

ECTOR COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

I. Background Data on Agency:

Kind of agency: Children's Services (Child Protective Services)

Parent agency: A Part of the Social Services Program under the
Texas State Department of Public Welfare.

Number served in community: The whole of Ector County
(population: in Odessa - approximately 85,500 people;
population: in Ector County - approximately 102,500 people).

Description of community served: Largely industrial with a
heavy emphasis on oil related occupations; generally
the worker or mid-management level.

Total staff: 20 people (not including regional supervisors
located elsewhere in the state).

Services offered: Child Protective Services (Intake of child
abuse/neglect referrals, investigation, court referrals,
and ongoing casework with older juveniles, families, and
foster children); Adoption work with unwed mothers.

Referral services: Mental Health - Mental Retardation Clinic,
Welfare Social Services, private counseling, court, police
intervention, school system.

Brief Statement of Agency philosophy: Highest priority is
help for the abused/neglected child; second priority is
help for the family; the major emphasis is casework
for the purpose of keeping the child within the home.

Additional information: Texas has a central state computerized
file of all previous referrals for suspected abuse/neglect
and the results of the investigation; also there is a
toll free hot line for the state in order to report
suspected incidents.

Comments: In the past few years the state has launched a mas-
sive public relations program designed to educate the
public about the prevalence of child abuse; in Texas
it is estimated that 2 children a week die from child
abuse.

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II. Staff:

Total number of workers: 20 (4 male, 16 female)

Ethnic backgrounds: 1 black, 2 Spanish, 1 oriental, rest Anglo.

Status: All full time workers; 2 supervisors

Educational background: Supervisor - MSW preferred, BA is allowed (both in Odessa have BA's); caseworker - BA required (preferably in psychology or sociology); case-aide - 2 years of college; stenos and bookkeepers - high school and some related experience (depending on job).

Certification or licenses: none

Caseloads: Intake (3 workers) - about 70-90 a month; full-time foster-care - about 12 to 15 children in care a month; on-going workers supervise about 15-20 cases a month; the older juvenile workers supervise about 15-20 cases a month; total = approximately 400+ children a month being served.

Work classifications: 2 supervisors (1 handling casework development, 1 acting as resource person along with both supervising units of workers); 3 intake workers (handle initial referrals); 2 work mainly with older juveniles (runaways, those without effective supervision); 4 do ongoing casework with families; 1 generally handles foster home licensing and placement; the remainder are clerical workers.

Methods of assigning cases: Cases are assigned to intake workers generally by their specialties (1 man, 2 women), as are ongoing cases usually assigned according to the workers special abilities; however, present caseload size, amount of available time, and worker's schedules also are considered before assignment of a particular case.

Who counsels if this agency doesn't: Juvenile Probation, IHPR, Youth Encouragement Service, Family Services, or any other counseling service; investigations regarding abuse/neglect are handled either by this agency or investigated by the police.

Description of offices: Either 1 or 2 person offices; have used this facility for 8 months - the old Health Department Building; waiting for permanent office space.

Comments: There is much concern about someone without adequate training or education in social work or counseling handling such specialized cases; the case for licensing or certifying workers is a strong one; however, it appears that the need for such workers exceeds those available.

III. Record Keeping

Location of records: In office

Accessibility? Staff only; information may be given to court and police if needed; some information is shared informally with school personnel, health department staff, and other social services or welfare workers; they do not, however, have access to files.

Confidentiality of information: Available to staff only, and on certain matters to the County Attorney; clients are not permitted to see files.

Disposition of records: Files are kept by local agency; state also has a computerized file of all referrals regarding suspected abuse/neglect.

Forms and records completed by workers:

- a) initial complaint form (cross-indexed with files to see if there is a previous record of family.);
- b) notation made when supervisor assigns case;
- c) worker contacts Austin with information on this referral to be indexed for previous reports (sound indexed too); worker receives copy of previous incidents from Austin for case record;
- d) at time of family contact, an information sheet is completed: family structure, income, other identifying information;
- e) worker dictates contacts with family - plan for family's goals;
- f) a three part series of state forms regarding family size, goals, problems;
- g) daily reports of that day's contacts;
- h) folders filed.

Additional information: Files are kept on each child in foster care, and on each family; court reports are done if needed.

Comments: As with most governmental agencies, there appears to be too much paper work, far too much.

IV. Appraisal Instruments:

Psychological testing for clients: MHR has a contract with agency to work with any child in foster care free; other referrals are made as needed, and fees are based on the client's ability to pay.

Testing by the agency: None; workers do make individual evaluations of a family's problems.

Consultation: Psychological consultation for the staff is available through MHR.

V. Interviewing and Counseling:

Theoretical orientation: Directive, goal-oriented.

