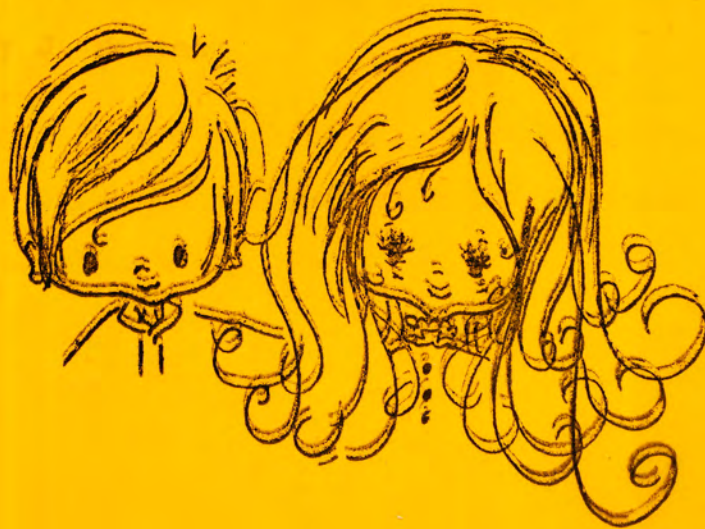


ECTOR COUNTY  
CHILDREN'S SERVICE

1973

ANNUAL REPORT



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ECTOR COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE, UNIT 002-10

1973

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Jane Conner, Worker

Fran Wilson, Worker

Bruce Carter, Worker

Keith Bailey, Worker

Billie O'Dowdy, Case Aide

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The staff and Board of Ector County Children's Services would like to express their appreciation to the Ector County Commissioners' Court who gave us their full support during 1973.

### ECTOR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

Honorable Michael D. Earney, County Judge

### COMMISSIONERS

Erskin Wunsch	Precinct Number 1
Bill Elms	Precinct Number 2
Julian Pressly	Precinct Number 3
Salvador Guerrero	Precinct Number 4

### LEGAL COUNSEL

During 1973, both District Judges C. V. Milburn and R. L. McKim gave careful consideration to all cases presented to them, as well as advising us on various procedures.

County Attorney Bill McCoy and his assistants, Ernie B. Armstrong and Clifford Hardwick, provided legal counsel for our unit and appeared representing our interests in District Court numerous times.

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Our thanks also goes out to numerous persons and agencies without whose cooperation our services would not have been possible. We would like to especially mention the staffs of MH/MR, Permian Basin Rehabilitation Center, Texas Rehab Commission, YES, Three Tier Learning Center, Odessa Police and Juvenile Departments, Ector County Independent School District, Special Education Department, and local medical personnel.

Various county departments which have also been instrumental in our services to the public include the County Auditor's Office, County Treasurer, Purchasing Department, County Welfare, Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Department, and the District Clerk's Office.

We have also seen a growing interest in the community in the problems of children. This is evidenced in the building of the Juvenile Detention Center and the increase in the number of resources now available in the area.

A special thanks goes to the Highland Methodist Church of Odessa who provides a birthday cake for each child in foster care and a Christmas party and gifts, complete with a Santa Claus, each year.

## FOSTER PARENTS

The persons we feel who have given more of themselves than anyone would certainly be our foster parents. During 1973, Ector County's foster homes were probably more crowded than in any previous year. An intense recruiting program was initiated in November of '73 to alleviate this problem, and we appreciated the help the news media gave us in making the public aware of our need for foster homes. We would like to thank the Odessa American, KOZA, KQIP, KBZB, and KOSA TV for their assistance. We received approximately 90 inquiries from prospective foster parents and several new homes have already been licensed.

Throughout the year, our foster parents opened their homes to children who were experiencing more serious problems than in the past. Much of this was due to the placement of many more older children in foster care.

Also during the year, we conducted several surveys of our foster parents and found they spend an average of \$3.50 to \$4.50 per day per child and receive an average of \$2.50 to \$3.00 a day plus clothing and medical expenses.

