

Personnel in Public Child Welfare Programs

by MIGNON SAUBER*

The number of employees working full time in public child welfare programs has gone up substantially in the past 5 years, according to reports made by the States to the Children's Bureau. One-third of the Nation's children, however, still live in areas without full-time workers. Some of the facts shown by the State reports are summarized in the following pages.

IN June 1951 more professional workers in the State and local public welfare agencies were devoting their time exclusively to programs for children than ever before in the history of the programs. Nearly 4,500 workers were employed full time in these programs—8 percent more than in June 1950. They had the assistance of more than 1,350 clerical employees working full time in the public child welfare programs. In addition, 3,600 general welfare workers—caseworkers and director-workers primarily concerned with the administration of public assistance programs—were spending some of their time working with or on behalf of children.

The workers who were spending all their time in the public child welfare programs were serving approximately 4 out of every 5 of the nearly 260,000 children receiving specialized child welfare services from public welfare agencies in June 1951. The other children in the group were served by general welfare workers—those who spend only part of their time in the child welfare programs. The 4,465 full-time professional public child welfare employees are the subject of this report.

Almost half (47 percent) of the 3,187 counties of the United States and its Territories had the services of full-time public child welfare workers. These 1,492 counties had full-time child welfare caseworkers (or director-workers) assigned exclusively to one county or covering several counties. About two-thirds

of the Nation's children under age 21 were living in these counties.¹ Thus nearly 1 child in 3 was living in an area in which there was no full-time public child welfare worker. These children may have been helped by general welfare workers, primarily public assistance workers, or they may have been out of reach of public child welfare services altogether.

Of the counties with full-time public child welfare services, more than 2 out of every 3 are predominantly rural. A county has been considered as rural for the purposes of this report when 50 percent of the county's population have been classified by the Bureau of the Census as living in rural places. Most of the counties in the Nation would be classified as rural under this definition. At best, this measure indicates only roughly the extent to which public child welfare services are reaching rural areas, since some counties classified as urban under this definition may have large rural areas, while some classified as rural contain towns or cities.

Even though most of the counties with full-time public child welfare services are rural, 58 percent of all rural counties—in which live 22 percent of the Nation's children—are without such services. Fewer urban counties (35 percent) lack the services of full-time public child welfare workers. Only 12 percent of the children of the United States live in these counties.

Source of Funds for Salaries

The amendments to the Social Security Act adopted late in 1950 increased the amount of Federal

funds available for the State child welfare programs. Despite the use of the additional funds, 70 percent of the 4,465 full-time public child welfare employees were paid entirely from State and local funds. In June 1951, more than 3,100 of the full-time workers were being paid from these funds; the others were paid in whole or part from Federal grants-in-aid for the child welfare services.

State and local funds were being used in June 1951 to pay the salaries of 73 percent of all caseworkers, 71 percent of the casework supervisors, but only 45 percent of the consultants. California and Washington—the two States with the largest increases in the number of full-time child welfare employees during the year ended June 1951—met the cost of the added personnel almost entirely through the use of State or local funds. In the country as a whole, however, Federal funds were used to pay the salaries of nearly 70 percent of the full-time employees added to the public child welfare staffs in the course of the year.

Over the 5 years ended June 1951, the total number of full-time public child welfare employees rose 58 percent.² Although caseworkers—the largest group among public child welfare employees—showed the greatest increase in number (about 1,100), percentagewise they increased less than the supervisory and executive staffs. The number of caseworkers in 1951 was 53 percent greater than it had been in 1946, while the increase among supervisory, consultant, and executive staffs for the 5 years was nearly 75 percent.

The strengthening of the supervisory and consultant staff over the 5 years June 1946–June 1951 resulted mostly from the use of Federal child welfare services funds. Sixty percent of the supervisors added to agency staffs and nearly 70 percent of the added consultants were paid from these funds.

* Program Analysis Branch, Division of Research, Children's Bureau.

The article is adapted from the report, *Personnel in Public Child Welfare Programs, 1951* (Children's Bureau Statistical Series, No. 13).

¹ All data on child population based on the 1940 Census. Age data by county for 1950 were not yet available for all States.

² All comparisons between 1946 and 1951 are for the 48 States for which comparable data are available.

Most of the Federal child welfare services funds were used for caseworkers. State and local funds, however, were used to a greater extent than Federal funds to enlarge this group. State and local funds were also primarily responsible for the increase in the number of executives and specialists—psychologists and research personnel, for example—in the public child welfare program.

Job Turn-over and Salaries

Nearly 1 out of every 3 public child welfare employees working on June 30, 1951, had come to the job within the preceding year. In 1949 and 1950, new workers likewise represented a large proportion of the total number employed.