Percentages of time spent counseling (can vary according to worker's major assignment):

- a) individuals (children - 30%, parents - 70%)
- b) family counseling - 35%
- c) schools, neighbors, collateral fact building - 10%
- d) legal - 10%
- e) paper work - 35%
- f) travel time - 10%

Referral sources:

- a) individuals 15%
- b) law enforcement 14%
- c) relatives 13%
- d) schools, medical resources, welfare agency 6-8% each
- e) courts 16%
- f) other (other agencies, self-referrals) 23%

Location of interviews and counseling: In the client's home; some done in the office

Kinds of referrals: Out of approximately 175 cases, 40 may be in regard to abuse; the remainder are for neglect, runaways, or children in need of supervision.

Additional information: One unique factor of this agency is that the majority of the clients are involuntary clients - they are not generally asking for help. They are being confronted with facts about their methods of child rearing which someone else has questioned. As a result, most clients are, at least initially, hostile, rejecting, and aggressive towards the worker. Counseling on this basis is difficult and must - at least initially - be most directive and specific.

Comments: It could well be argued that most Protective Services Workers do not counsel - they merely investigate and give orders. Surely it is a schizophrenic role: investigating and helping (how can someone help me when they have the power to remove my child?). Because the client rarely asks for help in overt ways (it can be argued that by striking his child the abusive father is asking for help), the worker is forced to take a much more aggressive, goal-directed role as a counselor than if the client were to come in requesting help.

VI. Informational Service

Kinds of information available: Public assistance programs (medical and financial); Preventive services; Adoption services.

Preventive program: Slide presentation regarding child abuse for presentation in the community; school talks in homemaking and sociology classes; newspaper, radio, T.V. articles to increase public awareness of the incident and pattern of child abuse; state-wide programs and funding designed for public awareness.

Volunteer coordination: Person paid through the Manpower program to help with transportation, reworking of the clothes closet, etc.

Coordination with other community groups:

- a) nutrition and basic homemaking program to teach skills through the Texas Agriculture Program;
- b) Ector County Community Service Organization: 50 or 60 agencies meeting monthly to get a better awareness of the agencies available for referral and the people within them; greater understanding between agencies as to their individual and collective functions.

Extent of use of these programs: Trying to initiate and encourage a community-wide, team approach for all agencies which may be working with the same family.

Referrals to and use of State facilities, when needed: for instance, the Pyote Children's Home.

Additional Information: As the agency grows with more staff to handle the incoming referrals, the focus of the agency can shift from strictly doing crisis intervention type work to a more preventive program; they hope to do more educational-type community awareness programs in the future. It is recognized that this is the best way to fight child abuse - by preventing it in the first place.

Comments: Public awareness of this growing problem is slow in coming; too many people still would rather think that child abuse does not exist. The need for informative articles, interviews, workshops, etc., is great. While information is available within the agency, this same information needs to be dispersed into the community.

VII. Integrating Child Welfare:

Organizational pattern: Ultimately under HEW; Chain of command is: state, county, city. Child Welfare Services are a part of the Social Services area of the State Department of Public Welfare.

Funding: Approximately \$175,000 yearly from state funds (equally matched by federal funds); approximately \$10,000 yearly from county funds. If the money spent for foster care is matched by the state (if the child is eligible for these matching funds), then that money is placed in a slush fund which is used by the local agency.

Accountability: Ector County has a local board (the Ector County Children's Services Board) which helps the agency with funding and public relations. This board also regulates the slush fund which is used to obtain needed equipment for the agency (recording machines, answering service) or to cover the cost of a special project for a child in care (purchase an instrument for a foster child who is taking band).

Also, the State Department has evaluated the agency by means of quality control over the handling of cases. This is one way for the state to keep track of the activities within any particular agency.

Each supervisor is, of course, responsible for the workers under him/her. They periodically read the case folders for an evaluation of the worker's progress with the family and for the completeness of a particular case file. Literally all the cases are at some time read by the supervisor.

Additional information: It is generally felt that the workers within this agency should be considered professionals and the supervisors are the one level to monitor the ability of the worker. Because the agency can hire (through the State Employment System, by passing a test, interview, and initial training period) those without specialized backgrounds or education which would prepare them for this kind of work, there would seem to be an opportunity for less-than-professional work, although not necessarily. "Ability to care" is not taught.

Comments: Unfortunately, the effectiveness of casework for a particular family cannot be measured immediately; it may be years (or too late) before it is found that the family did not benefit from counseling - in the form of another battered or neglected child.

VIII. Evaluation:

Evaluation of the agency: The State of Texas did a quality-control evaluation of all the state social services programs in December, 1974. At this time there was an evaluation of the casework done, the quality of case folders kept (i.e., appropriate forms, current dictation), and a follow-up with the families which had been serviced to determine the effectiveness of the work being done. To date, the results have not yet all been interpreted and released to the local agency to use in developing new methods of casework. These suggestions could be very valuable recommendations to the workers and an excellent tool to determine the effectiveness of the agency from the stand-point of the families served.

