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FOSTER CARE CASE REVIEW IN NEW JERSEY:  
AN EVALUATION OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS

DEC 12 1977

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from the Office of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a study to assess the value of periodic case review for foster children. The study analyzed the general concept of case review and then evaluated the implementation and impact of an administrative review system recently established by the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services. A chapter-by-chapter summary of the report follows.

### General Introduction (I):

"Case review" is defined as a management control device for case-by-case monitoring of the plans and progress of entire populations of children in foster care. The system's general characteristics are:

- (1) a service delivery unit directly responsible for a case delivers periodic and standardized reports on the status of, and plan for, the case to a superordinate unit;
- (2) the superordinate unit evaluates the information according to specified universalistic criteria to learn whether the status and plan are justified, and responds accordingly.

Four types of review systems can be identified: judicial review, independent review boards, supervisory review, and centralized agency monitoring. In the first two types, the child welfare agency as a whole is the service delivery unit subject to monitoring by an outside party. In supervisory review, the caseworker is monitored by his supervisor, and in centralized monitoring, the caseworker-supervisor pair is monitored by an internal review unit.

The impetus for case review has two major sources: the desire to enhance the security of foster children, whether that involves restoration home, adoption, or planned permanent foster care; and the perceived need to increase the accountability of caseworkers and/or child welfare agencies.

The anticipated usefulness of case review in improving case outcomes is based on the belief that the service delivery unit (however defined) is not performing its case management functions consonant with some desired standard. Review decreases reliance on the independent judgments of practitioners and increases the involvement in case decision-making of administrative superiors or persons who are not social work professionals. Monitoring the casework process through periodic review is viewed by proponents as a cost-effective method of maximizing the beneficial impact of the resources currently available to the foster care system.

Review of the Literature (II):

Many studies have presented dismaying statistics on the numbers and characteristics of children in foster care. However, the effectiveness of periodic case review, whether of the administrative, judicial, or independent review board type, in improving case planning or client outcomes has not been demonstrated to date. Indeed, few empirical studies on the subject even exist.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that case review systems have only a marginal potential for improving foster care services. There is little evidence that the quality of case management is, in itself, a significant determining factor in case outcomes, or that widespread deficiencies in case management exist. On the contrary, there is stronger evidence that factors such as obsolete state legal systems, insufficient preventive and supportive family services, lack of subsidized adoption programs, insufficient casework staff, and resistant family problems often stemming from low socioeconomic status, are instrumental in shaping the unfortunate agency careers of many foster children. Case review does not confront these other problems, and public advocacy for review may in fact divert attention from them.

Nevertheless, there have been increasing calls for regular case reviews of foster children. Evidently the child welfare

system is responding: a recent survey of statewide public agencies has shown that a majority of states have some form of administrative or judicial review. Thus, if only because many states are financing or planning relatively expensive review systems, there is a pressing need for more information about the usefulness of periodic case review for foster children.

Process Evaluation of Administrative Case Review in New Jersey (III):

Although episodic surveys of the foster care caseload had been conducted in New Jersey during the 1960's and 1970's, the new Review of Children in Placement (RCP) system is innovative in that it is intended to function on a continuous basis, to employ rigorous follow-up procedures, and to improve individual case outcomes by holding workers accountable for adequate case planning and plan implementation. The New Jersey system is patterned after the "centralized monitoring" model. An internal agency review team surveys caseworkers on their foster children using a self-administered questionnaire; checks the responses for accuracy, consistency, and conformity to policy; and communicates further with workers and their supervisors on cases evidencing incomplete information or questionable planning. Reviews of the caseload have been conducted twice to date, during November, 1974 and September, 1975.

The planning and implementation of RCP had certain weaknesses. The planning stage was conducted in a crisis atmosphere, attributable to the agency's desire to pre-empt impending court review legislation. Local staff were informed about RCP through a single statewide meeting of District Office managers. The basic forms were distributed and completed on time, but the follow-up phase of the review was attenuated. The part-time unit charged with implementing the first review was inundated with cases, because the initial computer screening of forms nominated an unexpectedly large number of cases for follow-up action. Further written information was requested on some children, but apparently no case conferences were scheduled with local workers, nor were any suggested changes in case planning or management forwarded to the local offices.

A new Case Review Unit (CRU) was established in July, 1975 to perform the next scheduled six-month review, already past due. After only minor revisions in procedure, and despite a request for postponement by CRU, the second review was conducted in September, 1975. During the following year about 2200 cases underwent some type of follow-up. This follow-up phase was not well documented, and there was no evidence that the process increased adoptive placements, one of its main objectives.

The chapter concludes that the apparent inefficacy of RCP was not due primarily to inadequate implementation, but stemmed from more basic difficulties inherent in the concept and method of case review itself. Centralized monitoring models depend upon efficient computer screening procedures, but it is virtually impossible to establish a reasonable set of selection criteria which avoid being either too inclusive or too exclusive. The problem is that most current criteria for foster placement and related decisions are essentially abstractions and have not been adequately operationalized, i.e., have not had empirical, observable indicators specified. The absence of such objective indicators means that it is very difficult to obtain valid, independent assessments of case planning and case management using case review techniques.

#### Evaluation of Client Outcomes (IV):

In order to determine whether RCP had any effects on case planning or case outcomes for client children, the project conducted a retrospective longitudinal analysis of individual narrative case records. An experimental design with random assignment was not possible. Instead, a cohort of children entering foster care in 1971 (before the existence of RCP) was compared with a cohort entering foster care in 1974 (during the period of RCP). Key issues examined were the intake characteristics of the children and their families,

the type and extent of case planning for their futures, and the final (or interim) outcomes of agency intervention.

The adequacy of the research design was limited by problems of historicity and by the maximum 18 month follow-up period for the cases. Within these restrictions, no differences were found between the cohorts which could be attributed to RCP as of 18 months after case opening on such variables as: case status, number of residential moves, residential location, or extent of goal attainment. The frequency with which written case goals appeared in case records and on RCP forms was about the same; however, goals as specified by workers in the case records were better predictors of outcomes than goals as entered on the RCP forms.

#### Evaluation of Staff Participation (V):

An interview survey was conducted to assess the reactions of local office staff, including caseworkers and supervisors, who participated in the RCP program. In general, staff did not object to the program, but neither did they seem highly conscious of it at the time of the survey: this may have been partially due to the lack of intensive follow-up procedures during the reviews.

Forty percent of the respondents believed RCP had at least a

"somewhat positive" effect on the agency, and one-quarter believed it had a positive influence on planning for some of their own cases; these tended to be the same individuals. Relatively experienced staff, and staff who believed their caseloads were manageable, were more likely than other workers to evaluate RCP positively; several explanations for these findings were offered.

One-half of the workers reported entering unrealistic case goals and/or reported having difficulty in assigning precise "expected goal achievement dates" on some of their RCP forms. Apparently the criteria for completing the forms had not been adequately communicated to workers. The Central Office provided little feedback after receiving the forms, thus probably avoiding some confrontations with local staff.

Two-thirds of the staff stated that RCP caused a disruption in their routines, but virtually all claimed that they had been able to compensate, and that therefore the quality of their casework had not been adversely affected.

The study solicited staff recommendations for improvement of RCP, whether or not the respondents evaluated RCP positively. The leading recommendations were to revise the RCP forms, to increase feedback and enforcement mechanisms, to develop



clearer instructions for the review process, and to transfer total responsibility for review to the local offices.

The survey explored a number of additional areas relevant to agency practice. A majority of staff, both caseworkers and supervisors, agreed that additional training, primarily in casework, would be beneficial to them. One-half of the respondents believed that their current caseload was "more than they can adequately handle". Workers who actually had high caseloads, and less experienced workers, were more likely than other workers to express dissatisfaction with their caseloads.

Lastly, workers were asked their views of the most important needed improvements in agency operations. In order of frequency mentioned, these were: increasing or redistributing services to clients; improving office facilities and equipment; reducing client/worker ratio; changing agency casework policies; and restructuring basic agency organization.

#### Case Review: Discussion and Recommendations (VI):

This chapter develops some generalizations about case review and suggests alternative strategies to improve foster care services. The main conclusion is that there seem to be irreconcilable disparities among the purposes of review, the

methods of review, and the nature of the child welfare casework process. Periodic case review, particularly the centralized monitoring model, is a step towards increasing bureaucratization of casework. The standardized reporting formats and the universalistic, inadequately operationalized decision-making criteria characteristic of review systems are ill-suited to yield useful information about the management of individual cases. Thus, case review systems cannot provide true worker or agency accountability, or contribute to improved individual case outcomes.

The following recommendations are derived from the study findings:

- Large-scale case review systems have not justified themselves sufficiently to be used as a standard tool; further tests should be only small-scale;
- The revision of existing accountability systems, such as the traditional caseworker-supervisor relationship, should be considered before installing innovative systems of accountability such as case review;
- The inherent difficulties of trying to improve the casework process through increased bureaucratization, as represented by case review, must be recognized;

- Although there are limits on the amount of management control which can usefully be exercised in (or on) child welfare agencies, program development could be enhanced through on-going "quality control" systems, based on intensive regular data collection, using representative sampling of foster care caseloads;
- To increase community credibility, public agencies should demonstrate greater openness about their operations and performance.

The 1971 Sample (VII):

In addition to the evaluation of case review, the report includes a more general analysis of the 1971 cohort of children drawn for the study. Some selected findings are:

1. One-fifth of the foster children were living with "surrogate families" at case opening, and continue to be supervised by the agency in these homes as part of the "foster care" caseload;
2. The agency provides fewer services to its lower SES clients;
3. One-third of foster placements were terminated

because the problem causing placement was improved or resolved; another one-third were terminated because of problems arising in the placement;

4. About half the cases were closed due to improvement or resolution of original presenting problem; the rest were closed for less positive reasons;
5. Only 39% of foster care cases and 20% of at-home cases were open after 4 1/2 years, but both the open and closed cases at that time included revolving door cases which had been opened and closed more than once during the follow-up period. Twenty-five percent of all closed foster care cases had reopened at least once by the end of the 4 1/2 year interval. This suggests that programs aimed primarily at moving children out of foster care more rapidly may not necessarily obtain lasting benefits for the children;
6. Parental visiting was a good predictor of a child's final location for some types of cases, but not for others. For instance, among high SES families in which the parents were perceived by caseworkers to have a positive attitude toward the agency, visiting was decisive for outcomes. But among low

SES families perceived as having a negative or indifferent attitude, the frequency of visiting had no clear effect on outcomes;

7. Children who received no "tangible services" from the agency were more likely than others to be with a natural or adoptive parent at the end of the 4 1/2 year period - evidently because of the overwhelming impact of client characteristics and circumstances as compared with agency interventions, and because of the allocation of services according to perceived need.

#### Analysis of Financial Costs (VIII):

Since potential financial savings have been used as one argument in favor of case review, this chapter presents a financial cost-benefit analysis of RCP.

The first section discussed the various subjective decisions which must be made in conducting a cost-benefit analysis, as well as other limitations of the technique. Next, a taxonomy of various costs relevant to RCP was presented. This took into account questions such as:

1. How much of the cost is determined by the scope of

RCP (i.e., by the number of reviews actually performed)?

2. How much of the cost is determined by the effectiveness of RCP (i.e., by the effect of review on the distribution, duration, and number of placements)?
3. Is the cost of RCP a one-time or recurring cost (i.e., a developmental or operational cost)?
4. Does the cost fall primarily on the public child welfare agency or on other state agencies?
5. Is the cost related to services provided directly by the state agency, or by contracts with non-state vendors?

Some of the primary costs within these categories were then estimated.

A distinction was drawn between costs which, in the short-term, represented direct out-of-pocket expenses and those which did not; the latter involved mainly personnel time. Finally, the study considered what were termed "hypothetical" costs. Lacking demonstrable effects of RCP, the study attempted to estimate the costs of redistributing the foster

care caseload to achieve a "preferred" pattern of placements.

Because RCP did not affect case outcomes, it was relatively inexpensive (about \$164,000). Had review succeeded in moving some children into more desirable placements, or in returning some children home, the state would have been obligated to spend several times as much in public assistance payments and/or in alternative services to the client families involved.

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## I. General Introduction

### A. Scope of Foster Care in the United States and in New Jersey

Few social services for children are used both as widely and as reluctantly as foster care. Foster care is believed to have detrimental consequences for a child's intellectual and emotional development, due to repeated separations from significant others and extended living in ambiguous situations (Goldstein, et al., 1973). "Separation has generally not been viewed as a constructive step for family and child, but rather only as an unavoidable evil" (Goldstein, 1971:275). "Because of the pervasiveness of the change in the child's life, substitute care is regarded as the third line of defense in caring for the child... every effort should be made to keep the home intact for the child and to keep the child in the home" (Kadushin, 1974:392).

Despite these beliefs, it is estimated that 364,000 American children were in foster care in 1975, five out of every 1,000 children (Geiser, 1974). Recent studies document that foster children often spend five or more years in placement (Fanshel, 1976; Fanshel and Grundy, 1975; Gruber, 1973; Maas, 1969). In New Jersey alone, more than 14,000 children were in some kind of substitute care during June 1976. There has been a steady increase in the rate of both foster family and institutional placements in recent years, as shown in Table I-1. The overall public child welfare population in New Jersey has increased at a much faster rate than the population receiving substitute care; whether this situation reflects the true state of need for substitute care programs, or merely fiscal constraints on the providing agency, is unclear. In any event, based on such figures, a consensus has developed that children throughout the nation are placed too often, for too long, at considerable misdirected public expense (e.g., Weissman, 1950; Lewis and Russel, 1951; Maas and Engler, 1959; Lawder, 1961; Arnold, 1967; Fanshel and Shinn, 1972; Geiser, 1973; Gruber, 1973; Mnookin, 1973).

### B. Definition of Case Review

The concept of case review is prominent among current recommendations for improving the provision of foster care services. Case review is a response to the perception that deficiencies in case management are important, and perhaps the primary, factors contributing to the frequently undesirable situations of foster children. Fanshel (1975b:84) has summarized this concern as follows:

"One of the most serious crises facing the child welfare field is the matter of the quality of the management of programs. It would appear that many children become locked into the system because of the lack of systematic management techniques which insure that each child's situation is pursued systematically in goal-oriented fashion. Indeed, it is no easy task to administer a program in which custom-tailored approaches are required and where, without systematic accountability systems, children can easily 'fall between the cracks'."

After examining the findings of seven foster care studies conducted in California, a panel of consultants made the following recommendation, among others (Pascoe, 1974:37):

"The specifics of a careful review of out-of-home placements according to a specified time frame should be developed and enforced. Written short- and long-term plans which evaluate possibilities of return to home, adoption, long-term foster care, etc., should be made for the child at every point of review. At a definite time during placement, a permanent plan should be made for the child. If the temporary placement exceeds a certain length of time, the permanent plan should be reviewed, implemented and enforced."

The term "case review" is used somewhat ambiguously by both professionals and laymen. Often it is used to denote any procedure intended to hold a caseworker and/or an agency accountable for the status of a foster child. However, such a broad conception of the meaning of review does not lend itself to empirical study. In this report the term "case review" will refer to a class of systems for case-by-case monitoring of the plans and progress of entire populations of children in foster care. Their objectives are to ensure the appropriateness and timeliness of (a) planning towards a stable future for each child, and (b) the expeditious implementation of such plans.

This class of systems is distinguished by the following abstract characteristics:

- (a) a service delivery unit directly responsible for a case delivers periodic and standardized reports on the status of, and plan for, the case to a superordinate unit;
- (b) the superordinate unit evaluates the information

according to specified universalistic criteria to ascertain whether the status and plan are justified, and responds accordingly.

This chapter will examine the concept of case review as defined above, emphasizing its underlying assumptions and its implications for social work practice. Later chapters will present a detailed review of the literature on the subject, and will evaluate the effectiveness of an actual administrative review system typical of the type currently being proposed for child welfare agencies. Lastly, there will be an attempt to generalize the empirical findings and develop policy recommendations on case review.\*

### C. Description and Typology of Case Review

As defined in this report, the concept of case review goes beyond merely recording the current status or status changes of clients in the child welfare system (although such recording is clearly a prerequisite to any review). For review to fulfill its intrinsic purpose of monitoring, the superordinate unit must attempt to critically assess the content and implementation of individual case plans and then redirect case management, or make some other corrective decision, whenever problems are detected. A complete case review system thus includes mechanisms for compiling information on individual cases; for processing that information using specified standards to arrive at enforceable decisions; and for transforming those decisions into appropriate action.

The term periodic in the definition of case review reflects the fact that review is intended primarily to prevent placed children from drifting into unplanned, long-term care, and only secondly to extricate children from long-standing undesirable circumstances. Some agencies have performed large-scale "reviews" of their foster care caseloads as a one-time effort to identify and help inappropriately placed children. In contrast, this report is concerned with case review as a continuous part of regular case management.

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\*Although the idea of case review is in principle not restricted to foster care services, the agency review system evaluated in this report was limited to foster children.

There are two general types of periodicity in case review: time-orientation and event-orientation. Time-oriented reviews require reports on each case to be submitted at specified chronological intervals, whether or not any new events have occurred, although the schedule may vary by type of case. Conversely, event-oriented reviews require reports to be submitted whenever a specific type of event occurs (e.g., changes in placement, cessation of parental visiting) irrespective of the time interval since the last report. These two types of periodicity are complementary: time-orientation signals when no progress is being made in a case, while event-orientation permits the most rapid possible detection and response to changes in the case.

Case reviews can be standardized in two ways - content and format - although the degree of standardization is variable. Typical types of content requested are case goals, casework activity, and parental involvement. The information may be supplied on standard forms using pre-coded or semi-structured survey items, or in semi-structured interviews with personnel. Standardization in these ways is intended to permit comparison of different cases from different workers and offices, based on information judged to be significant for case management decisions.

The criteria for evaluating review reports are universalistic in the sense that cases of the same type are expected to be managed in a similar manner, irrespective of the individual caseworker or his local office. The criteria themselves are derived from the legitimate, normative structure of social work practice. Examples of codified universalistic criteria for foster care services used implicitly or explicitly in case review systems may be found in Paul (1975), or in standards published by the Child Welfare League (1975).

The relationship between the service delivery unit directly responsible for a case and the superordinate unit charged with reviewing the case can be summarized by a four-fold typology (see Figure I). Most existing administrative review systems can be classified as either "supervisory review" or as "centralized monitoring" systems. Reviews external to the agency generally follow the "judicial review" or "special review board" models.

"Supervisory review" constitutes a formalization of the relationship between caseworkers and supervisors with respect to case management. Such reviews differ from case conferences in that they are not conducted on an

Figure I: Case Review Typology

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<u>Types of Review</u>	<u>Service Delivery Unit</u>	<u>Superordinate Unit</u>
I. Internal (Administrative)		
a. Supervisory Reviews	Caseworker	Immediate Supervisor
b. Centralized Monitoring	Supervisor-Caseworker Dyad	Special Review Unit
2. External		
a. Judicial Reviews	Child Welfare Agency	Court
b. Special Review Boards	Child Welfare Agency	Independent Review Board

irregular or ad hoc basis, they do not necessarily involve face-to-face communication between caseworker and supervisor, and they do involve a standardization in the content and format of the case information relayed to the supervisor. But as compared to the review models to be discussed next, supervisory review is characterized by the retention of control over case planning within the traditional caseworker-supervisor relationship.

"Centralized agency monitoring" is distinguished by an intensification of the upward flow of information in the agency organization and by a concomitant shift of control in case decision-making to higher levels in the agency hierarchy. Computerization is not in principle necessary for centralized monitoring, but in practice it seems to be indispensable; there is no other way for a small group of review unit specialists to obtain and evaluate data on case decision-making for large numbers of cases. In this model of review the caseworker-supervisor dyad, rather than the caseworker alone, is the service delivery unit held accountable by an agency monitoring unit.

In external case review models, the agency as a whole is considered the service delivery unit subject to monitoring by some other party. The current New York judicial review of children in foster care may soon be a model for other states (Festinger, 1975; 1976). In New York, the law requires agencies charged with the care, custody or guardianship of children to petition the Family Court to review the status of all children who have been in voluntary placement continuously for 18 months. The petition sets forth the agency's plan for the child and the court holds a hearing with all interested parties to determine whether it is in the child's best interest to remain in foster care, be returned home, be freed for adoption, or be placed in an adoptive home.

A fourth type of case review involves special independent review boards composed of citizens' panels appointed through the political process. South Carolina has established a statewide Advisory Board, and a system of local advisory boards composed of citizens appointed by the Governor, with the mandate to review every six months the cases of children who have resided in public or private foster care for more than six months. The boards are to determine whether the responsible agency is acting in the best interests of the child, to promote

the goals of return home or adoption wherever possible, and to aid in arranging "for permanent foster care for children for whom return to parents or adoption is...not feasible or impossible" (Chappell, 1975) . Whenever the advisory board and the agency are in disagreement, either party may ask for a judicial hearing of the case.

D. The Rationale of Periodic Case Review

1. The Issue of Case Management

The impetus for the creation of case review systems seems to derive from two major sources. One source is the desire to enhance the achievement of security and permanency for foster children, whether that involves restoration home, adoption, or a stable form of agency guardianship. The second source is the perceived need to increase the accountability of caseworkers to agency administrators, or the accountability of child welfare agencies to representatives of other institutions or the public. "Accountability" between a higher authority - a superordinate unit - and a subordinate service delivery unit exists to the extent to which the former is able to accurately evaluate the task performance of the latter. These two objectives are of course related; in child welfare, the demand for accountability is seen as a means of improving case outcomes.\*

Case review, as a procedure directed towards improving case outcomes for foster children, assumes that the basic service delivery unit (however defined) is not performing its case management functions consonant with some desired standard. The role of case management in foster care services seems to be conceptualized in at least two different ways. In one view, superior case management is seen, not as a substitute for other needed improvements in the foster care system, but simply as a necessary and indispensable part of the system. Referring to social services in general, Fanshel (1975b:106) notes that "the claim has been made that a great deal of money has gone 'down the drain' and that no lasting benefits have resulted from many of these efforts... No matter how well-intentioned a social program may be, it must be well-managed."

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\* However, this need not be true generally. "Accountability" may be a value sought for its own sake, or sought in order to further purposes of the monitoring authority which are not closely related to the specific needs of clients.



While some minimal level of managerial competence is certainly required, nevertheless a question can be raised about the degree to which variations in the "quality" of case management, including casework skills, actually do influence ultimate case outcomes for foster children. What is the relative importance of "systematic" case management in comparison with client characteristics and circumstances; with availability of tangible services, whether preventive or remedial; with limitations on agency manpower; and with various legal and normative constraints on case decision-making? If the importance of managerial functions has been over-emphasized, then the establishment of case review as a way to monitor the casework process and to "rationalize" it would not be expected to result in substantial benefits to foster children.

According to a second view, improved case management techniques are a method of trying to compensate for other types of deficiencies in the foster care system. Pers (1974:578-583, 593-595) believes that a number of problems inhibit long-range planning and adequate casework:

1. Large caseloads prevent intensive casework and force staff to respond mainly to emergency situations;
2. High staff turnover causes confusion and distrust among natural parents, foster parents, and foster children, leading to a reluctance to call on the worker except in a crisis;
3. Lack of state or federal regulations which require adequate long-range planning;
4. Inadequate training of field staff, including some MSW's, in casework skills;
5. A tendency for overburdened staff to "bank" children who are "responding well" to foster care, in order to concentrate on clients requiring special services and constant supervision;
6. A shortage of suitable placement facilities and alternatives to out-of-home placement.

Pers (1974:578, 598-9) suggested solution to these problems is the creation of "administrative or legal mechanisms to force long-term decision-making..." These problems have produced "bureaucratic structures" which "almost insure that long-term decisions will not

be made and the child will remain in an unstable, uncertain environment... There are no deadlines or time limits built into the foster care process to insure that decisions are made about a child's future." Clearly this view, which seems to be a general one in the field, regards periodic review of foster care as a substitute to some extent for what might be considered more direct approaches to the observed problems: increasing staff; supporting staff "professionalization" (e.g., through increased education and training); increasing the availability of subsidized adoption; reducing legal constraints on the freeing and adoption of children; providing services directly to natural parents; and so forth.

In brief, the improvement of the case management process through periodic case review is seen as a cost-effective way of maximizing the impact of the resources already available to the foster care system. A pertinent question which can be raised is whether the case management process can be substantially improved without concomitant increases in the level of human and other resources available to the foster care system.

## 2. The Demand for Accountability

Case review, as a procedure undertaken to achieve accountability, assumes that sufficient accountability does not yet exist but that it is necessary and desirable. The child welfare field is not alone in facing increased public demands for "accountability". Professionals generally, including doctors, lawyers and university professors, are experiencing an attrition of the respect, trust and discretionary authority which they have been accorded traditionally. Today neither individual professionals nor government agencies can expect to have their judgments and services accepted uncritically by the public. The desirability of this trend is not at issue. Rather, this report is concerned with whether case review is an effective and efficient form of accountability for workers and agencies rendering foster care services.

Given the nature of the decisions and actions required in social casework, can periodic case review achieve its objective of improving outcomes for foster children? Case review is a method of improving case management by decreasing reliance on the independent judgments of practitioners, and increasing the involvement in case decision-making of either administrative superiors (in administrative reviews) or non-professionals in social work (in citizen or court reviews). The trend toward

case review symbolizes a growing belief in the importance of the decisions made by child welfare workers and agencies, and a concern that these decisions are sometimes in error. The decisions are seen as too important to be left to the fallible judgements of service delivery units.

In external reviews, the child welfare agency as a whole is treated as the unit performing below accepted or desirable standards. For example, adoption advocacy groups may believe that agency administrators fail to place a sufficiently high value on freeing children for adoption; or legislators may believe that agencies are poorly organized and wasteful of resources. Whatever the specific perceived failings, the proposed remedy is a decrease of the agency's discretionary authority. External review systems are thus designed to secure increased realization of community values by means other than substantially increased financial investment in those values: lack of money, though not ignored, is not seen as the central deficiency in the provision of foster care.

External reviews tend to focus outside pressure on agency administrators, while internal reviews tend to focus administrator attention and pressure on the role of individual caseworkers, or on the working relationship between caseworkers and their immediate supervisors. Periodic review is intended to structure the case management process so that deficiencies in worker socialization, motivation, and/or recording practices can be recognized by superordinate units charged with monitoring, and so that rational incentives can be arranged to eliminate those deficiencies (Gambrill and Wiltse, 1974a).

### 3. Case Review and Agency Organization

How does case review, whether internal or external, relate to the conduct of an agency's activities? It is important to distinguish between two components of administrative activity: that involving program planning and that involving management control. Program development requires collecting and analyzing data to evaluate the performance of entire agency programs and projects against some standard; to identify problem areas; and to select the best means of resolving those problems. The purpose is not to monitor and intervene in on-going case management, but to create the type of future agency environment wherein effective casework can be pursued. In contrast, management control involves day-to-day decision-making in the agency's operations. The intent of periodic case review, as a type of manage-

ment control, is to aid in the process of case planning and plan implementation for individual clients, working within the current confines of agency policy and tangible resources. Program development is intended to have a longer-range, facilitating effect on the casework process (though that may be through recommended changes in the process itself), while case review is intended to have a more immediate, directive effect on the process.

Adequate management control can be achieved only if there are adequate transfers of information within the authority structure. Thus a central question which emerges is how the objectives of case review - achieving accountability and improving case outcomes - can be served by the actual mechanisms through which reviews are implemented. It is possible to identify deficiencies in case management, and identify them soon enough, using the information transfer formats characteristic of case review systems?

The information requirements of case review for some limited purposes, such as testimony that each case has received minimal caseworker attention at specified intervals, can be met rather easily. However, the monitoring authority may find information about qualitative aspects of case management considerably less accessible. To what extent can the essential information about a particular foster care case be condensed and summarized without a serious loss of information in the process? In its general form, this problem is relevant to each of the types of review systems outlined previously.

#### E. New Jersey Review of Children in Placement-1974/5

The primary purpose of this report is to evaluate the development and impact of an administrative periodic case review system established by the Division of Youth and Family Services of the State of New Jersey. In doing so we also hope to help answer the research questions recently posed by Fanshel (1975b:105): "Will computer-assisted 'goal-oriented' approaches succeed in overcoming the problem of 'drift' in foster care? Can case management procedures be rationalized so that a series of service interventions be undertaken and monitored which would either return children home or result in their adoption?"

The current Review of Children in Placement (RCP) system was first implemented in the fall of 1974, and was followed by a second round of activity during the

summer of 1975. The system is patterned after the "centralized monitoring" model outlined above. The basic procedure was to survey caseworkers on their foster children using a self-administered questionnaire; check the responses for accuracy, consistency, and conformity to policy; and communicate further with workers and their supervisors on cases evidencing incomplete information or questionable planning.

The study's evaluation of RCP is divided into four parts. Chapter III describes early attempts at case review in New Jersey, and then analyzes the planning and implementation of the new RCP program. Chapter IV is an assessment of the impact of review on case planning and case outcomes for agency foster children. Chapter V discusses the reactions of caseworkers and supervisors involved in the review process. Chapter VIII is a financial cost-benefit analysis of RCP.

#### F. Summary

"Case review" is defined as a management control device for case-by-case monitoring of the plans and progress of entire populations of children in foster care. The system's general characteristics are:

- (1) a service delivery unit directly responsible for a case delivers periodic and standardized reports on the status of, and plan for, the case to a superordinate unit;
- (2) the superordinate unit evaluates the information according to specified universalistic criteria to learn whether the status and plan are justified, and responds accordingly.

Four types of review systems can be identified: judicial review, independent review boards, supervisory review, and centralized agency monitoring. In the first two types, the child welfare agency as a whole is the service delivery unit subject to monitoring by an outside party. In supervisory review, the caseworker is monitored by his supervisor, and in centralized monitoring, the caseworker-supervisor pair is monitored by an internal review unit.

The impetus for case review has two major sources: the desire to enhance the security of foster children, whether that involves restoration home, adoption, or planned permanent foster care; and the perceived need to increase the accountability of caseworkers and/or child welfare agencies.

The anticipated usefulness of case review in improving case outcomes is based on the belief that the service delivery unit (however defined) is not performing its case management functions consonant with some desired standard. Review decreases reliance on the independent judgments of practitioners and increases the involvement in case decision-making of administrative superiors or persons who are not social work professionals. Monitoring the casework process through periodic review is viewed by proponents as a cost-effective method of maximizing the beneficial impact of the resources currently available to the foster care system.

TABLE I-1: Children Under Supervision of the  
 New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services, 1972-1976  
 (Rates per 1,000 children in the New Jersey child population)<sup>a</sup>

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Children Under Supervision<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>Children in Substitute Care</u>	<u>Children in Family Foster Care</u>	<u>Children in Group Care<sup>c</sup></u>
1972	3.9	5.4	4.4	1.0
1973	4.1	5.4	4.3	1.1
1974	6.0	5.6	4.4	1.2
1975	8.9	6.3	4.9	1.4
1976	13.1	6.8	5.2	1.6

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<sup>a</sup> Rates are based on the DYFS caseload as of March 31 of each year on the estimated New Jersey child population age 0-17 during each year.

<sup>b</sup> Excludes children of families enrolled in the Work Incentive Program (WIN).

<sup>c</sup> Includes primarily institutional placements.

## II. A Synthesis of the Literature Relevant to Periodic Case Review

As discussed in the first chapter, many studies have presented statistics on the numbers and characteristics of children in foster care, which point to a need for improvement. Among the improvements most frequently recommended is the creation of a case review system. Unfortunately, our review of the available literature found very little evidence supporting the effectiveness of such a solution to the problems of children receiving foster care services. The two main questions addressed in the literature review are the following:

- a) Does a problem exist in the administration of foster care programs which can be solved in principle by establishing some type of a review system?
- b) Has a case review system ever been demonstrated to be effective in improving the provision of foster care?

These issues will be considered in detail.

### A. The Need for Case Review

Maas and Engler (1959) conducted what remains to date the most extensive inquiry into the circumstances of foster children in the United States. This examination of nine diverse communities, encompassing dependent children and their parents, legal systems, agency networks, and community structures, has been influential in creating increased public and professional awareness of widespread deficiencies in foster care services. In a postscript to the book, Reid (1959) drew on the research findings and sounded the major themes which since have formed the bases for attempts to improve the provision of foster care. Most of Reid's recommendations - in the areas of preventive measures, adoption services, legal reform, and so on - have been implemented to various degrees in different states, although much remains to be done. Of particular interest to us here are Reid's comments on the role of systematic case planning and what he terms "community control" in the administration of foster care. Unfortunately, the Maas and Engler data offer little support for positive recommendations in this particular area, as will now be discussed.

Does systematic case planning affect time in foster care? Maas and Engler (1959:350-1, 421) found that "the children who returned home were the children who



had been dependent a much shorter time, on the average, than those remaining in care...staying in care beyond a year and a half greatly increased a child's chances of not being adopted or returned home." From this Reid (1959:390) chose to conclude that "early diagnosis and clear planning are essential," although the study does not reveal whether those children restored home in fact received clearer planning or earlier diagnosis than those children not returned home.

Even Maas and Englers' finding that children who leave care seem to do so early in their agency careers is not strongly supported by later research. Thus, Fanshel (1976) shows that the rate of leaving care for his 1966 cohort of children entering foster care was indeed highest the first year (24%), but after a decrease in the second year, the rate of departure stabilized. (Of the children remaining in care at the beginning of each year, 17%, 12%, 16%, and 15% left during the second, third, fourth, and fifth years of the study.) Maas and Engler's cross-sectional research design, which created a sample heavily weighted with long-term foster children, may contribute to this discrepancy.

Maas and Engler (1959:356-358;423) concluded that "better than half of... all the children studied... gave promise of living a major part of their childhood years in foster families and institutions." The authors distinguished among three groups of children likely to grow up in foster care, using combinations of parental visiting and parental plans (p. 35):

1. The "unvisited"-children whose parents "never or very infrequently visited them" and "who were content with their being in long-term care";
2. The "visited"-children "whose parents, exactly like the parents of the unvisited, had no plans for them other than long-term care but who had been visiting their children";
3. The "relinquished"-children never visited, "whose parents had either already relinquished their children for adoption or were desirous of, or committed to, doing so in the near future".

Each group constituted about 25% of all children in the sample. Summarizing, Reid (1959:390) stated that "more than 70 percent of the fathers and mothers of the children (in the study)... either had no relationship with the agencies responsible for the care of their children or their relationship was erratic or untrusting."

T A B L E      A: Length of Time in Foster Care, by Parental Visiting and Parents' Plans for Child\*

	Children in short-term care (3 mos. to 2.9 years)		Children in intermediate care (3 to 9.9 years)		Children in long-term care (10 yrs. or more)		All Children	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<u>Parents' visits with child</u>								
Frequent	24	(23)	58	(56)	18	(17)	100%	(96)
Infrequent	23	(54)	45	(109)	32	(76)	100%	(239)
None	27	(23)	30	(25)	43	(36)	100%	(84)
<u>Parents' plans for child</u>								
Unknown	0	(0)	36	(9)	64	(16)	100%	(25)
Content with long-term care, or no plan	20	(46)	49	(112)	31	(70)	100%	(228)
Relinquishment of child	31	(32)	35	(37)	34	(36)	100%	(105)
Return child home	37	(23)	49	(31)	14	(9)	100%	(63)

\*Recomputed from Maas (1969: Table 2)

The usefulness of parental activity as an indicator of the long-term fate of children in care has been underscored by Fanshel (1975a). As children in his study were discharged from care over time, those left in care showed an increasing proportion who were unvisited. In a ten-year follow-up of the children studied by Maas and Engler (1959), Maas found associations in the predicted directions between long-term care and parental visiting; and between long-term care and parental planning for either relinquishment or return home.\*

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\*In order to understand Maas' (1969) data, it is necessary to repercentage his tables in the hypothesized causal direction. For example: Maas wishes to answer the question: Are frequently visited children less likely to remain in care than unvisited children? But his Table 2 is percentaged to answer the less meaningful question: Are children in long-term care less likely to have been visited than children in short-term care?

The questions are not identical, nor are their answers identical, since the correlation between visiting and time in care might not be symmetrical. Table A below is recomputed from Maas' (1969:325) Table 2 and shows that there is a rather strong relationship between time in foster care and parental visiting and parental plans, respectively.