The greatest amount of turn-over occurred among the caseworkers. Although they accounted for 75 percent

of all public child welfare employees, they constituted roughly 86 percent of the new employees during the year. Fortunately, the problem among supervisory and executive staff was not so great, and the relative stability of this group gives some continuity in agency leadership.

Many jobs remained unfilled at the end of the fiscal year. As in the preceding year, 1 job in 10 was vacant

Table 1.—Employees in the public child welfare programs, by State and type of position, June 1951¹

State	Child welfare employees devoting full time to child welfare services									General welfare workers devoting some time to child welfare services		
	Total	Professional child welfare employees							Clerks	Total	Director-workers	Case-workers
		Total	Directors	Director-workers	Caseworkers	Supervisors	Consultants	Specialists				
Total	5,823	4,465	120	70	3,272	514	380	109	1,358	3,603	870	2,733
Alabama	64	57	1		41	3	11	1	7	384	38	346
Alaska	5	5			4	1			1	5	5	
Arizona	36	30	1		25	1	3		6	3	3	
Arkansas	40	30	1		21	2	6		10	23	22	1
California	2 170	127	3		70	4	48	2	43	37	1	36
Colorado	43	38	1		24	4	8		5	23	23	
Connecticut	193	138	7	4	115	11	1		55	1		1
Delaware	19	19			17	2						
District of Columbia	96	70	1		50	12		7	26	2		2
Florida	65	44	1		29	9			21	3 439		439
Georgia	58	40	2		29		8	1	18	55	41	14
Hawaii	33	28	1		20	4	3		5	71		71
Idaho	9	8	1		5		2		1	43	14	27
Illinois	324	266	3		208	35	15	5	58	1		1
Indiana	215	179	1		151	21	6		39	147	46	101
Iowa	76	63	1		43	12	1	6	13	75	57	18
Kansas	49	33	2		17	3	11		16	2		2
Kentucky	2 38	69	2	1	52	11	8	3	29			
Louisiana	103	74	1		53	12			29	2 1		1
Maine	66	46	7		38			1	20	1		1
Maryland	2 28	28			26	2				(2)		
Massachusetts	254	192	4		158	20	3	7	62	3	2	1
Michigan	156	118	4		80	8	16	10	38	58		58
Minnesota	236	192	3		152	28	8	1	44	175	49	135
Mississippi	102	60	2		47	8	3		42	239	66	173
Missouri	117	89	2		64	21	1	1	28	148	63	85
Montana	20	18	1		11		6		2	46	38	8
Nebraska	44	33	2		21	3	6	1	11	112	62	50
Nevada	8	8			6	1	1					
New Hampshire	20	18	1		15	2			2	17		17
New Jersey	19	12		7	2			2	7	134		134
New Mexico	41	28	1		20	5	1	1	13	13	9	4
New York	1,043	765	14		555	116	73	7	278	4		4
North Carolina	98	85	1		63	4	9	8	15	328	49	279
North Dakota	12	12			7		3	2		69	46	23
Ohio	421	315	15	38	197	33	8	24	106	83	26	57
Oklahoma	75	43	4		29	1	7	2	32	5		5
Oregon	86	63	3		44	9	7		23	59	14	45
Pennsylvania	2 86	62	3	15	37	7	5	1	24			
Puerto Rico	191	100	2		71	20	7		1	54	54	
Rhode Island	54	41	1		29	5	3	3	13			
South Carolina	36	32	1		26	2	3		4	244		244
South Dakota	29	25	1		19	3	1	1	4	4		4
Tennessee	113	80	1		60	4	12	3	33	83	32	51
Texas	132	79	2		50	15	11		53	131		131
Utah	26	23	1		17	3	2		3	(2)		
Vermont	26	22	1		21				4			
Virgin Islands	11	8	1		5				3	2		2
Virginia	135	112	3		87	13	8	1	23	190	92	98
Washington	156	130	1		128	16	5		6	16	5	11
West Virginia	138	112	1		90	16	5		26			
Wisconsin	222	162	5	4	112	17	17	7	60	31	6	25
Wyoming	15	14	1		11		2		1	24	16	8

¹ As of the last payroll period in June 1951.

² Does not include all employees.

³ Includes all public assistance workers who may provide child welfare services

when there are cases in their areas, although at any one time there will be some workers not providing such services.

in June 1951. The difficulty in obtaining adequately qualified personnel was most acute for consultants—training consultants, district consultants, foster care consultants, and others. One out of every 6 consultant positions was vacant in June 1951.