Particular strengths of the Odessa agency:

- a) much support from community resources;
- b) good plans for casework - flexible programs and staff;
- c) relatively stable staff - thus increasing the overall competency of the agency due to experience;
- d) staff seems very dedicated to the work - workers feel there is a real need for Protective Services in the community and for their particular work with families in need; as a result, extra effort is asserted;
- e) very community-awareness oriented; agency has been instrumental in bringing child abuse to the public's conscience and in developing workshops and individual presentations to educate against the spread of child abuse and to identify existing cases and problems; an excellent slide presentation;

Areas possibly needing improvement:

- a) more homemakers are needed for teaching 1 to 1 homemaking skills (volunteer basis);
- b) more community resources for placement of problem children; development of a crisis care nursery;
- c) salaries need to be more competitive (\$760 month starting salary for Public Welfare Worker I; no extra pay for being on-call, only time off if actual overtime is worked); little chance for advancement;
- d) paperwork seems excessive;
- e) increased in-service training - work on family counseling skills (there can never be too much of this);

- f) more public awareness of the problem of children's rights - from courts and judges, to the individual neighbor who witnesses a case of child abuse/neglect;
- g) more children's rights!

Additional information: It is felt that there is some positive movement towards a greater feeling for the child: hesitancy towards involvement is decreasing, more legal counsel is being appointed to represent children in court. It is also felt that the attention directed towards child abuse from the national level may slowly be receding while another national concern takes the public's attention (say, the aged and the nursing home problem). Hopefully, the movement will have its own momentum by then and the campaign against child abuse (which is, in fact, increasing) will continue on its own.

Comments: It appears that the Odessa agency is progressive in their approach towards combating child abuse in West Texas. The agency has not been in effect long, and yet they have established themselves with the community as an important service. The agency has a remarkable slide presentation for public education programs (a major way to combat child abuse). And this agency has been instrumental in organizing the Community Services Group which is attempting to consolidate numerous services into an effective block of help for families which are being served perhaps in a haphazard way by several agencies at the same time. Because the Commissioner's Court saw fit to appoint a local board to help the agency with public relations and fund raising, we can assume that the agency is met with approval by the court systems (even if the courts do seem, at times, reluctant to intervene in the parent/child relationship).

My major concern is in the area of skill: the need for Protective Services workers in all geographic areas (not just Texas) is so great, that the need exceeds the supply of qualified workers. Is it better to have no worker, or a semi-qualified one? This is a difficult question, one which may be solved (maybe) by the state's plan to license social workers. And, can we really say that a worker without a MSW is not qualified? Again, the "ability to care" is not taught - and many abusive/neglectful parents have just never had anyone to care about them.

Still, the Odessa Children's Services Agency does have dedicated workers, they are skilled in many ways (and

they are, I imagine, learning in others), and in a few years they have risen to meet the need of providing effective Protective Services to the children and families of Ector County.

ECTOR COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICE

PROTECTIVE SERVICE PRESENTATION INFORMATION

ECTOR COUNTY: 362-0464 - 24 HOUR SERVICE - HOT LINE: 1-800-292-5400

I. CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A. Joint State/County Project - since October 1970 (Off and on prior to that - at times completely funded and operated by Ector County).

1. State DPW - over \$250,000.00
 - a) Salaries
 - b) Training
 - c) Supervision
 - d) AFDC foster care (Reimburses County for eligible children).
 - e) Medicaid
 - f) Offices

2. Ector County approximately \$70,000.00

- a) Foster care
 - b) Medical
 - c) Clothing
 - d) Special
 - (1) Unwed mother program
 - (2) Allowances
 - (3) Answering service
-] funded by state reimbursements

B. Other financial information

1. Foster care rate - \$4.50 per day - paid twice monthly.
(January 1, 1977 - \$4.50 for 0-9 age children
\$5.00 for 10-18 + exceptional care cases 0-18)

C. Children's Services Board - Consisting of 11 members - Appointed by the Commissioners Court.

1. Chairman - Dr. William D. Furst
2. Vice Chairman - Mr. Keith Dial
3. Secretary - Mrs. Faye Connell

D. Staffing - Ector County

1. Total staff of 20 - (two supervisors)
 - a) Workers - 12
 - (1) Intake - 3
 - (2) Ongoing - 4
 - (3) Juvenile - 2
 - (4) Substitute care - 3
 - b) Clerical - 6
 - (1) Stenographers - 2
 - (2) Clerk Typists - 4

2. Support Staff - Region Headquarters: El Paso
Sub Region : Midland

3. Case loads approximately 30 cases per worker.

E. Case loads - Ector County - Average 300 cases (550 to 600 children per month). See current statistical report for present case loads.