The following families participated in our 1973 foster parent program and to them we extend our warmest appreciation.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Melvin Arnold	Mr. and Mrs. Martin Benavidez
Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Blanch	Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Brosh
Mr. and Mrs. Juan Calderon	Mr. and Mrs. Jim Cavender
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Ciulla	Mr. and Mrs. Carl Dillard

Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Eaton	Mr. and Mrs. Valentino Garza
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Grass	Mr. and Mrs. Bill Heard
Mr. and Mrs. John Henderson	Mr. and Mrs. Abel Martinez
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Purvis	Mr. and Mrs. David Robinson
Mr. and Mrs. Juan Rodriguez	Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rubalcado

Since many persons expressed an interest in the case summaries we included in past reports, this year we have asked the foster parents to summarize some of their situations.

#### "Billy and Susan"

I believe Billy and Susan were classic examples of the kids our home has cared for. We first saw a really scared couple of kids--so lost. Billy was trying to be so big and brave while Susan continually cried. The Social Workers had explained where they were going and why, but their father had told them how awful foster care would be and how mean foster parents were. The first days were just a lot of getting to know and like one another. Our kids did the most to help Billy and Susan to feel "at home". The kids were starved for attention. Susan would sit on a kitchen stool and talk while I had supper. "Mommy never just talked or listened, she yelled" was her only comment. Billy was my husband's shadow until the new of the change wore off. It took several weeks for them to begin functioning independently. The kids just could not get full the first month or so, but they gradually came to understand that the next meal would be there. Before coming to us, they ate only one meal a day.

No matter what the size of our family, all participate in the activities. We try to allow each child to find an "outlet". We also try to make each child feel that this is his home and family and that we are here when he needs or wants us. We don't try to take his "real" family's place--only add to their family. The Social Workers are there when needed, whether it be for physical or moral support for us or the foster children.

The week another foster child was placed for adoption, it was also necessary to move Billy and Susan. They were secure enough now and the move was done with several visits over a period of time. When they left for their new home, they weren't the same children. They now have a happy outlook on life. The normal things are now taken for granted, and they

are allowed to be children at last. But, best of all, they feel loved and cared for by a family and their friend--a social worker.

When a child leaves, it is like losing part of the family, but in a good way. It is not an abrupt separation, but a happy--going to a new life, and we're always here when you need us-- separation. Children's Services gave these kids a chance to lead a normal happy life. No matter where they go from here, it's a better life than it was before.

#### "Not Enough Children"

Every once in a while the phone rings and we are asked if we would like another addition to our family. I have learned never to ask for how long, as the stay may be overnight or much longer. Sometimes the children have been in trouble, but most of the time, they are the victims.

One day we were asked to take a 12 year old who was in jail. We agreed and have always been pleased we made that decision. He was a gentle sensitive person who had inherited a violent neighborhood. His crimes had been wanting enough food and clothes to exist so he stole them. However, he was the most honest and trustworthy child you could want, once his basic needs were filled.

Since we have three children, people usually ask us how this affects them. There are some bad effects, but they learn so much more. One morning the boys awoke to find they had acquired another sister during the night. This was the ninth girl in a year, and they said "Oh no, not another girl."

Our youngest summed up our feelings beautifully one day when we were discussing our family project during a period of no foster children. He said "We're not a family, we don't have enough children."

#### "Fitting In"

Being a foster parent has taught me a lot of things. When I started, my only idea was to help a child who by circumstances beyond his control was unable to help himself, to help and love a child who had to depend on a strange adult to give him the things that everyone is born into this world expecting-- love, a home, and food. We have provided these things for each



and every child that has come to us. But something different happened that was totally unexpected, we were the ones who prospered. This is my view of being a foster parent.

You learn to love and give up each one, but you hopefully grow stronger.

You learn to hand out love to someone who has known very little of it.

You learn to appreciate the world around and all the treasures you hold so dear in your own kids.

You learn to be more thankful for healthy kids, especially when a child is brought to you that is sick.

You find that your own children are learning to know what it means to reach out and help those who cannot help themselves.

You learn the happiness you feel to have had a part in making adoptive parents the happiest people in the world.

I see only that my family and I are really the ones who have been helped. Sure, it is hard at times, times when you want to give up or feel like you've done all that you could, with no shown progress. You try everything, love, kindness, discipline, even ignoring the problem. But, as I have found out, a child only feels accepted when he finally "fits" into a family and recognizes he has a "place to fill" as being a member of your family.

All this requires only TIME! No matter what you try it will become possible only when you've given it enough Time. I can't say this has worked for all foster parents, only that it has worked for me. What I am trying to say is that the rewards for us have been far greater than the rough spots.

Our children love and accept every single child that comes to our home. They never express jealousy or selfishness. I am very proud of them; they love freely without reservations.

