

# ANNUAL REPORT

1971



Ector County Children's Services

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is difficult to single out the special few who have contributed the most to our efforts and our success during our first year of operation as a coordinated State-County Service Agency. However, without the material assistance and/or professional counsel of the persons named below, it would not have been possible for us to have functioned. We wish to state publicly the gratitude of our staff and our Board to the following:

### ECTOR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Honorable Michael D. Earney, County Judge

#### COMMISSIONERS

H. W. (Happy) Smith	Precinct Number 1
Bill Elms	Precinct Number 2
Kellus Turner	Precinct Number 3
Salvador Guerrero	Precinct Number 4

The Commissioners gave the essential support that resulted in our State-County merger to provide protective services to children. Moreover, they have consistently and steadfastly maintained a spirit of confidence, support, and interest in our function, which has meant as much to us as the funding that they (and the taxpayers) continue to provide.

### LEGAL COUNSEL

County Attorney Bill McCoy and his capable staff, especially Assistant County Attorney Phil Godwin, have patiently helped us sort fact from fiction, knowledge from belief, logic from opinion. Their interests were always consistent with the best interests of

very special families endure. They hold back the tears of separation, they savor the remembrance of their success, and they call us to bring another child. During the year, a ceremony was held at our annual foster parents' banquet to particularly honor two of these families who have helped children for over ten years. For those who have helped even one child, we express our deepest appreciation.

In 1971, they were:

Valentino R. Garza - 20 years

Juan D. Calderon - 10 years

Juan Rodriguez

Carl C. Dillard

Preston Gobble

Ernest Kelly

John R. Henderson

David Robinson

J. B. Cavender

R. C. Stucks

Edmund A. Brosh

William T. Wright

Warner C. McCarty

Weldon Sadler

Bill Heard

James R. Hudson

James Athans

Joe M. Rubalcado

Robert H. Blanch

C. A. Howell



## I. 1971 - A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

Protective services for children entered into a new era during 1971 when, in October 1970, a contract was signed by the County and the State Department of Public Welfare to offer a balanced program with equal participation by both governmental bodies. Under the terms of this innovative contract, Ector County took its place alongside other metropolitan areas in recognizing that its efforts for child protection must be coordinated with those of other cities and states in the interest of communication, efficiency, and equitability for clients. Specifically, the contract contained the following major provisions:

- (1) The program is to be "a jointly financed, State Administered program of child protection to meet the needs of dependent and neglected children and children with special needs, including adoption. It is to be neither a probation nor a general relief program".
- (2) "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 shall be complied with in all operations". (To this end, our staff now includes one Black caseworker and two Mexican-American secretaries.)
- (3) "The Department is to provide an in-service training program similar in scope with that offered throughout the Department, at no expense to the County."
- (4) Foster children are hereby eligible for Title XIX medical care coverage and reimbursement for foster care expenditures.
- (5) "The County will extend the program in such manner as will best carry out the purposes"... "of strengthening the program and affording care and services on behalf of the needy children in the County."
- (6) The State Welfare Department is to provide the costs pertaining to salaries and administrative expense of the staff. The County is to provide adequately for the field operations of the agency, including child care and unwed mother expense, travel, office space and expense, supplementary medical costs, and such funds as later jointly determined to provide essential extension of the program.

7. Services to unwed mothers
8. Services to adolescents (pre-delinquent)
9. Investigations for agencies outside County
10. Independent adoption investigations for the Court
11. Disputed custody investigations for the Court.

(It is noted that our agency is also responsible for the study, investigation, and licensing of all day care facilities in Odessa.)

An anticipated 985 children were served by the end of fiscal 1971. The following represent some of their true stories (only the names are fictitious).



### III. A POUND OF CURE

When we initially came into the Agency, approximately seventy cases had been received, but had not been served by the Unit due to shortage of staff. Our caseloads are now stabilized, and we are able to act upon all referrals immediately due to more adequate staffing of the Agency. Additionally, approximately 425 families and 99 foster children were served during 1971.