Extensive turn-over and continuing vacancies cannot help but result in a less effective child welfare program. Services to children may be interrupted while positions are vacant. Frequently service may be pro-

vided only for emergencies, if at all. Qualified staff is difficult to find. When replacements are found, executives and supervisors must spend time in orienting the new staff. New workers must then get to know the families and children in their service load before they can help them. Children in trouble need sustained help from professionally equipped and experienced personnel.

One reason for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff

is that the salaries offered to public child welfare employees are relatively low. In June 1951 the median monthly salary for caseworkers was \$247—a total of \$2,964 for the year. Although salaries were slightly better in 1951 than they had been a year earlier, they continued low in relation to the requirements of the job.

Low salaries deter young persons from undertaking the professional training essential to child welfare work. More lucrative jobs are avail-

Table 2.—Public child welfare employees (full-time) in professional positions, by source of funds for salaries or travel, by State and type of position, June 1951¹

State	Paid entirely from State and local funds						Paid in whole or in part from Federal child welfare services funds					
	Total	Directors	Caseworkers ²	Supervisors	Consultants	Specialists	Total	Directors	Caseworkers ³	Supervisors	Consultants	Specialists
Total	3,138	88	2,454	363	170	63	1,327	32	888	151	210	46
Alabama	5	1	1	3			52		40		11	1
Alaska							5		4		1	
Arizona	11	1	10				19		15		1	3
Arkansas	1				1		29	1	21		2	5
California	100	3	57		38	2	27		13		4	10
Colorado	23	1	22				15		2		4	8
Connecticut	117	6	100	10	1		21	1	19		1	
Delaware							19		17		2	
District of Columbia	65		50	7		7	5			5		
Florida	21	1	16	1	3		23		13		8	2
Georgia	16	1	14			1	24	1	15			8
Hawaii	20		18	2			8	1	2		2	3
Idaho							8	1	5			2
Illinois	244	2	196	27	14	5	22	1	12		8	1
Indiana	170	1	148	19	2		9		3		2	4
Iowa	43	1	33	3			20		10		9	1
Kansas	1						32	1	17		3	11
Kentucky	9	1	8				60	1	45			11
Louisiana	43	1	31	10	1		31		22		2	7
Maine	28	5	23				18	2	15			
Maryland							28		26		2	
Massachusetts	183	4	158	18	2	1	9		2			1
Michigan	85	4	61	8	6	6	33		19			10
Minnesota	180	3	147	27	3		12		5		1	5
Mississippi							60	2	47		8	3
Missouri	42	1	37	3		1	47	1	27		18	1
Montana	5	1	4				13		7			6
Nebaska	24		21	3			9	2				6
Nevada							8		6		1	1
New Hampshire	4		3	1			14	1	12		1	
New Jersey							12	1	9			
New Mexico	15		14			1	13	1	6		5	1
New York	745	13	552	113	60	7	20	1	3		3	13
North Carolina	13	1	7	1	3	1	72		56		3	6
North Dakota							12		7			3
Ohio	286	14	225	32	2	13	29	1	10		1	6
Oklahoma	5	1	1		2	1	38	3	28		1	5
Oregon	42	1	33	5	3		21	2	11		4	4
Pennsylvania	12		12				50	3	41			5
Puerto Rico	36	1	27	8			64	1	44		12	7
Rhode Island	32	1	24	2	3	2	9		5		3	
South Carolina	4		2	1			28		24		1	3
South Dakota	3	1	1				22		18		3	1
Tennessee	33	1	21	2	6	3	47		39		2	6
Texas	24	2	9	10	3		55		41		6	8
Utah	8	1	6		1		15		11		3	1
Vermont	9	1	8				13		13			
Virgin Islands							8	1	5		2	
Virginia	63	2	52	7	1	1	49	1	35		6	7
Washington	132	1	115	14	2		18		13		2	3
West Virginia	95	1	80	12	2		17		10		4	3
Wisconsin	134	5	100	14	11	4	28		16		3	6
Wyoming	7		7				7	1	4			2

¹ See footnotes 1 and 2, table 1.

² Includes 40 director-workers.

³ Includes 30 director-workers.

able in other fields for the individual with graduate study. Employees already in child welfare work move about in search of better-paying positions, and jobs remain vacant because salaries are too low to attract and hold qualified persons.

Service Loads

The number of children for whom a child welfare caseworker is responsible determines, in part, the quality of service that can be provided for each child. A caseworker was responsible, on the average, for 55 children in June 1951.