Interestingly, parental visiting does not differentiate among the sample on the proportion experiencing short-term care, but does predict whether children will receive intermediate or long-term care. This anomaly might be due to the fact that many of the children had been in foster care for some time at the time the original data, including data on visiting, on them was obtained (April 1, 1957). In other words, it is unclear from the study, for how long children had been visited before their exit from care; this length of time may not have been anywhere near three years.

As for the matter of parental plans, we can note that "relinquished" children are about as likely as children with no plan for return to become long-term cases, but are also more likely to be short-term cases. Apparently this is because relinquished children who are relatively attractive for adoption are in fact adopted early, while those with the characteristics of the "hard to place" tend to remain in foster care perpetually.

(End of footnote)

However, it remains unclear to what extent improved case planning or more competent caseworkers could increase parental involvement, and thus ameliorate the plight of children likely to remain in foster care. For Maas and Engler's unadopted "relinquished" children, the main difficulties (related of course) were the personal characteristics of the children themselves and the lack of enough adoptive parents. Only a general effort in the improvement of resources for adoption (an area in which much progress has been made recently) could benefit such children. For the "visited" children, Reid (1959:389) notes that "neither social attitudes nor laws permit the removal of such children, nor, most importantly, would it be desirable psychologically for the children themselves... for these children communities or social agencies must face the fact that long-term care that protects the child's emotional health is required."

Increased casework effort might make a difference for the last type of foster child at risk, the "unvisited." For these situations, some changes in casework practice were recommended: "Frequently agencies fail to appreciate the dynamics of intra-family relationships and work only with the child... agencies need to examine their practices carefully to make certain that they are helping to maintain a sense of responsibility and dignity in the parents of children under care" (Reid, 1959:391-2). Reid suggests the idea of contracting with parents at the time of initial placement: "Agencies should reach a firm understanding with parents as to their responsibility for visiting their children, for payment of fees... regular interviews with caseworkers, and reporting upon plans for the return of the child to his own home" (p. 393). At least one recent study has found that, controlling for other variables, frequency of caseworker contact with the parent is positively associated with the frequency of parental visitations (Fanshel, 1975a), although casework activity per se is only weakly related to discharge from care (Fanshel, 1976). However, Reid (1959:391, 396) also recognized that "in many instances the agencies' resources were such that their staff's time was entirely consumed with the day-to-day job of caring for the children... they had no time for the continuous work with the parents of the children which could effect the rehabilitation of the home... the best trained social worker cannot give adequate care to a caseload of fifty to a hundred children."

As part of a general program to improve the provision of foster care services, Reid (1959:391-2) suggested

that "children's agencies (be) required to report to a responsible governmental agency every six months on their plans for children in care, as well as reporting cases where parents were failing in their parental responsibility..." Reid is concerned about the "hundreds of children's agencies without good professional services" and which lack "adequately trained staff in sufficient numbers to insure (sic) consistent, competent, and continuous work with parents toward a permanent plan for their children." Increased community involvement in the care and planning for the future of children "would provide communities with information as to the incidence of (problem) cases and would also serve as a stimulus for agency awareness of the children in their care." It is noteworthy that, with the shift in responsibility for foster care services from private to public agencies during the last two decades, the governmental agencies which were to serve as watchdogs are now themselves the main foci of criticism, criticism which has remained substantially unchanged since the time of the study.

In brief, it seems fair to say that Reid's recommendation for the creation of case review systems does not receive much empirical justification from the Maas and Engler data. The study did not clearly show that lack of systematic case planning or mere lack of agency awareness are important contributing factors to the length of time foster children spend in care.

A recent study of a random sample of New York City foster children reported that more than half were inappropriately placed initially, and more than two-fifths were inappropriately placed at the time of the survey (Bernstein et al. 1975). The main discrepancies between preferred and actual placements were as follows:

- a) 7% of all children in foster care should be returned home;
- b) 13% of all foster children should be in adoptive homes, in addition to children already there;
- c) The 14% of all foster children in "general institutions" should be removed, most to residential treatment programs.

These judgments were made on the basis of case record reading by "experienced social workers in the child care field," using formal criteria developed prior to the study.

How can the problems revealed by the study be ameliorated?

Bernstein, et al. apparently consider additional tangible resources to be the primary remedy.

Those children whose parents were willing and able to care for them and who themselves were able to function adequately in the community, require "one or more services in the community in order to make the return home possible and stable. . . about two-fifths of the children and their families will need help from a comprehensive family service center and another two-fifths from a casework agency (p.24). Most children in "general institutions," which by definition lack intensive levels of care, are in need of new residential treatment and group home facilities. The conclusion could be drawn that neither of these two types of children is likely to benefit from case review per se.

The group of children identified by the study as adoptable, yet not in adoptive placement, poses more of an ambiguity. In the individual case synopses presented by the authors most of these children are adolescents who apparently should have been adopted during infancy or early childhood and for whom adoption is still considered desirable (pp 51-53). The case synopses imply that more aggressive action in the past by individual caseworkers or by the agency could have overcome any resistance by natural parents and/or foster parents to permanent adoptive status for the child. Unfortunately, even when made by experts, such retrospective interpretations of case record data may constitute a dubious sort of second-guessing. Perhaps some variant of periodic case review would have prevented these children from growing into adolescence in foster care. On the other hand, perhaps traditional legal barriers to freeing children from their natural parents or the financial inability of foster parents to assume adoptive responsibilities were insurmountable at the time. The study was therefore essentially unable to ascertain to what relative extent deficiencies in case management or a lack of more tangible resources contributed to the circumstances of these unadopted children.

Although this review of the Bernstein et al. (1975) study suggests that purely administrative innovations are unlikely to have much impact on changing inappropriate placements, a recommendation for regular case review is prominent in the official "plan for action" based on the research report (Board of Social Welfare, n.d.). The plan asserts that "criteria for the placement of children in foster care or alternatives to placement have been unclear and inconsistently applied, and as a

result, a large proportion of children in foster care are inappropriately placed." (p.3). While this may have been a hypothesis motivating the original research, the actual findings lend it scant support. Other parts of the overall plan are better grounded in the data. For example, increased services to families and children which would prevent entry into foster care or support discharge plans; full public reimbursement of costs related to freeing and placing children for adoption; servicing families willing to adopt older and handicapped children; and expansion of residential treatment and group home facilities.

Nevertheless, the Board of Child Welfare also recommended periodic evaluation of the "performance" of voluntary agencies through regular reviews of a sample of their case records. Some insight into the Board's rationale is provided by the following paragraph from the plan for action (p.6):

The study indicates that more than twice as many children should be placed for adoption as are now in the adoption process. A doubling of the volume of adoptions will require attitudinal changes on the part of many staff and improved skills to identify the children now in foster care who should be adopted. The Board will require all authorized agencies to develop intensive training programs designed to heighten staff sensitivity to each child's need for a permanent home, and to extend staff capabilities in adoptive planning.

This is consistent with conventional wisdom in the child welfare field, but as we have seen above, the Bernstein et al. research did not itself establish that such methods would significantly increase adoptions in New York City. In the absence of such evidence, policy-makers must decide whether to assign high priority to strategies designed to compensate for alleged deficiencies in case management - strategies such as periodic case review--or concentrate on increasing the scope and total amount of resources available to children in public care. While the latter course may seem impolitic in the current climate of taxpayer opinion, the fact is that resources allocated to review procedures, if these are very expensive, may in fact constitute the less parsimonious of the two strategies in the long run.

Gambrill and Wiltse (1974b) have written extensively on problems in the case management process and have strongly

recommended a regular "case scanning" procedure which would aid in identifying foster care children overdue for restoration home, adoption or permanent guardianship. Factors which are to be examined by the procedure include the child's legal status, visiting patterns and whereabouts of the parents, characteristics of the child which might prevent successful adoption, and contacts between the worker and the parents. Such information would be available on a brief form submitted periodically by workers and could be computerized for efficient scanning. With precise guidelines specifying the preferred relationships among client situations and service goals, case outcomes would be greatly improved, according to the authors. Gambrill and Wiltse stress the importance of achieving changes in worker behavior and in evaluating the effectiveness of such changes. Records should be kept of each intervention that a worker makes to solve a problem as well as the outcome of such attempts. This would help ensure that reasonable efforts are being made to fulfill case goals and would aid in accumulating information about which interventions seem most effective. Supervisors should examine the case scanning data in order to monitor worker behavior and should arrange incentives so that workers are rewarded for following systematic case management procedures. The ability to obtain compliance with agency decisions is to be emphasized: "Unless incentives are arranged in accordance with agency objectives, the extent to which workers will follow prescribed procedures will probably be minimal" (Gambrill and Wiltse, 1974b:46). In a pair of companion papers the authors present research findings which they use to justify their emphasis on the skills and motivations of the individual caseworker (Wiltse and Gambrill, 1974; Gambrill and Wiltse, 1974a).

Unfortunately, as we shall show, their interpretations and conclusions range far beyond the limits of the available data. Before a solution to a problem can be outlined, it is necessary to establish that there is a problem: "The most striking fact to emerge from the study was that 62 percent of the children in this sample were expected to remain in out-of-home care until maturity.... The data demonstrate that a majority of the children who enter the foster care system, excluding the obviously short-term emergency type placements, will very likely grow to maturity in foster care" (Wiltse and Gambrill, 1974: 8, 14). The problem is that the conclusion does not follow from the statistics. The researchers selected their sample from a population of current active cases of foster care workers, not from a population of cases recently entering foster



care; thus we do not know what percentage of the latter usually head for long-term care. This procedure of selecting a sample from a cross-sectional population of active cases lends itself to a statistical bias based on the principle of random incidence (cf. Blumstein and Larsen, 1971). Random incidence denotes a sampling procedure which selects randomly from the population of attributes, rather than from the desired population of individuals. In this instance the sampling design gives cases with long times in foster care a disproportionately high chance of selection, and since long times in care are associated with plans for long-term foster care, children with plans for long-term care are overrepresented in the final sample.\*

Citing what they consider to be the high number of children heading for long-term care, and the low number of voluntary relinquishments planned, Wiltse and Gambrill (1974) speculate about how the individual caseworker might improve his functioning to change the situation (e.g., "Social workers ought to be more effective in confronting the ambivalent and vacillating natural parent with the 'take your kids back or give them up' choice" (p. 10); but as the authors themselves recognize, virtually no data is offered to support such criticism.

The last article by Gambrill and Wiltse (1974a) to be considered here does present questionnaire and interview data from workers, and data from case record files, to bolster the authors' arguments. The paper concludes that there exists a "notable lack of systematic case planning...supported by unclear or ambiguous agency objectives and an absence of guidelines for worker behavior" (p.20). According to the authors, the research revealed "a picture of each worker as an entrepreneur... worker behavior must be monitored... an incentive structure to support appropriate behavior must be designed and implemented...and an ongoing in-service training program must be offered to provide needed skills" (pp. 20-21). But to what extent are these recommendations actually supported by data?

The study analyzed the progress of 98 cases one year

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\*Indeed, the same critique is valid for most quantitative research on foster care programs; one important exception is Fanshel's cohort study (1975a; 1976).

after they were identified by workers as headed for "restoration to parental home": Sixty-two children had been returned home (with 3 "failures"), while 20 of those not restored (including the three failures) now had plans for long-term foster care. None of the cases from the original sample of 772 who originally had plans for long-term care or termination of parental rights were included in the research - a major deficiency in the study methodology, given the questions the authors hoped to address.

The study noted that the majority of returns home were not systematically planned and implemented, but rather were the result of "happenstance, perhaps precipitated because a foster home disintegrated and the child had to be moved"; or were the result of an older child's greater ability "to tolerate a highly deficient parental situation that had remained unchanged."

"Systematic case planning" was defined as "the identification of specific changes necessary for restoration to occur; the setting of time limits for achieving these changes; and careful work to bring about each change, including help and support to the natural mother as required." (Gambrill and Wiltse, 1974a: 14). However, the study fails to inform us whether children restored home had more frequent systematic case planning than those not returned home; similarly, we are not told whether children headed for or actually returned home received systematic case planning more frequently than those in long-term care. Perhaps so few children receive adequate planning by the authors' standards that such comparisons are impossible. But in any event, the design of the research makes it difficult to establish a connection between case planning and case outcomes. The fact is that most children who returned home did so without the type of case management advocated by Gambrill and Wiltse! This could be interpreted as meaning that expert case management is more or less irrelevant under present conditions in the delivery of foster care services. It remains to be shown whether focusing on the actions of the individual worker is the most efficient route to improvement of the system, in view of the many external constraints on the casework function which have been documented in the literature, and of which every practitioner is only too well aware.

Gruber (1973) studied the entire Massachusetts foster home population in order to identify problems relating to adoption and foster care and to develop specific recommendations for improvement in the system. Among

other things, he concluded that a case monitoring system was essential to expedite decision-making and accountability: "Lack of such a system...is probably the greatest single factor which has allowed the problems identified in this study to exist" (pp. 89-92). In conjunction with such an information system, Gruber also recommended the establishment of a "special working task force" to review each child individually and to identify those services necessary to free him or her from permanent, unplanned foster care. However, while Gruber evidently finds that most of the deficiencies in the system cannot be attributed to individual case-worker incompetence, he also reports that "there are clear indications of a serious lack of good judgment on the part of some of the social work staff" (p. 88). Some of the evidence for this will now be examined.

First, the study found that almost forty percent of the children identified by workers as needing to be freed for adoption through the courts had not yet been referred. Yet it was also true that petitions for at least one-half of those cases which were referred had been filed more than a year without having been brought to trial (p. 25).<sup>\*</sup> Whether or not workers are conscious of the great backlog, and they probably are, increasing the number of court petitions awaiting the court's attention would obviously not have an immediate impact on the number of adoptions.

Secondly, Gruber discovered that, of those children designated by workers as "unadoptable because of parental interest", 11% had not been visited by their parents for at least six months and 14% had an "unknown" frequency of visiting reported by the worker (pp. 19-20). The first group of children might be legitimately considered at risk of entering "limbo". Perhaps Gruber takes his data too literally in the case of the second group; after all, caseworkers may not have anticipated that he would be crosstabulating children's adoption status with the frequency of parental visiting! Parents may very well have visited at least once in 6 months in the second group, and caseworkers may have realized this, but it may have been easier for a small minority

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<sup>\*</sup>It is not clear from Gruber's presentation whether one-half of all adoptable children had a petition filed in court more than one year prior to the study; or whether one-half of all children who had a petition filed, had it filed more than a year ago.

of workers to put down "unknown" rather than calculate the exact frequency of visiting on Gruber's detailed scale. These two categories of children constituted about 7% of the total Massachusetts foster care population. Again the actions of the individual worker might be less significant here than the lack of legal staff to effect adoption processing, also documented by Gruber (1973: 25, *passim*). As mentioned before, the system was already overloaded with court petitions.

Third, of the children designated by workers as "too old to be adoptable", 17% were 12 years old or less, an admittedly unacceptable situation. Yet these children constituted only 2% of the foster care population. In addition, Gruber is concerned about the total group of children designated as "too old" for adoption (11% of all children) and the children designated as too handicapped to be adoptable (5% of all children). He believes that agency policy ought to require that children should not be automatically considered ineligible for adoption on the basis of such characteristics, but the worker can obviously not be faulted for adhering to what seem to be general agency expectations. Gruber's (1973: 23) recommendation that "there should be a specific mechanism for automatic referral to the Adoption Placement Unit of every child who could conceivably be adopted", simply postpones the need to make hard decisions about which children should receive priority in adoption processing. However, the recommendation is consistent with a viewpoint that says the decision is too important or too complex to be left to the individual caseworker.

In summary, Gruber found some undesirable case outcomes which plausibly could be attributed in part to inadequate case management, but compared to other deficiencies identified in the Massachusetts's foster care system, it is unlikely that the former contributes significantly to the failures of that system.

Perhaps the most interesting recent paper stressing the need for periodic case review is by Chappell (1975). According to her, a series of studies conducted during 1973 and 1974 in South Carolina found that a large proportion of the 1,500 foster home children were eligible for adoption under the laws on involuntary termination of parental rights and would be served best by adoption, but no legal action had been taken; that most caseworkers were unaware of the content of those laws and the legal procedures involved; that 25% to 50% of nearly 1,300 children in institutions would not be returned home and were legally eligible for adoption,

yet adoption was not planned; and that Family Court judges were unable to follow up cases brought to them for custody proceedings.

While Chappel's report appears convincing on the surface, some important questions can be raised. First, why do two different empirical studies of the foster care caseload in South Carolina, conducted at the same time, yield contradictory results on the proportion of children found eligible for termination of parental rights and subsequent adoption? Two studies conducted under different auspices reported 23% and 76% of foster home children in this category. If the latter figure is indeed correct (it was corroborated by impressionistic interviews with Family Court judges), then what the state appears to need is not a review system but automatic submission of petitions to the courts for virtually all foster children! Second, caseworkers were found to be generally unaware of the relevant laws, but the new facilitating Child Abuse Act was passed in 1972, only one and one-half years after the study cited by Chappel. Although workers as individuals would surely eventually become aware of the new legal situation, this finding suggests the need for training sessions to orient caseworkers rather than the need for continuous reviews of the caseload. Once workers are familiar with the law, why should not one expect that they will consider it in their case plans? Third, it is unclear what judges would or could do with additional information on those cases put in the custody of the agency, given the strains on the Family Court system alluded to by Chappel. Lastly, while those children living in institutional children's homes appear to be least well-served by the present system in South Carolina, Chappel's data do not clarify why they are not placed in foster homes and what proportion are realistically adoptable given present resources for adoption. In summary, Chappel's description of the situation in South Carolina outlines some real deficiencies in the provision of foster care, but does not constitute a convincing argument for periodic review by a panel of laymen as a remedy for those deficiencies.

## B. Implementing Case Review

### 1. Administrative Procedures

Systematic tracking of children in foster care is certainly not a new idea. In an early paper, Lewis (1951) described an attempt to expedite the progress of cases through foster care: agency workers were required to submit a treatment plan within six weeks of referral; thereafter plans were reviewed at intervals not to exceed six months; monthly statistical reports giving the type of case and length of time in care were submitted by each worker. In combination with supervisory conferences and in-service training, these administrative techniques seemed to yield some positive results: according to the author the average length of time in foster care for children over the age of six dropped markedly. Unfortunately, this report is neither very detailed nor quantitative; there may be little relationship between the experience of this single agency 25 years ago and the computerized case review systems proposed today for large child welfare agencies.

A demonstration and evaluation of a case monitoring strategy was conducted more recently by the Child Welfare League in Rhode Island's public foster care agency (Sherman et al., 1973). The intention was that caseworkers would be held accountable for the current status of children, would have to develop plans for more permanent care, and would have to report periodically on their efforts to implement those plans. The agency caseload was divided into three segments: a control group, handled by normal procedures; a monitored group, on whom were filed regularly scheduled status reports; and a second monitored group which also included special workers for the natural parents. Monitoring consisted of a report form completed by the caseworker on each child every three months until some acceptable permanent case resolution was achieved. The form noted case plans, obstacles to plan implementation, caseworker efforts to implement the plan during the preceding three months, and anticipated worker activities for the next three months. Acceptable case resolutions were defined as return to natural parents, entering the home of relatives, adoption, admission to an institution for specialized care, or permanent stable foster care.

The results of the demonstration were not particularly encouraging. The two experimental groups did not have significantly more implemented plans for permanency than the control group (pp. 49-50). However, intervention

did have an effect insofar as workers in the experimental segments were less optimistic than workers in the control group concerning the percentage of children projected for return to parents (pp. 50, 56); Sherman et al. (p.102) believe that this reflects greater realism on the part of the workers in the monitored groups. Despite this lack of optimism in the monitored groups, the special workers had greater relative success in implementing plans for permanent, stable foster care, probably because they were under more direct pressure to demonstrate some kind of positive result in their work with natural parents than were other workers. "The implication is that the monitoring-accountability system should be backed by some kind of pressure; concerned, periodic (but not routinized) supervisory review might provide this" (p.103).

In order to increase the rate of adoption for foster children, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) identified by computer 1572 children, out of a total of 15,000 in placement, considered to be likely candidates for adoption (O'Neill, 1972). Using a screening checklist, an evaluation was then made of "the child's physical and emotional development and other factors that would indicate the possibility of relinquishment, or freeing by court action, or whether the foster parents were interested in adoption." On the basis of this screening, 547 were referred to special liaison workers from the Department of Adoptions (CDA) and 206 were finally accepted for adoptive planning. Referrals for adoption processing "increased 140% between September 1970 and May 1971" (p.316).

There can be little doubt on the basis of this report that the project to identify adoptable children increased referrals, but there is no evidence that an on-going review of foster children for that purpose was either necessary or effective. Thus, "recently the majority of referrals to CDA were initiated by DPSS staff, independent of identification from computer lists" (p. 315).

Why was it necessary to screen the foster care caseload for "adoptable" children in the first place? Apparently the Department of Adoptions had discouraged referrals, either directly or by failing to provide adequate information and mechanisms to facilitate referrals ("...CDA, at times, had been almost overwhelmed by the number of newborns being relinquished to it.")

Once an administrative decision was made to encourage referrals by assigning CDA liaison workers to DPSS

offices to advise staff "about services CDA could provide for children, and to discuss specific cases that the placement staff wished to refer for adoptive planning" (p. 315), referrals increased markedly even without a systematic review of the foster care caseload. The study demonstrates that a change in agency policy, along with an increased investment in resources for adoptive planning, can have an impact on achieving permanency for some children.

It should also be noted that a number of computerized information systems have recently been developed to track individual foster care cases and to develop aggregate statistics for long-range program planning. Among these are the CHILDATA system in Chicago (Rothschild, 1974; Rothschild and Bedger, 1974), the CWIS system in New York City (Fanshel and Grundy, 1975), and the CYCIS system, now undergoing pilot implementation in several states. There is as yet no evaluation of the effectiveness of these systems in improving case outcomes for children in out-of-home placements.

## 2. Judicial Review

The most detailed evaluation to date of a judicial case review system was done by Festinger (1975, 1976). The author concluded that review had a substantial impact in moving children out of foster care: During a one-year period, 50% of the children remaining in foster care after four years "had left or were scheduled to leave foster care" (Festinger, 1976:35).

The premise of judicial case review is that agencies, for whatever reason, require external legal pressure to ensure that foster children are discharged home or placed for adoption without undue delay. A comparison of outcomes between a cohort of New York City foster children studied prior to the creation of court review (Fanshel, 1976) and the group studied by Festinger suggests that the latter had neither a higher rate of discharge home nor a higher rate of non-subsidized adoption than Fanshel's group. The main difference between the two groups is in the much higher rate of subsidized adoptions for the court reviewed children. Subsidized adoption did not come into existence in New York until the end of Fanshel's study. Furthermore, we would expect a much higher rate of adoptions in the Festinger sample anyway, given its age distribution: 62% of the children were under the age of three, while only approximately one-third of Fanshel's cohort were that age.



Perhaps it is impossible to prove or disprove Festinger's conclusion that many of the sample children would not have been placed in subsidized homes, or not placed as rapidly, had it not been for court review. However, we note that the facilitation of subsidized adoptions has not generally been used as a primary argument in favor of judicial review; rather, the arguments have been that review would increase discharges home or regular adoptions. Since there is no evidence that court review had an impact in these important areas, the claim that review aided in subsidized adoptions is thrown into doubt. Festinger's work suggests that, at best, the effective scope of judicial review may be much narrower than anticipated. In brief, Festinger's evaluation of court review may be more of a testimony to the effectiveness of subsidized adoption programs than to the inherent efficacy of court review.

Festinger's studies provide some insight into why the judicial review process seems to have been ineffective. Thus, there appeared to be strong agreement between the latest stated agency goal for the case and the court's disposition at the time of review. The only area of clear disagreement was in 58% of the cases where the agencies' goals were to continue foster care or were unclear, and where the court instead ordered, or "leaned" toward, discharge, freeing, or adoptive placement. However, these disagreements accounted for only 17% of all cases in the sample. Festinger notes that there had been considerable changes in agency goals from the time of intake to the time of the hearing and suggests that "agencies, aware of the court review and anticipating the hearing, may have been stimulated to move more quickly toward making certain decisions" (1975:242). However, the high agreement on plans may also be explained by the fact that the review procedure "relies on agency reports rather than on an independent investigation of the cases that are reviewed" (1975:244), a critical shortcoming in the procedure.

Festinger (1975: 238-9) cites evidence that "some agencies... looked to the court as a guide for taking decisive steps, particularly with respect to freeing children". This should not be surprising, because in the past it has been the courts' interpretation of the law which has made permanent severance of parental rights so difficult. If the court encouraged the surrender of children, then it was modifying a legal philosophy which has helped alienate the child welfare profession from the courts. This suggests that it is not judicial review which is needed, but a more hospitable

environment for those professionals who have been rebuffed by the courts in the past in their attempts to have children freed. (The current change in legal philosophy is best represented by Goldstein et al., 1973).

The possibility that court review is addressing the wrong issue is illustrated most clearly in Festinger's data on agency compliance with court disposition. Sixty-one percent of the required reports were submitted on time (an additional 10% were less than one month late), and 76% were rated "high" on substantive compliance with court orders. The interesting fact is that reports were "least late when continued foster care had been ordered..., more often late when the court ordered a child to be freed for adoption, and most often late when the court ordered adoptive placement or discharge". (Festinger, 1976:32). Similarly, little or no substantive compliance was found most frequently in cases where the court ordered proceedings to free a child for adoption.

Festinger raises the possibility that this was the "product of resistance and delays in cases where agencies were not in accord with court decisions" (1976:17), but this seems unlikely because we already know that the agencies and courts strongly agreed on case goals. (In any event, it should have been possible to test the idea by seeing whether tardiness and non-compliance were indeed more frequent in cases of disagreement between the agency and court.) Rather, it is more probable that the time, expertise, and tangible resources were not available to initiate and consummate adoption processing. That is, agencies were not able to expedite adoption proceedings after court review for the same reasons that they had not been able to before court review.

### 3. Special Review Boards

No formal evaluation of an independent review board system appears to be available. However, in early 1976, the N.J. Division of Youth and Family Services had occasion to contact administrators in the South Carolina Department of Social Services to obtain their response to the system described by Chappel (1975). According to them, decisions by the review boards suffer from the lack of qualifications and expertise in foster care of the lay board members. Recommendations for the termination of parental rights were being made in cases where the agency believes such action is detrimental to the well-being of the child. The agency has recourse to court appeal and consideration of such appeals was underway.

### C. Conclusion

The effectiveness of periodic case review, whether of the administrative, judicial, or independent review board type, has not been demonstrated in available research to date. Indeed, few empirical studies on the subject even exist. Nevertheless, there have been increasing calls for case review of fosterchildren by both practitioners and concerned laymen. Evidently the child welfare system is responding: a survey of statewide public agencies has shown that a majority of states have some form of administrative or judicial review. Three-quarters of the full-scale review systems were developed only since 1970 (Claburn et al., 1976).

Thus, if only because many states are financing or planning relatively expensive review systems, there is a pressing need for more empirical information about the usefulness of periodic case review for foster children. The following evaluation of the New Jersey Review of Children in Placement system will attempt to clarify this issue.

The literature review also suggests that, at best, case review systems have only a marginal potential for improving foster care services. There is little evidence that the quality of case management is in itself a significant determining factor in case outcomes, or that widespread deficiencies in case management exist. On the contrary, there is stronger evidence that factors such as obsolete state legal systems, insufficient preventive and supportive family services, lack of subsidized adoption programs, insufficient casework staff, and stubborn family problems stemming from low socioeconomic status, are instrumental in shaping the unhappy agency careers of many foster children. Comprehensive information systems, such as CYCIS, could be used to document the needs of foster children and provide a data base for program planning, but any information system conceived of, or structured primarily as, an individualized case review system frankly seems unlikely to fulfill the expectations of its proponents.

### III. Process Evaluation of Administrative Case Review in New Jersey

#### A. Early Attempts at Review

##### 1. Introduction

In the 1960's and 1970's the public child welfare agency in New Jersey conducted a number of surveys of foster children, some of which were called "reviews", both on a statewide and county office level. The statewide projects have generally been in response to pressure from the state legislature, while the county projects have been conducted at local initiative, with varying purposes and procedures.

The similarity of these projects lies in their de facto nature and the lack of provision for continuation; by default they seem to have amounted to little more than episodic data gathering.

The current administrative review process, established in 1974, is innovative in that it was intended to be continuous, to employ rigorous follow-up procedures, and to affect individual case outcomes by holding workers responsible for adequate case planning.

It is not feasible to discuss every statewide or local survey project which involved foster children. We have chosen to concentrate in detail on a few statewide projects on which sufficient documentation is available, and which seemed most relevant to placing the current administrative case review system in a broader perspective.

##### 2. The 1964 Review

The first statewide review of public agency children in New Jersey occurred in 1964. It was conducted on all children under supervision except those in institutions, paroled, or living independently. The review was prompted by a request from Assemblyman Maraziti, following a highly publicized abuse incident involving a child under supervision of the Bureau of Children's Services.\* Assemblyman Maraziti chaired

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\*The Bureau of Children's Services (BCS) was the forerunner of the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) before the reorganization of the Department of Institutions and Agencies in 1973. The Department of I and A became the Department of Human Services in 1976.

Note: The data base for Chapter III is a combination of DYFS documents and semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with top-level and mid-level agency administrators. The interview schedule is given in Appendix A of this Chapter (not all questions were relevant to all respondents).

the Welfare Investigation Committee hearings on this incident, at which the Bureau of Children's Services was required to testify. Thus, the 1964 review was an explicit response to criticism from the Maraziti Committee.

A Case Review Project was established with certain Central Office (C.O.) staff temporarily assigned to work on it. It was conceived as a crash project to produce information as quickly as possible for the agency and for the Maraziti Committee. The project was given top priority; as much agency manpower and overtime as necessary were allocated to completing the project interviews within one month.

This review process was very intensive. All BCS supervised children living with families were reviewed, including children residing with their biological or adoptive parents. Each natural or foster family was visited unannounced by a caseworker not regularly assigned to the case. A detailed evaluation form was completed by the caseworker, noting the child's living conditions, physical health, emotional adjustment, and relationship with caretakers; the adequacy of supervision in the home; and any other special problems or conditions. The agency's goal for each case, such as return to the natural home, was also assessed as part of this review. During the month of June 1964, 8,350 children received such visits and evaluations in their current homes.

As a part of this review a follow-up was planned "to be used as a supervisory tool by the caseworker's immediate supervisor in following up an action taken on the needs and problems indicated... This supervisory review will be done by all D.O. supervisors, casework supervisors, and assistant supervisors." In other words, any follow-up to check that action had been taken on the identified problems of individual cases was the responsibility of the local office, although the process received the support of the Bureau Chief: "Regional representatives (supervisors) will be responsible for reporting to C.O. on the status of the follow-up in their monthly progress report." On the interview forms, caseworkers suggested follow-up on 6,043 children on any of 15 different matters.

Apparently most of these follow-ups revealed nothing serious. A memorandum from Thomas Riti\* to the Committee on Services to Children, Board of Public Welfare, concerning the results of this review project, stated that the situations of only 51 children, living in 20 homes, required immediate attention. In a letter to the Maraziti Committee, Riti stated that corrective action had been taken on those 51 cases. In the memo Riti also noted that 50% of all children under supervision

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\* Former Chief of the Bureau of Children's Services

had not received a yearly physical examination as required by the agency, but that exams were presently being obtained for all agency children. In roughly 18% of the cases some physical punishment of the child, which is prohibited, was uncovered. Eleven percent of the children had not been visited by caseworkers according to policy, resulting in the substitution of a more stringent Minimum Visitation Requirement (MVR) to replace the quarterly visit policy, as recommended by the Maraziti committee.

The 1964 case review was systematic and thorough, but it was not routinized. As designed it could not have been done even annually, involving as it did almost the entire staff of the agency for a month. To have become a permanent and regular part of agency operations, a large full-time staff charged solely with case review would have had to be created in the Central Office; the review itself could not have involved personal interviews requiring so much time; and the processing of the data on a regular basis would have required computerization to keep full-time staff to a reasonable number.

The 1964 review process could not have become a regular part of agency activity; it remained an isolated agency activity, soon almost forgotten except by a few agency veterans, and thus was essentially unrelated to later attempts at case review in New Jersey. Nevertheless, if more adequate records had been kept, perhaps later agency staff might have benefited from learning about this project.

### 3. The 1970 Survey and the 1971 Review

The next statewide review of foster children was in 1971; it was this review that signaled the eventual introduction of a more permanent review system. The 1971 review reflected a genuine desire by BCS staff to introduce a system which would prevent children being left in foster care for too long without sufficient reason. However, this review was also stimulated, at least indirectly, by the state legislature. In 1970 Senator Maraziti was holding committee hearings on adoptions; he noted that BCS had 4,147 Guardianship (GSP) cases as of February, 1970, i.e., cases in which the agency was identified as legal guardian. Since such children are technically available for adoption, Maraziti questioned why more of these children were not being adopted. In order to respond to Maraziti's charges, the Bureau of Children's Services drew a 5% random sample of these 4,147 children for a detailed study. The survey was apparently conducted through telephone interviews with caseworkers.

This process was not intended or carried out as a review of individual cases: there was no case-by-case investigation nor was there any identification of problem cases for follow-up. It was intended strictly as an information gathering process to answer the questions of Senator Maraziti.

The survey found that only 13% of GSP children were in adoptive homes. Of the remainder, about one-quarter were under the age of six. Most placements appeared to be stable -- two-thirds of the children had only one placement. About one-half of the children were committed to agency guardianship for reasons other than adoption planning. Adoption was the "long-range plan" for one-third and "continued foster home placement" was the plan for another third; the remainder of the children had a variety of other plans, including "return to own home" and "residential placement." About one-half of all children had "close contact" with parents or adult relatives.

This raw data was quite ambiguous and no attempt at further analysis or interpretation seems to have been made at the time by the agency. We do not know what the Maraziti committee thought of the results of this survey, nor what policy implications might have been derived from it. In any event, the survey appears to have stimulated interest in a case review system on the part of BCS administrative staff. First, it was known that other states were initiating efforts in this area. Secondly, it was in BCS's interest to demonstrate to Senator Maraziti a real concern for the problems of foster children.

Consequently, a Foster Care Review Committee was formed of Central Office staff and District Office representatives sometime in late 1970 or early 1971. This committee recommended a case review of all children in foster care, both in boarding and free homes. Its primary purpose was to determine whether each case had a goal established and whether that goal was appropriate. The first phase was to gather basic information. From this it was hoped that various recurring situations could be identified, leading to an in-depth study of cases with particular types of problems. After making these recommendations the committee was dissolved.

In the latter part of 1971, a group of C.O. staff was assigned the responsibility of carrying out a case review. Three categories of children were to be reviewed, in separate stages: All guardianship cases under age six, all boarding home children under age six, and all guardianship children ages 6-11. This constituted a total of some 10,000 children, but only the reviews on the first two categories were actually completed.

Computer listings of all children in each category were obtained, and review forms were distributed to the District Offices to be completed by the appropriate caseworkers. These forms requested updated goals and plans for each case; current information about the agency's legal authority over the child; and identification of the child's problems.

In the first review phase, which included guardianship children under six, the computer listing was sent to the



Adoption Service Unit (ASU) to identify children not previously known to that unit. ASU had been receiving periodic lists of all children available for adoption, and had already been mandated to track the status and progress of these children. Thus, it was felt to be relatively unimportant to review those children already known to ASU. (Whether those children were actually making progress towards adoption seems to have been unknown).

Accordingly, review forms were sent out to caseworkers for only those 256 children not previously identified by ASU (out of a total of 1,385 children who were less than age six and under guardianship). Reviews of the 256 cases were completed and reported in an internal memo. Regional representatives were notified of these cases and charged with supervising the follow-ups. For goals of return home (46 children), progress was to be checked in six months. For goals of long-term foster care (22 children), an in-depth analysis was called for. Adoption processing was to begin immediately for the 52 children scheduled to be adopted by their foster parents without subsidies, and necessary background information was to be gathered on the 41 children whose foster parents would require subsidy for adoption (a new subsidized adoption program was being developed at that time). Apparently due to lack of manpower, no report was made on the outcomes of these follow-ups. It is not known what further actions were taken with respect to the children identified during the first phase of the 1971 review.

The second phase reviewed 1,519 children who were under age six and in boarding foster care as of March, 1972. In this phase forms were sent to District Offices for all 1,519 children. The review found that "return home" was the goal for 31% of the children, of whom 70% were expected to be restored within one year; adoption was the goal for 34%, of whom 30% needed selected adoptive parents and 50% would be adopted by interested foster parents (half of whom needed subsidies); long-term foster care was the goal for 12%; the case goal was undecided for 17%; and there were miscellaneous goals (e.g. institutionalization) for the remaining 4% of cases.