Table 1 compares the volume of cases handled over the past ten years. As you can see, the 1971 figure is well above and significantly greater than that for any previous year. It represents a 77% increase over 1970 and a 78% increase over the average during 1960-1970. These figures are significant in that the population at large in Odessa has not grown during the same period of time so it stands that the Agency has made itself much more accessible to clients over a wider range of services which we will examine in more detail later on.

The child population served becomes doubly significant when compared to the number of children placed in foster care (see Table 2). The number of children placed increased by 49% from 1970 (65 to 99), with the 1971 figure of 99 being constant with the 1960-1970 average.

One out of every six children served was placed in foster care during 1960-1970. Only one out of every ten is so being placed in foster care at present. The significance of this change is that the Agency is now able to offer more preventive services with more emphasis in maintaining the child in his own home via casework services with his parents and relatives wherein at all possible. Foster care placement is usually not the plan of

choice when alternative plans are available. We apply foster care from a remedial standpoint with a long-term objective of reuniting child with family after effective casework efforts.

Since 1968, the trend has been to place an increasingly smaller proportion of children in foster care (related to the total caseload), but this has only begun to be fully practiced as the Agency has become adequately staffed. Thus, it can be said that foster care is generally imposed only in extreme or crisis situations with a concern for foster care being a temporary measure.

The efforts of the two former County Caseworkers, Mrs. Carlton and Mrs. Kimbrell, were superlative in reversing the previous trend of over-placement of children. Their efforts could have had even more reward if they had had the staff and supervisory support essential to keep up with mounting caseloads. What they were able to accomplish in this direction was of major benefit to the present staff, and certainly enhanced the position of the present staff in coming into the Unit. Things would have certainly been much more difficult without their legacy.

Tables 3 and 4 tend to validate our stated conclusions by comparing the monthly averages for each year from 1960 until the present. These figures conclusively demonstrate the trend towards greater accessibility to a wider range of services to the community with increasing emphasis on in-home service as opposed to foster care. This is indicated by the decrease in the rate of placement (see Table 5) that has occurred over the past four years. During 1971, only an average of 17 children were in foster care at any particular moment. This figure is a decrease



from the past year and which represents a 32% decrease from the average (25) during the period 1960-1970. These figures all go to show that more children who actually need foster care are receiving it, but for a much shorter period of time and only after extreme extensive casework efforts with the family have been utilized.

We can summarize by saying that (1) the agency is currently serving a greater population of families and children, a figure that is explained by an increased Agency outreach not natural population growth; yet, (2) the agency is putting children into foster care only about half as often (one out of ten as opposed to one out of six); with (3) the length of stay in foster care being reduced as evidenced by a lower number of children being in foster care at any given time.



## V. DOLLARS MAKE SENSE

Under the terms of the joint contract, the State Department of Public Welfare has assumed about 65% of the total costs of our program, (see Table 6). Consequently, the County's budgeting responsibility has been reduced from its high of \$65,946.00 for 1970 to \$29,000 for 1971. This \$29,000 of total County dollars were expended primarily on non-administrative areas, concentrating on child care needs, (as the Table shows).

All of this primary budget was expended for 1971. However, it is sometimes overlooked that the agency consistently returns about \$2,000 annually to County tax coffers in the form of parents' reimbursement for foster care expenses and adoptive couples reimbursement for delivery expense of infants. This figure represents a return of about 7% of our gross county budget to the General Revenue Fund. We minimize the role of this because, even in our adoption program, primary concern is for proper placement of children rather than financial gain. In keeping with this philosophy, our adoption reimbursement schedule is placed on a sliding basis from zero to \$400, based on the couple's ability to pay. This amount, of course, is considerably less than normal child bearing costs, even when taken at the maximum of the range (which was done only once during the past year).

Our emphasis ever remains on finding homes for our hard-to-place children rather than our finding ideal infants for families wanting to adopt. The Department as a whole once had an open-door policy toward adoptive applicants, but we now focus our resources on meeting the needs of children already in our care.