I can't really begin to relate a story about a particular child because, of the 11 or 12 children that we have had, not a single one is remembered more than the other. We loved them all as much as we could and it was always hard to let go.

I can only tell you about Fred whom we still have with us after two years. Fred is four going on five. He came to us a toddler, not uttering a sound, sick, scared to death, and completely dependent on his three sisters. Well, his physical health cleared up quickly enough, but there came a time after about six months that I felt like I couldn't help Fred to discover that he had a mind of his own or how to use it. Fred could accept love, but he couldn't give love in return. He mostly sat in a corner with his head down, his lips stuck out, and his arms folded. Oh, he learned to feed himself, to be potty trained, and to dress himself; but Fred never expressed likes or dislikes, never showed emotions of loving or caring. He did exactly as he was told, without ever batting an eye or questioning. He had absolutely no drive or personality.

I related this to his caseworker, and we agreed that Fred was possibly mentally hendered. Well, I can't remember when it started, but all of a sudden, three or four months after this feeling on my part of wanting to give up, Fred began to need good-night kisses, ask for a drink of water, let it be known that he didn't like a particular food, cry when his daddy took one of the other kids and not him, and most of all started saying intelligible words.

Afterwards, it was all uphill for Fred. Not a single minute of a day went by without his learning something and developing into an individual person. It didn't happen all at once, and I could write page after page about Fred's progress. So, let me say that as of now, Fred, age 4½ years, is as normal, loving and smart as my own 4½ year old. He has a charming little personality and gives love to his brothers and sisters as well as he accepts it. He has learned so rapidly that I'm sure whoever adopts Fred will be getting a perfectly normal, healthy, and very loving little boy.

We have really enjoyed becoming foster parents, and I hope with all my heart that we can always continue to be so. As I said, the rewards have far exceeded the bad times.

## THE YEAR - MCMLXXIII

During 1973 there were significant events that directly affected our services to the children of Ector County. The Commissioners' Court approved \$5,000.00 to be used for the payments to foster parents, making it one of the highest in the state. We initiated the use of an answering service which takes our emergency calls 24 hours a day. Mr. Keith Dial and Rev. Anthony Montez were appointed to our Board. A Slide Program was assembled to be shown to the public including schools and medical personnel to make everyone more aware of the problem. A new computer system was set up by the State to compile child abuse and neglect information and made available to the social workers. Several staff members attended the Child Abuse Conference in Arlington and the Child Welfare League of America Meeting in Denver, Colorado, as well as numerous other training sessions.

Ector County Children's Service was fortunate this year to retain most of its staff and, therefore, was utilizing a great deal of experience. Our Protective Service Caseworkers continually carried a higher than average caseload and yet were able to provide immediate service to inquiries and complaints regarding the care of children. The staff has to be available 24 hours a day and received an average of 25 calls per month after hours regarding children in danger.

During 1973, the State Welfare Department spent a total of \$57,051.00 for the administrative costs of the unit and, in addition, provided much of the training and materials for the operation of the unit.

Ector County spent a total of \$20,722.10 on foster care payments for children with a total expenditure of \$35,206.94 for the year.

A total of \$11,572.55 was received in a special AFDC fund which was used to pay foster parents for taking care of children with special problems, foster children's allowances, the answering service, and special medical costs the children incurred.

This year Ector County Children's Service worked with a total of 1,186 children as compared to 1,108 a year ago and 676 ten years ago.

Fifty-eight children were removed from their homes, and out of these, eleven children were placed for adoption in 1973.