Only 35% of the children for whom adoption was planned had actually been surrendered by their parent(s).<sup>\*</sup> The agency report notes that "it is the opinion of the Adoption Service Unit that the majority of our adoption placements to date have been for children whose parents have requested adoption services.... In order to free...children, a great deal of work and the learning of new skills will be required by staff."

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\* This is a tentative statement, since there is some numerical confusion in the available agency reports.



As we interpret the results of the 1971 review, they seem to indicate that the problem is not identifying children who should be adopted, but expediting the process of adoption for the children who have been so identified. It is curious that the first phase of the review should have concentrated on the small minority of guardianship cases not known to ASU, while ignoring the status of nearly 1,400 children "known" to ASU. Were all the latter committed to guardianship for adoption planning, and if so, what was being done in those cases? (We know from the first phase of the review that only one-half of the guardianship cases not previously identified by ASU were committed for adoption planning. Was this representative of all guardianship cases?) The second phase of the review identified an additional (?) 535 children in boarding care with the goal of adoption, a third of whom had already been surrendered. While it is laudable to try to free the remainder, what was happening in the cases of the previously surrendered children?

The main impression one receives from the 1971 case review process is that it was emphasizing the wrong issues and using the wrong methodology. Even if the goal of "adoption" were realistic or appropriate in all the cases so listed (it is not known whether this was so), the most obvious problem lay in getting the identified, eligible children adopted. The review did not ignore the issue entirely, in that information on need for subsidies and on child "problems" was requested from workers. However, that type of information could have been best obtained, not through a massive "case review," but rather through detailed examination of a small sample of cases (by case record reading; and by interviews with caseworkers, supervisors, natural and foster parents.) The total amount of effort expended on such a fundamentally different project would not have been greater than that expended on the large-scale, superficial review of cases but might have yielded more useful information.

As it was, the 1971 case review process produced no evidence of tangible results. Master charts listing each child and his case goal were sent to each District Office to be "used by the district office administration as a control to facilitate follow-up... This survey will be followed up by periodic progress reports on the status of the children studied." No follow-up seems to have been done, however, nor were any further reports on the first two phases of the 1971 review forthcoming. No-one connected with this project who was interviewed believed it had any effect on individual case decisions or outcomes.

Before the third and final phase of the 1971 review could be implemented, the agency was expanded in scope, was upgraded in status from the Bureau of Children's Services to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), and received a new Division Director, Frederick Schenck. Mr. Schenck halted the review because he believed that this particular

process was not a sufficiently valuable use of limited staff time. He also objected to the concept of long-term foster care as a legitimate case goal, a concept employed during the 1971 review. As the 1971 review was indeed very labor-intensive, it was unlikely that it could have continued for long under any circumstances. We note that a Case Control Task Force, established in the Bureau of Family Services of DYFS in 1973 to develop a "case tracking" system, instead proposed an organizational restructuring of District Offices (The Ocean and Camden D.O.'s were then restructured on an experimental basis.)

#### B. Background of the "Review of Children in Placement" Program

In 1973 there were renewed efforts to establish a case review system on a permanent, continuous basis within the Division of Youth and Family Services. This undoubtedly was influenced by the experience of the 1971 review attempt, for which the last report was written in July 1972, only a short time before the new proposal for a Case Audit and Review System in April 1973. Several of the people involved in the 1971 review were contributors to the plans for the new review system. Action in this area was again stimulated by activity in the state legislature, this time in the form of a bill introduced by Senator Menza to establish a court review for foster children modeled on the recently established New York court review system. According to DYFS staff the system proposed by the bill permitted little input by the agency; provided for insufficient flexibility in case management; would have encumbered casework with time-consuming bottlenecks in the courts; and presumably would have diverted a large amount of state money, which might otherwise be used for tangible services to clients, into an expansion of the New Jersey judiciary. Considerable discussion regarding this bill took place between Senator Menza and Director Schenck. These discussions were continued into 1974 and the transition to the new Director, James Kagen, who also tried to dissuade Senator Menza from proceeding with the bill. Apparently it was finally agreed that DYFS be allowed time to see what could be accomplished with an administrative review system before the legislature attempted to institute court review.

The formal proposal for an ongoing review system for children in foster care had been submitted in April 1973, by William Resnick, Chief of the Bureau of Research, Planning and Program Development (BRPPD) of DYFS in a document entitled, "Proposal for a System for Auditing and Reviewing Children in Placement." Resnick was motivated to recommend the system to Director Schenck not only because of the pending legislation, but by an awareness that case review was intended to ameliorate problems common to many states (and thus likely to be present also in New Jersey), and because case review already was being established in a number of states.

The BRPPD proposal recommended creating "a mechanism for the on-going and periodic audits of children in placement such

that DYFS can review both 1) the appropriateness of the goals and the placement; and 2) the efficiency of the process for attaining the goals." It suggested that the Bureau of Family Services, which is the client contact and service branch of DYFS, should direct the review. It was not explicit, however, as to whether additional staff would be hired specifically for that purpose of implementing case review. A Case Review Board was to be created to oversee the review process and to perform the required training, development, and management. The proposal emphasized the importance of training caseworkers and supervisors in the policy and criteria for review so that review would have an effect on day-to-day casework. One of the reasons for the emphasis on training was that the review was conceived as being done in great part by supervisors in the local D.O.'s. This feature was designed to keep the review process as close as possible to ongoing casework.

The proposal also was suggested that a computer program be designed to pick up inconsistencies in cases, "between case plans and case facts...between Division standards and the workers' output". The "audit process" was described as follows:

1. Assistant Supervisor explains policy, purpose, and methods to caseworkers, who then complete forms;
2. Assistant Supervisor checks for inappropriate goal and progress toward goal and discusses with caseworker who takes required action;
3. D.O. prepares master list and tabulations which are sent to the Case Review Board and appropriate management; and
4. Review Board and appropriate management examine lists for completeness and case reports for inconsistencies on a case-by-case basis.

Although it was not stated in the proposal, presumably the Central Office would then contact the local supervisors concerning problematic cases and request or require corrective action.\*

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\* A parenthetical note on terminology is appropriate at this point. Various terms appear in agency memos and proposals referring to some process or system of checking goals, and progress toward goals, for cases under supervision. A "case control" task force was set up in 1973. The BRPPD proposal discusses "audit" and "review". The term "tracking" is also used. All four terms appear in Director Schenck's letter announcing the establishment of the Case Audit and Review Unit. The terms are used practically as synonyms, and no attempt has been made within the agency to define any of the terms explicitly or to distinguish them from each other in usage - though there was some tendency for references to concrete historical events to become more or less attached to one term or another.

The BRPPD proposal was not entirely explicit on certain matters. Most importantly, it did not clarify what kind of follow-up (if any) should be done, nor exactly what types of criteria should be used. The proposal concluded by stating that the Review Board "will scrutinize the reports on each case for combinations of facts that indicates that a more thorough study is required". Nothing was said about what actions might be taken or what "more thorough study" would mean. In other words, the stage of feedback to the caseworker and supervisor, crucial to ensuring that review would have an impact on a case-by-case basis, was not delineated. This lack of specificity left open the possibility for case review to be interpreted by other administrators as primarily a program development process, since the significance of the feedback stage was not strongly emphasized.

Director Schenck himself seems to have embraced this shift in emphasis from management control to program development in his letter announcing the establishment of the Case Audit and Review Unit (CARU), headed by the former BCS Chief under whom the 1971 review was conducted. After some revisions of the BRPPD proposal by his personal staff, Mr. Schenck announced the creation of CARU using the BRPPD proposal "as a basis for beginning operations." CARU was to be "responsible for designing and implementing a system for insuring that appropriate goals are set for each child...and that goals are being met..." These goals were to be met in two ways: through direct effect upon cases, by the review unit bringing to the attention of caseworkers and supervisors immediate problems of specific cases; and indirectly, by uncovering general problems of casework policy and procedure which could then be corrected and presumably would influence all cases. The first activity emphasizes feed-back on individual cases, the second the gathering of general program information for management. In his letter Schenck states that CARU is to become an integral part of the newly developing Management Information System (MIS), implying that case review was being primarily thought of in terms of information gathering and program development.

The system actually developed by CARU appears to place even greater emphasis on the management information approach. This trend was further enhanced by the decision that CARU would evaluate the dual experimental reorganizations of the Ocean and Camden District Offices, mentioned earlier. Although the Schenck administration approved a concept of "case review as information system", this view was certainly not exclusive to the former agency administration, since the subsequent Director, Mr. Kagen, and some other DYFS administrators have appeared to give primary emphasis to the aggregate statistics accumulated through case review, rather than to the potential impact of review on individual case outcomes.

Since CARU was concerned with improving agency organization as a whole, rather than designing a case-by-case review of

foster children, the unit addressed some rather general questions and took considerable time in preparing a plan of action. By the time CARU had prepared its program and was circulating it among administrative personnel for comment, Mr. Kagen had replaced Mr. Schenck as Director of DYFS. Director Kagen decided not to use the CARU plan for review and removed case review from CARU's authority.

C. Planning and Implementing the 1974 Review of Children in Placement

As has already been indicated, Director Kagen quickly became aware of both the urgent need to obtain more information about agency foster children and the imminent possibility of legislation establishing court review. The Director decided that CARU was not responding rapidly enough and that something needed to be done immediately. Former Director Schenck's letter announcing the establishment of CARU had already mentioned that the "case auditing system cannot await completion and implementation of the total MIS in 1975. It is just too critical a task". Probably this view played a part in the new Director's decision.

In any event, Kagen decided to remove case review from CARU and to set up a new review unit within the Bureau of Family Services. In the meantime, however, he considered it urgent that an actual case review be implemented immediately, before a specialized unit to conduct it was established. He therefore called a meeting of CARU representatives and several other administrative staff to get an interim review underway. This informal, ad hoc "task force" planned the 1974 case review, which was entitled "Review of Children in Placement" (RCP).

At this stage, Kagen did not formally designate specific staff as members of a task force with its own director. Rather he held staff meetings with various individuals in his office at which the basic decisions and assignments were made. Little documentation exists about this phase of the process and subsequent recollections of those involved provide different accounts of the relevant events. Evidently the only training of local workers in the purposes and procedures of the review, and the policy upon which it would be based (the importance of which had been stressed in the BRPPD proposal), was one statewide meeting of supervisors. It was intended that this review be the first installment of routinized, periodic review process, conducted every six months; however, the emphasis most generally perceived at the time by many DYFS personnel was not on adequate preparation for the future, but rather intense pressure to get that first, already delayed, review implemented as quickly as possible.

The Central Office task force devised a special review form (Appendix B) and wrote a set of instructions. The actual implementation of the review was assigned to the Program Assistance Unit (PAU) within the Bureau of Family Services. PAU obtained lists of all agency children in family foster, institutional, or "parafoster" care;\* and distributed the review forms (accompanied by the lists and sets of instructions) to approximately 20 DYFS District Offices for completion and return. The lists of children were current as of September 30, 1974, and were sent out during October 1974; they were to be updated by local workers to reflect the placements and plans for children as of October 31, 1974. Most of the forms seem to have been completed during November, 1974.

Of 11,500 forms originally distributed, about 9,950 were returned, keypunched, and entered on a computer tape (with some attrition at each of those steps). A preliminary computer screening of the data in December resulted in the selection of about 3,000 cases for follow-up. A subsequent manual screening of those 3,000 forms by PAU resulted in 767 being returned to the local offices for "additional information". After this information was received, forms for 128 cases were referred back to local offices for a second time. This follow-up process was apparently concluded by February, 1975.

The criteria for follow-up used in the initial computer screening were as follows (quoted from an internal memo):

1. "Case goal is undecided or exceptional";
2. "Case goal is return home and there is no parent contact";
3. "Case goal is independent living and child is under 15";
4. "Case goal is return home and child has been in placement 3 years or more".

The specific criteria used in the manual screening subsequent to the computer screening are less clear, but apparently cases were selected where the "case goal is long-term foster care and (the) worker's comments do not justify the case plan", where "an inappropriate person is determining the case plan", or where "cases (were) marked denied by the supervisor". Other types of irregularities may also have been considered.

The main practical problem was that PAU was inundated with cases to be followed-up, because the computer program designed

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\*According to the agency's definition, a "parafoster" home is "a home where eligibility for AFDC does not exist because relationship could not be proved and [DYFS] accepts the home as a foster home because this is the only home the child has known..."



to perform the initial screening of forms nominated an unexpected 3,000 cases for further attention. According to PAU staff, this was too large a workload for a unit primarily devoted to other tasks. Nevertheless, the 3,000 RCP forms were manually screened and about one-quarter were selected for additional follow-up action, using brief written inquiries. This was the extent of the follow-up effort. Apparently no case conferences were held nor were any suggestions for changes in case planning or management forwarded to the local offices. These facts decrease the likelihood that the process could have directly influenced case management for individual children, as was intended.

Nevertheless, it may be that the review process had a more general influence in sensitizing casework staff to the problems of foster children and/or in contributing to changes in basic worker attitudes. The implementation of RCP is itself a consequence of agency administrators increasing awareness of children in foster care of the problems of such children and their desire to improve the circumstances of foster children. It is of course difficult to ascertain to what extent RCP was a symptom or a symbol of growing concern with foster children, and to what extent it has made a contribution to accentuating such concern. This issue will be partially addressed through an analysis of caseworker interview data, reported in Chapter V.

The creators of RCP also hoped that the review process would provide administrators with information about the characteristics and needs of the foster care population in general, which was badly needed for planning and policy decisions. The computerized data from the 1974 review were aggregated into a series of tables, calculated separately for each District Office. Unfortunately, no interpretation of the tables was provided and, as related by one member of the organizing task force, the tables occasioned many questions from District Office Supervisors. It is not difficult to see why. For example, one table crosstabulates children's "number of moves" with "time in placement;" another crosstabulates "time in placement" with "case goal", and so on. Exactly what should District Office Supervisors have done with such information? Clearly, insufficient thought was devoted to developing analyses which might be useful - either during the planning of the review or after the data were collected. In retrospect, there seemed to be no one who had the required combination of the time, the competence, and the specific assignment to do the required analytical work.

In sum, the lack of adequate computerization, of proper planning, and of sufficient manpower, resulted not in an effective case-by-case review, but rather in another agency information-gathering exercise. Although the intent had been establishment of a permanent administrative review system, the 1974 review had the characteristics of another ad hoc activity completed in a crisis atmosphere. Furthermore,

the fact that those who worked on it did so in addition to their normal assignments meant that only what was absolutely necessary was done. There was no single specialized person in charge of the review to supervise the process or to use properly the information generated; those who worked on various aspects of the review process were scattered through several bureaus and offices. There was little or no documentation of what was done, and no final report was written to help lay the groundwork for the permanent Case Review Unit that was to be created to perform the next scheduled review in May, 1975.

D. Implementing the 1975 Review of Children in Placement

The Case Review Unit (CRU, organizationally a sub-unit of PAU) was established on July 1, 1975 and received its full complement of four staff members by September, 1975. Unfortunately, this was already past the May due date for the scheduled six-month review, again creating a crisis atmosphere. CRU was directed to proceed immediately with the scheduled review. This was despite the facts that:

- a) none of the new staff had participated in the previous review;
- b) workable procedures, including effective follow-up procedures, had not been established by the previous review;
- c) the extent to which computerization could or should be utilized was still ambiguous;
- d) there had been many criticisms of the original 1974 RCP forms and procedures;
- e) clear lines of authority between CRU and other units and offices had not been established; and
- f) there seemed to be no consensus among administrators about the main purpose of CRU.

CRU asked for, but was not granted, a postponement of the scheduled review. An internal memo states: "...the review will be established immediately in an effort to preclude the establishment of a burdensome and time-consuming court review."

A formal schedule for periodic review had been issued in March, 1975. The schedule provided that a review form be submitted on each new child entering placement six weeks after the date of such placement. Thereafter, updated forms were to be submitted at six month intervals on all children under age seven, and on all children in placement two years or less and under age fifteen. Forms were to be submitted at annual intervals on children in placement two years or



more and under age 15, and on children in parafoster homes. Children age 15 and over were not to continue the review process "if the initial review indicates that the goal is appropriate."

The second Review of Children in Placement in the current series was conducted by the Case Review Unit during August and September, 1975. Review forms were to be completed by local workers for all new children entering placement between November 1, 1974 and May 31, 1975, and for all previously reviewed children due for a six month review (according to the schedule given above). The format of this second review was similar to the first, except that workers were asked to provide current information on children still in placement, or information as of May 31, 1975 for children no longer in placement or no longer under agency supervision. The second review was more inclusive than the first: Children living with relatives, in free homes, in group homes, and in shelters were added to the review process. Children entering placement after May 31, 1975 were not reviewed at this time.

A revised form (Appendix C) was constructed for the 1975 review, although the revisions were relatively minor. Both the 1974 and 1975 forms obtain basic identifying and demographic data; type of placement and the dates relevant to that placement; the agency's legal authority to place the child ("no agreement-parafoster home" added in 1975) and the date of such authority; the case goal ("long term foster care" added in 1975) and the expected goal achievement date; parent-child and parent-worker contacts ("face to face" contact distinguished in 1975 from "other" contacts); and the "major barriers to goal achievement" (changed from a pre-coded to a narrative item on the 1975 form). The 1975 form also eliminates the "comments" section and adds an unstructured "reason for placement" item.

Almost 6,400 children were identified as eligible for review in 1975, about 70% being children reviewed for the first time and 30% being children due for a regular six month review. Approximately 5,700 forms were eventually received, keypunched and entered on a computer tape. The attrition was due to errors in the original computer listing of cases to be reviewed, cases which were closed or transferred by the time of the review, and tardiness in submission of forms.

A combination of computer screening and manual inspection was again used to identify cases for potential follow-up action. Two criteria for computer screening were apparently added at this time to the list given previously for the 1974 review:

- 1) "Goal achievement date is longer than one year for return home, 1 1/2 years for adoption by selected parents, (and) six months for foster parent adoption";
- 2) "Cases with surrenders of custody or guardianship where goal is not adoption".

Thus, the September 1975 review process was in large measure a recapitulation of the 1974 review. CRU did manage a minor revision of the RCP form, largely for the better. However, the schedule for the selection of children for review; the basic operational procedures; and the criteria for screening and follow-up; all remained virtually unchanged. The plan for follow-up was sketchy: "This follow-up may be in the form of written request for additional information, conversation with the worker and/or supervisor, case reading or some combination of these...cases which remain problematic will be referred to District Office Supervisor and/or Regional Supervisor for assistance in resolution." Forms were completed and computerized on about 5,700 cases, of whom 2,200 underwent some sort of follow-up during the period October 1975 through September 1976. The details of this will be discussed in a subsequent section.

#### E. Developing the Role of CRU

Despite the necessity of immediately implementing the 1975 case review, CRU did not neglect the tasks of attempting to define its role more clearly and to improve the procedures for later reviews. The dual roles of CRU, as outlined in a July 1975 memorandum, were to be "case monitoring" and "program evaluation", with the first receiving priority. The "case monitoring" function would encompass the Review of Children in Placement program and miscellaneous other reviews as described below.

The first clear statement of purpose for RCP was given by CRU in May 1976. The program is "(1) to determine if initial and continued placement is appropriate, (2) to determine if appropriate case plans have been established, (3) to assure that children are receiving (sic) appropriate and timely services; and (4) to determine those obstacles which hinder or prevent the achievement of case goals."

In addition to reviewing all children placed out-of-home through RCP, CRU has recommended specialized reviews for protective service cases, for children in residential placement, and for prospective adoption cases. A proposal for monitoring a new supervisory review procedure for all agency children was also offered. Without entering into the details of each, suffice to say that, as described in memos, these reviews are very labor-intensive and their relationship to the RCP program is not clearly delineated. Every type of case appears to merit a different review procedure. While

these proposals for various kinds of "review" and "tracking" proliferate, none have been implemented, nor could they have been without huge staff increases. CRU had all it could do in the past year merely to try to follow-up some cases from the 1975 RCP process.

The "program evaluation" function of CRU was expected to be expanded as soon as the "case monitoring" system "begins to function routinely." This function would be "linked to case monitoring in that trends can be identified, evaluated and the data utilized to improve program planning."

Thus CRU had created an impressive agenda for itself, but had scant means to fulfill its goals.

#### F. CRU Follow-up of Adoption Cases

The Case Review Unit made a considerable effort to follow-up the progress of about 1,600 children whose stated goal was "adoption-foster parent" in the November 1974 case review. This was done in a number of ways. First, the Data Processing Unit was asked to search the agency's computer files and to determine the case status and type of placement of each such child as of November 30, 1975 (about one year after the case review). "The initial expectation was the children whose goal was 'adoption-foster parent' should have their goal realized within six months." This search found that about 10% of the children were no longer active cases\*; about one-third had been transferred to the Bureau of Resource Development (BRD)\*\*; and only 1% were currently being supervised in an adoptive home.

What happened here? As will be seen from the staff interviews, reported in Chapter V, apparently adoption was not currently a realistic goal for some of the children so identified. This may have contributed to the finding that most children with a goal of "adoption" were not subsequently transferred to BRD, and that those transferred had such a low rate of placement. (Of course, some of the remaining children may have been placed after November 30, 1975). According to an agency memo, "BRD has found a large percentage of these children must be transferred back to BFS\*\*\* because adoption cannot be effected. There is the feeling that the goal 'adoption-foster parent' is selected prematurely and may

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\* It is conceivable that some of these had completed the adoption procedure and had their cases closed.

\*\* The successor to ASU and the Bureau responsible for adoption processing in DYFS. However, BRD's scope of responsibility is wider.

\*\*\* Bureau of Family Services, the bureau providing casework services.

indicate the need for a definitive procedure to be developed..." While the meaning of the phrase "large percentage" is unclear, apparently the situation involved enough cases to be defined by administrators as an administrative problem.

As a continuation of its follow-up of prospective adoption cases, CRU planned "to survey the districts regarding all children whose goal.....was 'adoption-foster parent' and whose current status is uncertain;....to look at those children whose goal...remains the same to determine the obstacles which have hindered its realization;" and "to look at those children who have been transferred back to BFS to determine what...could have been done [to have] increased the chances for....adoption." The surveying was accomplished by distributing one-page follow-up forms to the local offices for about 1,000 cases, while the "looking" apparently involved an unknown number of case record inspections in the local offices. This project seems to have been completed by the end of 1976, but to our knowledge no results of these efforts are available as yet.

Our Project's analysis of BRD's monthly statistical reports (details of which are not included in this report) indicates that the number of adoptive placements has been increasing since the Bureau's creation in 1973. Since RCP was implemented during the same period BRD was gradually gearing up its activities, it is impossible to say for certain whether BRD's placements would have been as numerous even without the existence of RCP. But the fact is that the number of referrals to BRD has consistently been more than the Bureau could satisfactorily handle with its present staff. Thus, the limiting factor on adoptions has been, not the inability to identify children potentially eligible for adoption, but the lack of adequate resources (caseworkers, adoptive families, legal staff, court facilities, etc.) to process those children known to the agency.

#### G. CRU and Program Evaluation

In addition to its case monitoring tasks, CRU attempted to produce aggregate data for the purposes of program evaluation. However, the report distributed by CRU can only be termed perplexing. For reasons not entirely clear, CRU's tables aggregated data on three distinct populations of children,

using data collected at two different points in time\*. In a memo accompanying the tables CRU noted its "failure to indicate the number of children in each base population group and to separate these groups for each report... This does not permit us to identify peculiar (sic) characteristics of the groups or to diagnose any developing trends." In addition, "the current reports include information on children representing approximately 25% of the total which was not up-dated in the past year."

These statistics can serve no practical purpose. In comparison, the data generated by the 1971 review and even by the 1974 review (taken alone) were superior: those data were at least based on cross-sections of the foster care caseload at one point in time. (Of course, such cross-sectional data tends to be less useful than longitudinal data.) It is necessary to question the wisdom of promulgating the statistics from the 1975 review at all, given the handling of the information. Thus, there still exists a need in the agency for valid statistics on the foster care population.

Though generating a large volume of uninterpretable statistics, CRU failed to perform the type of statistical analysis most relevant to the case review function. For example, a general comparison of all data from the 1974 and 1975 reviews for all children involved in both reviews would have seemed logical - even mandatory - yet that was not done. In brief, the attempt to analyze the RCP data base has thus far not produced useful aggregate information on the agency's foster care caseload.

\*The populations were:

1. All children reviewed in November 1974 who were not due for six-month review, but who were still in placement in September 1975;
2. All children reviewed in November 1974 who were due for a six-month review, and thus were reviewed again in September 1975;
3. All children who entered placement between November 1974 and May 1975, and thus were reviewed initially in September 1975.

For the first population, the tables used data from the original 1974 RCP forms, while the data in these same tables for the other two populations came from the 1975 RCP forms. That is, these data were used together without distinction in calculating a single set of tables on all the children involved! A fourth population of children, those who were reviewed in November 1974 but who were no longer in foster care by September 1975, were deleted from the reported statistics.

#### H. CRU's Proposed Revisions of RCP

CRU has recommended changes in the RCP program which could increase its efficiency, at least technically. First, CRU found the six-month review schedule to be unwieldy for the District Offices, the Data Processing Unit, and CRU itself, because of the large, sudden workload concentrated in a short period of time for all parties. Consequently, the next review, when it occurs, will initiate a monthly review schedule in which cases to be reviewed will be distributed over twelve months. Each case will still be reviewed every six or twelve months, but the dates on which individual cases came up for review will be spread over the entire year. Since caseworkers will be going through periodic review of their cases year-round, CRU hopes that review will become a routine part of case management.

Secondly, the revised system will use a pre-printed computer sheet for each case; i.e., all identifying information, and information obtained at the last review (if any), will be pre-printed on the sheet so that only handwritten changes need be made by the worker at each subsequent review. This would eliminate unnecessary redundancy and minimize the opportunity for error.

Third, the RCP form was scrutinized by CRU after the September 1975 review. For the first time an explicit justification for each item on the proposed new form was developed. It was found that some information on the previous forms was available from other sources (e.g., the agency's computerized Child Master Record system); some was needed only for the initial review; some only for follow-up actions; and some not needed at all. CRU has developed detailed codes for new items on "reason for placement" and "services needed/received", which will be added to the new form. In general, the format and substance of the proposed form are superior to the hastily conceived instruments which have been employed in the agency's case reviews up to this point. The question to be addressed is whether these improvements are sufficient to warrant the continuance of the basic system.

CRU has also developed new criteria for review and for follow-up. All children entering foster care are to be reviewed within 60 days. Thereafter, children under age 11 are to be reviewed every six months, "or at least until they have been in placement for two years"\*; children age 11 and over are to be reviewed six months after the initial review and annually thereafter; children placed with relatives or in a parafoster home are to be reviewed annually; children in residential treatment are to be reviewed one year after

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\* and annually thereafter?

initial review and every six months thereafter. Unfortunately, the rationale for this new review schedule is no clearer than that for the original schedule. The choice of ages at which to make distinctions for the frequency of review still seems rather arbitrary. It would be more consistent with the general logic of periodic review (not necessarily an improvement, however) if all foster children simply were reviewed every six months. This should be no problem given adequate computerization.

#### I. Problems of Case Screening

The selection of cases for follow-up action by computer screening is the heart of any "centralized monitoring" model of administrative case review. Thus, CRU's revised list of criteria for screening must receive particularly careful attention. The following is a list of CRU's criteria for follow-up which, according to a memorandum, "[do] not reflect any particular priority", although it is also stated that priority categories such as "the youngest child, the child newly placed, and the child legally free for adoption" will ultimately be established:

- "1. Children entering foster care placement 12 years of age or younger.
2. Children in foster care over 16 months or more.
3. Children in placement 2 years or less with 3 or more placements.
4. Children in residential placement over one year.
5. Goal is Return to Family and there is no family contact and no interest.
6. Goal is Return to Family for children in placement over three years.
7. Goal is Return to Family and Expected Achievement Date has expired or been extended.
8. Goal is Independent Living for a child under 15 years of age.
9. Goal is Long Term Foster Care (except parafooster placements).
10. Goal is Long Term Foster Care for children under 12.
11. Goal is To Be Decided Within 60 Days.
12. Goal changed from Return to Family or Adoption to any other goal.
13. Legal Authority is marked No Authority.
14. Legal Authority is marked PRS Order.
15. Legal Authority is marked Interlocutory Guardianship.
16. Children who have been known to the agency before.
17. Children in placement #29 (parafooster children).
18. Goal information is not completed.
19. Legal Authority is not completed."\*

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\* Quoted from an agency memo

In addition, all cases with the goal of "adoption" are scheduled for special follow-up until transferred to BRD.

There are many problems with the above listing, problems which we suggest derive from difficulties intrinsic to the case review enterprise in general, not simply from the design of this particular review system.

Large-scale computer screening of cases is designed primarily to eliminate cases from follow-up whose planning, plan implementation, and so on, are considered satisfactory. The first two criteria on the above list obviously defeat this purpose. Our study found that in 1974 about 75% of children newly entering foster care are age twelve or under, and that about 80% of such entering cases are still active one and one-half years after case opening (Tables IV-1B and IV-8A). Consequently the inclusiveness of these first two criteria potentially creates far too many "false positives", i.e., children who are selected for follow-up although their cases do not in fact warrant it. Is the answer to increase the exclusivity of the follow-up criteria, i.e., to lower the "threshold" age or increase the required length of time in foster care? There is no justification for doing so. It can be put this way: the first two criteria for follow-up are not "selective" because they are, in fact, mere restatements of the basic rationale for periodic review, i.e., that virtually all children entering care are "at risk", and that virtually all children stay in "temporary" care "too long". Increasing the exclusivity of the follow-up criteria would, according to these assumptions, potentially create far too many "false negatives", children who are not selected for follow-up although their cases warrant it.

Another way to view the list of follow-up criteria is to ask, not whom it includes, but rather whom it excludes from the process. Very roughly, the only possible major group exempted from follow-up are those children screened at six and twelve months after first placement who:

1. have not been "known to the agency" before this period of supervision; and
2. have been voluntarily placed; and
3. have goals of "return to family" in conjunction with records of parental contact or parental interest.\*

Only on other cases, according to CRU, is additional follow-up information required at those times. But we know from our study that in 1974 over half of the newly entering cases were either voluntarily placed, had a case goal of "return to family" (Table IV-6B), or had records of parental visiting

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\* Of course, if such children had been under twelve years of age at placement, they would have been followed-up at that time under the age criterion.



(Table III-1). If almost all children with these characteristics actually returned home within about one year, then the foster care system would not be subject to nearly the amount of criticism which it receives today! Excluding this group of children from follow-up would probably produce far too many "false negatives", as defined above. Thus, the dilemma is complete: the proposal follow-up criteria are simultaneously much too inclusive and much too exclusive! The necessity for large-scale computer screening of cases is the Achilles heel of the RCP system, as well as any other case review system similar to it.

#### J. Problems in Developing Criteria for Review

The arbitrary qualities of the follow-up criteria recommended by CRU are apparent. Developing a substantially improved list may be impossible, however. For example, what help can we find in the literature? Criteria for foster placement such as those developed by Paul (1975) are essentially abstractions and require operationalization, i.e., require the specification of empirical, observable indicators before they can be consistently applied. One example: "Foster care is suitable for the majority of children whose parents are unable to provide adequately for them even with community support, or who are unable to respond appropriately to an emotionally disturbed child who may be seen as making excessive demands on the family equilibrium" (Paul, 1975:30). Surely this is sensible guidance, and caseworkers are forced to make such subjective assessments continually. But how does one objectively determine which cases fall into the category? Perhaps the objective sorting of cases on such criteria is possible in principal, but the necessary basic research demonstrating that it is possible has not yet been done. Clearly the information on the RCP forms or follow-up forms provide no independent basis for such judgements. Yet if one were to rely on the worker's reported subjective assessment of the situation, then in what way does case review hold the worker accountable? Essentially the caseworker would simply have been asked to provide the reviewers with "written testimony" that he is doing what he believes are the right things on the case, within the constraints of the situation. Whatever function this written assurance serves, it could not provide a basis for accountability in the sense evidently intended by advocates of case review.

This ubiquitous problem of operationalizing casework decision-making criteria is most severe in attempting to design a computer screening program, but is by no means restricted to it. Manual perusal of forms, unstructured reports prepared by caseworkers, and even case record reading, are also subject to great limitations in assessing the quality of casework and in evaluating the caseworker's decisions (even

if these activities were feasible on a large scale.)\*

If computer screening cannot help in deciding whether a given case has the right plan, or whether that plan is being properly implemented, perhaps it can at least inform us whether a case has any plan whatsoever. Unfortunately, a periodic review system which concentrates on the latter issue invites a total ritualization of the review process. A case review system without the capacity to make independent evaluations of plans and without the power to take corrective action is no "review system" at all, as defined here. At best such a "system" encourages a trivialization of the case planning process. After all, case planning involves considerably more than simply indicating a choice among the seven alternatives of "return to family", "adoption - foster parent", etc. Good planning involves contingency planning, not just the indication of one's highest preference. With few exceptions case plans must be conditional, i.e., dependent on the outcomes of a worker's actions or on unpredictable events, which will occur between a particular phase of planning and a resolution of the case. Choosing "return to own family" as the "goal" in all cases where there is at least a possibility of the child returning home, seems to be nothing more than a reaffirmation of the value structure on which casework is predicated -- it is not a "case plan" or a "goal" in any useful sense. Caseworkers already know that children are not to be kept in care indefinitely if it can reasonably be avoided! Similarly, it is not particularly useful to call "long-term foster care" a "plan" or "goal" -- it is a necessity resorted to when superior arrangements cannot be made. This should not be taken to mean that children likely to remain in foster care should not be identified -- the error lies in equating such identification with case planning (or the lack of it). Case planning involves devising a series of specific, workable steps, e.g., to return a child to his parents; together with developing plans about what to do if that fails or is patently impossible. This case plan must then

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\*But surely there are at least some standards which are relatively unconditional and unambiguous and which, if violated, demand corrective action? The reader will recognize that the following criterion, given by Paul (1975:29) is based on considerable theory and research in child development: "Foster family care is usually the only appropriate kind of placement for children under six..." Moreover, since New Jersey law allows initiation of action to terminate parental rights when a parent has had no contact with a child for one year, lack of such action would usually be questionable. If workers are not familiar with these standards, then they should be. But how many more standards of this type can be named? Note again that criteria based on such factors as "length of time in care" are essentially unworkable. One is obligated to review virtually all children with short times in care (to prevent them from becoming long-term cases) and all children with long times in care (to see if the situation has changed sufficiently to allow them to be finally discharged home or adopted).

be competently implemented. Clearly, the large-scale but shallow screening procedures characteristic of the "centralized monitoring" model of case review are intrinsically incapable of ascertaining the existence of proper case planning.

The list of follow-up criteria proposed by CRU are an implicit admission that computer screening is useless: virtually all cases must supposedly be "followed up" for more information. Yet they are not all followed up for lack of manpower. But what if all the eligible cases were "followed up"? The basic "follow-up" instrument\*, a half-page form with room for one question and answer, provides even less information than the initial computerized form! Since the follow-up form is no more likely to resolve any issues than was the computer screening form\*\*, CRU is forced to examine actual case record files or hold case conferences with workers. Since the latter are very labor intensive, not many follow-ups of these types have actually been done. And is there any way to tell whether the follow-up cases were those actually most in need of further attention from the monitoring unit?

In effect then, CRU has become a four-man team of extraordinary, itinerant supervisors expected to oversee all foster care cases in the state, but without any workable guidelines or procedures for determining which cases deserve priority in receiving their attention. Certainly this is not an enviable position, or one from which substantial impact on case outcomes can be expected.

#### K. Summary

In the 1960's and 1970's the public child welfare agency in New Jersey conducted a number of surveys of foster children, some of which were called "reviews", both on a statewide and county office level. The statewide projects have generally been in response to pressure from the state legislature, while the county efforts were conducted at local initiative, with varying objectives and procedures. In order to place the present case review system in a developmental perspective, a few of the better documented prior projects were discussed in some detail, using data from internal memoranda and reports, and in-depth interviews conducted with agency administrators. The similarity of these projects lay in their ad hoc nature, the lack of provisions for continuation, and the ambiguity of purpose; they seem to have amounted to little more than episodic data-gathering. However, their substantive results seem to suggest that the main problem of the foster care system in New Jersey at the time was not inadequate case planning and management per se, but the lack of human and financial resources for adoption processing.