Therefore, couples who will consider a wide range of characteristics of the adoptable child, including (a) racial differences, (b) physical, mental and correctible handicaps, and/or (c) older children, are still sought out by our agency on a nation-wide scale. Homes are needed for more than 200 adoptable children state-wide. There is an average of five children available in our agency at any given time. Those seeking white, normal infants are properly referred to other private agencies which are legally licensed by the Department to place children. This is only fair to them, considering the waiting period that they had with us (often years) when they were so specific in their selection. It is also only fair to our children who need homes but cannot find them. There are no "unadoptable" children, not if the child's caseworker is persistent in examining every possible resource for that child. The result of taking this attitude is that children are placed for whom adoptive homes were never before considered feasible (as with the little girl mentioned in the case illustration section of our report). Thus, the dollars wasted on unneeded long-term foster care are re-channeled. The emotional cost savings, likewise, becomes considerable.

The budget has been supplemented by the State for non-administrative expense in two ways. First, by including all foster children under the medical coverage of the Title XIX program, the County's medical expenditures for foster children have been reduced by 50%. Second, by reimbursing the County two-thirds of its expenditures on boarding care for foster children who would be eligible for welfare payment if they still lived in their own



home, approximately \$2,000 was returned to the County for supplementing the child care program. These latter funds have been used (at the discretion of the Board) to provide a supplemental payment of 50¢ a day above the normal boarding care rate of \$2.00 - \$2.50 a day to foster parents caring for teen-agers or children with physical, mental, or emotional handicaps. In addition, school-age children now receive a \$1.00 per week personal allowance to learn how to handle money responsibly. Specialized treatment was made possible where it was not before, as with a multiple handicapped little girl who has been placed in a residential children's hospital in Port Arthur. These moneys are anticipated to provide increasingly for supplementary services that will greatly enhance the viability of our total program. Other such contract services are also available to the County.

For 1972, the Commissioners Court has continued its backing of the program. The allocation of \$29,900 represents only a modest increase over 1971, but is well tailored to fit our needs. As already mentioned, a major new item of inclusion is \$2,000 for "miscellaneous" expense, represents a mandate from the County for our pioneer effort to establish a community-wide homemaker program. The Commissioners had the foresight to avoid specifically earmarking this fund, should diversion of it to the rest of the program become necessary. However, the homemaker program should more than carry its own weight by sometimes preventing the need for foster care. This example is one instance among many of dollars making sense.

The original 1971 and 1972 budgets are compared in Table 7.