Appendix

TABLE 1

TOTAL NUMBER CHILDREN SERVED: 1963-1973

ALL CHILDREN BY YEAR

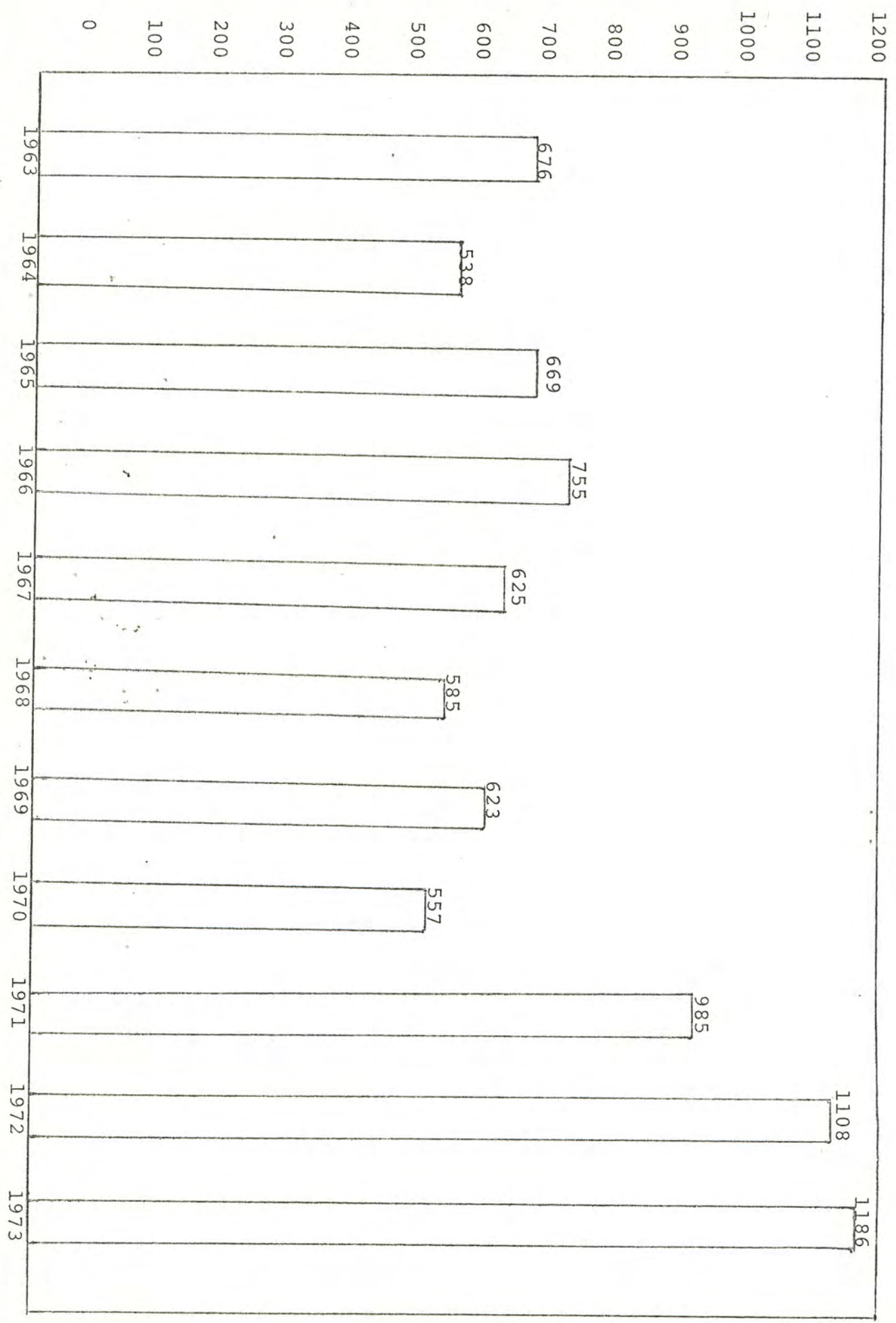


TABLE 2  
CHILDREN IN BOARDING CARE; 1963-1973  
ALL CHILDREN BY YEAR

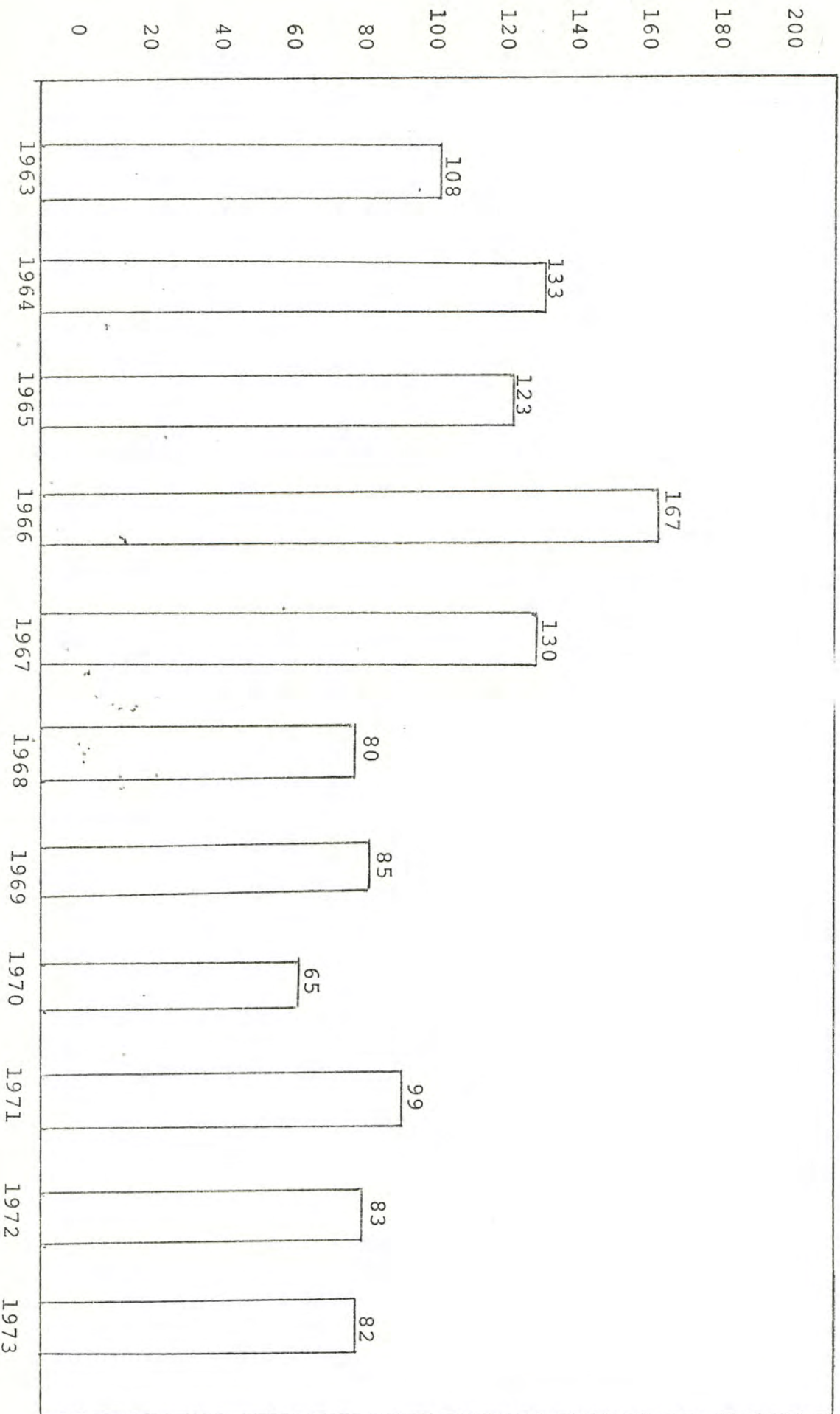


TABLE 3

CHILDREN IN BOARDING CARE: 1963-1973

MONTHLY AVERAGE

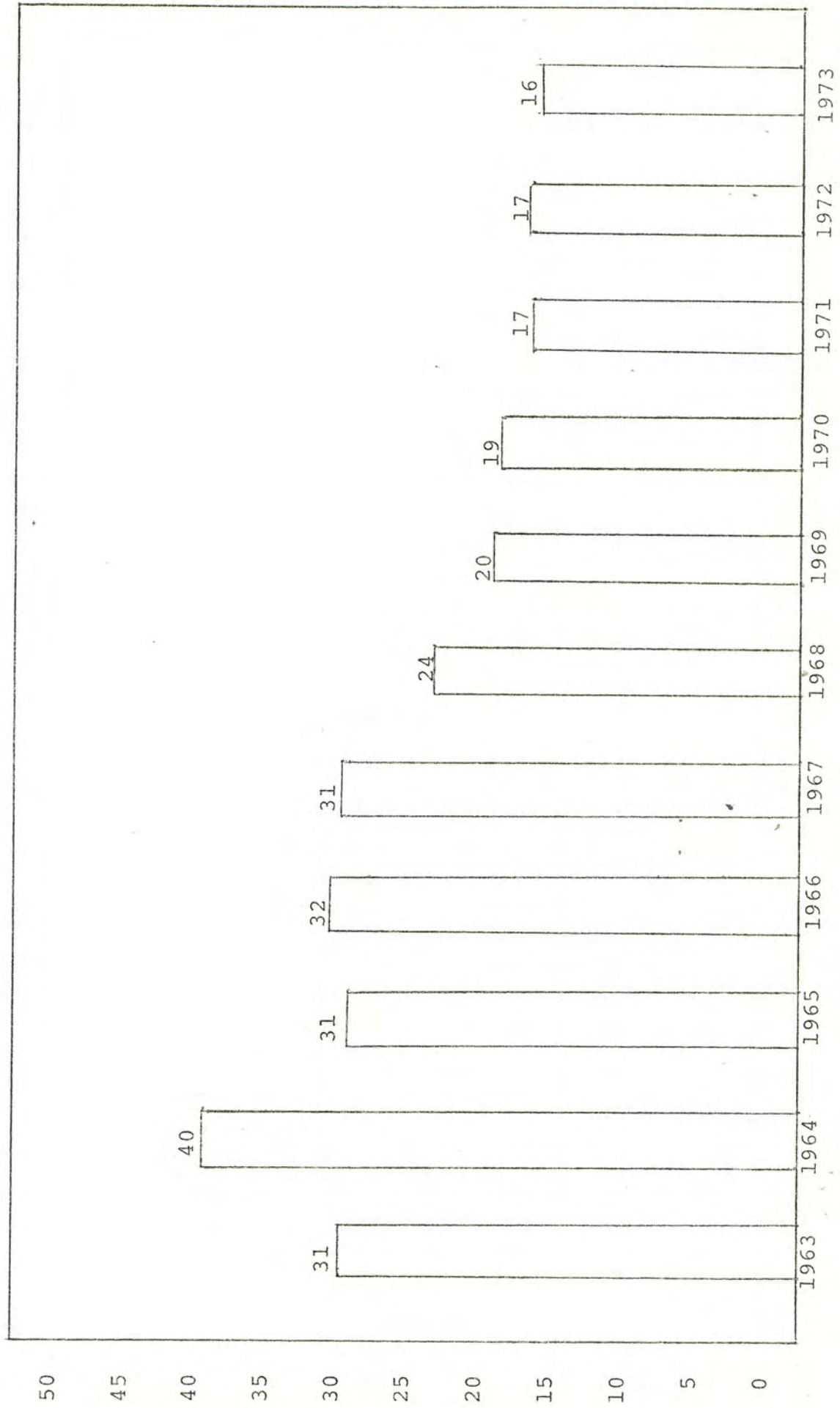




TABLE 4

RATIO OF CHILDREN PLACED IN SUBSTITUTE CARE  
TO TOTAL OF CHILDREN SERVED

<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
$\frac{108}{676} = 16\%$	$\frac{133}{538} = 25\%$	$\frac{123}{669} = 19\%$	$\frac{167}{755} = 22\%$
<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