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\*Appendix D

\*\*The forms used to follow-up prospective adoption cases did not appear to yield information useful to CRU.

The new Review of Children in Placement (RCP) system, established in 1974, is innovative in that it is intended to function on a continuous basis, to employ rigorous follow-up procedures, and to improve individual case outcomes by holding workers accountable for adequate case planning and plan implementation. The New Jersey system is patterned after the "centralized monitoring" model. An internal agency review team surveys caseworkers on their foster children using a self-administered questionnaire; checks the responses for accuracy, consistency, and conformity to policy; and communicates further with workers and their supervisors on cases evidencing incomplete information or questionable planning. Reviews of the caseload have been conducted twice to date, during November, 1974 and September, 1975.

The planning and implementation of RCP had certain weaknesses. The planning stage was conducted in a crisis atmosphere, attributable to the agency's desire to pre-empt impending court review legislation. Local staff were informed about RCP through a single statewide meeting of District Office managers. The basic forms were distributed and completed on time, but the follow-up phase of the review was attenuated. The part-time unit charged with implementing the first review was inundated with cases, because the initial computer screening of forms nominated an unexpectedly large number of cases for follow-up action. Further written information was requested on some children, but apparently no case conferences were scheduled with local workers, nor were any suggested changes in case planning or management forwarded to the local offices.

A new case Review Unit (CRU) was established in July, 1975 to perform the next scheduled six-month review, already past due. After only minor revisions in procedure, and despite a request for postponement by CRU, the second review was conducted in September, 1975. During the following year about 2200 cases underwent some type of follow-up. This follow-up phase was not well documented, and there was no evidence that the process increased adoptive placements, one of its main objectives.

The chapter concludes that the apparent inefficacy of RCP was not due primarily to inadequate implementation, but stemmed from more basic difficulties inherent in the concept and method of case review itself. Centralized monitoring models depend upon efficient computer screening procedures, but it is virtually impossible to establish a reasonable set of selection criteria which avoid being either too inclusive or too exclusive. The problem is that most current criteria for foster placement and related decisions are essentially abstractions and have not been adequately operationalized, i.e., have not had empirical, observable indicators specified. The absence of such objective indicators means that it is very difficult to obtain valid, independent assessments of case planning and case management using case review techniques.

Table III-1: Frequency of Parental Visiting During Placement,  
Comparing 1974 Reviewed Cases and 1971 Placed Cases

<u>Frequency of Visits</u>	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Weekly	20	(23)	16	(15)
Monthly	22	(26)	18	(16)
3-4 per year	8	(10)	8	(7)
1-2 per year	5	(6)	18	(16)
Less than yearly	6	(7)	5	(5)
Amount Unclear	39	(45)	35	(32)
Some visiting		59 (117)		47 (91)
No recorded visiting		41 (82)		53 (102)
Total	<u>100%</u>	<u>(199)</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>(193)</u>

Table III-2: Barriers to Parental Visiting During Placement,  
Comparing 1974 Reviewed Cases and 1971 Placed Cases

	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Parent(s) <u>unable</u> to visit	33	(21)	32	(18)
Deceased		(7)		(4)
Physically ill		(0)		(1)
Institutionalized		(3)		(6)
No transportation		(3)		(6)
Other inability		(8)		(1)
Parent(s) available, but <u>unwilling</u> to visit	33	(21)	40	(23)
Parent(s) disappeared	27	(17)	25	(14)
Agency denied access	6	(4)	3	(2)
Other	-	(10)	-	(5)
Total	99%	(73)	100%	(62)

## Chapter III: Apendix A

### QUESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEWS

#### I. THE ORIGINS of "REVIEW of CHILDREN in PLACEMENT":

- A. Where and when did the original idea to set up a RCP procedure in N.J. come from?
  - 1. Who originally suggested it?
    - a. DYFS
    - b. BFS
  - 2. What originally convinced you that RCP was needed?
    - a. Time in out-of-home placement
    - b. Number of different placements
    - c. Mounting caseloads and costs
    - d. Complaints from children, parents, caseworkers, etc.
- B. Was there an underlying assumption that there was a failure to properly supervise cases?
  - a. Proper planning for cases
  - b. Proper follow-up of cases
- 1. Aside from inadequate handling of cases, what else could have affected the length of stay and the number and type of placements for children under supervision?
  - a. Changing population characteristics
  - b. State of the economy
  - c. Other administrative policies
  - d. Governmental/legal requirements
- 2. Were there any other alternatives to RCP considered?
  - a. What were they?
  - b. Were they adopted? Why/why not?

#### II. THE CONCEPTION of "REVIEW of CHILDREN in PLACEMENT":

- A. Was RCP originally conceived as part of DYFS?
  - 1. as a procedure
  - 2. with a special staff
- B. Was the intent to review all cases?
  - 1. how frequently
  - 2. what priorities
- C. What authority was the CRU to have?
  - 1. to advise or recommend
  - 2. to require review
  - 3. to require corrective action
    - a. specific
    - b. discretionary

#### III. THE IMPLEMENTATION of RCP:

- A. What problems arose in the implementation of RCP?
  - 1. scheduling
  - 2. staffing
  - 3. lines of authority
  - 4. procedural

Appendix A (cont'd)

- B. How did the implementation of RCP differ from the original conception of the program?
  - 1. authority of CRU
  - 2. extent
  - 3. timetable
- C. What caused the implementation to differ from the conception?
  - 1. insufficient funds for CRU
  - 2. insufficient funds for DO'S
  - 3. resistance or insufficient cooperation
  - 4. inadequate case records

IV. THE GOALS of RCP:

- A. What were the original objectives of RCP?
  - 1. lower caseload
  - 2. lower costs
  - 3. better placements
  - 4. shorter placements/case
  - 5. fewer placements/case
- B. How do you feel RCP has done in meeting those objectives?
  - 1. How do you know?
  - 2. What do you use to evaluate RCP?
- C. How likely is RCP to meet its objectives in the future?
  - 1. What changes will be necessary?
  - 2. if not likely, why not?
- D. Have there been any secondary or indirect advantages or disadvantages of RCP?
- E. What is your overall evaluation of RCP?
- F. Who has benefitted most from RCP?
  - 1. the child
  - 2. the parents
  - 3. the agency

V. INVOLVEMENT in RCP:

- A. To what extent were you involved in the planning and development of RCP?
  - 1. theorizing
  - 2. tasks
  - 3. time spent
- B. How are you involved in RCP now?
  - 1. monitoring
  - 2. evaluation
  - 3. development
  - 4. implementation
- C. How much of your time is involved with RCP on an on-going basis?
  - 1. constant/varied
  - 2. increasing/decreasing



## Chapter III: Appendix B

DIVISION OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES  
REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENTDO# **009**

N. NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DOB MO/DA/YR 11/27/72 RACE ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ CASE NO. E138511d  
W B H O

CURRENT VENDOR NO. 422-30-2854 CURRENT PLACEMENT CODE 013 STARTING MO/DA/YR 02/16/74  
DATE 01/04/74  
TOTAL NO. OF PLACEMENTS 1 DATE OF FIRST PLACEMENT BY DYFS MO/DA/YR  
DATE OF FIRST SEPARATION FROM PARENTS (IF DIFFERENT) MO/DA/YR 1/1 UNKNOWN ☐

## B. DYFS LEGAL AUTHORITY TO PLACE CHILD (CIRCLE ONE)

- ☒ 1. Voluntary Agreement for Placement  
☐ 2. Surrender of Custody-Mother  
☐ 3. Surrender of Custody-Legal Father  
☐ 4. Surrender of Custody-Putative Father  
☐ 5. Interlocutory Guardianship  
☐ 6. Final Guardianship  
☐ 7. PRS Order of Custody  
☐ 8. ACI Custody  
☐ 9. Other, e.g., JINS, Order of Custody, etc.  
Specify \_\_\_\_\_

## EFFECTIVE DATE

MO	DA	YR
01	03	74

## TERMINATION DATE

MO	DA	YR

## C. CASE GOAL (CIRCLE ONE)

- ☒ 1. Return to own family  
☐ 2. Adoption - Foster Parent  
☐ 3. Adoption - Selected Parent  
☐ 4. Independent Living (Only for child age 51 or over)  
☐ 5. Exceptional (Explain under comments)  
☐ 6. Undecided (Explain under comments)

## EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENT DATE

MO	DA	YR
		75

## D. MAJOR BARRIER TO GOAL ACHIEVEMENT (Circle up to one barrier in each category.)

Use comment section to explain.)

## Check Appropriate Box(es)

1. Parent  
a. Unwilling  
b. Unable  
c. Missing  
d. Deceased

Mother	Father

3. Resources  
a. No home available  
b. Inadequate resources for parent  
c. Inadequate resources for child

2. Child  
a. Unwilling  
b. Physical or Intellectual Problem  
c. Behavioral/Emotional Problem

- ☒ 4. Other (Specify) mother unable to care for child

## E. NATURAL PARENT ACTIVITY

Was there face-to-face (non-telephone, non-written) contact during this period?

## Parent-Child Visits

Mother	Father
YES NO	YES NO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Parent-Worker Visits

Mother	Father
YES NO	YES NO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## F. SIGNATURE OF SOCIAL WORKER:

## G. SUPERVISORY APPROVAL OF CASE-PRESENT STATUS

1. Granted  
2. Denied (Specify why) \_\_\_\_\_

Initials

LL

COMMENTS:

DO #

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State of New Jersey  
Division of Youth and Family Services

DYFS 17-15  
(new 6/75)

# REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

A. NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BIRTHDATE \_\_\_\_\_ RACE 

W	B	H	O
---	---	---	---

CASE NUMBER 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT VENDOR # \_\_\_\_\_ CURRENT PLACEMENT CODE \_\_\_\_\_ MADE \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL # OF PLACEMENTS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF FIRST PLACEMENT BY DYFS \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF FIRST SEPARATION FROM PARENTS (IF DIFFERENT) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ UNKNOWN

## B. DYFS LEGAL AUTHORITY TO PLACE CHILD (Circle appropriate #)

1. Voluntary Agreement for Placement
2. Surrender of Custody
3. No Agreement — Para Foster Home
4. Final Guardianship
5. Interlocutory Guardianship
6. PRS Order of Custody
7. JINS
8. Other, e.g. ACI Custody, Order of Custody
9. No Authority

	MOTHER		LEGAL FATHER		OTHER	
	MO.	YR.	MO.	YR.	MO.	YR.
Eff. Date						
Eff. Date						

EFFECTIVE DATE		TERMINATION DATE	
MO.	YR.	MO.	YR.

## C. EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR PLACEMENT:

## D. CASE GOAL (Circle One)

1. Return to own family
2. Adoption — Foster Parent
3. Adoption — Selected Parent
4. Independent Living (Only for child age 15 or over)
5. Long term foster care (Explain under "Comments")
6. Exceptional (Explain under "Comments")
7. Undecided (Explain under "Comments")

COMMENTS:

EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENT DATE	
MO.	YR.

## E. NATURAL FAMILY ACTIVITY

Date of last face-to-face contact \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last "Other" contact (telephone, letter, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY-CHILD CONTACT		
MOTHER	FATHER	RELATIVE

FAMILY-WORKER CONTACT		
MOTHER	FATHER	RELATIVE

## F. DESCRIBE THE MAJOR BARRIERS TO GOAL ACHIEVEMENT:

Caseworker  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

DO # \_\_\_\_\_

## REVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Case Name \_\_\_\_\_ Case # \_\_\_\_\_

Worker \_\_\_\_\_

After examining the Review of Children in Placement form (DYFS 17-15) submitted for the child named above, we have certain questions which are stated in paragraph B. Please indicate in paragraph C the response to these questions and return to the Case Review Unit within 10 working days of the receipt of this letter.

A. Case Status: (Check only if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_ Terminated \_\_\_\_\_ No Longer in Placement-Transferred to \_\_\_\_\_ (SPECIFY)

B. Question: Is the goal for this child "Adoption-Foster Parent"?

If so, what is the major barrier in realizing this goal? If there has been a change, please indicate.

C. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. Evaluation of Client Outcomes

A. Introduction

Any program innovation must ultimately justify itself on the basis of improvements in service to agency clients. This chapter presents findings from a study of the careers of a cohort of foster children who entered agency supervision in 1974 and who underwent administrative review. Key issues to be examined are the intake characteristics of these children and their families, the type and extent of case planning for their futures, and the final (or interim) outcomes of agency intervention. In order to help determine the extent of RCP's contributions to case planning and outcomes, the research design included a comparison cohort of children entering agency care before the establishment of the Review of Children in Placement program.

B. Methodology

## 1. Research Design

The preferred methodology to assess the effect of RCP on case outcomes would have been to create a true experimental design using random assignment to "treatment" and "control" groups. In lieu of strict random assignment, it would have been desirable to compare cases entering foster care during the same time period, with some undergoing review and others not. These approaches to the research were precluded by the fact that review was extended immediately to the entire DYFS out-of-home population. Nevertheless, a comparison group of some type was seen as indispensable for a proper evaluation. The study therefore chose a cohort sample of children entering foster care in 1971, before the present centralized monitoring system was instituted, to act as a comparison group for a sample of case reviewed children.

This compromise design is limited by both lack of random assignment and uncontrolled effects of historicity. The former problem is characteristic of most evaluative research and can be addressed through standard techniques of statistical analysis. The latter difficulty warrants a detailed discussion.

Historicity

The problem of historicity (i.e., the problem of comparing two similar events occurring at two different times) is unavoidable in a research design which seeks

to compare two different agency cohorts. As discussed in the preceding chapter, this agency has become increasingly aware in recent years of the problems of foster children and of community demands for accountability. This has resulted in a number of projects termed "surveys" or "reviews" of the foster care caseload, some statewide and some at the county level. There is considerable variation in the extent to which these activities have been documented. If any of these previous efforts were similar to the RCP program established in 1974, the argument might go, perhaps choosing a comparison group of clients from before 1974 might not result in an accurate test of the value of RCP, because of the effect of those earlier attempts at review. However, this possible difficulty is not as serious as it might appear, for the following reasons.

The purpose of this chapter is limited to determining whether RCP had an incremental effect on case outcomes beyond what would have occurred in the hypothetical absence of RCP. The fact that the agency may have been improving its management practices and thus improving its case outcomes in the 1970's before the establishment of RCP is not a key consideration here. This chapter's methodology makes it feasible only to ascertain whether children entering foster care in 1974 and undergoing the RCP process had better case planning and outcomes than children entering in 1971; we cannot conveniently determine whether the various statewide and county research and management control projects in the early 1970's had any influence on the handling of the 1971 cases, nor whether these projects had subtle, permanent effects on agency practices or attitudes which may have carried over to the handling of the 1974 cases.

However, the data of the previous chapter show that the most pertinent earlier project (the project termed "the 1971 review") could not have influenced individual case decisions or outcomes, nor did any informants connected with the project believe that such effects occurred. No follow-ups were conducted and the project itself was left uncompleted. The existence of this project apparently does not by itself represent a confounding factor in the research design for this chapter.

Despite its planning and procedural weaknesses, the RCP program was a considerable departure from earlier projects in terms of its administrative commitment and its degree of implementation; this should be apparent from Chapter III. RCP was not intended by its creators as a replication or continuation of previous projects, but was expected to produce significant and broad-based

improvements in foster care case planning, decision-making, and case outcomes. At least the program was publicly justified in these terms.

These considerations led us to believe that a 1971 cohort would be useful as a comparison group for the cases undergoing case review in 1974 and 1975. In any event, circumstances offered few suitable alternatives if a comparison group were to be used in connection with the evaluation at all. The only plausible comparison groups for this research are cohorts entering foster care between 1968 (when data on the caseload was first computerized by the agency)\* and 1971 (a later year would not have allowed a minimum follow-up time of three years before active cases encountered the 1974 review).\*\* It was advantageous to choose 1971 cases for comparisons because obviously the further back in time one goes, the greater the general problem of historicity. In brief, we believe that in evaluation research an imperfect but plausible comparison group is superior to no comparison group whatsoever.\*\*\*

However, the research design does attempt to compensate for some of the effects of historicity, within the limits of possibility. Two representative samples of non-placed agency supervised children from the two different time periods - 1971 and 1974 - also were selected for the study. Although of course neither group underwent case review, their inclusion has some potential methodological advantages. For example, if

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\*Although this study obtained its detailed data on clients from narrative case records, use of the agency's computerized files was necessary for sampling purposes.

\*\*During the design of the research we anticipated the possibility of continuing the evaluation project through two years, and thus a three-year follow-up time for all cases would have been required.

\*\*\*Naturally it would have been preferable if the needs of proper evaluation had been considered in the design of the RCP program, perhaps by allowing for a small, randomly selected control group of unreviewed children in 1974. But in this instance, as frequently happens, the ethical responsibility of evaluating programs was viewed by the agency as secondary to the perceived ethical responsibility of extending the opportunity for assumed program benefits to as many children as financially possible.

there were a temporal tendency towards a decreasing average time under supervision for agency children in general, whether in foster care or not, this tendency could be identified by comparing the two samples of non-placed children. Thus general agency policy or practice changes could be differentiated in theory from the effects that case review might have had on the careers of foster children.

#### Sample Description

The basic sample design consists of four groups of agency children:

- a. A representative sample of agency foster children who were case reviewed during November 1974 (some of whom remained in placement and thus were reviewed again in September 1975);
- b. A representative sample of agency foster children who were in out-of-placement during November 1971 (but of course were not reviewed)\*;
- c. A representative sample of agency children who were being supervised by DYFS while residing with parents during November 1974;
- d. A representative sample of agency children who were being supervised by DYFS while residing with parents during November 1971.

Certain types of cases were categorically excluded from these final samples:

- a. Children whose parents were enrolled in the Work Incentive Program (WIN);
- b. Children over the age of fifteen at case opening;
- c. Children whose cases were closed prior to the completion of 90 days continuous agency supervision;
- d. Children supervised by the agency for more than one year prior to the November 1974 case review

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\*That is, they were not reviewed until November 1974, assuming they remained active and were in foster care at that time. This is irrelevant for the evaluation study, because only the status of this sample at 18 months after case opening will be considered in the analysis.

(for the 1974 samples) or children supervised for more than one year prior to November 1971 (for the 1971 samples);

- e. Children with a completed period of supervision by the agency prior to their entry into the system in 1974 (for the 1974 samples) or in 1971 (for the 1971 samples) - i.e., those children re-entering the system in the respective years;
- f. Children supervised in Camden or Ocean Counties (for the 1974 samples only).

WIN cases were excluded because their purpose is to facilitate parental employment through provision of day care; they do not require or receive intensive casework. Older adolescents were not considered because their prospective stay in the system is relatively short. The ninety day supervision criterion was intended to exclude less serious cases. Conversely, the requirement that children not be involved with the agency more than a total of one year prior to case review was dictated by knowledge that review was proposed as an ongoing process, not merely as a one-time effort to purge the system of an accumulation of inappropriately placed children. The test of a continuous review model is not whether it can benefit those foster children who have been mired for years in the system, but whether it can prevent that from happening to children newly entering the system during successive years. Similarly, to have included children returning to agency care after a previous period of supervision would have distorted the research towards a test of what might have worked in the past, rather than an attempt to test what could be expected to work in the future for children newly entering foster care. Lastly, children supervised in Camden and Ocean Counties were excluded; case review was not implemented there because of other experimental programs being conducted in those offices at the time.\*

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\*Although it could not have been predicted in advance of the study, it was in fact unnecessary to introduce the 1971 and 1974 non-placed children into the analysis in order to produce a satisfactory evaluation of RCP. This additional data gathered by the project is useful for many other purposes, however. For example, a preliminary analysis of case outcomes which includes the 1971 non-placed children is presented in Chapter VII.



## 2. Sample Selection

The actual sampling procedures for the 1971 and 1974 cases were made as analogous as possible. The samples were obtained from the populations of children accepted for agency supervision during 1971 and 1974, respectively. In order to meet the requirement that cases be supervised for a minimum of 90 days and a maximum of one year before case review, only cases accepted by the agency between January 1 and July 31, 1974 were included in the 1974 samples; to create analogous comparison groups, only cases accepted between January 1 and July 31, 1971 were included in the 1971 samples.

A two-phase sampling procedure was used in the study. Two-phase sampling (sometimes termed "double sampling") "involves selecting the basic sample of elements not directly from the population of  $N$  elements, but from a larger sample of  $n_L$  elements. Ancillary information from the larger preliminary sample of  $n_L$  elements is used to improve the final sample of  $n$  elements" (Kish, 1965, 440-1). In two-phase sampling, the different phases of observation relate to sample units of the same type, while in two-stage sampling, the sample units are of different types at different stages (e.g., cluster samples).

Two-phase sampling was used independently for the populations of children entering supervision in 1971 and 1974, respectively. The preliminary populations of children were listed on computer tapes supplied by the agency's Data Processing Unit. In the first sampling phase, base populations of cases were constructed by computer selection of children according to the exclusion criteria (a), (b), (c), (d), and (f) given above, and simple random samples were then drawn from these base populations. The sizes of the base populations were  $N = 7,944$  for the 1974 cases and  $N = 3,826$  for the 1971 cases. The sizes of the random samples were  $N = 3,000$  and  $N = 612$  for the 1974 and 1971 cases, respectively. (The required sizes of the random samples were calculated contingent on prior information about the ratio of in-home to out-of-home supervised children in the two populations. Since this ratio was estimated to be considerably higher for the 1974 than the 1971 population, a larger random sample was needed from the former to provide a sufficient number of foster children for the second sampling phase).

A second sampling phase, based on these preliminary random samples, was necessary because the computerized listings of the populations did not allow us to identify which cases had completed a period of agency supervision

prior to 1971 or 1974, nor which cases were in foster placement on October 31, 1971 or October 31, 1974, respectively. The former information was needed to exclude cases on the basis of criterion (e) above, and the latter to draw the desired analytical sub-samples of in-home and out-of-home supervised cases for each year. Consequently, a manual quota sampling procedure was developed to complete the sample selections for each year.

Preparatory to quota sampling, the cases constituting each preliminary random sample were listed in random order. Card files in the agency's Central Office were then examined for each consecutive case to determine whether the case was in foster care on October 31, 1971 (or 1974), and whether the case had an episode of agency supervision prior to entering the caseload in 1971 or 1974, respectively. Cases with prior periods of agency involvement were excluded from the final samples. Cases were assigned to separate in-home and out-of-home sub-samples for each year until the desired number of cases for each type of sub-sample was obtained (quota sampling). This procedure was equivalent to drawing random samples from an original larger random sample.\*

After cross-checking with computerized data derived from the Review of Children in Placement forms, we found (as expected) that the vast majority of children in out-of-home placement on October 31, 1974 were reviewed during November, as they should have been. However, since not all categories of placements (e.g., adoption homes, group homes) were included in the review process, some cases were in placement on that date but were not reviewed. The final samples, representative of their respective populations, were as follows:

- a. Children in out-of-home placement on October 31, 1974 and case reviewed (N = 221);
- b. Children in out-of-home placement on October 31, 1974 and not reviewed (N = 19);
- c. Children supervised at home on October 31, 1974 (N = 50);

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\*Technically, this pragmatic procedure reduces the efficiency of the final random samples in comparison with the original random samples, but does not introduce any systematic bias into the final samples.

- d. Children in out-of-home placement on October 31, 1971 (N = 193); and
- e. Children supervised at home on October 31, 1971 (N = 180).

### 3. Sources of Data

The basic data source for the client outcomes evaluation was narrative case records maintained in 26 different local offices throughout New Jersey. All active cases and many recently closed cases were physically located in these offices; cases closed for more than one year are sent by the local offices to the single Central Office in Trenton for microfilming and were located there. Project staff traveled to the various locations and coded the case record information onto two instruments. The core instrument is the 33-page Supervision Form which obtains family background, intake, agency processing and discharge data for each child. In addition, each case had a Placement Form completed for each move while under agency supervision, whether representing a foster placement or an intervening return home. The data from the Supervision and Placement Forms were then coded and computerized.

The data collection took place between November 1975 and June 1976. In order to maximize the retrospective follow-up times for each sample, the 1971 cases were located and coded before the 1974 cases. Comparisons of outcomes between 1971 and 1974 cases were made as of 18 months after case opening - which was the longest follow-up time possible for the 1974 cases. In addition, the status of each case was also ascertained as of the date that the case record was coded by our staff.

The Project used a number of important supplementary data sources. Computerized information from RCP forms completed by workers during the 1974 and 1975 reviews was supplied to the Project by the agency's Data Processing Unit. These data were merged with the Project's case record data for those reviewed cases included in the 1974 sample. The Project also had access to data from the agency's ongoing information/accounting system (the Child Master Record). The latter was useful primarily during the sample selection process.

Although the process of locating the physical case records was tedious and not without pitfalls, some information was ultimately obtained on virtually all cases originally selected for our samples. However, the case record data themselves were of varying quality

and completeness. Although some District Offices have recently attempted to introduce some systemization into their recording practices, most records with which the Project dealt took the traditional form of a relatively unstructured chronological narrative, accompanied by relevant documentation. Thus there tended to be rather high rates of missing information on any single item of interest.

Part of the evaluation procedure involved matching data obtained from case records with data reported on the RCP forms. Unfortunately, there was no common identifier available to guarantee the accuracy of the matching process. To ensure reasonable accuracy, cases with questionable matches were eliminated from the analysis. There were 221 cases in the final 1974 sample. In 197 cases, we established a match between the case record data and the RCP data, i.e., we were confident either that data on the same child in the same out-of-home placement was being compared, or that there was no evidence to the contrary. But complete RCP data could only be located on 182 out of these 197 cases. Depending on the issue, the following tables for the 1974 sample are based on anywhere between 197 and 182 cases.

Children who were already placed in adoptive homes on the October 31, 1974 review date were not included in the review process. In order to establish an analogous comparison group, children in the 1971 placed sample who were already in adoptive homes on October 31, 1971 were excluded from the analysis. After exclusion of such cases, 178 children comprise the 1971 out-of-home comparison group for the client outcomes evaluation.

#### C. Analysis of Client Outcomes Data

##### 1. Case Characteristics at Agency Intake

In order to use children placed in 1971 as a valid comparison group for 1974 case reviewed children, it is helpful to show that the two groups are in fact similar on characteristics which might plausibly be associated with differential case outcomes. Dissimilarities which exist between the groups will have to be explicitly considered in any interpretation of the findings.

In the following tables, a "surrogate parent" is defined as an individual who has had a significant relationship with the child, involving primary or secondary caretaking responsibility for the child, before agency involvement in the case. A "surrogate parent" may be related to the child, e.g., a grandmother,

although not all grandmothers may qualify as surrogate parents, or the person may be totally unrelated: it is the extent and depth of the relationship with the child which is at issue. These individuals often qualify as the true "psychological parents" of the child (Goldstein, et al., 1973:9-28). The "surrogate" concept was chosen for the study in preference to the official "parafoster" category, to which it is similar, because the latter was regarded as too restrictive for the purposes of the study.\*

#### Demographic Characteristics (Tables IV-1A--1E):

The sex distributions of the two cohort samples are identical. Males are somewhat overrepresented in proportion to their existence in the general population, a typical finding for foster care caseloads (e.g., Fanshel, 1976).

The 1971 cases are younger than the 1974 cases, reflecting a gradual change in the age composition of the total DYFS caseload (cf. Arden, 1975).

There are marginally more black foster children in the 1974 group. This again reflects a long-term trend in the DYFS caseload.

The religious backgrounds of the samples are virtually identical, although comparisons may be affected by the greater propensity of caseworkers in 1974 to consider religion as "unknown". The marginal drop-off of Catholics between 1971 and 1974 is a consequence of the changing ethnic composition of the agency caseload.

The great majority of children in both the 1974 and 1971 cohorts were born in New Jersey. Again comparisons are difficult because of an increasing caseworker tendency to consider the item "unknown".

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\*According to the agency's definition, a "parafoster" home is "a home where eligibility for AFDC does not exist because relationship (sic) could not be proved and [DYFS] accepts the home as a foster home because this is the only home the child has known...." Formerly the parafoster board rates were set to coincide with AFDC payments rather than foster care board payments. Beginning on January 1, 1976, board payments to parafoster parents were made equal to those received by regular foster parents. Parafoster parents now receive annual and quarterly clothing allowances and the same services as regular foster parents.

Referral Source (Table IV-1F):

The 1971 cases were more likely to be referred to DYFS by a parent or relative, while the 1974 cases were relatively more likely to be referred from some other source, especially another adult caretaker of the child, the school, or another social agency. As shown in tables not reported here, this finding primarily reflects the age differences between the cohorts.

Socioeconomic Status (Table IV-2A,B):

About half the natural families in both cohorts received public assistance as their principal source of income. However, surrogate parents caring for children in 1974 were twice as likely to be on public assistance as the surrogate parents of 1971. (As discussed above, "surrogate" parents are individuals, not necessarily relatives, who have established a significant relationship with the child prior to agency involvement and are currently the primary caretakers of the child. Of course, the child may also have living "natural", i.e., biological parents).

Secondly, a global judgment of the "standard of living" of each family in the samples was made considering the sum of the economic data available in the case record. The measure was found to correlate highly with such more specific indicators as family income, education of caretakers, source of income, etc. There were no substantial differences between families in the two samples on this measure. Unfortunately, even minimal socioeconomic data was not available from the case records in about a third of the cases.

Location of Child at Case Opening (Table IV-3):

The locations of children in the 1971 and 1974 cohort samples at the time of application for agency supervision were remarkably similar. Approximately equal proportions of children resided with a natural parent, with a surrogate family, with some other family ("foster family"), or in an institutional setting. Some children who were not actually residing with a natural parent at case opening may have had such a parent potentially available to them -- this was most true of children already institutionalized at the time of case opening and least true of children residing with a surrogate family.

The main difference between the samples occurs in the breakdown of the parental category: the 1971 cases were more likely to be with their mothers as new-borns or unborns. According to the tables not shown here, this reflects differences in the age distribution of the cohorts. However, the proportion of children in categories 1 and 2 together -- single mothers -- is about the same for the 1971 and 1974 cases (65% and 58% of all those children residing with parent(s), respectively). Few children in either cohort resided with both natural parents.

Substitute Care Plan at Case Opening (Table IV-4A):

Approximately 30% of each sample were accepted for initial supervision with no immediate intention by the agency of providing substitute care, although of course these were all children who were subsequently placed by October 31 of the respective years. The 1974 cases were somewhat more likely to be scheduled for institutional care, the 1971 cases for family foster care.

Reason for Foster Placement at Case Opening (Table IV-4B):

Although there were some differences in the primary reason for placement (as given by the caseworker) between the 1971 and 1974 samples, this can again be explained by the differences in the age distributions. The 1971 cases, who were younger, were placed more often for "unwillingness or inability to assume care", "abandonment", and "family dysfunction", and less likely to be placed for "child behavior" or "neglect/abuse", reasons which all have a high correlation with age in our data [Moreover, the first named reason is assigned exclusively to infants, according to Jenkins' and Norman's' (1972) definition].

Summary:

This section compared the 1974 and 1971 cohort samples on background and intake characteristics at case opening. The samples were similar except for the age distributions and a few characteristics which are highly correlated with age. These differences, particularly the fact that the 1974 cohort was considerably older than the 1971 cohort, will be taken into account in the following analysis. Assuming due caution, the 1971 sample of placed children seems to be a serviceable comparison group for the 1974 sample of case reviewed children.

## 2. Characteristics of the Review of Children in Placement Process

### Agency Placement of Child (Table IV-5A,B):

The types of placement in which children resided on October 31, 1974 or 1971 were virtually identical for the two cohort samples.\* Over one-half of each group were in foster family homes, almost a fifth were with surrogate families, and about another fifth were in an institutional setting. Almost all homes in the "foster" and "surrogate family" categories were boarding homes, i.e., receiving payments for child care from the agency, although a few were not receiving such payments due to a lack of need or desire.

In the majority of cases in both cohorts, the placement children were in on October 31 was not their first domicile under agency supervision. After case opening, most children had either been supervised in at least two foster homes, or in a combination of in-home and foster placements, by October 31 of the respective years. In the latter situations, children typically had remained with their natural parent(s), either on a "trial" basis or awaiting foster placement, before being removed from the parent(s). Recall that in one-third of the cases in both cohorts, there was no original agency intention to place the child out of the home in which he or she originally resided at case opening (Table IV-4A).

### Case Goals (Table IV-6A,B):

A major facet of the RCP process was to require workers to select explicit goals for their cases. Two sets of data exist on case goals. First, we have available for each child in the 1974 cohort sample the "RCP case goal" information from the actual Review of Children in Placement forms submitted by the local workers to the Central Office. This represents the case goal identified and/or assigned by the worker at the time of review in November, 1974.\*\* Secondly, through case record reading,

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\*For the 1974 sample, these placements were of course not due to RCP, but were what RCP was confronted with.

\*\*For cases who remained active and were in placement in September 1975, the Project also has available RCP data reported at the second review. However, analysis based on the 1975 RCP data contributed little to the evaluation and is not being reported here.



the staff of this project identified the case goal given by the worker at the beginning of the placement which was subsequently reviewed in 1974, or for the 1971 cases, the placement in which the child was located on October 31, 1971. These case goals are termed "supervision goal at placement" in the report. This results in three separate sets of data on case goals, as shown in Table IV-6.

One problem in identifying goals at the beginning of an individual placement from the case record is that it was sometimes ambiguous whether the worker intended the goal stated at case opening to be carried over to that subsequent placement. The data have been coded conservatively on this point: Unless the worker explicitly repeated his statement of the original goal when subsequently placing or re-placing a child, we did not assume that the goal stated at case opening remained applicable, though that may well have been the worker's intention.

At case opening, a definite written goal was found in the case record for 90% of the 1974 cases (i.e., excludes all cases where goal was "foster care, outcome undecided" or "unknown"). At the start of the placement which subsequently underwent review, the case records show that 62% of the 1974 children had a definite written goal, based on the conservative categorization rule outlined above (Table IV-6A and note "b"). In comparison, the rate of goal setting obtained by means of the special RCP form was between these two figures: 77% of the 1974 reviewed cases had a definite goal entered on the form (i.e., excludes all cases where goal was "undecided" and three cases where goal was "unknown": Table IV-6B and note "e").

Thus the notion that workers generally do not have goals in mind when they supervise children, and/or that they usually fail to write them down, was not confirmed by these data. Written goals were not always less identifiable from the narrative case records than from the RCP forms. Indeed, certain workers described case goals and plans in their records in much more detail than represented by our classification of "supervision goals" or RCP's classification of "case goals". Conversely, there appear to be some cases in which the worker is unable to state definite case goals at placement, whether or not a special form is used to elicit such goal information (The comparative realism of the goals as stated in the case records and on the RCP forms will be addressed shortly).

According to the case record data, at placement 43% of the 1974 cohort were definitely to be returned home, 7% were to be adopted, and 12% were slated for long-term foster care (either family foster care or institution-alization). Sixteen percent of the children were to remain in the care of surrogate parents, with no definite plans for adoption. The 1971 cases, who were generally younger, were only half as likely as the 1974 cases to be scheduled for long-term foster care (6%) and more than twice as likely to have a goal of adoption (17%). (Tables not reported here show that older children in each cohort do indeed have less "desirable" case goals.)

According to the RCP forms, 53% of the 1974 cohort had a goal of "return to own family" and 13% had a goal of adoption, percentages higher than those in the corresponding categories of supervision goals at placement based on case record data. The study also found that the "exceptional" goal category on the RCP form apparently included largely children expected to remain in residence with their surrogate parents. (The relationship between supervision goals at placement and RCP case goals will be discussed further in Chapter V).

Expected Goal Achievement Dates (Tables IV-7A, B; Table IV-8A):

In addition to selecting or identifying case goals, the RCP process required workers to specify a time period within which the goals would be attained. Among those workers giving an expected goal achievement date, as shown in Table IV-7A, about half said the goal would be achieved no later than December 1975 (about one year after initial review), and three-quarters said it would be achieved no later than June 1976 (about one and one-half years after initial review). Table IV-7B presents this data in an alternative manner: about half of the workers expected the goal to be attained within one and one-half years of the placement starting date, and three-quarters expected goal achievement within two years of that date.