TABLE 1

TOTAL NUMBER CHILDREN SERVED 1960-1971  
ALL CHILDREN BY YEAR

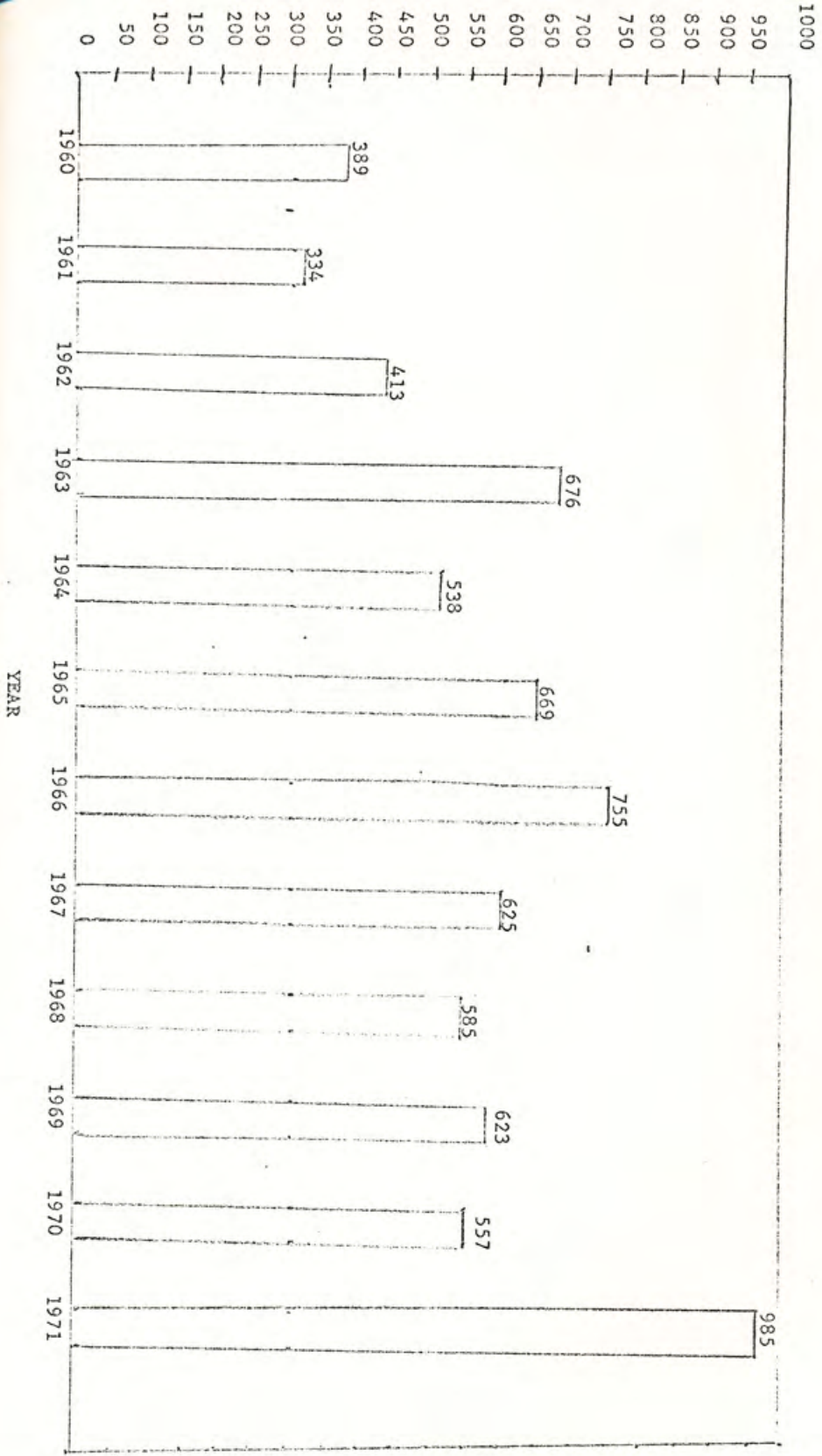


TABLE 2

CHILDREN IN BOARDING CARE: 1960-1971

ALL CHILDREN BY YEAR

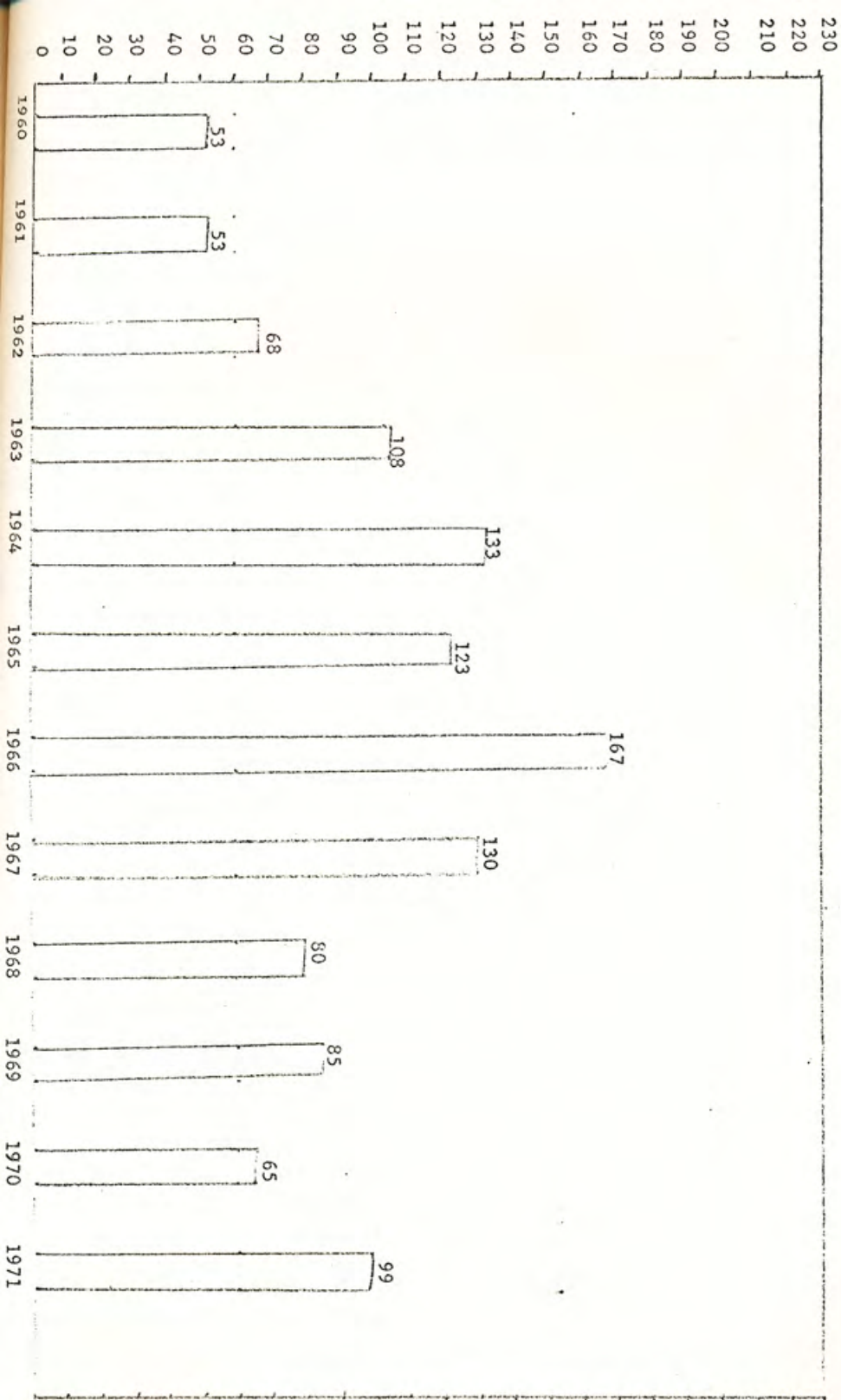


TABLE 4

CHILDREN IN BOARDING CARE: 1960-1971

MONTHLY AVERAGE

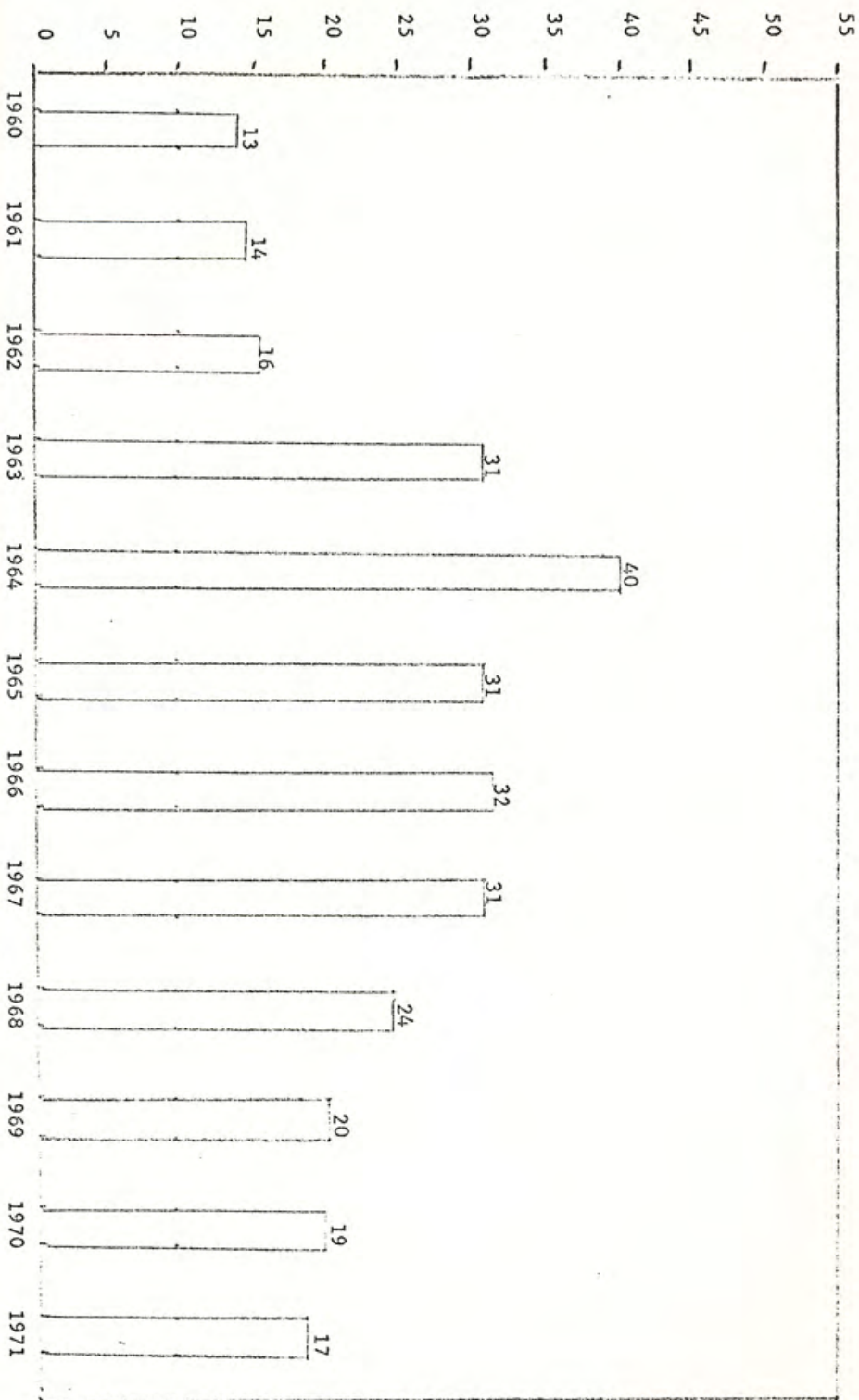




TABLE 4