$\frac{130}{625} = 28\%$	$\frac{80}{585} = 14\%$	$\frac{85}{623} = 12\%$	$\frac{65}{557} = 12\%$
<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	
$\frac{99}{985} = 10\%$	$\frac{83}{1108} = 7.5\%$	$\frac{82}{1186} = 6.9\%$	

This chart reflects that even though the number of children served is increasing, the percentage of children that are having to be removed from their home is decreasing. This, we feel, shows that our goal of working with the family so that the child might remain in his own home is successful.

TABLE 5

## BUDGET COMPARISON

	<u>1973 Budget</u>	<u>1974 Budget</u>
Office Supplies	900.00	900.00
Office Equip. Maint.	200.00	200.00
Clothing	2,400.00	2,400.00
Drugs - Medical	2,500.00	2,500.00
Telephone - Telegraph	1,600.00	1,300.00
Travel	4,000.00	4,000.00
Dues - Subscriptions	250.00	250.00
Unwed Mother Expense	3,000.00	3,000.00
Board & Lodging	12,000.00	15,000.00
Machinery & Equipment	1,300.00	-0-
Miscellaneous	<u>2,000.00</u>	<u>2,000.00</u>
TOTAL	30,150.00	31,550.00

Total Funds expended by Ector County during 1973. \$35,206.94,  
(This includes budget amendments made during  
the year.)

Total State Funds expended during 1973. \$57,051.00  
(Plus training and medical costs through Medi-  
caid.)

Total Special AFDC funds received during 1973. \$11,572.55

Total Adoption reimbursement. \$ 2,860.00