These tables may be misleading because such a large proportion of caseworkers (about one-third) failed to enter a date, although they usually did complete the remainder of the RCP form. As will be discussed Chapter V, many workers were unable to volunteer a precise date. It is possible that the longer a worker expected a placement to continue, the less able the worker felt to give a precise expected termination date, and that therefore the distributions in Tables IV-7A and B are

biased towards shorter expected goal achievement times. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that about 75% of the cases with "exceptional" and "undecided" goals were not given an explicit goal achievement date (cf. Table IV-9).

Table IV-8A presents expected goal achievement times cross-tabulated with RCP case goals. Children scheduled for eventual return to their own families had the shortest expected goal achievement times, and children with "other" goals (primarily "exceptional" and "independent living") had by far the longest times. Adoption was generally believed by workers to take longer to achieve than restoration home.

### 3. Case Outcomes of Review of Children in Placement

#### Current Placement status (Table IV-8B):

According to data collected between February and May 1976, about one-half of the 1974 cohort were no longer in the placements which had originally been reviewed, although the cases remained active for over 80% of the cohort sample. Placements were most likely to be terminated for children who had been scheduled to return home and least likely to be terminated for children whose adoption was planned. Virtually no children with the goal of adoption had their cases closed, however. Thus, while the adoption cases were evidently in stable home situations, they were remaining under agency supervision. In general, there was some progress in terminating placements, but little progress in closing cases, during the approximately one and one-half years subsequent to the 1974 case review.

#### Actual Goal Achievement Time (Table IV-9):

Caseworkers were not particularly accurate in their assignment of expected goal achievement dates. Placements were terminated after the expected date, or were "overdue" for termination, in about as many cases as they were terminated within the expected period. Workers were especially inaccurate in predicting the length of time adoption would take.

Placement Termination Reasons (Tables IV-10 and 11):

Why did transitions in placements occur? Apparently only a third of the 1974 placements were terminated because the original precipitating reasons for placement were improved or resolved during agency intervention. (Table IV-10). In one-half of the cases problems of one sort or another arose to lead to the termination of that placement -- this was especially true for those cases in which the RCP case goal was something other than return home or adoption. Temporary placements and court-ordered replacements accounted for a negligible percentage of transitions. In five cases, the new placement was seen by the worker as superior to the previous one (e.g., the child was moved to a relative), although the primary reason for placement itself remained unaddressed.

What types of problems arise during placement and lead to breakdowns of those placements? For the 1974 cases, behavioral problems of the child were the leading cause, although foster parent or institution-related difficulties were not far behind (Table IV-11). In the latter cases, the agency often believed that the child's foster parents were in some way inadequate to their tasks; or institutions were unable to continue caring for the child. Natural parent disruptions of placements were not particularly important as causes of placement failure in either cohort, perhaps an interesting finding. One might also observe that most placements failed because of the problems of adults or institutions, rather than problems directly attributable to the children.

However, we note that the failure of a placement does not necessarily mean that the agency has failed to achieve its "case goal". Sometimes, for instance, children with a goal of return home were returned home sooner than was desired as a result of the collapse of their placement. (This indicates one possible deficiency of "return home" as an outcome criterion.)

Case Status (Table IV-11B):

The case status of children in the 1974 and 1971 cohorts was compared at 18 months after case opening: about the same percentages of children in both groups were still under agency supervision. However, it is necessary to consider the possible influence of the observed age differences between the cohorts on these results.

Age was not identically correlated with case status in the two cohorts: older children in the 1971 cohort

were less likely than younger children to have their cases closed after 18 months, while older children in the 1974 cohort were more likely to have them closed. (cf. Claburn et al., Forthcoming). Moreover, as we have seen, the 1974 cases were generally older than the 1971 cases. Aside from any possible effects of review, then, one should expect that the 1974 cases would have been closed more often on the average than the 1971 cases; yet as the table shows, there was virtually no difference. Thus the age differences between the cohorts certainly cannot explain the observed lack of association between case review and case status after 18 months of supervision. The age differences would in fact have tended to exaggerate differences in case closing in favor of the 1974 cohort, rather than to have reduced them.

Is it conceivable that review could have influenced children of different ages in a different manner in the 1974 cohort, thus leading to the observed reversal of the relationship between age and case status in the two cohorts? In other words is it possible that, in 1974, the older children benefited more from review than the younger children? This does not seem likely. First, it is usually believed that, if review does exhibit a differential effect by age, the younger children would be expected to benefit more than the older children.\* Nevertheless, children under the age of six in the 1974 cohort were actually somewhat more likely than children under six in the 1971 cohort to remain under agency supervision after 18 months. If review had no beneficial effects on the younger children, then it is doubtful whether it could have had them on the older children. On the basis of this analysis, RCP does not appear to have altered the rate at which children were leaving supervision after 18 months, in comparison to the rate observed three years earlier.

#### Child's Location (Table IV-12A):

How desirable were the locations of children in the two cohorts as of 18 months after case opening? At least half the children in both samples were living with an agency foster family or in an institution, though the 1974 children were somewhat more likely to be institutionalized and less likely to be with a foster family. The 1974 cases were marginally more likely to be residing with a natural parent, but much less likely to be placed in an adoptive home (some of those children returned to their parents also had their cases terminated,

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\*Recall that the older children in our cohort samples entered supervision at the same time as the younger children.

while others continued to supervised in their own homes). About equal percentages of both groups were residing with a surrogate family; such cases tended to remain active.

The differences in children's locations which exist between the two cohorts can be explained again by the differences in the age distributions: the younger the child, the more likely he is to be adopted rather than returned home, and the older the child, the more likely he is to be found in an institution rather than with a foster family.

A complicating factor is that a new Bureau of Resource Development (BRD), responsible for home-finding and adoption processing, was established as part of the reorganization of DYFS in 1972.

It is difficult to distinguish between the effects of BRD's creation and the effects of RCP, if any, on achieving greater permanency for foster children. Apparently most, if not all, of the adoptive home placements in the 1971 cohort which occurred within 18 months after case opening were still transacted in the local District Offices. The gradual increase in BRD's activities may be reflected in the fact that 13 children in the 1974 cohort were referred to BRD within 18 months after case opening, while only three children in the 1971 cohort were referred within a similar time span (Table IV-12A, notes b, c, d). One could argue that this administrative reorganization has increased the length of time needed for adoption processing (though it may have other advantages), and that the way to test whether case review has influenced adoptions would be to treat adoptive placements and adoptive referrals as equally satisfactory outcomes when comparing the 1974 and 1971 cohorts. The obvious objection to this procedure is that referrals do not necessarily lead to adoptive placements -- some unsystematic agency data corroborates this point -- and that increasing referrals of older and minority children will probably decrease the overall rate of success in achieving placements\*. In other words, we know that some proportion of the referrals to BRD will achieve adoption, but we are not certain what proportion will.

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\*Of course, increasing referrals is worthwhile if some children are adopted who otherwise would not have been, whatever the rate of successful adoption.

Nevertheless, even grouping the adoptive referrals and placements together for purposes of comparison would not greatly alter the general distribution of case outcomes, although it would narrow considerably the gap between the 1974 and 1971 cases in the adoption category (7% versus 9%, respectively).

We note that the lack of strong differences between the 1974 and 1971 cases in their location as of 18 months after case opening cannot be explained by a temporal difference in the availability or accessibility of parents, as measured at case opening: as shown in table IV-3, about equal percentages of children in both cohorts were residing with a natural parent at that time.

Despite some inevitable ambiguities which exist in comparing cohorts at two different points in time, we can conclude that, as of 18 months after case opening, the data failed to demonstrate that the 1974 case reviewed children were residing in locations preferable to those of the unreviewed 1971 children.

Number of Moves (Table IV-12):

One desirable consequence of RCP would have been to decrease the rate at which children move from placement to placement. The table indicates that there were virtually no differences between the 1974 and 1971 cohorts in the number of changes of residence experienced during agency supervision. The children with "no moves" were primarily children residing with surrogate parents at agency intake. Thus, in comparison to the situation three years earlier, RCP does not seem to have influenced the degree to which shifting of placements occurred.\*

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\*Twenty percent of the 1974 cases had four or more moves versus only 15% of the 1971 cases. This appears to be because 1974 children tended to be in their second placement on October 31, more often than the corresponding 1971 children -- usually after a brief first placement consisting of a short period of supervision in their natural homes before foster placement (Table IV-5B). Furthermore, the reason why more of the 1974 cases were not placed immediately was that more of them were awaiting institutional placement (Table IV-4A). Of course RCP had nothing to do with this delay of service availability at intake.

Goal Attainment (Table IV-13):

To what extent were the goals specified by caseworkers at placement actually achieved as of 18 months after case opening? In this study, goal attainment for the 1974 cases was measured using both case goals entered on the RCP forms and supervision goals derived from the case records. Moreover, goals based on the case record data were available to compare goal attainment for the 1974 and 1971 cohorts (See previous discussion.)

According to the table, goals at placement of "return to natural parent(s)" were more frequently attained for the 1974 cases than for the 1971 cases. Of those 1974 children with a supervision goal of "return to natural parents", 54% were actually returned, versus only 30% of the 1971 children with the same goal. However, the pattern was not the same for prospective adoption cases. Of those 1974 children with a goal of "adoption", one child was placed with adoptive parents versus ten of the 1971 children with that goal.\*

At least with respect to restorations home, it seems that between 1971 and 1974 caseworkers increased their success in choosing realistic case goals and/or in implementing plans to achieve those goals. But to what extent did RCP contribute to this difference between the 1971 and 1974 cohorts? Comparing the first two rows in Table IV-13, we see that the RCP case goals of "return to own family" were less likely to be achieved than the corresponding supervision goals abstracted from the case records. In other words, the goals specified by caseworkers prior to the actual reviews were better predictors of outcomes than were the goals subsequently entered on the case review forms.

Goals of "adoption" show a similar pattern: Comparing the fourth and fifth rows of the table shows that twice as many children were assigned a goal of adoption on the RCP forms than were assigned that goal in the written case records, but none of these additional children with a goal of adoption were actually placed in an adoptive home.

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\*As discussed previously, if referrals to BRD are considered, this large difference would be considerably reduced, but not eliminated.



Although the RCP process appears to have increased the proportions of desirable case goals specified by workers, desirable case outcomes have not correspondingly increased. Goals as specified by workers in the case records were more realistic predictors of case outcomes than were the goals entered on the RCP forms. Thus by this measure, RCP does not seem to have improved the case planning process.

#### 4. Summary and Conclusions

Since a major objective of Review of Children in Placement was to improve case planning and case outcomes for clients, this chapter compared cohorts of children who did and did not undergo case review. The adequacy of the research design was limited by problems of historicity and by the maximum 18 month follow-up period for the cases. Within these restrictions, no differences between the cohorts which could be attributed to RCP were found as of 18 months after case opening on case status, number of residential moves, residential location, or extent of goal attainment. The frequency with which written case goals appeared in case records and on RCP forms was about the same; however, goals as specified by workers in the case record were better predictors of outcomes than goals entered in the RCP forms.

It is conceivable that the effects of RCP may not occur until after the 18 month follow-up period of this evaluation. However, it should be recognized that those cases which remained in the caseload long enough after the 1974 review were reviewed again in 1975, and that there was an average time lapse of an additional six months after that second review before the research project collected its data on the same cases. This would seem to have offered ample time for some improvements in outcomes to appear.

Table IV-1: Distributions of 1974 and 1971 Cohort Samples  
on Selected Variables

		<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A.	<u>Sex</u>				
	Male	58	(114)	58	(103)
	Female	42	(83)	42	(75)
B.	<u>Age in Years</u>				
	Unborn	2	(4)	9	(16)
	Less than one	10	(19)	15	(26)
	One-two	9	(17)	12	(21)
	Three-five	17	(34)	16	(28)
	Six-eight	14	(28)	15	(27)
	Nine-eleven	19	(37)	16	(28)
	Twelve-fourteen	29	(58)	18	(32)
C.	<u>Ethnicity</u>				
	White	40	(78)	42	(75)
	Black <sup>a</sup>	54	(106)	50	(89)
	Hispanic	6	(13)	7	(13)
	Other	--	(0)	1	(1)
D.	<u>Religious Background</u>				
	Protestant	61	(88)	61	(91)
	Catholic	34	(48)	38	(57)
	Other	5	(7)	1	(1)
	Unknown	--	(54)	--	(29)

<sup>a</sup>Includes "interracial"

Table IV-1 (Continued)

		<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
E.	<u>Birthplace of Child</u>				
	New Jersey	73	(100)	(81)	(125)
	Southern U. S.	9	(13)	(3)	(5)
	Other U. S.	14	(19)	(13)	(20)
	Latin America, Puerto Rico	4	(5)	(3)	(4)
	Unknown	--	(60)	--	(24)
F.	<u>Referral Source</u>				
	Parent	24	(48)	37	(65)
	Relative	6	(12)	9	(16)
	Other adult caretaker	13	(25)	8	(15)
	Welfare board	11	(22)	11	(19)
	Court	7	(13)	6	(11)
	School	12	(23)	6	(10)
	Health personnel	7	(14)	6	(10)
	Police	3	(7)	4	(7)
	Social agency	7	(13)	4	(7)
	Other and unknown	10	(20)	10	(18)
		Total N= 197		Total N= 178	

Table IV-2: (A) Principal Source of Income and (B) Standard of Living for Natural and Surrogate Families, Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases.

	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>				<u>Placed 1971</u>			
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<u>A. Principal Source of Income</u>								
Employment	45	(59)	40	(16)	42	(47)	56	(13)
Public assistance	45	(58)	50	(20)	48	(54)	22	(5)
Social Security	6	(8)	5	(2)	6	(7)	9	(2)
Other (relatives, child support, etc.)	4	(5)	5	(2)	4	(5)	13	(3)
Unknown or not applicable	--	(67)	--	(157)	--	(65)	--	(155)
Totals	100%	(197)	100%	(197)	100%	(197)	100%	(178)
<u>B. Standard of Living<sup>a</sup></u>								
Comfortable	9	(11)	16	(5)	11	(11)	9	(2)
Modest	25	(30)	16	(5)	15	(15)	27	(6)
Marginally above public assistance	7	(8)	6	(2)	10	(10)	14	(3)
Public assistance level	53	(65)	53	(17)	58	(58)	36	(8)
Below public assistance level	7	(8)	9	(3)	6	(6)	14	(3)
Unknown or not applicable	--	(75)	--	(165)	--	(78)	--	(156)
Totals	100%	(197)	100%	(197)	100%	(178)	100%	(178)

<sup>a</sup>Based on judgments made by Project Staff from case record data.

TABLE IV-3: Location of Child at Case Opening, Comparing 1974 Reviewed Cases and 1971 Placed Cases

<u>Location of Child at Case Opening</u>	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Natural Parent(s)	58%	(111)	58%	(98)
1. Mother - child unborn or newborn		(6)		(24)
2. Mother - other		(58)		(40)
3. Mother and paramour		(12)		(8)
4. Father		(11)		(7) <sup>a</sup>
5. Father and paramour		(7)		(3)
6. Both natural parents		(17)		(17) <sup>b</sup>
Surrogate family	21%	(41)	19%	(32)
Foster family <sup>c</sup>	9%	(17) <sup>d</sup>	11%	(19)
Institution	11%	(21)	11%	(18)
1. Shelter/temporary detention		(9)		(8)
2. Health		(6)		(4)
3. Delinquent		(3)		(5)
4. Emotionally disturbed		(3)		(1)
Other	1%	(2)	1%	(2)
Unknown		(5)		(8)
Total	100%	(197)	100%	(178)

<sup>a</sup>Includes one adoptive father

<sup>b</sup>Includes one pair of adoptive parents

<sup>c</sup>Identifies children living in homes with caretakers who are neither their natural nor surrogate parents.

<sup>d</sup>Includes one "group home".

Table IV-4: (A) Substitute Care Plan and (B) Primary Reason for Foster Placement at Case Opening, Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases

	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A. <u>Substitute Care Plan</u>				
Family Foster Care	46	(91) <sup>a</sup>	56	(100) <sup>b</sup>
Institution	21	(41)	14	(25)
Substitute care plan, type unknown	3	(6)	1	(2)
No plan for substitute care <sup>c</sup>	30	(59)	29	(51)
B. <u>Reason for Foster Placement<sup>d</sup></u>				
Child behavior	27	(43)	20	(27)
Unwillingness or in- ability to continue care	24	(38)	21	(28)
Neglect or abuse	20	(32)	10	(13)
Unwillingness or inability to assume care	9	(15)	20	(27)
Family dysfunction	8	(13)	13	(17)
Abandonment or desertion	6	(10)	10	(14)
Mental illness	7	(4)	6	(8)
Physical illness	1	(1)	1	(1)
Not immediately placed	--	(35)	--	(35)
Unknown	--	(3)	--	(8)
	Total N= 197		Total N= 178	

<sup>a</sup>Includes three "group home".

<sup>b</sup>Includes one "group home".

<sup>c</sup>Includes cases where children were expected to remain in residence with surrogate parents

<sup>d</sup>Cases were coded according to the typology developed by Jenkins and Norman (1972)

TABLE IV-5: Agency Placement of Child on either October 31, 1974 or 1971,  
Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases

A. <u>Agency Placement Type</u>	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Surrogate family <sup>a</sup>	18	(36)	17	(28)
Foster family <sup>a</sup>	57	(112)	61	(104)
Institution	23	(46)	21	(35)
Other	2	(3)	1	(2)
Unknown	-	(0)	-	(9)
B. <u>Placement Number</u> <sup>b</sup>				
First	37	(73)	45	(77)
Second	40	(79)	35	(59)
Third	12	(23)	12	(21)
Fourth or greater	11	(22)	8	(14)
Unknown	-	(0)	-	(7)

<sup>a</sup>Includes free homes and boarding homes

<sup>b</sup>Counts both periods of supervision in the natural home and periods of placements out-of-home.

Table IV-6: Case Goals, Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases

	<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<u>A. Supervision Goal at Placement<sup>a</sup></u>				
Return to natural parent(s)	43	(65)	38	(53)
Long-term foster care	12	(18)	6	(8)
Foster care, outcome undecided	20	(30)	23	(32)
Care with surrogate parent	16	(24)	15	(21)
Adoption - surrogate	3	(5)	0	(0)
Adoption - other	4	(7)	17	(24)
Other	2	(3)	1	(2)
Unclear at placement	--	(45) <sup>b</sup>	--	(38)
 <u>B. RCP Case Goal<sup>c</sup></u>				
Return to own family	53	(94)		
Adoption-foster parent <sup>d</sup>	9	(17)		
Adoption-selected parent	4	(7)		
Independent living	3	(6)		
Exceptional	9	(17)		
Undecided	21	(38)		
Unknown <sup>e</sup>	--	(18)		
		Total N = (178)	Total N = (178)	

<sup>a</sup>Based on the Project's case record data; shows case goal indicated by the worker at the beginning of the placement in which the child was located on October 31, 1974 or 1971.

<sup>b</sup>At case opening, the distribution of goals for these 45 children was as follows: Return to natural parents (20%), long-term foster care (4%), foster care, outcome undecided (22%), care with surrogate parent (11%), care with natural parents (22%) and unknown (20%). The complete case record could not be located for some of the "unknowns".

<sup>c</sup>Based on agency Review of Children in Placement forms; shows case goals assigned to 1974 cohort sample at the time of review.

<sup>d</sup>Refers to the foster parent(s) with whom child is currently residing.

<sup>e</sup>Includes 15 cases whose RCP forms could not be located.



Table IV-7: (A) Date of Expected Goal Achievement, and  
(B) Time Between Placement Date and Expected  
Goal Achievement Date,  
1974 Reviewed Cases

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A. <u>Date of Expected Goal Achievement<sup>a</sup></u>	%	(N)
November-December, 1974	12	(14)
January-June, 1975	26	(31)
July-December, 1975	16	(19)
January-June, 1976	22	(26)
July-December, 1976	7	(8)
January-December, 1977	8	(9)
January-June, 1978	3	(4)
July, 1978 and beyond	6	(7)
Unknown <sup>b</sup>	-	(79)
B. <u>Time Between Placement Date and Expected Goal Achievement Date<sup>a</sup></u>		
0 - 6 months	14	(16)
7 - 12 months	18	(20)
13 - 18 months	25	(28)
19 - 24 months	19	(21)
25 - 30 months	8	(9)
31 - 36 months	7	(8)
Over 3 years	9	(10)
Unknown <sup>c</sup>	-	(85)

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<sup>a</sup>Based on agency Review of Children in Placement forms.

<sup>b</sup>Includes 4 cases with dates prior to October, 1974 (errors),  
and 15 cases whose RCP forms could not be located.

<sup>c</sup>Includes 15 cases whose RCP forms could not be located.

Table IV-8: (A) Time Between Placement Date and Expected Goal Achievement Date, and  
(B) Current Placement Status, by RCP Case Goal<sup>a</sup> (1974 Reviewed Cases).

A. Time Between Placement Date and Expected Goal Achievement Date <sup>a</sup>	Return to own Family		Adoption		Other Goal <sup>b</sup>		Total <sup>e</sup>	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
One year or less	38	(30)	11	(2)	17	(2)	31	(34)
One to two years	46	(37)	67	(12)	0	(0)	44	(49)
Over two years	16	(13)	22	(4)	83	(10)	25	(27)
B. Current Placement Status <sup>c</sup>								
Placement terminated, case terminated <sup>d</sup>	21	(20)	8	(2)	16	(10)	18	(32)
Placement terminated, case active	42	(39)	21	(5)	33	(20)	36	(64)
Placement open, case active	37	(35)	71	(17)	51	(31)	46	(83)

<sup>a</sup>Based on agency Review of Children in Placement forms.

<sup>b</sup>Includes "independent living, " "exceptional", and "undecided."

<sup>c</sup>Determined as of the date project data on the case was collected.

<sup>d</sup>In 24 of these, the placement terminated prior to the case itself.

<sup>e</sup>Excludes cases with unknown RCP case goals and (for Table A only) with unknown goal achievement dates.

Table IV-9: Actual Goal Achievement Time by RCP Case Goal, 1974 Reviewed Cases

	<u>Return to Own Family</u>		<u>Adoption</u>		<u>Other Goal<sup>b</sup></u>		<u>Total<sup>c</sup></u>	
<u>Actual Goal Achievement Time<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
1. Placement terminated within expected period	40	(38)	21	(5)	13	(8)	29	(51)
2. Placement terminated after expected period	17	(16)	4	(1)	2	(1)	10	(18)
3. Placement termination overdue	17	(16)	50	(12)	2	(1)	16	(29)
4. Placement termination not yet due	15	(14)	12	(3)	8	(5)	12	(22)
5. No expected goal achievement date given	11	(10)	12	(3)	75	(46)	33	(59)
a. Placement terminated	--	(5)	--	(1)	--	(21)	--	(27)
b. Placement active	--	(5)	--	(2)	--	(25)	--	(32)
Total	100%	(94)	99%	(24)	100%	(61)	100%	(179)

<sup>a</sup>Determined as of the date Project data on the case was collected.

<sup>b</sup>Includes "independent living", "exceptional" and "undecided".

<sup>c</sup>Excludes cases with "unknown" RCP goals.

Table IV-10: Placement Termination Reason by RCP Case Goal, 1974 Reviewed Cases

<u>Placement Termination Reason</u>	<u>Return to Own Family</u>		<u>Adoption</u>		<u>Other Goal<sup>a</sup></u>		<u>Total<sup>b</sup></u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
1. Original reason for supervision improved or resolved	42	(18)	20	(1)	19	(5)	32	(24)
2. Problems arising during placement	33	(14)	60	(3)	70	(19)	48	(36)
3. Placement was intended as temporary	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)
4. Court ordered termination	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)
5. Superiority of the new placement	12	(5)	0	(0)	0	(0)	7	(5)
6. Other reason for termination	9	(4)	20	(1)	11	(3)	11	(8)
7. Placement not terminated	--	(34)	--	(17)	--	(31)	--	(82)
8. Unknown	--	(17)	--	(2)	--	(3)	--	(22)
Total	100%	(94)	100%	(24)	100%	(61)	100%	(179)

<sup>a</sup>Includes "independent living", "exceptional" and "undecided".

<sup>b</sup>Excludes cases with unknown RCP goal.

Table IV-11: (A) Problems Causing Termination of Placement, and  
 (B) Case Status at 18 Months after Case Opening,  
 Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases

		<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A.	<u>Problem Type</u>				
	1. Child's behavioral problems	42	(21)	36	(26)
	2. Foster parent/institution related problems	32	(16)	48	(35)
	a. Unable to care (reloca- tion, ill, etc.)	--	(4)	--	(18)
	b. Incompetent	--	(12)	--	(17)
	3. Parental deviance	20	(10)	10	(7)
	4. Other	6	(3)	6	(4)
B.	<u>Case Status After 18 Months</u>				
	Open	85	(167)	87	(155)
	Closed	15	(30)	13	(23)

Table IV-12: (A) Location of Child and (B) Number of Moves at 18 Months after Case Opening, Comparing 1974 Reviewed and 1971 Placed Cases

		<u>Reviewed 1974</u>		<u>Placed 1971</u>	
		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A.	<u>Location of Child after 18 Months</u>				
	Natural parent(s)	30	(60)	22	(40)
	Surrogate family <sup>a</sup>	18	(36) <sup>b</sup>	16	(28)
	Adoptive parents	1	(1)	8	(14)
	Foster family <sup>a</sup>	32	(63) <sup>c</sup>	39	(69) <sup>d</sup>
	Institution	18	(36)	14	(25)
	Other	1	(1)	1	(2)
B.	<u>Number of Moves after 18 Months<sup>e</sup></u>				
	None	17	(33)	16	(28)
	One	22	(43)	27	(48)
	Two	30	(60)	31	(55)
	Three	11	(22)	11	(20)
	Four or more	20	(39)	15	(27)

<sup>a</sup>Includes free homes and boarding homes.

<sup>b</sup>Includes four children transferred to Bureau of Resource Development (BRD) for adoption processing.

<sup>c</sup>Includes nine children transferred to BRD.

<sup>d</sup>Includes three children transferred to BRD.

<sup>e</sup>Counts the number of changes of residence a child has had during agency supervision; includes interim moves to natural parents. Simultaneous return home and case closing is not counted as a "move", however.

Table IV-13: Location of Child at 18 Months after Case Opening by Goal at Placement, Comparing RCP Case Goals and Supervision Goals.

	<u>Location at 18 Months</u>											
<u>Goal of "Return to Own Family" or "Return to Natural Parent(s)"</u>	<u>Natural Parent(s)</u>		<u>Surrogate Family</u>		<u>Adoptive Parents</u>		<u>Foster Family</u>		<u>Institution</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Given as RCP case goal, 1974 reviewed cases <sup>a</sup>	45	(42)	4	(4)	0	(0)	23	(22)	28	(26)	100	(94)
Given as supervision goal at placement, 1974 reviewed cases <sup>b</sup>	54	(35)	5	(3)	0	(0)	26	(17)	15	(10)	100	(65)
Given as supervision goal at placement, 1971 placed cases <sup>c</sup>	30	(16)	4	(2)	0	(0)	38	(20)	28	(15)	100	(53)
<u>Goal of "Adoption"</u>												
Given as RCP case goal, 1974 reviewed cases <sup>a</sup>	0	(0)	42	(10)	4	(1)	54	(13)	0	(0)	100	(24)
Given as supervision goal at placement, 1974 reviewed cases <sup>b</sup>	8	(1)	33	(4)	8	(1)	50	(6)	0	(0)	100	(12)
Given as supervision goal at placement, 1971 placed cases <sup>c</sup>	8	(2)	0	(0)	42	(10)	46	(11)	4	(1)	100	(24)

<sup>a</sup>Based on RCP data; shows caseworker's goal at time of review in 1974.

<sup>b</sup>Based on Project's case record data; shows worker's goal at the beginning of the placement which was subsequently reviewed in 1974.

<sup>c</sup>Based on Project's case record data; show worker's goal at the beginning of the placement in which the child was found on October 31, 1971.

V. Evaluation of Staff Participation in Review of Children in Placement

A. Introduction

An important component of any program evaluation is the collection and analysis of feedback from agency staff who participated in the program. Such feedback can provide useful information on the adequacy of program implementation, on staff morale, and on staff experiences, which can aid in explaining why a program was effective or ineffective, and can often lead to improvements. Moreover, staff appreciate the opportunity for comment and can supply valuable personal insights. However, such essentially subjective data are less useful for determining the extent of program impact on clients, although the data can sometimes corroborate conclusions drawn from other sources.

This chapter analyzes interviews conducted with a representative sample of District Office caseworkers and supervisors who participated in the RCP program in 1974 and 1975. (Interview information from administrative staff involved in planning and managing the RCP program, including CRU personnel, was incorporated in Chapter III.) This evaluation component is especially relevant to the present study, since RCP is focused on improving case planning and increasing local staff accountability for case management.

B. Methodology

In order to obtain a fairly representative sample of District Office staff who participated in RCP, the selection procedure combined clustering and stratified sampling. First, the 20 District Offices were categorized into those with low (38-55), medium (56-74), and high (80-101) caseload/worker ratios. Three offices were randomly selected from each of the medium and high, and two offices from the low, ratio groups. This ensured that the sample would include, not only a variety of unique offices, but also a wide range of caseload sizes among individual workers. Secondly, a master list of current personnel who had been hired by DYFS no later than November 1, 1974 was obtained; this ensured that workers in the sample were employed during the 1974 and 1975 case reviews. (Unfortunately, workers employed during those period who subsequently left the agency could not be included in the survey). Individual workers were randomly selected from each



office, roughly in proportion to the staff size of the office. Caseworkers and supervisors were selected in approximately the ratio of 2:1; no fewer than two supervisors were chosen from each office. A total of 75 caseworkers and supervisors, including alternates, were selected in this manner. After attrition, interviews were actually completed with 65 staff members. Five individuals refused to participate, four were on vacation during the interview period, and one was leaving employment. One-hour tape-recorded interviews were conducted by Project staff during July and August, 1976, using the interview schedule shown in Appendix A.

Of the total sample of 65, 55 participated in RCP during November 1974 and/or September 1975 - 42 as caseworkers and 13 as supervisors. One person participated in 1974 as a caseworker and in 1975 as a supervisor. Currently, 18 of the 55 are supervisors. The ten workers not involved in RCP were not asked about the program, although they completed the remainder of the interview schedule. Thus, only relatively informed opinion about RCP was considered for the evaluation itself. However, the retention of the other ten workers in the study is useful for the purposes of the financial cost-benefit analysis in Chapter VIII, and for the analysis of general informational and attitudinal items in this chapter.

Since the sampling design was restricted to personnel who had been employed by DYFS at least one and one-half years, it cannot be considered representative of agency field staff at the time of the survey. The sample by definition represents relatively experienced agency workers. This may be advantageous in so far as these workers have had an opportunity to become more knowledgeable about the agency than newly hired employees.

#### C. Description of District Office Staff Sample\*

A basic description of the study sample is presented in Table V-1. The frequencies are given separately for supervisors and caseworkers because the former are overrepresented in this analytically drawn sample, as discussed in the preceding section.

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\*Reference to "worker" in this chapter denotes both caseworkers and supervisors.

About one-half of the workers claimed to be unspecialized. Among the remainder, the survey found a striking diversity in caseload specialization, both by type of service offered (family foster care, PRS, day care, residential placement, etc.) and by type of client served (Spanish-speaking, multiproblem families, male adolescents, geographical area, adolescents in "intensive situations", transfer cases); these are in addition to the specialized intake or screening workers (Table V-1B).

Given that the sample is weighted toward workers with at least two years of DYFS professional employment, the relative lack of both general social work and supervisory experience should be noted (Table V-1C,D). The age distribution supports this finding - almost 60% are under the age of 30 (Table V-1F). The amount of personnel turnover apparently experienced by the agency, especially among first line supervisors, seems to be typical for the field (Shapiro, 1976).

Educationally, the respondents are rather impressive: over 60% have done at least some postgraduate work (Table V-1E) and over 30% are currently enrolled in a postgraduate course. However, the substance of our respondents' education is often not closely related to social work/casework practice: only about half either majored in social work as undergraduates or have taken any postgraduate courses in the area. The most popular undergraduate training for the sample was sociology, followed by psychology and education; but graduate training has been almost exclusively in social work.

Lastly, the sample was predominately female and white. As compared to caseworkers, supervisors were older, more frequently male and white, and had more social work experience and education (especially an advanced degree. Although direct comparisons are not possible, these findings are similar to those of Shapiro (1976) for the public-voluntary foster care agency system in New York City.

Some basic statistics on the current caseloads of our respondents may be pertinent (an individual child under supervision constitutes a "case"). The median number of cases which caseworkers had in their care was 52; the median number of cases for which supervisors had responsibility was 226. Specialized staff was somewhat better off than the rest; caseworkers specializing by type of service or client had a median of 40 cases, while specialized supervisors dealt with a median of 180 cases (these statistics exclude the intake and screening workers). These rather substantial caseloads seem to manifest themselves in some dissatisfaction,

both among caseworkers and supervisors: 52% of the sample state that their current caseload was "more than [they] can adequately handle." This finding will be explored in more detail subsequently.

D. Staff Awareness and Understanding of RCP

One object of the survey was to determine the amount of local staff awareness and understanding of RCP. Although the term "Review of Children in Placement" was mentioned in our interview request letter, and although subsequent telephone contacts with workers prior to the interview may have divulged some information to them (at their request), still about half our sample was unsure what the term "Review of Children in Placement" represented at the time of the interview. Even among those who immediately recalled the nature of the RCP enterprise, some were unaware of the connection between the earlier reviews and the current Case Review Unit - if indeed they had heard of the Unit or its supervisor at all. During the interview, some of our respondents initially confused RCP with the Title XX reporting procedures or with other internal DYFS projects and activities. Thus it is fair to conclude that RCP has not made a strong impression on the staff who were involved in it.

However, virtually all the interviewees whom we expected to have participated in RCP did recall their participation after more details of the procedure were provided, e.g., by showing them the actual RCP forms. What did they perceive as the main purpose(s) of RCP? About one-half (53%) said the purpose was to help the agency evaluate the case plans for individual children in out-of-home placement; 9% said the purpose was to collect statistics on an aggregate basis for the agency; 20% mentioned both areas. Thus workers generally understood the manifest purposes of review as conceived by agency management. A few respondents (7%), all of whom were supervisors, mentioned that RCP was intended to prevent court review of foster children. Nine percent of the respondents gave various other answers.

The survey asked workers whether they had participated in any follow-up reviews subsequent to the initial reviews in either 1974 or 1975, and if so, what the main reason(s) for the follow-up contact had been. Almost half (45%) of the respondents were certain no follow-ups were ever requested or had no recollection of anything resembling a follow-up. Almost all of those workers who were contacted for a follow-up stated

that they were asked to supply additional information regarding their choice of a case goal; in addition, a few workers were asked to correct obvious clerical errors or were contacted for some other reason. Caseworkers reported an average of one case follow-up request during each review cycle; supervisors reported an average of three follow-ups during the 1974 review and an average of five follow-ups during the 1975 review (of course, follow-ups reported by caseworkers and supervisors overlap). The fact that staff involvement in follow-ups was rather sparse may have contributed to the observation that staff were not highly conscious of the RCP program at the time of the interview survey.

#### E. Assessment of RCP by District Office Staff

Respondents were asked both rather broad and quite specific questions related to their subjective evaluation of the impact of RCP. These questions are given in Part E of the interview schedule (Appendix A).

Workers were not expected to recall the exact numbers and percentages of their foster care cases affected in a given way (In their answers workers did usually refer to more than a single case, however). The main purpose of this section is not to develop precise estimates of the number of clients affected by RCP, but to determine the attitudes of individual staff toward the program, as reflected in discussions of their own reviewed cases.

According to Table V-2, 40% of the sample believed that RCP had at least a "somewhat positive" general effect on DYFS. Neither the respondents' 1974 job function nor their current job function differentiated on this opinion. Very few of the staff were inclined to say that the impact was either negative or very positive. When questioned about their personal experiences, eighteen (35%) believed that RCP had some influence on their own cases, and fourteen (28%) interpreted that influence as positive. Table V-3C suggests that workers based their evaluations of RCP for the agency largely on their own experiences with the program: 67% of those workers stating that RCP influenced some of their personal cases gave the program a positive rating, whereas only 25% of the other workers did so.