CHILDREN IN BOARDING CARE: 1960-1971

MONTHLY AVERAGE

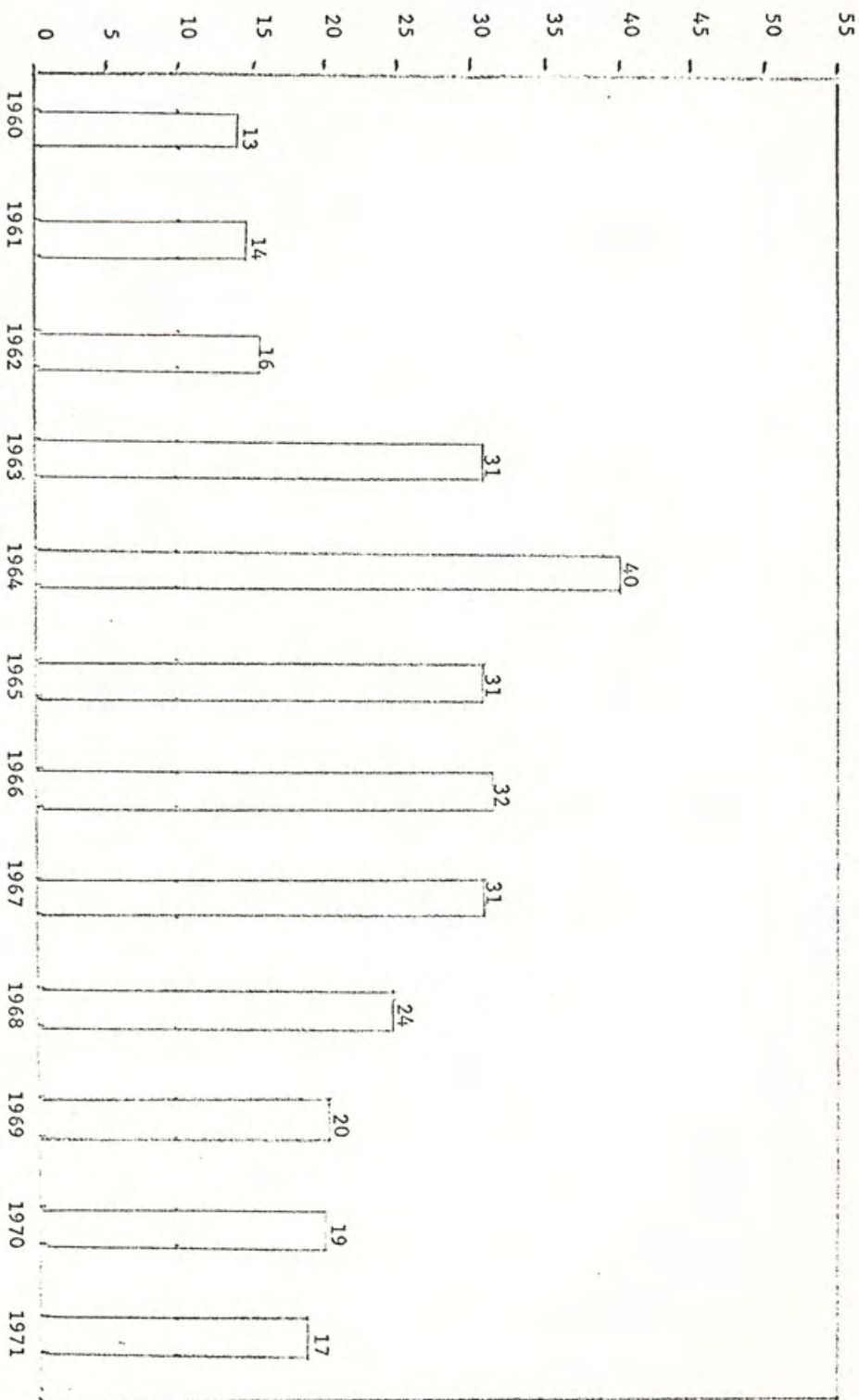


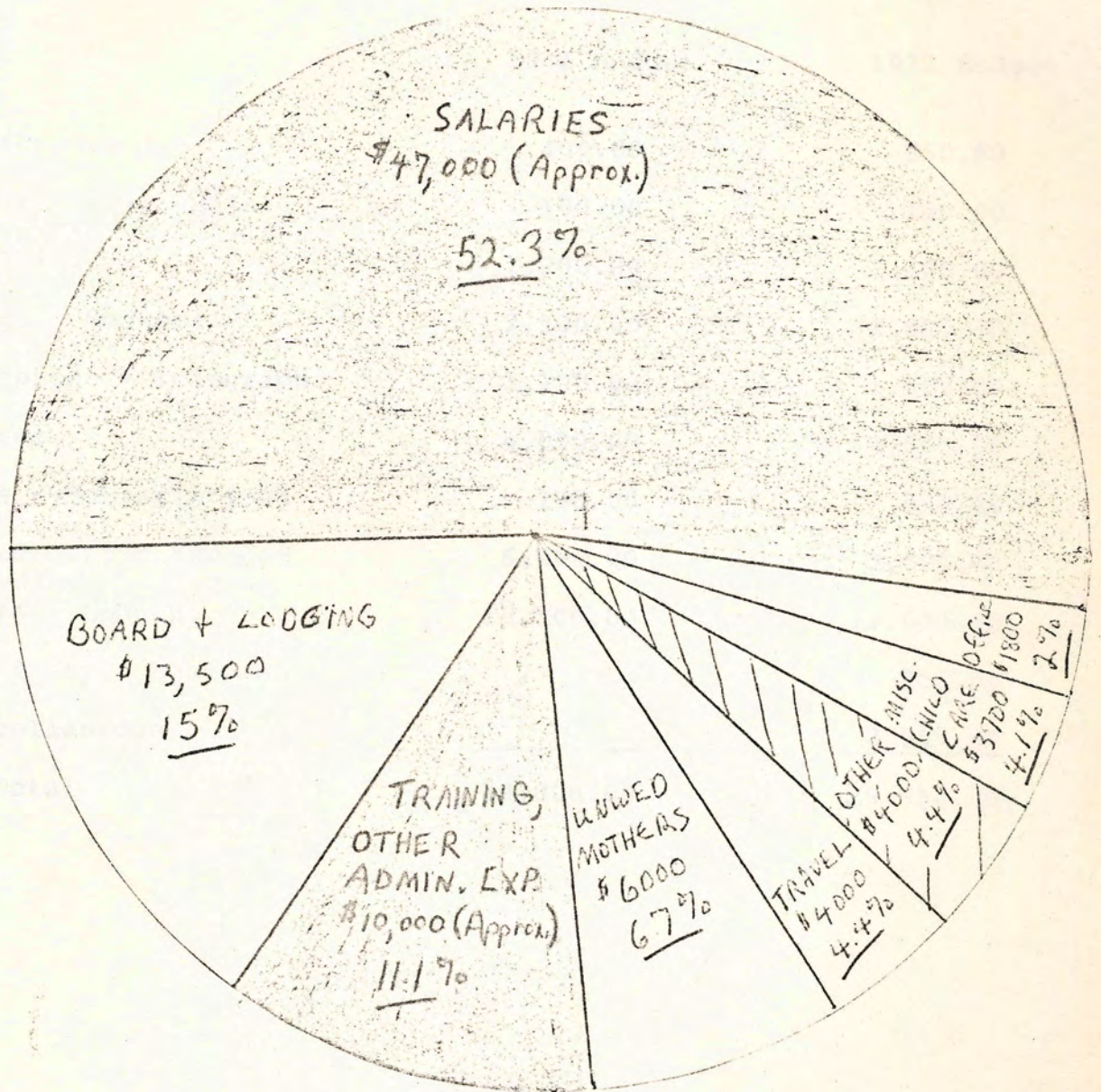
TABLE 5

RATIO OF CHILDREN PLACED TO  
CHILDREN SERVED

<u>1960</u> $\frac{53}{389} = 14\%$	<u>1961</u> $\frac{53}{334} = 17\%$	<u>1962</u> $\frac{68}{413} = 14\%$	<u>1963</u> $\frac{108}{676} = 16\%$