The States varied considerably in the workload assigned to child welfare caseworkers. For the 21 States with at least 50 public child welfare caseworkers, the median number of children in the service load in June 1951 was as follows:

Tennessee.....	26
Michigan.....	32
Illinois.....	35
Kentucky.....	36
Louisiana.....	38
Minnesota.....	49
Texas.....	49
Connecticut.....	50
Virginia.....	51
Massachusetts.....	53
Washington.....	56
Missouri.....	59
Ohio.....	59
Pennsylvania.....	60
District of Columbia.....	61
Wisconsin.....	63
West Virginia.....	69
Indiana.....	70
California.....	78
North Carolina.....	79
Puerto Rico.....	97

At the end of June 1951, service loads were considerably smaller on the average than they had been in 1946. The median load had dropped steadily over the 5-year period; the decrease from 1946 to 1951 was from 71 children per worker to 55. From 1950 to 1951 the decrease was from 59 to 55.

Service loads must be small enough to permit workers time to provide appropriate care and service for each child—to distinguish the needs of the individual as fully as possible within the function of the agency and the resources of the community. For the 310 workers (nearly a tenth

Table 3.—Public child welfare caseworkers (full-time), by State and number of children served, June 1951¹

State	Total number ²	Workers not directly serving children ³	Workers serving specified number of children				
			1-24	25-49	50-74	75-99	100 or more
Total:	4 3,342	272	371	753	698	383	310
Number.....	100.0		14.8	29.9	27.8	15.2	12.3
Percent ⁵							
Alabama.....	41		1	3	1	4	32
Alaska.....	4						4
Arizona.....	25			2	12	2	9
Arkansas.....	21	5	2	5	8	1	
California.....	70	26	4	5	11	16	8
Colorado.....	24		2	6	8	5	3
Connecticut.....	119	14	25	28	14	27	11
Delaware.....	17		1	11	1	2	2
District of Columbia.....	50	9	4	8	19	10	
Florida.....	29	4		13	9	3	
Georgia.....	29	1	5	11	5	6	1
Hawaii.....	20	5	2	2	1	1	9
Idaho.....	5		1	3	1		
Illinois.....	208	44	51	77	36		
Indiana.....	151	10	5	27	49	29	31
Iowa.....	43	4	6	14	12	7	
Kansas.....	17	4	1	4	4	3	1
Kentucky.....	53		14	28	9	1	1
Louisiana.....	53		5	41	5	2	
Maine.....	38			2	13	16	7
Maryland.....	26		7	16	2	1	
Massachusetts.....	158	19	25	40	38	28	8
Michigan.....	80	4	31	26	16	3	
Minnesota.....	152	23	20	47	29	25	8
Mississippi.....	47	13	12	12	7	1	2
Missouri.....	64	2	6	16	26	13	1
Montana.....	11	2			5	3	1
Nebraska.....	21	1	2	12	5		1
Nevada.....	6			6			
New Hampshire.....	15				1		14
New Jersey.....	9			2	1	2	4
New Mexico.....	20		1	6	9	2	2
New York.....	555	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)
North Carolina.....	63	3	1	10	17	12	20
North Dakota.....	7		1		2	1	3
Ohio.....	235	21	30	49	75	25	35
Oklahoma.....	29	1	10	14	3	1	
Oregon.....	44	10	5	12	17		
Pennsylvania.....	53	2	4	16	14	8	9
Puerto Rico.....	71	16	1	7	3	19	25
Rhode Island.....	29	2		3	12	9	3
South Carolina.....	26		2	4	7	5	8
South Dakota.....	19	5	4	7	2	1	
Tennessee.....	60	9	25	20	4	2	
Texas.....	50	1	5	20	7	15	2
Utah.....	17	1	1	5	8	2	
Vermont.....	21			1	8	7	5
Virgin Islands.....	5			1	1	1	2
Virginia.....	87		3	39	38	5	2
Washington.....	128	8	24	21	58	11	6
West Virginia.....	90		10	17	24	19	20
Wisconsin.....	116	3	12	24	40	27	10
Wyoming.....	11			10	1		

¹ See footnotes 1 and 2, table 1.

² Includes 3,272 caseworkers and 70 director-workers.

³ Includes homefinders, workers in orientation, and others who are not providing services directly to

children.

⁴ Service load not reported for the 555 workers in New York.

⁵ Based on data excluding employees for whom service load was not reported.

of all workers) in the country who must plan for more than 100 children, this is an almost impossible task. In 1946, however, 27 percent of the workers were responsible for at least 100 children. The steady reduction in the size of service loads and in the proportion of workers serving impracticably large numbers of children is a promising trend.

As service loads decrease and full-time public child welfare services become available in more areas, especially rural areas, the needs of children will be met more fully. Efforts to raise salaries, to reduce personnel turn-over, and to increase the professional competence of staff will further ensure that children get the kind of help they need.