In what ways did the staff believe their cases were influenced by participation in RCP? Those fourteen workers whose cases were affected positively stated that RCP had caused them to adopt a different goal or

service strategy for some of their cases: Nine workers established more specific long-term goals, and five intensified or altered their actions in goal implementation. That workers regarded this reconsideration of case plans as beneficial is supported by the finding that workers who reported planning changes also were much more likely to give RCP a positive rating for the agency (Table V-3D). However, workers also believed that relatively concrete influences on individual cases were virtually negligible. Thus, only four workers indicated that RCP contributed to any changes in placement, only two workers said that RCP changed any child's number of placements, and only six workers stated that RCP affected the length of time some of their cases remained under agency supervision (five of those latter workers said that RCP contributed to a decrease in supervision time, which would generally be regarded as desirable).

The claim of some of our respondents that RCP affected the assignment of case goals for at least some cases does receive verification from the Project's case record data. Table V-4, which presents the relationship between the caseworker's supervision goal at the beginning of the placement which was reviewed in 1974, and the worker's case goal as later entered on the 1974 RCP form, demonstrates that some reconsideration of long-term goals had evidently taken place. Among the findings are that (1) 12 out of 129 children who did not start their placement with a goal of adoption ("adoption-surrogate" or "adoption-other") later received that goal on the RCP form; (2) 27 out of 83 children who originally did not start placement with a goal of "return to natural parent" later received the equivalent goal on the RCP form. While these could be construed as positive changes, not all changes were of this nature. Thus, 17 out of 114 children with rather definite prior goals ("return to natural parent," "long-term foster care," or "care with surrogate parent") were later listed on the RCP form having "undecided" case goals.

Unfortunately, the survey shows that workers sometimes indicated case goals or "expected goal achievement dates" on the RCP forms which they did not feel were realistic: 46% of the respondents admitted to doing this on at least some of their cases. About half of these (or a quarter of the total sample) said that they felt themselves particularly pressured to indicate a specific goal achievement date, despite their inability to forecast accurately enough the progress of a given case. Workers' difficulty in assigning goal achievement dates is suggested also by the fact that no date was

entered for one-third of the study cases (Table IV-9). Another quarter of the sample either stated that they tended to put down optimistic goals in order to please their agency superiors, or believed that the intent of RCP was to ascertain the desirable, not necessarily the realistic, goal for each case. This shift towards possibly unrealistic goals is reflected, as noted above, in the shift toward "return to own family" and adoption as goals.

During the interviews respondents distinguished between what was entered on the RCP forms and what their actual case plans were. Workers stated that any lack of realism on the forms did not influence the way in which their cares were managed. As might be expected, workers who considered themselves pressured into listing improbable case goals or achievement dates also were less likely than other workers to give RCP a positive rating for the agency (Table V-3E).

How were our respondents' perceptions of their working conditions related to their assessments of the RCP program? As shown in table V-3B, staff who agreed with the statement that their current caseload was more than they could "adequately handle" were considerably less sanguine about the overall value of RCP for the agency. This suggests that the workers who consider themselves most overburdened with cases are least likely to perceive RCP as a practical solution to their problems. This fact is important because of the frequently made argument that administrative case review is a relatively inexpensive way for agencies with excessively heavy caseloads to improve their case planning.

Sixty-seven percent of our respondents agreed that RCP was responsible for a reduction in, or postponement of, their other tasks; in other words, RCP entailed what economists term "opportunity costs" for the agency. According to table V-3F, staff who mentioned opportunity costs also were slightly less likely to rate RCP positively - a consistent response.

Nevertheless, virtually the entire sample (85%) stated that participation in the RCP program did not reduce the quality of their casework. Workers were careful to inform our interviewers that, while RCP disrupted their routine to various degrees, they were able to compensate for the disruption in the long run - by rescheduling activities, working extra hours, etc. But workers did object that insufficient effort had been devoted to helping them integrate review into their schedules. This problem remains to be satisfactorily resolved.

While the attitudes and self-reported behavior of respondents were correlated with their assessment of RCP (as has been shown), their more "objective" characteristics generally were not. Thus, a positive evaluation of RCP was not related to a worker's educational attainment, current enrollment in school, annual salary, caseload specialization, age, sex, or ethnicity. With an average of only six respondents who participated in RCP from each of the eight District Offices in the study, it was impossible to ascertain variations in the evaluation of RCP among different offices. Yet one finding is noteworthy: as Table V-3A indicates, staff with six or more years of experience were less likely than other workers to give RCP a positive rating. According to our analysis neither chronological age nor agency function (supervisor vs. caseworker) can account for this observed relationship. There are at least three plausible, though not mutually exclusive, explanations of this finding:

1. In comparison to less experienced workers, experienced staff may be performing sufficiently well without review, but may tend to generalize their personal capabilities to the entire agency;
2. experienced staff may be habituated to their past routines and thus unable to be objective about the positive aspects of review;
3. experienced staff, by virtue of their knowledge of social work and agency operations, may in fact have a more accurate perception of the value of RCP to the agency.

F. Staff Recommendations for Improvement of RCP

Our respondents were generally willing to discuss areas in which the performance of RCP could be improved; only 18% of the sample failed to volunteer any specific comments. (Note that workers who made suggestions for improvement did not necessarily rate RCP positively.) The distribution of suggestions is given in table V-5. Those workers who indicated that the review process should be more intensive and detailed, or that revisions in the format of the review forms were needed, essentially believed that the review process was too simplistic. Those in the first group believed valid and reliable information could be obtained only through interviews with caseworkers or some other method more sensitive to subjective assessments, while those in the second group were dissatisfied with what they considered the poor or

naive construction of items on the RCP forms. Nine respondents were concerned about the lack of effective follow-up procedures, which most of them believed contributed to poor worker motivation in implementing RCP. Some resentment of the Central Office's involvement in individual case management is represented by those five respondents who stated that case review would be best implemented as a strictly local office activity. Eight workers indicated that the instructions received for the review process were deficient or ambiguous. Six workers stated that the system could not be improved, while 3 workers were satisfied with the present system. Overall, our respondents articulated a wide range of opinions.

It is interesting to note that workers who believed that RCP was presently satisfactory, or who believed that the system could be improved solely by revising the present review forms, were also very likely to give an overall positive rating to RCP: three-quarters of this group (N=14) believed that RCP had an overall positive effect on the agency, while only one-quarter of all other respondents (N=36) believed this. Evidently there is a minority of workers who exhibit a basic, if restrained, optimism about RCP that the majority do not share.

#### G. Staff Training Needs

Since the impetus for administrative case review is largely derived from a concern about individual worker performance, it makes sense to examine staff perceptions of training needs. A large majority of workers (69%) agreed that they needed "additional training in order to satisfactorily handle (their) caseloads"; 17% were unsure whether formal instruction would be beneficial for them; and 14% definitely did not desire additional training. Caseworkers were somewhat more likely to desire training than supervisors (75% vs. 57%), but personnel satisfied and dissatisfied with the size of their current caseloads desired additional training in the same proportions. Thus, it certainly cannot be said that this group of employees is complacent about the level of its job skills, an observation supported by the earlier finding that one-third were doing post-graduate university work.



Table V-6 shows the distribution of specific training needs noted by our respondents. Casework skills were mentioned most often, particularly skills related to dealing with specific client groups or problem areas. Frequently mentioned were needs for instruction in protective services, in handling adolescents, and in group work with families. Improved proficiency in paperwork, and information about the legal system, were also desired quite often, with a miscellany of other perceived needs completing the picture.

# I. Supplementary Findings

## 1. Staff Recommendations for Agency Improvement

Workers were given an opportunity to suggest improvements in agency operations with the following question: "What is the single most important thing that this agency can do to improve its impact on client families?" The question was deliberately worded to avoid inviting long, and perhaps trivial, lists of complaints. Nevertheless, twenty-five respondents made two recommendations they considered vital, and twelve respondents made three recommendations; these are all included in the following presentation.

Table V-7 shows the percent and number of workers giving each type of recommendation. By far the most frequently mentioned category was an increase or redistribution of services to clients, such as expanding day care availability or restoring recent budget cutbacks. Improved office equipment and facilities were next most frequently mentioned, e.g., more automobiles and supplies, better location of offices to increase accessibility to clients. Reduced caseloads rank third on the list; as might be expected, workers who believed their personal caseloads were too high tended to mention this subject more often than other workers. Dissatisfaction with agency casework policies also proved to be an important concern. Workers believed that the agency's expectations of what could be accomplished with some cases were unrealistic; inappropriate amounts of time were seen as going to clients whose situations could not be improved upon. According to this critique, the current administrative orientation toward casework results in the setting of too many impractical case goals. Fifth on the list of recommendations is the restructuring of the agency's organization, primarily in the directions of a decentralization of authority and of a reduction in hierarchical structure.

The remaining recommendations occurred much less frequently than the five discussed above. Six workers suggested improving communication and relations between the agency and the community; five desired changes in personnel recruitment policies (e.g., hiring of better qualified staff; increased minority hiring); and three were critical of the competency or political connections of agency administrators. Eleven workers also made a variety of other specific suggestions which would not be conveniently categorized. One worker believed that the performance of the agency was completely satisfactory and one volunteered no opinion.

An exploratory analysis was done to determine whether the numbers or types of recommendations made were associated with characteristics of the respondents, i.e., their age, sex, ethnicity, education, social work experience, agency function, caseload specialization, caseload size, and their opinion of the manageability of their caseloads. Younger workers and those who had at least some postgraduate education were more likely than other workers to focus on more than one recommendation for agency improvement during the interview. However, specific types of recommendations seemed to be equally frequently mentioned by various categories of respondents. There do not appear to be particular classes of workers in the agency who are predominantly concerned with specific issues (One exception, as mentioned previously, were workers who considered their caseloads burdensome and who thus recommended reductions in caseloads).

## 2. Staff Dissatisfaction with Caseloads

Worker morale, especially in admittedly understaffed public child welfare agencies, is an issue deserving special attention. Is dissatisfaction with caseloads based on the real work situation, or are some employees merely more predisposed to complain than others, irrespective of the situation? Tables V-8A,B support the former proposition: Both caseworkers and supervisors with relatively high caseloads are considerably more likely than other workers to express discontent with their caseloads. Staff least likely to be dissatisfied are caseworkers responsible for forty-five or fewer children, the lower third of the caseload size distribution. However, whether even caseloads of this size can in fact be effectively managed by workers is

unclear from the study. The study reported earlier that specialized workers had slightly smaller caseloads than others; therefore they would be expected to express somewhat less discontent as a group: Table V-8C shows this to be true. The age, sex, ethnicity, education, and agency function of workers were not related to dissatisfaction. But as demonstrated in Table V-8D, relatively less experienced workers were more likely to express dissatisfaction with their caseloads than other workers.

#### H. Summary

An interview survey was conducted to assess the reactions of local office staff, including caseworkers and supervisors, who participated in the RCP program. In general, staff did not object to the program, but neither did they seem highly conscious of it at the time of the survey; this may have been partially due to the lack of intensive follow-up procedures in the reviews.

A minority (40%) of respondents believed RCP had at least a "somewhat positive" effect on the agency, and one-quarter believed it had a positive influence on planning for some of their own cases; these tended to be the same individuals. Relatively experienced staff, and staff who believed their caseloads were manageable, were more likely than other workers to evaluate RCP positively; several explanations for these findings were offered.

One-half of the workers reported entering unrealistic case goals and/or reported experiencing difficulty in assigning precise expected goal achievement dates on the RCP forms for some of their cases. (Other data collected by the Project supported this finding.) Apparently the criteria for completing the forms were not adequately communicated to workers. The Central Office provided little feedback after receiving the forms, thus probably avoiding some confrontation with local staff.

Two-thirds of the staff stated that RCP caused a disruption in their routines, but virtually all claimed that they had been able to compensate, and that therefore the quality of their casework had not been adversely affected.

The study solicited staff recommendations for improvement of RCP, whether or not respondents evaluated RCP positively. The leading recommendations were to revise the

RCP forms, increase feedback and enforcement mechanisms, develop clearer instructions for the review process, and transfer the total responsibility for review to the local office level.

The survey explored a number of additional areas relevant to agency practice. A majority of staff, both caseworkers and supervisors, agreed additional training, primarily in casework, would be beneficial to them. One-half of the respondents believed that their current caseload was "more than they can adequately handle". Workers who actually possessed relatively high caseloads, and less experienced workers, were more likely than other workers to express dissatisfaction with their caseloads.

Lastly, workers were asked to outline their views of the most important current deficiencies in agency operations. In order of frequency mentioned, these were increasing or redistributing services to clients; improving office facilities and equipment; reducing client/worker ratio; changing agency casework policies; and restructuring the basic agency organization. We note that workers failed to mention case review of any type in their recommendations for change.

Table V-1: Characteristics of District Office Staff Sample

A.	<u>District Office</u>	<u>Supervisors<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Caseworkers<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>Total</u>
	Burlington	(2)	(5)	(7)
	Gloucester	(2)	(5)	(7)
	Hudson	(4)	(6)	(10)
	Mercer	(2)	(4)	(6)
	Middlesex	(2)	(6)	(8)
	Newark	(5)	(8)	(13)
	Orange	(2)	(5)	(7)
	Sussex	(2)	(5)	(7)
		<u>(21)</u>	<u>(44)</u>	<u>(65)</u>
B.	<u>Caseload Specialization</u>			
	None	57	54	55
	By agency service <sup>c</sup>	38	16	23
	By type of client <sup>d</sup>	0	14	9
	Intake or screening	5	16	13
		<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
C.	<u>Social Work Experience<sup>e</sup></u>			
	Two to four years	5	25	19
	Five or six years	38	50	46
	Seven or eight years	29	18	22
	Nine years or more	29	7	14
		<u>101%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>101%</u>

<sup>a</sup> Assistant Social Work Supervisor only

<sup>b</sup> Civil Service job title is Social Worker II; includes one Social Worker I

<sup>c</sup> Foster care, PRS, day care, residential placement, etc.

<sup>d</sup> Male adolescents, transfer cases, multi-problem families, etc.

<sup>e</sup> Includes experience external to DYFS and supervisory experience, if applicable.

Table V-1: Characteristics of District Office Staff Sample (cont'd)

D.	<u>Social Work Supervisory Experience</u>	<u>Supervisors</u>	<u>Caseworkers<sup>f</sup></u>	<u>Total</u>
	Less than one year	10	--	--
	One year	33	--	--
	Two years	24	--	--
	Three years	19	--	--
	Four or more years	<u>14</u>	--	--
		100%		
	Median = 1.9 years			
E.	<u>Educational Background</u>			
	College graduate	24	43	37
	Some postgraduate work	57	50	52
	Postgraduate degree	<u>19</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>
		100%	100%	100%
F.	<u>Age</u>			
	20-29 years	48	64	59
	30-39 years	43	27	32
	40-49 years	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>
		100%	100%	100%
G.	<u>Sex</u>			
	Female	62	75	71
	Male	<u>38</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>29</u>
		100%	100%	100%
H.	<u>Ethnicity</u>			
	White	86	75	78
	Black <sup>g</sup>	<u>14</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>22</u>
		100%	100%	100%

<sup>f</sup> Two caseworkers had some supervisory experience.

<sup>g</sup> Includes one "Hispanic"

Table V-2: Perceived Effectiveness of Review of Children in Placement by Job Function

Perceived Effectiveness Review of Children in Placement <sup>a</sup>	Function on October 31, 1974		Current Function		Total <sup>b</sup>
	<u>Supervisors</u>	<u>Caseworkers</u>	<u>Supervisors</u>	<u>Caseworkers</u>	
Negative Effect <sup>c</sup>	9	8	6	9	8
No Effect	55	50	56	50	52
Somewhat Positive	27	34	31	32	32
Very Positive	9	8	6	9	8
	<u>100%</u> (11)	<u>100%</u> (38)	<u>100%</u> (16)	<u>100%</u> (34)	<u>100%</u> (50)

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were asked: "In terms of the following scale, how would you rate the general effectiveness to the agency of 'Review of Children in Placement' - very negative effect, somewhat negative effect, no significant effect, somewhat positive effect, very positive effect?"

<sup>b</sup> Includes one additional worker whose precise 1974 function was unclear.

<sup>c</sup> Includes "very negative" and "somewhat negative" effect.

Note: No response on this item was obtained from five of the 55 "eligible" workers.

Table V-3: Perceived Effectiveness of Review of Children in Placement  
by Selected Variables

		Percent of each group responding that RCP had a "somewhat positive" or "very positive" effect on the agency	
		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A. <u>Social Work Experience</u>			
Two to five years		50	(22)
Six years or more		32	(28)
B. <u>Manageability of Personal Case Load<sup>a</sup></u>			
About right <sup>b</sup>		52	(21)
Too large		24	(21)
C. <u>Has RCP Influenced any Personal Cases?<sup>c</sup></u>			
Yes		67	(18) <sup>d</sup>
No		25	(32)

<sup>a</sup> Respondents gave the size of their current active caseloads and then were asked: "Do you feel that this caseload size is - less than you could adequately handle, about right as far as manageability, or more than you can adequately handle?"

<sup>b</sup> Includes one respondent who replied caseload was less than could be adequately handled.

<sup>c</sup> Respondents were asked the open-ended question: "In your opinion, have there been any significant effects on your cases (positive or negative) of Review of Children in Placement?"

<sup>d</sup> Fourteen respondents interpreted the effect as "positive".



Table V-3: Perceived Effectiveness of Review of Children in Placement  
by Selected Variables (cont'd)

		Percent of each group responding that RCP had a positive effect on the agency	
<hr/>			
D.	<u>Has RCP Influenced Case Goals for any Personal Cases?<sup>d</sup></u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
	Yes	71	(14)
	No	28	(36)
E.	<u>Have you ever Assigned an Improbable Case Goal or Goal Achievement Date?<sup>e</sup></u>		
	Yes	32	(25)
	No	48	(25)
F.	<u>Has RCP Caused Reduction or Postponement of Other Work?<sup>f</sup></u>		
	Yes	37	(35)
	No	47	(15)

<sup>d</sup> "Has Review of Children in Placement caused you to adopt a different goal or service strategy for any of your cases?"

<sup>e</sup> "Did you ever put down a certain goal or goal date on the case review form which you know is not likely to be achieved?"

<sup>f</sup> "Has Review of Children in Placement caused a reduction in, or postponement of, any of your other assignments?"

Table V-4: RCP Case Goal by Supervision Goal at Placement, 1974 Reviewed Cases

Supervision Goal at Placement <sup>b</sup>	RCP Case Goal <sup>a</sup>											
	Return to own family		Adoption		Other		Undecided		Unknown		Total	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Return to natural parent	75	(49)	3	(2)	3	(2)	9	(6)	9	(6)	99	(65)
Long-term foster care <sup>c</sup>	50	(9)	5	(1)	6	(1)	28	(5)	11	(2)	100	(18)
Foster care, outcome undecided <sup>c</sup>	47	(14)	10	(3)	6	(2)	30	(9)	7	(2)	100	(30)
Care with surrogate parent	8	(2)	25	(6)	42	(10)	21	(5)	4	(1)	100	(24)
Adoption - surrogate parent	0	(0)	60	(3)	40	(2)	0	(0)	0	(0)	100	(5)
Adoption - other	11	(1)	78	(7)	0	(0)	0	(0)	11	(1)	100	(9)
Other	33	(1)	0	(0)	33	(1)	33	(1)	0	(0)	100	(3)
Unclear at placement <sup>d</sup>	40	(18)	9	(4)	11	(5)	27	(12)	13	(6)	100	(45)

<sup>a</sup> Based on agency Review of Children in Placement data; shows goal at the time of review

<sup>b</sup> Based on the Project's case record data; shows goal at the beginning of the placement which was subsequently reviewed

<sup>c</sup> Excludes care with surrogate parent(s)

<sup>d</sup> At case opening, the distribution of case goals for these 45 children was as follows: Return to natural parents (20%), long-term foster care (4%), foster care, outcome undecided (22%), care with surrogate parent (11%), care with natural parent (22%), and unknown (20%).

Table V-5: Staff Recommendations for Improvement of Review of Children In Placement

		Percent and Number of Respondents Mentioning the Item (N=55)	
		%	(N)
I.	Basic changes in review procedure	40 <sup>a</sup>	(22) <sup>a</sup>
1.	Increased follow-up/ feedback/enforcement/ mechanisms	16	(9)
2.	Review should be more intensive and detailed	11	(6)
3.	Review should occur at District (not Central) Office level	9	(5)
4.	Other changes in proce- dure	4	(2)
II.	Revisions in format of RCP forms	24	(13)
III.	Clearer instructions for review process	15	(8)
IV.	Present system incapable of improvement	11	(6)
V.	Present system satisfactory	6	(3)

<sup>a</sup> Percent and number of respondents mentioning points 1, 2, 3, or 4 at least once.

Table V-6: Staff Training Needs

<u>Type of Training</u>	<u>Percent and Number of Respondents Mentioning the Item (N=65)</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
I. Casework Skills	38 <sup>a</sup>	(25) <sup>a</sup>
1. Techniques for dealing with specific client groups or problem areas (PRS, adolescents, etc.)	26	(17)
2. General interviewing or counseling skills	8	(5)
3. Other general casework skills	11	(7)
II. Administrative/clerical/super- visory skills	15	(10)
III. Legal system and its relation to casework	9	(6)
IV. Other training	22	(14)

<sup>a</sup> Percent and number of respondents mentioning points 1, 2, or 3 at least once.

Table V-7: Staff Recommendations for Agency Improvement

	Percent and Number of Respondents Mentioning the Item (N=65)	
	%	(N)
1. Increase or redistribute services to clients	45	(29)
2. Improve office equipment and facilities	28	(18)
3. Reduce client/worker ratio	26	(17)
4. Change agency casework policies	23	(15)
5. Restructure agency organization	18	(12)
6. Facilitate communication between agency and community	9	(6)
7. Change personnel recruitment policy	8	(5)
8. Improve administrative staff	5	(3)
9. Other recommendations	7	(11)
10. Present agency performance satisfactory	2	(1)
11. No response	2	(1)

Table V-8: Manageability of Personal Case Load by Selected Variables

		Percent of each group stating that their caseload is too large <sup>a</sup>	
		%	(N)
A.	<u>Caseload Size - Caseworkers<sup>b</sup></u>		
	0-45 children	25	(12)
	46-60 children	82	(11)
	61 and more children	70	(10)
	Below median size	44	(16)
	Above median size	71	(17)
B.	<u>Caseload Size - Supervisors<sup>b</sup></u>		
	Below median size	43	(7)
	Above median size	71	(7)
C.	<u>Caseload Specialization</u>		
	None	61	(31)
	Specialized <sup>c</sup>	50	(16)
D.	<u>Social Work Experience<sup>d</sup></u>		
	Two to five years	65	(23)
	Six years or more	46	(28)

<sup>a</sup> Respondents gave the size of their current active caseloads and then were asked: "Do you feel that this caseload size is - less than you could adequately handle, about right as far as manageability, or more than you can adequately handle?"

<sup>b</sup> Excludes intake and screening workers

<sup>c</sup> Specialized by type of service or client; excludes intake and screening workers

<sup>d</sup> Includes experience external to DYFS and supervisory experience, if applicable.

## Chapter V - Appendix A

INTERVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_

RESPONDENT CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FIELD INTERVIEW FORM

A. GENERAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC:

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Titles, Locations, and Functions:

	Current	as of 9/30/75	as of 10/31/74
Job Title			
District Office			
Function*	S C O	S C O	S C O

\* S=Supervision, C=Casework, O=Other

3. Age: Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50 Up

4. Education: (Check highest group completed)

- ☐ Less than a high school graduate  
☐ High school diploma or G.E.D.  
☐ Some college; no four-year degree  
☐ College Graduate: Degree(s) \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Graduate work: Degree(s) \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you currently taking courses?

- ☐ No  
☐ Yes; Where: \_\_\_\_\_  
In What: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Annual Gross Wages/Salary (DYFS only): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

7. Work Experience (Full-time):

Years of Social Work Experience: \_\_\_\_\_ years  
Years of Social Work Supervisory Experience: \_\_\_\_\_ years

8. Do you have any children of your own? YES NO

BY OBSERVATION

9. Sex: Female Male

10. Race: \_\_\_\_\_



B. TIME AND TASK DISTRIBUTION:

1. Please estimate the number of hours in a typical 35-hour week which you spend on each of the following broad types of tasks:

NON-CASE RELATED:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(For example, staff development meetings  
work planning and scheduling, fund raising,  
personnel administration, summary reports,  
conferences, general staff or administrative,  
meetings, etc.)

CASE RELATED:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(Any time spent in dealing with cases or  
on tasks which are directly related to  
your handling of a case)

CASE OPENING/INITIAL PLACEMENT:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(For example, communication with others  
relative to initial placement, preparing  
case records, travel relative to initial  
placement, etc.)

REGULAR CASE-SUPERVISION:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(Communication with others relative to  
regular supervision of a case, updating  
or reviewing case records, travel relative  
to scheduled visitation, etc.)

TOTAL TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ 35 hours

2. Do you deal only with a specialized caseload  
(e.g., intake, foster care, children under five, etc.)?

☐ NO

☐ YES; Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you divide those hours in a typical week which you listed as being Case Related in the previous question, according to the following case related tasks?

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(For example, interviewing, counseling, or correspondence with the following types of persons)

Foster/Para-Foster Parents:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

Other Caretakers (natural, adoptive):

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

Child Under Supervision:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

Other (schools, doctors, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(Consultation, communication, or correspondence with other personnel in your agency concerning cases)

Immediate Supervisor:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

Other DYFS Staff:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

CASE RECORD PREPARATION AND REVIEW:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(This should include record keeping and posting, filing, reading case records, dictating, etc.)

TRAVEL:

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

(This should include all case related travel for the purpose of placement or regular case supervision.)

OTHER (CASE RELATED ONLY):

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
Specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL WEEKLY CASE RELATED HOURS (FROM QUESTION B-1):

\_\_\_\_\_ hours

4. Please estimate the average number of hours per case which are required for you to initially establish each of the following services. Also estimate the average number of hours per case which are required of you each month in order to supervise the service on an on-going basis:

SERVICES	AVERAGE HOURS REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH SERVICE	AVERAGE HOURS PER MONTH TO MAINTAIN SERVICE
FOSTER CARE:		
ADOPTION REFERRAL:		
SHELTER:		
OTHER GROUP CARE:  (Group Home, Residential Treatment Center, or Institution)		
HOME PLACEMENT:		
Alone:		
With Daycare Service:		
With Homemaker Services:		
With Parafoster Parents:		

5. INTERVIEWER: YOU SHOULD SELECT ONE OF THE EIGHT SERVICE GROUPS LISTED IN QUESTION 4 (on a rotating basis) AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Describe the steps you must go through in order to establish \_\_\_\_\_ service for a child or family. What must you do? Who must you talk with?

6. What is the size of your current active caseload? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Do you feel this size caseload is:

less than you could adequately handle ☐  
about right as far as manageability ☐  
more than you can adequately handle ☐

- b. What size caseload do you feel you could adequately handle? \_\_\_\_\_

C. UNDERSTANDING OF "REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT":

1. What is "Review of Children in Placement?"
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of "Review of Children in Placement?"
3. What is unclear to you regarding "Review of Children in Placement?"

## D. JOB IMPACT OF "REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT":

1. Were any of your cases in November, 1974, or September, 1975, included in "Review of Children in Placement"?

☐ YES

☐ NO

(Go to Section F)

2. Approximately how many of your cases at those times underwent the "Review of Children in Placement" process?

In November, 1974: \_\_\_\_\_

In September, 1975: \_\_\_\_\_

3. For how many of those cases which were reviewed was a "follow-up review" requested (i.e., a written or verbal inquiry from the Central Office to clarify your completion of the first review form)?

In November, 1974: \_\_\_\_\_

In September, 1975: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What steps did you perform during a "regular" review of a case? Exactly what did you do to accomplish the case review? (Interviewer: If respondent is still unclear, mention tasks such as "Discuss with supervisor," "Review case," etc.)

5. On the average, how long did it take you to do a "regular" review of a case?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

6. What tasks did you perform during a "follow-up" review of a case? (SEE QUESTION D-3 for definition)

7. On the average, how long did it take you to do a "follow-up" review of a case?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

E. EVALUATION OF "REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT":

1. In your opinion, have there been any significant effects on your cases (positive or negative) of "Review of Children in Placement"?
2. Has "Review of Children in Placement" caused you to adopt a different goal or service strategy for any of your cases? Please explain:
3. Do you ever put down a certain goal or goal date on the case review form which you know is not likely to be achieved? Why?
4. Has "Review of Children in Placement" ever caused you to change the placement of any of your cases (for better or worse)? Please explain:
5. Has "Review of Children in Placement" increased or decreased the time under supervision of any of your cases? Please explain:

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6. Has "Review of Children in Placement" increased or decreased the number of placements of any of your cases? Please explain:

7. Has "Review of Children in Placement" caused a reduction in, or postponement of, any of your other assignments? Please explain:

8. Has "Review of Children in Placement" caused you to reduce the quality of your casework? Please explain:

9. In terms of the following scale, how would you rate the general effectiveness to the agency of "Review of Children in Placement"?

1	2	3	4	5
very	somewhat	no	somewhat	very
negative	negative	significant	positive	positive
effect	effect	effect	effect	effect



F. IMPROVEMENT IN 'REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT':

1. In your opinion, what could be done to make "Review of Children in Placement" more effective?
2. Do you feel you need any additional training in order to satisfactorily handle your caseload; if so, what? What can the agency do to help you improve your effectiveness?
3. What is the single most important thing that this agency can do to improve its impact on to client families?

## VI. Case Review: Discussion and Recommendations

### A. Compatibility of Case Review with Child Welfare Practice

Social work has been aptly described as a "semiprofession": Toren (1972) points out that social work ranks behind more established professions in the creation of a coherent theoretical base for practice, in the degree of legitimate authority and approval accorded to it by its clientele and by the larger community, and in the development of a professional culture with strict criteria for recruitment, training and performance. This in turn means that social workers have been given less discretion in their jobs, and have faced greater demands for accountability, than workers in more established human service fields.

These characterizations of social work in general seem to have even greater applicability to child welfare casework. Child welfare caseworkers are responsible for some of the most important decisions in the social services, yet they are one of the least professionalized groups in social work in terms of work experience, formal education, career commitment, a theoretical base for practice, and public confidence (cf. Shapiro, 1976). These facts, coupled with the increasing employment of child welfare caseworkers in public agency bureaucracies, means that the workers are particularly subject to efforts to limit their discretion and to impose stricter supervision.\*

However, many aspects of child welfare casework seem incompatible with bureaucratic standardization, with adherence to specific regulations, with a rigid categorization of clients, and with routinization of the client-worker relationship. The traditional casework process, in contrast to more technical matters such as determining the eligibility of clients for service, is defined only in broad terms and must be adapted to the particular client. Achievement of excellence in casework performance seems to require that a considerable degree of discretion be delegated to the casework practitioner. Child welfare casework involves complex decisions in which a multitude of constantly changing factors must be considered.

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\* The fact that most child welfare caseworkers in New Jersey are currently in public service employment does not provide an impetus for increasing the professionalization of the field. For example, the minimum Civil Service requirements for caseworkers are a 4-year university degree (of any kind) and a passing score on a multiple-choice examination. Four years experience in the field can be substituted for the degree. In spite of this, of course, many caseworkers have qualifications greatly exceeding the minimum requirements. The point here is that the Civil Service system does not encourage real professionalism in the field.

But periodic case review, particularly the centralized monitoring model, is manifestly a step in the direction of increasing bureaucratization of the casework process.

#### B. Adequacy of Information Produced through Review

There are two basic dilemmas which call into question the usefulness of case review in the areas of management control and accountability. First, the flow of information between service delivery unit and superordinate unit during review necessarily results in an attenuation or summation of relevant information. For example, consider the difficulty of communicating the details of contingency case plans. This information loss tends to be most severe in centralized monitoring models, less severe in external review systems, and least severe in supervisory reviews. Computerization can be used in any of these models, although it seems most necessary for centralized monitoring and least necessary for supervisory review. Generally the greater the degree of computerization, the more information will be lost. The information loss is both quantitative and qualitative, and is directly related to the dearth of operationalizable universalistic criteria for decision-making in casework theory, i.e. the lack of adequate empirical referents for the abstract, universalistic criteria which abound in the child welfare literature. Thus, periodic review tends to supply the superordinate unit with much less information than is available to the service delivery unit, when in fact what the superordinate unit needs is at least as much and preferably more information in order to properly evaluate the actions of the service delivery unit. Centralized monitoring units (such as CRU) which try to "screen" caseloads, Family Court judges or independent review board members who try to evaluate case "reports" from an agency, and even supervisors who periodically "review" the status of cases assigned to caseworkers, all need more information than can be supplied by most financially practical case review systems. Thus, it is difficult to see how their recommendations could consistently constitute a substantial improvement over decisions made by caseworkers.

In addition to the problem of a loss of information in the review process, there is an equally severe problem of biased information. It is in one sense illogical for the service delivery unit to supply the basic information which will be used in the evaluation of its own actions, yet neither would it be appropriate or feasible to exclude information supplied by the service delivery unit. There are some types of important information perhaps known only to the service delivery unit. Moreover, it may not be financially possible, or may interfere with casework, for the superordinate unit to conduct or commission an independent investigation of each case. Thus, the decisions of the superordinate unit

tend to be limited by the perceptions and even manipulations (whether conscious or not) of the service delivery unit. This is unsatisfactory because the service delivery unit might not be in possession of all the relevant facts, or might not have assessed them properly; or the service delivery unit might be more interested in justifying its own actions than in developing a correct case plan.

The problem of biased information is perhaps more critical in administrative reviews than in external reviews since, in the latter, hearings attended by the natural and foster parents, as well as by the agency, are often held. Hearings tend to supply a greater diversity of information to the superordinate unit, but are of course quite costly, unwieldy, and as we know from New York Court Review (Festinger, 1975; 1976), often delayed and poorly attended.

As we have already suggested, it is doubtful whether casework practice is amenable to the types of bureaucratic monitoring or strict accountability structures which periodic review systems are designed to impose. Casework practice has not yet been sufficiently routinized to enable the judgments of caseworkers at one level, or whole agencies at another, to be effectively second-guessed by administrative superiors or external authorities. While the level of accountability of individual workers concerning individual cases could be somewhat increased by collecting independent, intensive information on cases, case review systems are not designed to do this, nor would it ever be financially feasible to do it on entire agency caseloads at regular intervals. Unfortunately, it is not yet clear exactly what changes in the degree or type of organizational control could improve services to child welfare clients. The following section offers some suggestions directed toward the New Jersey case review situation, but which are intended to stimulate further discussion of these issues elsewhere as well.

### C. Recommendations

#### 1. Current Situation

The last administrative review of the foster care caseload in New Jersey was conducted in September, 1975. Although the Case Review Unit (CRU) has been prepared to conduct the next scheduled six-month review since late Spring 1976, inability to obtain access to agency data processing facilities has prevented this. This has been due to a lack of funds, to state computer hardware and software which are not particularly suited to processing RCP data, and to understaffing in technical personnel. At this writing the next review is scheduled for January, 1977.

How advisable is it for the present case review system to continue? One view among some agency administrators is that the centralized monitoring model has been only partially

implemented and that therefore the results to date are not a fair test of the system. The principal basis of this view is a faith in the technical improvements in screening procedures proposed by CRU, and in CRU's ability to institute intensive follow-up procedures for "problematic" cases.

On the basis of our data, we cannot subscribe to this optimistic view of the situation. Case review in general, and the centralized monitoring model in particular, will continue to fail to meet the expectations of its proponents, not primarily because it has been inadequately implemented, but because of basic contradictions in its assumptions and methods.

First, although RCP is designed to assess, and if necessary to correct, the discretionary decisions of caseworkers and their immediate supervisors, the justification for such a strategy in New Jersey has not been demonstrated. Inadequate case management has not been identified as a major problem in New Jersey although scarcity of staff and resources have been so documented. And as we have seen in Chapter II, virtually no research anywhere can be interpreted as providing a strong mandate for periodic case review. The primary impetus for administrative review in New Jersey has come not from a clearly documented organizational need, but rather from legislative bodies who were responding to public pressures and who were not intimately familiar with the complexities of child welfare casework. Thus, one reason why case review is unlikely to prove very effective, no matter how many marginal improvements are made, is that, in concentrating on caseworker commitment and decision-making, it is not addressing the most critical problems of the foster care system.

On the other hand, if caseworkers are too occupied to do proper case planning or to adequately implement those plans, a more appropriate solution than case review would seem to be to employ enough caseworkers to reduce caseloads to manageable proportions. If workers are seriously deficient in basic casework skills, then a more appropriate solution would be to improve hiring practices and/or to provide additional training. If case plans cannot be implemented because appropriate placement facilities are lacking, then those are the needs which should be directly addressed. The list of possible problems and matching solutions could be extended. Case review does not seem to constitute an adequate compensation, even a partial one, for other problems of the system.