<u>1964</u> $\frac{133}{538} = 25\%$	<u>1965</u> $\frac{123}{669} = 19\%$	<u>1966</u> $\frac{167}{755} = 22\%$	<u>1967</u> $\frac{130}{625} = 28\%$
<u>1968</u> $\frac{80}{585} = 14\%$	<u>1969</u> $\frac{85}{623} = 12\%$	<u>1970</u> $\frac{65}{557} = 12\%$	<u>1971 (prog.)</u> $\frac{99}{985} = 10\%$

TABLE 6 - BUDGET ANALYSIS 1971

Total State Budget:	\$57,000	(approximately)
Total County Budget:	29,000	
Total *Title XIX Cash Receipts:	2,000	(approximately)
Total Reimbursements by families:	2,000	(approximately)
Total Budget:	90,000	(approximately)



\*Does not include payment of Title XIX Medical Costs




STATE =   
 COUNTY =   
 OTHERS = 



TABLE 7

## BUDGET COMPARISON

	1971 Budget	1972 Budget
Office Supplies	400.00	850.00
Office Equip. Maint.	100.00	100.00
Clothing	1,200.00	2,400.00
Drugs - Medical	2,500.00	2,800.00
Telephone - Telegraph	1,200.00	1,600.00
Travel	4,000.00	4,000.00
Dues - Subscriptions	100.00	250.00
Unwed Mother Expense	6,000.00	3,000.00
Board - Lodging	13,500.00	12,000.00
Machinery & Equipment		950.00
Miscellaneous		<u>2,000.00</u>
Total	29,000.00	29,950.00