- F. Types of cases
1. Neglect - 50%
 2. Abuse - 25%
 3. Juvenile - 15%
 4. Other - 10% (Court reports, OTI's, Unwed mother referrals, etc.)
- G. Source of referrals - Ector County
1. Individuals - 22%
 2. Relatives - 18%
 3. Courts - 14%
 4. Police - 13%
 5. Schools - 8%
 6. DPW - 8%
 7. Other - 7%
 8. Self - 4%
 9. Anonymous - 3%
 10. Medical - 3%
- Total 100%

II. SPECIAL INFORMATION

A. History

1. Mistreatment of children first identified in 1874. New York City case - Mary Ellen. Protected by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. No laws at that time to protect children.
2. Development of child abuse prevention detection occurred in 1920's and 30's.

B. Intent is to keep child in own home unless dangerous.

C. Of the 500 children served each month an average of 450 remain in their own home and with their parents. The rest are in foster care (Average of 15), Adoptive homes (average of 12) and the remainder are with relatives. (ALSO INSTITUTIONS avg of 15)

D. Most of casework done in families own home as compared to other counseling agencies who use their offices.

E. Protective Services involves involuntary clients for the most part.

F. Court action necessary in only 5% of cases.

1. Most court action agreed to by parents.
2. Most contested cases involve Judge ordering certain conditions for parents - MH-MR, Support, Child Development training, etc. At completion child returned if satisfactory.
3. Is possible to terminate, but only as last resort.

G. Work with numerous local agencies.

1. MH-MR
2. Special Ed.
3. YES
4. TRC
5. Juvenile Probation
6. City Police - Sheriff
7. Rehabilitation Center
8. Expanding Nutrition

III. STATISTICS

A. Texas Statistics

1. 1975 - DPW received 34,384 cases of abuse. 10,708 were confirmed.
2. 804 cases of sexual abuse reported.
3. At least 70 children died in 1975.
4. Unknown how many unreported cases.

B. National Status

1. 250,000 cases of abuse each year with 4% death rate.
2. 300,000 will suffer permanant injury as result of abuse and neglect.

C. Child abuse and it's causes.

1. 20 to 25% of battered children are premature or required special care at birth.
2. Approximately 60% of parents who abuse their children were abused when they were children.
3. Most parents want help and will give three or four open warnings before injuring child such as:
 - a) Asking others for help.
 - b) Showing minor problems, neglect and etc.
4. Most families move around a great deal and have few close family members or friends to go to for help.
5. 1/3 of families are untreatable - cannot motivate to change - not dangerous enough to remove children.
6. Most child abuse victims are under the age of five.
7. 75% of abuse is by a female.
8. Women convicted five times that of men.
9. Frozen watchfullness - because of beatings etc, - children in hospital would not react to stimuli. The reason being unpredictable environment. In Los Angeles a Dr. Lenoski did a study on battered children. He would raise their arm and a leg in the air, say nothing to the child and he would leave the room. Of the abused group, 40 out of 52 children held this position stiffly from 2 minutes, 45 seconds to 17 minutes. The normal children would hold this position for no longer than 15 to 20 seconds.

D. Comparison Statistics - Los Angeles study:

	Child	Abusive Parents	Normal Parents control
1. Early exposure to pets, i.e., caring for some- one		3.7%	86.1%
2. Married		96.7%	54.2%
3. Exposure to violence in home		65.0%	43.3%
4. Preferred being alone		43.3%	20.0%
5. Listed telephone numbers		10.5%	88.0%
6. Premature child		22.0%	10.0%
7. Complication at delivery		9.0%	4.2%

8. Caesarean Section	30.0%	3.2%
9. Naming child after parent (high expectations of child)	24.0%	4.0%

IV. Some current programs under way to prevent abuse/neglect.

- A. Hot Line State DPW - Early detection thus prevention
- B. Canris - to keep up with clients who move etc.
- C. Denver Predictive Study - observing mother-father-child interaction at birth - then follow up to see development. (more information on this if worker wants).
- D. England and New York - Remove entire families to substitute placement (move information available).
- E. Provide more one-to-one services - homemaker, involve family-send out aides who will give constructive support.
- F. Coordinate services of all agencies to provide support and follow-up.
- G. Everyone to become involved - Report responsibility and early enough to prevent injury to child.

V. NEEDS.

- A. Foster Homes
 - 1. Desire to provide temporary homes NOT ADOPTIVE.
 - 2. Need adequate space.
 - 3. May care for up to six children, including own.
 - 4. Pass fire and health inspection.
 - 5. Apply at our office. Beverly Mahon
 - 6. Special need in area for 12 to 17 year old.
- B. Volunteers - to work with protective services as well as other DPW programs. Will be hearing more on this in future.
- C. Provide Christmas gifts etc. for foster children.

PREPARED: 9-76 by MARTIN THEOPHILUS

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