Even if it were demonstrated that caseworkers require much closer supervision, there is little evidence that periodic case review systems could accomplish that efficiently. The nature of the casework process seems to be ill-suited to management control by periodic case review because, as discussed previously, review inherently provides too little information (or unacceptably simplistic information) to enable reliable evaluations of individual case-management

decisions. Intensive follow-up procedures, such as case record reading and interviews with workers, provide more useful information than do mass screenings, but are impractical on a large scale. Thus, a second reason why case review will continue to prove ineffective is that its characteristic methods cannot achieve its primary intended purpose of management control.

If any agency believes that caseworkers should be producing better results with the time and resources at their disposal, then perhaps the relationship which currently exists between caseworkers and their immediate supervisors should be carefully re-examined. Has this relationship failed in some way, and if so, how can the failure be remedied? After all, supervision is the traditional first line of defense in ensuring adequate casework.

The process of supervising in social work is not without intrinsic difficulties (Toren, 1972:65-81), but the centralized monitoring model of review seems more likely to exacerbate those difficulties than to mitigate them. If immediate supervisors are in fact unable to evaluate the performance of caseworkers, then the entire concept of the supervisor's role is in jeopardy. It may well be that, in practice, supervisors are too mired in administrative paperwork and other tasks to properly perform their advisory and evaluative functions vis a vis their subordinates. If this is true, then it is difficult to see how a small special unit, far removed from the day-to-day casework process, could succeed in compensating for a lack of proper supervision in the local offices. If local supervision were adequate, on the other hand, it is unclear what such a special unit could contribute in terms of management control. (The same arguments could be made to apply to Family Court judges or lay review board members in the other types of case review.)

## 2. A "Quality Control" System

What could a child welfare agency do to improve its knowledge about the adequacy of the daily casework process? One possibility might be to employ procedures analogous to "quality control" or "spot-checking" procedures used in industry. This would involve selecting representative samples of small numbers of cases, and collecting intensive data on those cases, for the purpose of re-evaluating their management. (Information on this small number of cases would be gathered through case record readings and interviews with workers, natural parents, foster parents, foster children, etc., as needed.) Such thorough, random case evaluations by highly qualified agency inspectors would provide a route through which ranking agency administrators could occasionally bypass "normal" bureaucratic channels of communication and obtain more direct information about current problems in case management. Operations personnel should welcome such

inspections since the quality of their casework could thereby be vindicated, or at the very least, the day-to-day constraints on proper casework could be convincingly communicated to higher administrators. Needless to say, such inspections would also serve as additional motivation for any caseworkers and supervisors who may not be performing up to reasonable expectations. But this "quality control" system could never be a substitute for adequate local office supervision of the casework process.

The advantages of this proposed model over "case review" is that it can provide sufficient data on each case to enable informed assessments; that the limitation to small samples makes the enterprise financially feasible; that representativeness of the samples obviates the problem of trying to identify "problematic" cases using invalid or arbitrary selection criteria; and that the reliance on sources of information in addition to the worker mitigates the difficulty of biased information. However, the primary purpose of this quality control system would not be to influence the management of those particular cases selected for scrutiny, but would be to use those inspections to identify typical problems and to suggest workable strategies to prevent or solve those problems in the future. Despite the improved quality of the information collected, we submit that the system would still not provide a consistently satisfactory method of second-guessing individual case management decisions. Rather, over a period of time the system could identify types of problems which are common to types of cases or even types of caseworkers. The salient difference between this quality control system and case review is that the former does not assume that the inspector's assessment of any given individual case is valid, but rather that such assessments are only more valid on the average than the assessments of individual caseworkers. Thus the proposed quality control system does not offer a direct alternative to case review; it is designed to address the problems of the foster care system in a fundamentally different way.

The advantages of the "quality control" system over the typical type of survey research undertaken by service agencies is the increased detail and greater validity of the data collected and the more consistent timelines of the information. Frequently research findings are out of date before they become available. A quality control team doing regular sampling and study of agency cases on a systematic, continuous basis could alert administrators relatively quickly to any new problems developing in agency operations.\*

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\*It has been suggested that the data collected through the RCP program, even if not very useful for improving individual case outcomes or achieving greater worker accountability, (cont.)

In addition it might be possible, over a period of time, to develop out of the findings from intensive study of the random samples of cases, criteria which could be used successfully in the future to select cases for management attention on an exception basis.

It is unlikely that a highly accurate set of exception criteria can be created, in the sense that it will be known with a high degree of certainty that the cases selected for review on the basis of specific criteria are all and only those cases which should be reviewed. But since it is precisely for review (not for automatic assumptions about errors in those cases) that the cases would be selected, a reasonable degree of inaccuracy in the initial selection of cases would presumably be tolerable. This is not to say that there is any assurance that a good set of a criteria can actually be found, but clearly the efficiency advantage of such criteria would be so great that further research involving a search for such criteria for initial selection of cases to be reviewed intensively may well be worthwhile.

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could be useful for broader research on the DYFS foster care caseload. However, the data provided by the RCP forms add very little to the information already available through the Child Master Record (CMR) system, the computerized accounting information system in use since 1968. Actually, neither the RCP nor the CMR forms provide the quality and quantity of information desirable for research and program development, any more than they provide adequate data for individual case monitoring. For greatest efficiency, research instruments should be designed for specific purposes; secondary purposes should not be invented simply to justify the continuance of marginal programs.



## VII. The 1971 Sample

In addition to providing a data base for the evaluation of Review of Children in Placement, the cohort samples of children are a useful source of general information about the agency's caseload. An initial presentation of some of that information will be given in this chapter, although the possibilities for analysis will by no means be exhausted. The 1971 and 1974 samples were very similar on most characteristics, both at the beginning of agency supervision and at the end of the period studied; there was greater variation within each sample with respect to both entering characteristics and case outcomes.

It is convenient for the broader purposes of this research that the sample design for evaluating case review called for representative samples of entering cohorts of all non-WIN, non-EEA cases under age 15, rather than being restricted to those children who happened to be in foster care at a particular time. Most information developed on the DYFS caseload in the past has been strictly cross-sectional, aggregated data on the existing caseload (or some special segment of it). This project has, for the first time in the agency's history, developed extensive longitudinal information on two representative samples of individual cases from well-defined, newly entering cohorts of children. Furthermore, the 1971 sample had entered the caseload sufficiently early to permit tracing client careers over a period of four and a half years.

Thus, the agency, thanks to SRS funding of this project, now has a systematic data base able to reveal the population categories from which clients come, the problems which bring them to the agency, the way in which (and length of time during which) these problems are addressed by the agency, the nature of the clients' experiences with the agency, the distribution of case outcomes, and most importantly -- the characteristics of clients and of agency activities which predict or explain differential case outcomes. Since DYFS has not been alone in its lack of such information, perhaps this study of New Jersey public child welfare case will also be useful to comparable agencies in other states -- either as one basis for ascertaining the nature of their own caseloads or as data with which to compare information about their own caseloads in order to obtain better perspectives on their situations.

Because of the longer period over which childrens' agency careers can be followed up, the 1971 cohort sample represents the best group with which to begin development of a comprehensive understanding of the DYFS clientele and of what happens to them. Perhaps this information can later be updated by further study of the 1974 cohort, though as Chapter IV demonstrated, the two cohorts continued to be so similar

through the respective eighteen month follow-ups that further study of the 1974 cohort may not add significantly to the findings based on the 1971 cohort alone.

#### A. Client Characteristics

##### 1. SES and Caretaker Availability

Some basic characteristics of the 1971 cohort sample (N=373) are given in the following tables (cases for which data is missing on any variable in a table are excluded from that particular table):

Table VII-1: Caretaker Availability at Application by Family Education and Foster Placement\*

Table VII-2: Caretaker Availability at Application by Family Current Employment and Foster Placement

Table VII-3: Caretaker Availability at Application by Income Level of Family and Foster Placement

Table VII-4: Caretaker Availability at Application by Race and Foster Placement

In these tables "surrogate family" refers to a family other than the child's natural parents which has cared for the child for a substantial period of time before the child became a DYFS case. Many of these homes are subsequently paid board rates by the agency as "foster" or "parafoster" homes, and, in many cases these are the same families with which the children remain when agency supervision is terminated and the case closed. The children in "other" locations (shelters, institutions, various individual caretakers, etc.) are those whose parents are no longer alive, cannot be located, or are incarcerated at application, but who have not yet developed a long-standing relationship with a substitute caretaker before coming to agency attention.

The employment variable in these table refers to full-time employment only; there were only a small number of parents who were employed part-time, and also a very small number of families in which more than one parent was employed.

As the reader will notice, these and subsequent tables are not percentaged in the direction necessary to predict foster care placement from other variables. In this chapter we are not attempting to explain why children enter foster care;

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\* "Foster children" are defined as children who were ever placed out of the natural home during the 4 1/2 year follow-up period. Children living with surrogate parents are classified as foster children, although the analysis treats them separately. "Children remaining at home" had no foster placements during supervision.

this subject will be studied at a later date.

The families in this sample have considerably less formal education and much lower income than the general population of New Jersey families with children. Far more agency families are black and far fewer of them have anyone in the family who is employed. To be more specific, 44% of the families of children remaining at home, and 56% of the families of foster children had incomes less than \$6,000 per year in 1971.\* Only 14% of all New Jersey families with children under 18 had incomes of less than \$6,000 in 1969, according to the 1970 census data. Fifty-nine percent of the children who remained at home, and 47% of the foster children, were white, while 87% of New Jersey children under age 15 in 1969 were white, according to 1970 census data.

As tables VII-1 through VII-4 indicate, children of parents with only high school or less education, children of unemployed parents, children from families with income at or below public assistance level, and "non-white" children, also tend to have access to fewer potential parental caretakers at the time of application for DYFS services.

## 2. Age, Sex, and Location at Application

A second step towards identifying the DYFS clientele is to specify additional demographic facts about the children themselves.

Among the facts which can be derived from Tables VII-5 to VII-7 are the following:

- a. 50% of the children remaining at home and 58% of the foster children were male;
- b. 46% of the children remaining home, and 54% of the foster children were under school age at their entry into the agency caseload;
- c. unborn and newborn children of single women constituted 26% of the foster children, and 11% of the children remaining at home;
- d. 62% of the female foster children were under school age, as compared with 49% of the male foster children, though this sex difference is not present among children remaining at home;
- e. 24% of the girls in "foster care" under agency supervision and 13% of the foster boys were already living with surrogate families at the time of application;

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\* Again, these statistics do not address the issue of causality between family income and entry to foster care.

- f. 21% of the foster children age twelve and over were already in an institution of some kind before the application for DYFS services was made, compared with 8% of foster children other ages;
- g. children age twelve and older (both foster children and others and children of both sexes) were much more frequently than younger children with two parents at entry;
- h. among children age 12 and older, boys more frequently than girls were living with two parents. In effect these two-parent families of "difficult" boys seem to represent a special constituency within the DYFS caseload, perhaps similar to the families of those older children already in institutions at entry of the DYFS caseload.

### 3. Reasons for Agency Supervision

Table VII-8 shows that there is some tendency for the case records to give more reasons for agency supervision for boys and older children than for girls and younger children. This tendency is most easily seen by comparing the number of reasons given for older foster boys with the numbers for pre-school girls remaining at home.

Most of the following facts regarding reasons for supervision are demonstrated by tables VII-9, VII-10, VII-11, VII-12, VII-13, and VII-14:

- a. not many cases were supervised because of specific disabilities of parents (such as hospitalization, physical or mental illness, incarceration, addiction, etc.);
- b. girls were more frequently supervised than boys because of caretaker unwillingness or inability to care for them (in the absence of known specific disabling factors such as hospitalization for physical or mental illness, imprisonment, major drug or alcohol addiction); but this reason is more closely associated with foster care for boys than for girls;
- c. among foster children boys were somewhat more often supervised than girls for child reasons (i.e., claims that something is wrong with the child or his behavior, rather than with the parenting or the larger situation);
- d. child reasons for supervision were most often reported for children age nine and older;
- e. among both the in-home and foster care cases a very large proportion of the parents approached the agency (apparently voluntarily) with stated inability or unwillingness to care for their children, but foster

care cases were more likely than others to have been supervised under a court order;

- f. incidence of abuse as a reason for supervision among those placed in foster care was only 6%, of neglect 14%; while among those children supervised at home 16% were abused and 27% neglected (Tables VII-11 and VII-12);
- g. the difference observed between the foster and at-home children with respect to the incidence of abuse and neglect is evidently due to the larger numbers of abused and neglected children, as compared with other children, who have parents available to them to begin with (Tables VII-13 and VII-14). (This hypothesis will be tested in our projected later study of the causes of foster placements).

No single "typical" clientele of DYFS seems to emerge from the foregoing data. Rather the impression is created that DYFS clients represent a heterogeneous collection of relatively dissimilar categories of clients with widely differing service needs. This is likely to make it very difficult for the agency to assess its impact of clients by use of any set of simplified measures of productivity or effectiveness designed to be applied across the board to all types of cases.

More important, administrators will have to be alert to the fact that there are likely to be very few program elements which will be readily applicable to the entire caseload. Thus, major service improvements are less likely to be possible by means of sweeping changes in over all approach (which may simply shift all practice from a kind especially suitable to one small category of cases to a kind especially suitable to a different category of cases -- without achieving any general improvement) than by precisely targeted changes in the services to specified categories of clients. This more highly specified approach must also be handled with care, however, to require that each specific change is compatible with other aspects of the system and offers the intended advantages to the target groups without entailing unforeseen detrimental consequences for other agency clients or for the public at large.

## B. Agency Services and Client Attitudes

### 1. Number and Type of Services

The tables to this point have offered information about where the children came from and why. The tables which follow state some of the facts about what the agency attempted to do for them (beyond the simple dichotomy as to whether they were placed out of home or not).

As can be seen from Table VII-15, there is some tendency for girls and younger children to receive more services than boys and older children. This is most clearly seen in the contrast between the number of services to adolescent boys and the number to pre-school girls. This difference is all the more notable in view of the fact reported earlier: that the greatest number of reasons for supervision was given for older boys, and the fewest reasons for pre-school girls. If the number of reasons given could be construed as a rough measure of problem severity, one might expect the number of services to be greatest for those having the most reasons stated for supervision. However there may be relationships among types of problem and types of services required which complicate such expectations

Table VII-16, indicates that except among boys in foster care, there appears to be a general preponderance of tangible services\* over psychological\*\* or medical ones, as one might expect given the reported social and economic circumstances of DYFS families. The out-of-home boys and their families were, when provided services, more often provided with psychological testing or/with counseling or psychotherapy than were either the other boys and their families or the girls and their families. It may also be worth noting that in the out-of-home groups, the big surge in provision of psychological services occurred for boys and their families in the early school years, when boys were being coped with primarily by women (in school, etc.), while for girls it did not occur until adolescence was reached, when the girls finally began to be coped with by more men. To some degree, perhaps, the need for psychological counselling may be relative to the eye of the authority recommending it.

Table VII-17, demonstrates that the agency provided other services (besides foster care and basic agency supervision) more frequently to children with one or more available parent caretakers than for other children. One hypothesis to explain this would be that the agency is making an attempt to provide services where there is most hope that those services will result in keeping or returning the child home. However, preceding tables have demonstrated that children who come to the agency without available natural parents (whether with surrogate families at the outset or not) come from lower SES circumstances than do the children with parents. This would appear to put the agency in the ironic position of making the most effort to help those children already best off in terms of both socioeconomic and parental

\* "Tangible services" include day care, developmental/recreational, employment assistance/vocational rehabilitation, family planning, homemaker, housing assistance, legal services, transportation and assistance in obtaining welfare.

\*\* "Psychological services" include specialized counseling and psychiatric care/evaluation for either caretaker or child.

availability in spite of the fact that the agency's oldest and most fundamental legal mandate has been to provide for those children who are poor and without parents.

Tables VII-18, VII-19, and VII-20 confirm that, controlling for foster care, the agency provides fewer services to its lower SES clients generally. Since there is such a strong correlation in the DYFS caseload between race and these SES criteria, some people might conclude that the failure of the agency to provide as many services to lower as to higher SES children is actually a by-product of racial discrimination. As a comparison of table VII-21 with tables VII-18, VII-19, and VII-20 reveals, race is slightly less closely and less consistently associated with number of services than are education, employment and income. This suggests that if there is discriminatory provision of services, it is apparently based on social class rather than on race. As suggested above, this could be an outgrowth of a determination to "prevent unnecessary foster care" through the allocation of services to those children most likely to be gotten out of foster care early through use of the services. More will be said on this subject in the last section of this chapter.

## 2. "Tangible" Services

Since it has been previously stated that, appropriate to its low income clientele, DYFS offers a number of "tangible" services, the question arises whether it is in fact the lower SES clients in the DYFS caseload (who would presumably need the tangible services the most) who most often receive those specific types of DYFS services.

As Tables VII-22 to VII-24 demonstrate, when both parental availability and foster placement are controlled for, the relationship between SES and the receipt of tangible services from DYFS virtually disappears among foster children who have one or more parents, but is fairly strong among children who remain at home and among children with "surrogate families" (except among children with "surrogates" when using education as the indicator). Though children with "surrogate" families are listed in the "foster" category, they represent a special group who in general seem more similar to the "at-home children" than to the other "foster children". In any case, the relationship among the at-home children and those with "surrogate families" is as follows: higher SES children and their families received more of the tangible services! As was the case with services generally, race is not as consistent as education, employment, or income in predicting services. (Table VII-25). Were racial discrimination the basis of the fewer tangible services to the poor, one would expect fewer services to non-whites: But this did not occur.

This allocation of more of the agency's tangible services to relatively higher SES clients is all the more ironic in view

of the fact that the psychological/counseling services (psychological testing, counselling, psychotherapy, etc.) are not allocated consistently in favor of higher SES clients, even though one might expect them to be\*. Such traditional services to improve individual adjustment are often said to be more likely to be the principal need of, and more likely to be helpful to, higher SES persons, who already have reasonable access to basic tangible amenities, and who are more accustomed to dealing with life through activities involving high verbal facility. To sum up, the DYFS tangible services to children who remain at home go to the higher SES families, while the psychological services are more randomly allocated with respect to client socioeconomic status.

This apparent anomaly in the distribution of services appears to be related to what the workers might explain as a series of rational choices related to client ability and willingness to utilize help. The basis for this suggestion is the relationship between a variable which we have called "worker's perception of the principal natural parent's attitude toward agency supervision." While parental attitude does not predict the number of tangible services provided to foster children, to whom services are evidently allocated with less regard for the specific characteristics of the natural parents, there is (as Table VII-26 shows) a fairly strong relationship between parental attitude and provision of tangible services to children remaining at home.

### 3. Parental Attitude

Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of the situation reported above is that there is also a fairly clear tendency for caseworkers to perceive higher SES and white parents as having a "positive" attitude, while lower SES and black parents are perceived as having "indifferent" or "negative" attitudes (Table VII-27). Regardless of the degree to which the worker's perception of the clients' attitudes may be accurate, the relationships among perceived attitudes, SES, and service distribution must raise questions about the unintended consequences of various approaches to agency services allocation.

There is an even stronger relationship between parental attitude and reason for supervision. Although there is no clear relationship between SES and supervision for abuse and neglect, parents in cases supervised for abuse are less likely than parents supervised for other reasons to have a "positive" attitude toward agency supervision -- a difference of 54% (Table VII-28A). Those supervised for neglect are less likely than other parents to have a "positive" attitude toward agency supervision by a difference of 39% (Table VII-28B).

\* — These tables omitted.



While we would prefer not to attempt a substantive interpretation of this relationship at this time, we at least see in this correlation some degree of mutual validation of the two measures. That is, we believe that those clients who are supervised for abuse and neglect are less likely to be supervised voluntarily, and that those who are supervised voluntarily are more likely to be pleased with agency intervention. At least they have presumably approached the agency for services which they themselves feel that they need. The parents in abuse and neglect cases are more likely to have been approached by the agency for provision of services which someone other than the parents felt that the family needs.

#### 4. Services and Caretaker Availability

A final point to be made about the distribution of services is that tables VII-22 through VII-25 reveal a rather consistent tendency for more "tangible" services to go to children from one-parent families than to children having either two caretakers or no natural family available to them. This is not a result of SES or racial differences, since the tables in question control for that, though the tendency does appear stronger among higher SES clients than among lower SES clients. Presumably the agency either perceives the child with one parent as generally more in need of tangible services than other children, regardless of income level and employment status, or the agency views single parents as more likely than others to make good use of tangible services. Is this implied view of the agency justified?

### C. Case Outcomes

#### 1. Reasons for Placement Termination

One good indicator of the experiences of children in foster care should be the reasons given in the case record for terminating foster placements. The distribution of reasons for placement termination are as follows: 36% were terminated because of resolution of, or at least real improvement of, the problem causing the placement; 33% because of new difficulties arising during the placement; 10% because of the planned end of a deliberately temporary placement, 8% because of the anticipated superiority of a new placement; 4% by virtue of agency acceptance of a new de facto situation; 2% by court order; and 7% for "other" reasons.

#### 2. Time Out of Home, Number of Moves, and Final Location

A second rough indication of agency service effectiveness might be the length of time spent out of home by the foster children. In this sample children spent an average of 30 months out of the 52 months covered by the study in foster care. It should be noted that not all removals from natural

families were at the beginning of agency supervision, and that the above figure therefore represents an underestimate of time out-of-home. Many children were still in foster care at the end of the period covered by the research. Some children who have returned home will again return to foster care; and as previous research has indicated (Claburn, Magura, and Chizek, 1976), even some closed cases will be reopened for further agency supervision, including some for further foster care. In addition, many of the foster children in surrogate families are with the same families they were staying with prior to DYFS involvement, and can be expected to remain with those same families after agency involvement is ended. "Time in foster care" thus means something different for the latter children than for others. All in all, the facts about length of time in foster care remain incomplete and difficult to evaluate.

Another measure worth attention both as a service measure and as an outcome measure is the number of moves among different caretakers experienced by children under agency supervision. While this has not yet been calculated for the full 4 1/2 year period, Table IV-12B shows the number of moves which had occurred within the first eighteen months of supervision.

An outcome measure perhaps one step nearer the "bottom line" for foster children than either the length of time out of home, or the number of moves, is the final location of the child at case closing or at end of the study (whichever came first). Table VII-29 shows that, as expected, the likelihood that a foster child will end up with one or more parents is related to the number of parents he had potentially available at case opening.

### 3. Reasons for Case Terminations

Another set of figures providing some insight into case outcomes would be the reasons given for closing those cases which are terminated (to be distinguished from reasons for placement terminations). In somewhat more than half of the initial case terminations, the case is closed because the problem is considered resolved by the worker. A slightly larger proportion of these "successful" terminations occur in the foster cases (57%) than in the home supervision cases (49%), but more of the foster cases are also closed because of a loss of contact with the agency or of eligibility for service.

Of course resolution of the specific problem leading to DYFS supervision does not mean that all of a family's problems are resolved.

As table VII-30 shows, for both foster children and children remaining at home, resolution of the problems which caused agency supervision is more often given as the reason for

case termination for girls than for boys. There is also a fairly strong relationship between age and reason for case closing when sex and foster placement are controlled. Among foster children (both boys and girls) a much larger percentage of the cases of younger children than of older children are closed because the problem was resolved\*. Among children remaining at home this relationship does not hold.

In part the relationship between age and reason for case termination is probably due to the preponderance of adoption cases among younger children (where successful conclusion of the adoption process is by definition a resolution of the problem), and to the opportunity for the oldest group of children to become ineligible for further services through achievement of their majority before the end of the study period (regardless of whether the problem was resolved). Nevertheless, whatever the specific explanations, the fact remains that age is a fairly good predictor of the reason foster care cases will be closed.

Another, though somewhat weaker, predictor of reason for case termination is the reason for agency supervision. As Table VII-31 demonstrates, among both foster children and children remaining at home, child abuse or neglect cases are less frequently closed than other cases because the problem has been resolved.

#### 4. Case Status

Another useful measure of outcome is case status. As shown in Table VII-32, 32% of the foster care cases, and 16% of the home cases, had not been closed even once as of the end of the 4 1/2 year follow-up period. Another 7% of foster care cases, and 4% of home cases, had been closed, and reopened, and were still active at the end as a result. About half the foster care cases and three-fourths of the home cases had been closed once, and were still closed as of the end of the period. Another 9% of foster care cases, and 5% of home cases, were closed at the end, but only as a result of having been closed, reopened, and closed again during the 4 1/2 years.

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\* Other reasons for case terminations included transfer of the case to another agency, lack of consent or cooperation from parents, loss of contact with the child or the family, death of the child, agency inability to meet the child's needs, ineligibility for further agency services, court orders, etc. If resolution of the problem occurred, it was counted as such whether any of the other possible reasons was also given or not.

There was little difference between the sexes on case status. There was a much stronger tendency for the children age 12 and older to have had their cases closed once and remain closed. Among children remaining home this tendency extended to school age children as well. Of all the foster care cases which closed (N=175), 25% reopened at least once; of all the other cases which closed (N=93), 11% reopened.

Neither reason for supervision nor income level of the natural family predict case status very well individually, but testing for a relationship between income level and case status, controlling for reason for supervision and foster placement, yields Table VII-33. Among foster children, lower family income predicts greater likelihood that the case will still be open at the end of the study: this is true within each category of reasons except child reasons. Among children remaining at home, lower family income predicts greater likelihood that the case will still be open at the end in connection with each reason category except neglect and abuse. In the two exceptional instances this is not simply a lack of relationship, but a relationship clearly opposite to the predicted direction. While we would hesitate to discuss this pattern as simply random variation, neither are we prepared to offer a definitive explanation for it. We simply offer the data for further investigation and suggest that in general it probably supports the common sense assumption that the financially better off families are the ones who are also able to marshal the resources necessary to end agency involvement more quickly.

#### D. Predicting Final Location

It would certainly be useful to be able to predict accurately which foster children will end with at least one natural or adoptive parent by the end of the period studied. In approaching the task of such prediction, the literature directs attention to the issue of parental visiting during foster care (Fanshel, 1975).

##### 1. Parental Visiting and Caretaker Availability

Although our analysis of this issue is incomplete, it is clear that parental visiting during foster care is strongly related to final location of the child. Visiting was dichotomized into "often" and "seldom"\* for the one placement on which data is currently computerized.

In 64% of the cases in which visiting occurred "often" (N=64), the child was with a biological or adoptive parent at the end of the study, compared with 25% of the cases in which the visiting was "seldom" (N=52). Since parental availability

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\* Includes never

and visiting are obviously closely related (with visiting clearly an artifact of availability to some degree), it becomes necessary to control for availability to ascertain whether visiting per se has a substantive effect within each category of availability (Table VII-34). When this is done it becomes clear that there is no relationship between visiting and final location with a parent among those children with surrogate families, and only a weak relationship between visiting and final location with a parent for children in the "other availability" category. However, in both the one-parent and two-caretaker categories the relationship becomes stronger than the original zero-order relationship between visiting and final location. Among two-caretaker families, 83% of the frequently visited children end with one or more parents, while only 29% of the seldom visited do so. Among single parent families the corresponding figures are 65% and 19%.

## 2. Visiting, SES, and Parental Attitude

There is another way to obtain strong, and perhaps substantively important, predictability of final location from visiting data: by controlling for SES and parental attitude toward agency supervision. Among those cases for whom parental attitude information is available (N=170), 57% of children having parents with a positive attitude end with those parents, compared with 43% of those parents with "negative" or "indifferent" attitude. In addition, race and income predict 11% differences and employment status and education 14% differences, in final location with a natural or adoptive parent. When SES and parental attitude are used together to predict final location, a relationship is discovered along the following lines:

- 1) Among all those children from families with a positive attitude, the percent of children from families with lower education who end with their parents is identical to the percent of those with higher education who do so. However, among all those from families with negative or indifferent attitudes, 71% of those from higher education families end with a parent, compared with 54% of those from lower education families.
- 2) Looking at the relationships from another perspective, among all children from lower education families, 59% whose parents have a positive attitude end up with a parent, compared with 41% from families with negative or indifferent attitudes. Among all children from more highly educated families, 57% whose parents have a positive attitude end up with a parent, compared with only 29% of those whose parents have negative or indifferent attitudes. The relationships are quite similar using income

as the SES indicator, except in that instance, attitude yields a 28% difference of prediction within the negative attitude category (the relationships are in the same directions of course-lower SES and negative attitude predicting fewer final locations with parents).

Controlling for SES and parental attitude in the relationship between visiting and final location provides the following pattern of prediction (Table VII-35):

1. Children who are seldom visited have little chance of ending with a parent, regardless of their family's socioeconomic status or attitude.
2. Whether children who are frequently visited end with a parent depends largely on their parent's SES and attitude toward the agency:
  - a. If parental SES is low and attitude not positive, the parental visiting has little effect on the child's end location.
  - b. If parental SES is low, but attitude "positive" the child's chance of ending with a parent is considerably better.
  - c. If parental SES is relatively high and attitude positive, the child has an excellent chance of ending up with a parent - particularly as compared with children seldom visited who fall into the same SES/parental attitude category.

It is difficult to know, of course, to what extent this degree of predictability of final location from visiting behavior is saying something about the client, or to what extent it is saying something about the agency. Does visiting help higher SES parents with a positive attitude reunite with their children because of something which it expresses about (or does for) the family? Or does the visiting behavior affect agency decision-making differently, depending on the characteristics of the client?

For instance, does visiting in fact maintain the tie between parents and children more effectively among higher SES families than among lower SES families because of some difference in the quality of the visits or of the relationships? Or does the caseworker evaluate visiting differently when deciding whether or not a child should return home, depending on the parent's SES and attitude toward the agency? Or are there simply additional factors in the situations which make it impossible for lower SES parents and parents with negative or indifferent attitudes to care for their children on a

full-time basis, even if they do care about them enough to visit with them while they are in foster care?

In any case this analysis demonstrates that visiting behavior has a relationship with foster care case outcomes which is independent of the number of parents available for visiting.

#### 5. Agency Services and Final Location

Perhaps the question of most interest to an agency is whether agency services affect case outcomes. Within the normal parameters of agency operations (not an experimental situation in which service variables can be manipulated), does intensified agency effort lead to a greater likelihood that a child will be returned home? Or are the more favorable outcomes of some cases primarily due to other factors in the situation (such as client characteristics, client circumstances which are beyond practical agency control, agency limitations in respects other than the degree of casework effort, etc.)?

Although there was no association between the number of services generally and case outcomes, tangible services (the allocation of which has been discussed above) are clearly related to case outcomes for foster children when one controls for any of the following variables: parental availability, race, or income level. The relationship is as follows: receiving no "tangible" services predicts greater likelihood of foster children ending up with one or more natural or adoptive parents by the end of the study period (Table VII-36).

It would be an error to conclude from these figures that individual children are likely to leave foster care sooner if deprived of services, since both the nature of the outcomes and the allocation of services are probably related to prior client characteristics and circumstances. Yet this finding seems to be consistent with the literature, in which there exists no firm evidence that intensive social services to natural families lead to earlier permanency for children. This finding again raises the issue of the rationality with which services are distributed: those children most deprived (parentally and economically) seem to receive the fewest agency tangible services. Let us elaborate on this.

First, the earlier hypothesis that tangible services are allocated to those cases in which the investment is most likely to lead to early discharge from care must be considered refuted. Obviously the tangible services are being allocated on some other basis. Second, the fact that the services in question did not yield improved case outcomes does not mean they were ineffective in reducing the children's suffering or improving their care and nurture in ways not measured here.

But if considerations other than "efficiency in achieving reduction of unnecessary foster care" are involved in allocating



tangible services, what is the justification for providing those services more frequently to those children already comparatively better off, both financially and with respect to the number of parents already available to them?

Presumably the justification lies in some other client disadvantages addressed by the services which are not closely associated with poverty or the availability of parents, and which also affect case outcomes. If so, the heterogeneity of the DYFS caseload is again underscored. For other severe problems (besides poverty and parental availability) to affect service distribution this strongly in the observed direction, a large proportion of the children in the caseload who are relatively well off with respect to those two basic criteria must be much worse off than the other children with respect to the criteria for tangible service distribution. In other words, it appears that being poor enough and having parents unavailable can force a child to the agency, whether he or his parents have other problems or not. But if parents are relatively well off financially, or if children have parents available, certain other problems have to be perceived as quite severe in order to qualify the children for agency supervision -- severe enough that they then qualify for more tangible services than do children who are merely without financial resources or parents. It will be interesting to learn in detail what those other problems are which weigh so heavily in service allocation, compared with lack of money and parents unavailable. Further analysis will be undertaken in connection with this question.

#### E. Conclusion

The reader should bear in mind that the primary purpose of this grant project was to test the effectiveness of a case review system, and that the ancillary use of the data to learn other useful things about the caseload through survey research has only just begun. Not all of the data gathered had been processed by the time of this writing; and those tables constructed have simply made use of individual items from the data collection instrument (i.e., without development of complex indices).

However, the analysis thus far shows that client and situational characteristics such as parental availability, age, sex, problems requiring agency intervention, socioeconomic status, and parental attitudes toward agency intervention, are strongly associated with visiting behavior and with case outcomes. No correspondingly strong influences of agency decisions or actions have been detected as yet. Clearly the achievement of preferred case outcomes cannot be attributed to the intensity of agency services. This suggests the need for a reexamination of the purposes for which agency services are given, and the effects which such services can realistically be expected to achieve.



TABLE VII-1: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Family Education and Foster Placement

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>			
	<u>High School or Less</u>		<u>Beyond High School</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	25	(29)	41	(29)
One parent	49	(58)	41	(29)
Surrogate family	12	(14)	6	(4)
Other	14	(17)	11	(8)
Total	100%	(118)	99%	(70)

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
	<u>High School or Less</u>		<u>Beyond High School</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	51	(25)	41	(11)
One parent	45	(22)	52	(14)
Other	4	(2)	7	(2)
Total	100%	(49)	100%	(27)

TABLE VII-2: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Family Current Employment and Foster Placement

<u>Foster Children</u>				
<u>Availability</u>	<u>No One Working</u>		<u>Someone Working</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	14	(25)	50	(42)
One parent	44	(78)	39	(33)
Surrogate family	25	(44)	4	(3)
Other	17	(30)	7	(6)
Total	100%	(177)	100%	(84)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>				
<u>Availability</u>	<u>No One Working</u>		<u>Someone Working</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	32	(19)	58	(30)
One parent	57	(34)	38	(20)
Other	12	(7)	4	(2)
Total	101%	(60)	100%	(52)

TABLE VII-3: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Income Level of Family and Foster Placement

		<u>Foster Children</u>			
		<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>		<u>Above Public Assistance</u>	
<u>Availability</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers		24	(24)	47	(28)
One parent		47	(46)	47	(28)
Surrogate family		5	(5)	--	(0)
Other		23	(23)	5	(3)
Total		99%	(98)	99%	(50)

		<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
		<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>		<u>Above Public Assistance</u>	
<u>Availability</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers		35	(15)	59	(22)
One parent		63	(27)	35	(13)
Other		2	(1)	5	(2)
Total		100%	(43)	99%	(37)

TABLE VII-4: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Race and Foster Placement

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>			
	<u>"Non-White"<sup>a</sup></u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	13	(18)	40	(49)
One parent	47	(65)	38	(46)
Surrogate family	22	(30)	14	(17)
Other	18	(25)	8	(10)
Total	100%	(138)	100%	(122)

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
	<u>"Non-White"</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	33	(15)	52	(34)
One parent	59	(27)	41	(27)
Other	9	(4)	8	(5)
Total	101%	(46)	101%	(66)

<sup>a</sup>Includes blacks, Spanish surname, Orientals, mixed, and "others."

TABLE VII-5: Age by Sex and Foster Placement

<u>Age</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>			
	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Less than one	22	(33)	33	(36)
1 - 2 years	11	(16)	11	(12)
3 - 5 years	16	(25)	18	(20)
6 - 8 years	13	(20)	9	(10)
9 - 11 years	20	(31)	12	(13)
12 - 15 years	17	(26)	17	(18)
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total	99%	(152)	100%	(109)

  

<u>Age</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Less than one	11	(6)	11	(6)
1 - 2 years	18	(10)	14	(8)
3 - 5 years	14	(8)	23	(13)
6 - 8 years	20	(11)	27	(15)
9 - 11 years	18	(10)	14	(8)
12 - 15 years	20	(11)	11	(6)
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total	101%	(56)	100%	(56)

TABLE VII-6: Physical Location at Application  
— Foster Children

A. <u>Male</u>		Age less than 1	1-5	6-11	12-15
<u>Location</u>		%	%	%	%
Mother or Father Only <sup>a</sup>					
Unborn		52	--	--	--
Other		10	59	43	16
Two parents <sup>b</sup>		3	15	19	44
Surrogate family		10	2	19	20
Foster family <sup>c</sup>		6	12	11	4
Institution		16	7	9	16
Other		3	5	0	0
Total		100% (31)	100% (41)	100% (47)	100% (25)
B. <u>Female</u>					
<u>Location</u>					
Mother or Father Only <sup>a</sup>					
Unborn		48	--	--	--
Other		14	35	26	22
Two parents <sup>b</sup>		6	19	17	28
Surrogate family		20	23	43	11
Foster family <sup>c</sup>		9	13	9	11
Institution		3	6	4	28
Other		0	3	0	0
Total		100% (35)	99% (31)	99% (23)	100% (18)

<sup>a</sup>Only a very few of these father only

<sup>b</sup>Either both biological parents or one biological parent and a spouse or paramour of the biological parent

<sup>c</sup>Free home or boarding home

TABLE VII-7: Physical Location at Application  
 — Children Remaining in Home

A. <u>Male</u>		<u>Age less than 1</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>12-15</u>
<u>Location</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Mother or Father Only <sup>a</sup>					
Unborn	17	--	--	--	--
Other	17	44	62	36	
Two parents <sup>b</sup>	50	44	29	64	
Foster family <sup>c</sup>	17	0	5	0	
Institution	0	0	5	0	
Other	0	11	0	0	
Total	101% (6)	99% (18)	101% (21)	100% (11)	
B. <u>Female</u>					
<u>Location</u>					
Mother or Father Only <sup>a</sup>					
Unborn	67	--	--	--	
Other	17	70	50	33	
Two parents <sup>b</sup>	17	30	40	50	
Foster family <sup>c</sup>	0	0	5	0	
Institution	0	0	0	17	
Other	0	0	5	0	
Total	101% (6)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (6)	

<sup>a</sup>Only a very few of these father only

<sup>b</sup>Either both biological parents or one biological parent and a spouse or paramour of the biological parent

<sup>c</sup>Free homes or boarding homes

TABLE VII-8: Number of Reasons for Supervision  
by Age, Sex, and Foster Placement

<u>Foster Children</u>						
	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>	
	<u>Pre-School</u>		<u>Older</u>		<u>Pre-School</u>	
	<u>(0-5)</u>		<u>(6-15)</u>		<u>(0-5)</u>	<u>(6-15)</u>
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Three reasons	16	(12)	22	(17)	7	(5)
Two reasons	30	(22)	32	(25)	31	(21)
One reason	54	(40)	45	(35)	62	(42)
	100%	(74)	99%	(77)	100%	(68)
					100%	(41)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>						
	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>	
	<u>Pre-School</u>		<u>Older</u>		<u>Pre-School</u>	
	<u>(0-5)</u>		<u>(6-15)</u>		<u>(0-5)</u>	<u>(6-15)</u>
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Three reasons	17	(4)	19	(6)	11	(3)
Two reasons	26	(6)	38	(12)	15	(4)
One reason	57	(13)	44	(14)	74	(20)
Total	100%	(23)	101%	(32)	100%	(27)
					100%	(28)



TABLE VII-9:

## Reason for Supervision by Sex and Foster Placement

<u>Reason for Supervision</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>		<u>Children Remaining Home</u>	
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
	<u>% (N)</u>	<u>% (N)</u>	<u>% (N)</u>	<u>% (N)</u>
Caretaker disability	12 (26)	15 (22)	13 (10)	12 (8)
Caretaker unwillingness or inability	43 (92)	52 (76)	25 (19)	45 (30)
Abuse	5 (10)	3 (5)	17 (13)	8 (5)
Neglect	9 (20)	12 (17)	24 (18)	18 (12)
Child behavior	11 (23)	3 (5)	4 (3)	6 (4)
Other child reasons	10 (22)	6 (8)	12 (9)	11 (7)
Court ordered	10 (21)	8 (12)	5 (4)	- (0)
Total	100% (214)	99% (145)	100% (76)	100% (66)

The totals represent the number of times each reason was given. Since many children were supervised for more than one reason, these totals exceed the sample size.

TABLE VII-10: Reason for Supervision by Age and Foster Placement

Reason for Supervision	Foster Children			Children Remaining Home		
	0-5	6-11	12-15	0-5	6-11	12- 15
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Caretaker disability	15 (28)	13 (14)	9 (6)	15 (9)	9 (5)	15 (4)
Caretaker unwillingness or inability	57 (106)	43 (45)	25 (17)	40 (23)	31 (18)	32 (8)
Abuse	4 (8)	5 (5)	3 (2)	10 (6)	17 (10)	8 (2)
Neglect	12 (22)	13 (14)	2 (1)	24 (14)	21 (12)	15 (4)
Child behavior	1 (1)	8 (9)	27 (18)	2 (1)	3 (2)	15 (4)
Other child reasons	3 (5)	12 (13)	18 (12)	7 (4)	14 (8)	15 (4)
Court ordered	8 (16)	6 (6)	16 (11)	2 (11)	5 (3)	- (0)
Total	100%(186)	100%(106)	100%(67)	100% (58)	100%(58)	100% (26)

The totals represent the number of times each reason was given. Since many children were supervised for more than one reason, these totals exceed the sample size.

TABLE VII-11:           Percent of Cases with Child Abuse  
as Reason for Supervision

	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster children	6	(260)
Children Remaining Home	16	(112)

In this table each case was placed in the "abuse" category if abuse was given as a reason for supervision at all, regardless of the number of other reasons which may have been given in addition.

TABLE VII-12:           Percent of Cases with Child Neglect  
as Reason for Supervision

	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster children	14	(260)
Children Remaining Home	27	(112)

In this table each case was placed in the "neglect" category if neglect was given as a reason for supervision at all, regardless of the number or type of other reasons which may have been given in addition.

TABLE VII-13: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Child Abuse as Reason for Supervision

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Child Abuse</u>		<u>Other Reasons</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers <sup>a</sup>	64	(21)	28	(95)
One parent	30	(10)	46	(155)
Surrogate family	--	(0)	15	(50)
Other	6	(2)	12	(40)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(33)</u>	<u>101%</u>	<u>(340)</u>

TABLE VII-14: Caretaker Availability at Application  
by Child Neglect as Reason for Supervision

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Child Neglect</u>		<u>Other Reasons</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two caretakers	40	(23)	27	(83)
One parent	47	(27)	45	(138)
Surrogate family	2	(1)	16	(49)
Other	11	(6)	12	(36)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(57)</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>(306)</u>

<sup>a</sup>Includes at least one natural or adoptive parent.

TABLE VII-15:

## Number of Services by Age, Sex, and Foster Placement

	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>			
	<u>No Services Beyond Basic Agency Supervision</u>	<u>One addi- tional Service</u>	<u>More Services</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>No Ser- vices Beyond Basic Agency Supervision</u>	<u>One addi- tional Service</u>	<u>More Services</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Foster children</u>								
Pre-School	61	20	19	100% (75)	51	29	19	99% (68)
6-11	43	16	41	100% (51)	65	26	9	100% (23)
12-15	81	12	8	101% (26)	50	28	22	100% (18)
All ages	59	17	24	100% (152)	54	28	17	100% (109)
<u>Children Remaining at Home</u>								
Pre-School	50	33	17	100% (24)	37	30	33	100% (27)
6-11	62	33	5	98% (21)	57	22	22	100% (23)
12-15	55	18	27	100% (11)	50	50	—	100% (6)
All ages	55	30	14	99% (56)	46	29	25	100% (56)

TABLE VII-16:

Type of Services\* by Age, Sex, and Foster Placement

	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>			
	<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Tangible</u>	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Tangible</u>	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Foster children</u>								
Pre-school	20%	24	20	(75)	18%	34	21	(68)
6-11	43	35	22	(51)	17	13	9	(23)
12-15	15	4	--	(26)	44	28	6	(18)
All ages	41	37	26	(152)	24	31	17	(107)
<u>Children Remaining at Home</u>								
Pre-school	8%	38	17	(24)	7%	52	26	(27)
6-11	5	33	10	(21)	13	35	--	(23)
12-15	18	36	9	(11)	17	33	--	(6)
All ages	5	20	7	(56)	11	24	7	(56)

\*Each case was counted in a service category if one or more services of that type was/were provided at all in the case - regardless of whether or not other types of services were provided. Thus the percentages do not add up to 100, even though they were done "across" - by dividing the number of children receiving each category of service by the number of children in that age and sex category within the separate foster and at-home tables.

TABLE VII-17:

Number of Services by Parental  
Availability and Foster Placement

<u>Foster Children</u>								
<u>Services</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Surrogate</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	28	(19)	26	(29)	2	(1)	19	(7)
One	24	(16)	25	(28)	13	(6)	19	(7)
None	48	(32)	49	(54)	85	(40)	61	(22)
Total	100%	(67)	100%	(111)	100%	(47)	99%	(36)

<u>Children Remaining at Home</u>						
<u>Services</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	22	(11)	19	(10)	11	(1)
One	18	(9)	41	(22)	22	(2)
None	60	(29)	41	(22)	67	(6)
Total	100%	(40)	101%	(54)	100%	(9)

TABLE VII-18: Number of Services by Family Education  
and Foster Placement

<u>Foster Children</u>				
<u>Services</u>	<u>High School or Less</u>		<u>Beyond High School</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	24	(28)	28	(19)
One	21	(25)	28	(19)
None	55	(65)	45	(31)
Total	100%	(118)	101%	(69)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>				
<u>Services</u>	<u>High School or Less</u>		<u>Beyond High School</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	24	(12)	30	(8)
One	29	(14)	44	(12)
None	47	(23)	26	(7)
Total	100%	(49)	100%	(27)



TABLE VII-19

Number of Services by Family Current  
Employment and Foster Placement

		<u>Foster Children</u>			
		<u>No One Working</u>		<u>Someone Working</u>	
<u>Services</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more		18	(32)	29	(24)
One		21	(37)	24	(20)
None		61	(108)	48	(40)
	Total	100%	(177)	101%	(84)

  

		<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
		<u>No One Working</u>		<u>Someone Working</u>	
<u>Services</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more		17	(10)	23	(12)
One		25	(15)	35	(18)
None		58	(35)	42	(22)
	Total	100%	(60)	100%	(52)

TABLE VII-20:      Number of Services by Income Level  
                         of Family and Foster Placement

<u>Foster Children</u>				
<u>Services</u>	<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>		<u>Above Public Assistance</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	19	(19)	32	(19)
One	23	(23)	20	(12)
None	57	(56)	47	(28)
Total	99%	(98)	99%	(59)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>				
<u>Services</u>	<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>		<u>Above Public Assistance</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	21	(9)	24	(9)
One	35	(15)	30	(11)
None	44	(19)	46	(17)
Total	100%	(43)	100%	(37)

TABLE VII-21:

Number of Services by Race  
and Foster Placement

<u>Services</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>			
	<u>Non-White</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	17	(23)	26	(32)
One	22	(30)	22	(27)
None	62	(85)	52	(63)
	—	—	—	—
Total	101%	(138)	100%	(122)

<u>Services</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
	<u>None-White</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	22	(10)	18	(12)
One	35	(16)	26	(17)
None	43	(20)	56	(37)
	—	—	—	—
Total	100%	(46)	100%	(66)

TABLE VII-22: Percent of Each Group Receiving One or More  
"Tangible" Services - Family Educational Level

<u>Foster Children</u>						
<u>Family Education</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Surrogate and Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Beyond High School	24	(29)	43	(28)	17	(12)
High school or Less	31	(29)	33	(58)	16	(31)

  

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>						
<u>Family Education</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Beyond High school	45	(11)	64	(14)	100	(2)
High school or Less	32	(25)	50	(22)	50	(2)

TABLE VII-23    Percent of Each Group Receiving One or More  
 "Tangible" Services - Family Current Employment

Family Employment Status	<u>Foster Children</u>					
	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Surrogate and Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Someone working	26	(42)	36	(33)	33	(9)
No one working	28	(25)	35	(78)	11	(74)

Family Employment Status	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>					
	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Employed	37	(30)	75	(20)	100	(2)
Unemployed	16	(19)	35	(34)	14	(7)

TABLE VII-24: Percent of Each Group Receiving One or More  
"Tangible" Services - Family Income Level

<u>Foster Children</u>						
<u>Family Income</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Surrogate and Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
High	21	(28)	39	(28)	33	(1)
Low	37	(24)	28	(46)	11	(28)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>						
<u>Family Income</u>	<u>Two Caretakers</u>		<u>One Parent</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
High	27	(22)	70	(13)	100	(2)
Low	27	(15)	52	(14)	0	(1)

TABLE VII-25: Percent of Each Group Receiving One  
or More "Tangible" Services - Race

<u>Race</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>					
	<u>Two</u> <u>Caretakers</u>		<u>One</u> <u>Parent</u>		<u>Surrogate</u> <u>and Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
White	27	(49)	35	(46)	11	(27)
Non-White	28	(18)	35	(65)	13	(55)

<u>Race</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>					
	<u>Two</u> <u>Caretakers</u>		<u>One</u> <u>Parent</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
White	24	(34)	48	(27)	40	(5)
Non-White	40	(15)	52	(27)	25	(4)

TABLE VII-26: Number of Tangible Services by Attitude  
Toward Supervision and Foster Placement

<u>"Tangible"</u> <u>Services</u>	<u>Foster Children</u>			
	<u>Positive</u>		<u>Other<sup>a</sup></u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	5	(7)	10	(4)
One	24	(31)	20	(8)
None	71	(91)	70	(28)
	100%	(129)	100%	(40)

  

<u>"Tangible"</u> <u>Services</u>	<u>Children Remaining Home</u>			
	<u>Positive</u>		<u>Other</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two or more	10	(6)	4	(1)
One	52	(30)	25	(6)
None	38	(22)	71	(17)
	100%	(58)	100%	(24)

<sup>a</sup>Includes "Negative" and "Indifferent."



TABLE VII-27: Percent of Parents with "Positive" Attitude  
in Each Group

A.	<u>High School or Less</u>		<u>Beyond High School</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster Children	72	(87)	88	(56)
Children Remaining Home	67	(43)	73	(26)
<hr/>				
B.	<u>No One Working</u>		<u>Someone Working</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster Children	73	(98)	81	(72)
Children Remaining Home	56	(39)	84	(43)
<hr/>				
C.	<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>		<u>Above Public Assistance</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster Children	65	(75)	89	(54)
Children Remaining Home	57	(35)	81	(31)
<hr/>				
D.	<u>Non-White</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster Children	68	(85)	85	(84)
Children Remaining Home	68	(37)	73	(45)
<hr/>				

TABLE VII-28: Percent of Parents Supervised for Each Reason Having "Positive" Attitude

<u>Reason for Supervision</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A.	Abuse	25	(20)
	Other reasons	79	(232)
B.	Neglect	43	(49)
	Other reasons	82	(203)

Table VII-29: Percent of Foster Children in Each Parental Availability Group Having Final Location With at Least One Biological or Adoptive Parent

<u>Availability at Applications</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Two Caretakers	64	(67)
One Parent	44	(111)
Surrogate Family	13	(46)
Other	46	(35)

TABLE VII-30: Percent of Cases in Each Group Closed Because Problem Resolved<sup>a</sup>

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<u>Foster Children</u>				
Age 0-5	62	(47)	77	(43)
6-11	50	(26)	58	(12)
12-15	32	(25)	31	(13)
<u>Children Remaining Home</u>				
Age 0-5	31	(16)	68	(19)
6-11	35	(20)	53	(17)
12-15	50	(8)	80	(5)

<sup>a</sup>Other reasons for termination included transfer of case to another agency, lack of consent or cooperation from parents, loss of contact with the child or family, death of the child, agency inability to meet the child's needs, ineligibility for further agency services, court orders, etc. If resolution of the problem was reported, the case was counted as closed for that reason whether other reasons were also given or not.

TABLE VII-31: Percent of Cases Supervised for Each Type of Reason Which Closed Because the Problem was Resolved

	<u>Abuse or Neglect</u>		<u>Other Reasons</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Foster Children	26	(46)	38	(215)
Children Remaining Home	26	(42)	44	(70)

TABLE VII-32 Case Status at End by Age, Sex, and Foster Care

<u>Foster Children</u>										
Sex	M a l e			Total	F e m a l e			Total	Both Sexes, All Ages	
Age	0-5	6-11	12-15		0-5	6-11	12-15			
<u>Case Status</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Still open, first application	33	43	4	32	28	44	22	30	32	(81)
Open, 2nd or later application	12	8	4	9	4	4	6	5	7	(19)
Closed once, still closed	45	41	81	50	57	39	72	56	52	(132)
Closed more than once, now closed	9	8	12	9	10	13	-	9	9	(24)
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	99%	100%	101%	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	(256)
	(75)	(51)	(26)	(152)	(68)	(23)	(18)	(109)		
<u>Children Remaining Home</u>										
Sex	M a l e			Total	F e m a l e			Total	Both Sexes, All Ages	
Age	0-5	6-11	12-15		0-5	6-11	12-15			
<u>Case Status</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Still open, first application	17	5	9	11	27	22	-	22	16	(18)
Open, 2nd or later application	8	5	-	5	4	-	-	2	4	(4)
Closed once, still closed	67	91	82	79	58	78	100	71	75	(83)
Closed more than once, now closed	8	-	9	5	12	-	-	5	5	(6)
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100%	101%	100%	100%	101%	100%	100%	100%	100%	(111)
	(24)	(21)	(11)	(56)	(26)	(6)	(55)			

TABLE VII-33: Percent of Cases in Each Group Open at  
End of Period Studied

<u>Foster Children</u>				
<u>Reasons for Supervision</u>	<u>Above Public Assistance</u>		<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Parental disability	44	(9)	62	(29)
Parental unwillingness or inability	33	(33)	47	(60)
Abuse or neglect	27	(11)	69	(29)
Child reasons	23	(30)	13	(16)

<u>Children Remaining Home</u>				
<u>Reasons for Supervision</u>	<u>Above Public Assistance</u>		<u>Public Assistance or Below</u>	
Parental disability	14	(7)	33	(3)
Parental unwillingness or inability	19	(21)	36	(11)
Abuse or neglect	55	(11)	21	(28)
Child reasons	18	(11)	50	(4)

TABLE VII-34: Percent of Foster Children in Each Group  
Having Final Location with a Parent

	Two Caretakers Available at Application		One Parent Available at Application		With Sur- rogate Family at Application		Other Avail- ability Situation	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Children Visited Seldom	29	(14)	19	(21)	33	(3)	29	(14)
Children Visited Often	83	(23)	65	(23)	36	(11)	43	(7)

TABLE VII-35: Percent of Foster Children in Each SES/Parental Attitude Category Having Final Location with a Parent

	Children Visited Seldom		Children Visited Often	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<u>A. Education and Attitude</u>				
Beyond High School, Positive Attitude	13	(8)	75	(16)
High School or Less, Positive Attitude	43	(14)	69	(16)
High School or Less, Other Attitude	50	(6)	43	(7)
<u>B. Family Employment and Attitude</u>				
Someone Working, Positive Attitude	10	(10)	71	(17)
No One Working, Positive Attitude	35	(17)	73	(22)
No One Working, Other Attitude	25	(4)	57	(7)
<u>C. Family Income Level and Attitude</u>				
Above Public Assistance, Positive Attitude	14	(7)	81	(16)
Public Assistance or Below, Positive Attitude	38	(13)	64	(14)
Public Assistance, Other Attitude	38	(8)	43	(7)

There were too few parents with any high SES rating who were perceived as having any attitude other than "positive" to have the fourth cell in any section of the table.

TABLE VII-36: Percent of Foster Children in Each Service Category  
Having Final Location with a Parent

	Received No "Tangible" Services		Received One or More "Tangible" Services	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
A. <u>Parental Availability at Application</u>				
Two Caretakers	67	(49)	56	(18)
One Parent	56	(72)	23	(39)
Surrogate Family	14	(43)	0	(3)
Other	52	(27)	25	(8)
B. <u>Race</u>				
White	54	(89)	38	(32)
Non-White	44	(102)	23	(35)
C. <u>Income Level</u>				
Above Public Assistance	58	(45)	50	(18)
Public Assistance or Below	56	(73)	28	(25)



CHAPTER EIGHT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FINANCIAL COSTS OF  
"REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT"

by

David M. Hopkins

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to assess several of the costs and benefits relating to the Review of Children in Placement (RCP). This is complicated by the fact that what has become known as Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) was designed primarily as a quantitative tool. However, in evaluating administrative procedures in the area of foster care we are forced to consider many qualitative factors as well. Cost-Benefit Analysis is not well equipped for this task. Therefore, the report begins with a brief description of CBA and a discussion of several of the problems which it engenders for this particular project. For the most part, the costs tend to be more quantifiable than the benefits. Nevertheless, we are faced with a decision as to which costs are most relevant to our task and how they are to be measured. Therefore, a taxonomy of costs is presented which is useful for conceptualizing the potential impact of RCP. Those costs which were measured or estimated will be discussed. While the total costs or benefits cannot be precisely measured nor compared, reasonable estimates can be made of certain major cost categories. This analysis will also attempt to generate data which can be useful in suggesting what the potential benefits of RCP (or other changes in administrative procedure) could be.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The literature is not terribly consistent in its definition of cost-benefit analysis. CBA has been defined by Barsby (1972:7) as "Evaluation...from the standpoint of economic efficiency... (which) attempts to indicate whether the value of the outputs of a program exceeds the value of the inputs; and if so, by how much." This is consistent with our purposes here. However, Barsby (1972:7) goes on to say, "It can compare the costs and results of alternative programs or of alternative methods of conducting any one program... ." However, others contend that when a comparison of alternatives is involved it should be termed "cost-effectiveness analysis." For example, Mangum (1969:1174-5) asserts that "cost-effectiveness" deals with the comparison of costs of several different programs in an attempt to find the "best-cost method". In contrast, Barsby (1972:12) reserves the label "cost-effectiveness" for the inclusion of "non-economic" measures. He contends "... when they (non-economic measures) explicitly enter into the benefit calculations, either with economic benefits or as separate calculations, the analysis may be referred to as cost-effectiveness analysis."

In the cost study of Review of Children in Placement we are dealing with the evaluation of a single program and not a comparison of alternative programs. Similarly, non-economic (i.e., qualitative) factors are quite significant in the total evaluation of RCP, though we are quite limited in the extent to which we can put a price tag on them. This problem is discussed in greater detail below. Thus, the approach will be closer to what Barsby labels "cost-benefit" rather than "cost-effectiveness" analysis. There are many problems involved in analyzing RCP with a cost-benefit framework. Some of these problems are inherent in the type of analysis, while others are of an internal origin. Some of these problems will be briefly discussed.

Adequate Accounting Data

The most serious problem for this analysis is a deficiency of adequate accounting data within the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Barsby (1972:13) acknowledges that the "most obvious problem in determining the cost of some activity is lack of good accounting data." The lack of data concerning the costs of specific activities or programs in the agency has already been officially recognized. The Wechsler Task Force, which conducted an internal review of key DYFS programs after public criticism had been leveled at the agency, reported the following (The Trentonian, Sept. 9, 1976:20):

1. "Accounting policies and procedures do not exist within the Division to ensure accurate and timely recording of fiscal activity";
2. "There is no system for adequately and consistently reporting casework activity, including supervisory and managerial reports";
3. "The District Offices do not have a formal mechanism for measuring the quality of service that a case-worker is providing to DYFS clients";
4. "There is a lack of written policies and procedures to insure uniform financial reporting by contractors and monitoring at the central office - i.e., on minimum record-keeping requirements for contractors"; and
5. "There is no standard cost criteria for either the day care or residential child care programs with which to determine the reasonableness of the costs detailed in contractor's operating budgets."

The agency does not appear to have adequate "cost center" data. Wolins (1962:12) defines cost centers as "the units into which disbursements and supplementary cost data are accumulated." He mentions three types of cost centers which are particularly appropriate to child welfare agencies - 1) by program, 2) by service, and 3) by type of child. Examples of these cost centers in terms of our evaluation project would be 1) Program: foster care, adoption, institutional care, etc.; 2) Service: day care, homemaker, special counseling, etc.; and 3) Type of Child: by age, sex, race, presenting problems, etc. Other cost centers which could be appropriate would include Tasks (intake, screening, foster placement, follow-up, etc.).

An initial search by our Project has found very inadequate data in these areas. As an example, in the 1976-1977 Budget, State and County Cost Breakdown (New Jersey, Division of Youth and Family Services), the average costs of day care, homemaker, and other tangible services have been listed. However, the total cost of each of these various services has been divided by the same total active caseload in order to determine the average cost, rather than by the number of cases who actually received the service. Such figures are of little use in further cost analyses. However, even if "proper" average cost data were available, it would not be entirely appropriate for the present inquiry, for as Barsby (1972:14) notes, average costs only allow us to "look in the mirror to see where we have been." It is really marginal costs which are desired because these would indicate

the likely future increases in various costs which would result per unit change in a program, service, task, or caseload. Furthermore, it is not possible to collect or generate such data without central accounting procedures designed to acquire and compile the basic information. For example, personnel costs would need to be distributed to the various cost centers as described above. This could be done on the basis of a one-time "time and motion" study or, more ideally, by a continuous reporting scheme; but both of these are far beyond the resources and mandate of this Project. Thus, if such studies do not exist, we are left with estimating such costs from interviews and questionnaires, a less satisfactory methodology. As an additional complication, some of the costs being estimated are retrospective (e.g., the administrative costs of developing RCP). Without adequate data recorded at the time these costs were incurred, we are forced to rely on individuals recollections of how much time they spent on certain assignments. The shortcomings of such a method are obvious, but no practical alternatives were available.

#### Problems of Estimating Costs

There are various types of costs involved in RCP and it is necessary to decide exactly which ones we are concerned with. In addition, the estimation of each type of cost has unique problems associated with it.

First there is the problem of "joint costs", encountered when an expenditure supports more than one activity, service, program, or type of case. Such costs are involved with many capital expenditures, with rental expenditures, and with most administrative/supervisory expenditures. The relevant question is whether any particular expense has been increased by the program or policy under consideration - in this case Review of Children in Placement. However, this conceptualization definitely neglects some costs. For example, consider the cost of administrative time which has gone into developing and managing the review procedure. In most cases, we found that there were no additional expenditures for administrators; rather they performed these tasks along with their other assignments. In a strict sense, there were no "joint administrative" costs for RCP. However, a more accurate cost analysis would apportion their salaries, their office space, their secretary's time, etc., according to the relative amount of time spent on RCP.

Related to the above is the concept of "opportunity costs", which describes what must be surrendered in order to implement the program or policy. For example, it may be necessary for an administrator to give up or postpone other assignments in order to fulfill his role in RCP. The foregone

work then represents an opportunity cost of RCP. In other words, there is a limit to what can be done with the human and physical resources available; in making choices, one must pay the price of foregoing the benefits which would have derived from alternative choices. As another example, in asking caseworkers and supervisors to spend their time on fulfilling the requirements of RCP, we are losing the benefit of their time being spent on alternative assignments. While no out-of-pocket costs are likely to be involved, there are definite opportunity costs.

Perhaps the more central question is not "what cost to measure" but rather "whose costs to measure." For example, if RCP is successful in returning children to their natural parents more quickly, then the costs to the agency and therefore the community will be reduced, but the costs to the natural parents may well be increased. On the other hand, if RCP indicates the need for additional day care at public expense, then the cost of this additional service will increase the costs to the agency and community, but perhaps reduce the costs to those families receiving the day care.

While it may be most reasonable to limit the cost analysis to internal agency costs, it may be more difficult to determine what is "internal." For example, if RCP is successful in reducing the caseload (and therefore the costs) of DYFS, it may merely result in increased public welfare expenditures. Thus, the costs may be reduced for one agency, and increased for another - all within the Department of Human Services. The "parafoster" cases (see Chapter 4: ) represent just such a relatively recent shifting of responsibilities among agencies. Careful enforcement of public assistance regulations has chalked up illusory savings of welfare tax dollars by shifting a type of child traditionally supported by AFDC to the foster care caseload of DYFS, perhaps with as little actual effect on the children themselves as on the total number of public dollars involved.

One final problem in determining costs might be designated "unassigned costs." It is related to the problems of joint costs and inadequate accounting data. Two examples will suffice. In calculating the expenses of the Case Review Unit (CRU), we were able to obtain only a rough estimate of their data processing costs. According to DYFS sources the Human Services Data Processing Unit does not account for expenses by bureau or project, but only for DYFS as a whole. Similarly, the use of outside consultants and programmers are charged to the Department of Human Services but several projects may use the computer programs developed; thus these costs are not assigned to specific projects. A second example involves the cost of forms used by CRU. Forms which are prepared internally are not charged to

individual projects. Obviously there are costs involved but again they are not assigned to the specific user.

### Qualitative vs. Quantitative Benefits

The problems described above deal primarily with the cost side but there are also problems, perhaps more serious ones, in estimating benefits. "Benefits" have traditionally been equated with increases in income, or as decreases in costs. Defined in that way some benefits may not be difficult to measure. But benefits involving human value judgments are notoriously difficult if not impossible to quantify satisfactorily; taking such benefits into account requires a less structured analysis than that offered by Cost-Benefit Analysis.

CBA is predicated on the assumption that dollar values can be assigned to both the costs and the benefits. However, it is difficult to assign a dollar value to the satisfaction a child may obtain in being returned to his/her natural parents, or to the social development he/she may gain from being transferred from an institutional situation to a group home, or to the greater attention caseworkers can provide if their caseloads are reduced. Unable to quantify such benefits, we are unable to compare them neatly with the costs involved in obtaining them. What level of cost is justified by a child's increased happiness and mental well being? How much is a child's life worth? However, we must recognize that many of the benefits which are likely to accrue from such systems as RCP, if they succeed, are essentially nonquantifiable.

### Benefits for Whom

The examples mentioned above raise the question of whose benefits are being considered. It is difficult to imagine that an agency which is charged with protecting the welfare of children would not see an increase in the welfare of such children as a benefit to the agency as well as to the children, their parents, and even the society at large. Thus, while there are definite dollar savings (benefits) which accrue from placing children in less financially costly types of placements, there are less easily measured benefits which accrue to the child from proper placements or from being supervised at home rather than in foster care. While these benefits will often be complementary, it is quite possible that they could be conflicting. In such a case it is necessary to determine the perspective from which the analysis is being conducted, i.e., whose benefits count and with what weight.



## Conclusion

The difficulties described above are serious and prevent a thorough and detailed cost/benefit analysis in the traditional meaning of the concept. So what can be done? We cannot generate the needed accounting data. While we should apportion "joint costs" to the best of our ability, we should make a clear distinction between those costs which require an out-of-pocket expense and those which do not. I have chosen to concentrate on the former and ignore "unassigned costs" and "opportunity costs." To conduct a useful and workable analysis, we must proceed from the narrow perspective of costs and benefits which accrue to DYFS, and try to consider in detail the effects on other governmental agencies, on the clients, or on the community in general.

In addition, we should do our best to describe the qualitative benefits which have occurred but not try to assign a dollar value to these. Indeed, the welfare economics literature contends that values cannot be assigned in this case due to the incomparability of subjective utilities. The benefits calculated will be those accruing to DYFS, and will also include (to the extent possible) the quantifiable benefits to the people served by the agency.

Finally, although this evaluation project has not found that RCP had any effect on the lengths, numbers, or types of placements of DYFS foster children, this report will nevertheless estimate the various costs of such placements and then discuss the financial implications of a theoretically effective case review program. This analysis should be useful to any agency seeking to decrease or otherwise improve the provision of foster care, by whatever means are believed to be effective.

THE COSTS OF REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

The objective of this section is to evaluate the financial costs and benefits of the Review of Children in Placement program. Deciding exactly which costs are appropriate is difficult and somewhat subjective; these problems were discussed above. However, if the focus is on RCP, then only "differential costs" should be included. By differential costs we mean the difference between costs as they would have been without RCP and costs as they were after RCP was in fact initiated. Below is one possible taxonomy of such differential costs. Following the definitions of the various types of costs there is a brief discussion of the method by which each type was estimated for the study.

Non-Recurring Direct Fixed Costs

These are intended to be costs which were incurred prior to the establishment of RCP (or within the first two years of operation), and which were therefore not affected by the number of children reviewed or by the effectiveness of RCP itself. By far the major cost in this category would be that of administrative time in planning and developing RCP. As this did not represent an "out-of-pocket" expense, it does not constitute a "real" cost by our definition. Nevertheless, some administrators did expend substantial amounts of time which required them to reduce, suspend, or postpone other assignments, which would represent opportunity costs for RCP. Thus the time they spent on RCP represents a joint cost which should be estimated.

A retrospective estimate of this cost presents a problem as there are no formal records on which it can be based. Therefore, we used the approach of asking administrators to recall the extent of their involvement in the development of RCP. This was done using a questionnaire sent to twenty-three administrative personnel known or believed to have had a part in planning RCP. This list was compiled by questioning people definitely known to have been involved and by referring to minutes of meetings dealing with RCP.

The problems with a retrospective questionnaire are obvious. It is very difficult for people to recall with accuracy the time they spent at a particular task a few years prior. Nevertheless, the estimates of those persons involved were likely to be more accurate than those of anyone else. In addition we had the traditional problem of nonresponse to the questionnaire: seven people (30%) did not respond. (A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix.)

A Classification of Differential Costs\*

- I. Direct Costs: Those costs which result from the initiation of Review of Children in Placement regardless of the effectiveness of the program.
  - A. Fixed Costs: Those direct costs which are not expected to vary with the number of cases reviewed.
    - 1. Non-Recurring Costs: Those direct fixed costs which were incurred prior to the initiation of RCP or within the first two years of RCP which are not intended to continue after that time.
    - 2. Recurring Costs: Those direct fixed costs which are expected to occur on an annual basis.
  - B. Variable Costs: Those direct costs which are expected to vary with the number of cases reviewed.
- II. Indirect Costs: Those costs which will be primarily determined by the effectiveness of RCP program.
  - A. Intra-Division Costs: Those indirect costs which will be incurred by the Division of Youth and Family Services.
    - 1. Provided Service Costs: Those indirect intra-division costs which result from changes in the quantity or quality of services provided by DYFS.
    - 2. Contractual Service Costs: Those indirect intra-division costs which are incurred by DYFS in purchasing services from private sources or other public agencies.
  - B. Extra-Division Costs: Those indirect costs which will be incurred by other state government agencies as a result of implementing RCP.

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\*Differential Costs: This refers only to changes in costs as a result of (or in expectation of) Review of Children in Placement.

Examples of Differential CostsDifferential Cost CategoryExample

## I. Direct Costs:

## A. Fixed Costs:

1. Non-Recurring Costs: administrative planning time;  
data processing programming
2. Recurring Costs Case Review Unit;  
routine data processing;  
administrative monitoring

## B. Variable Costs:

caseworker time;  
supervisor time

## II. Indirect Costs:

## A. Intra-Division Costs:

1. Contractual Services day care, homemaker,  
foster parents, para-foster parents
2. Provided Services DYFS institutional costs;  
caseworker and supervisor  
case-placement and case  
maintenance time

## B. Extra-Division Costs:

increased caseload for  
County Welfare Board  
resulting from effectiveness of RCP.

The calculation of administrative costs began by adding each individual's base monthly salary and fringe benefits, as they were during the period of RCP development. This figure was then divided by what each person estimated to be their average monthly hours of work at that time. This provided an average cost per hour for each administrator during the development phase. Each person was then asked to estimate the number of months they were involved in planning RCP and the average number of hours each month. These figures were multiplied by the average cost per hour for each person, and were then summed to obtain an overall administrative cost for planning and development. This figure was \$8,373 or an average of \$1,046 for the people who were involved in RCP and who also responded. However, about seven people did not respond, including at least two people who were very instrumental in the development of RCP. Using the figures obtained, I believe \$15,000 would be a good estimate of the administrative expense involved in this cost category.

The other major nonrecurring direct fixed cost was that of data processing developmental expenses. This involved the expenses of developing computer programs and runs on the data base from the first review (in November, 1974). The best estimate of this cost is \$10,000, as described on the attachment of "Computer Expenses" (Appendix A, attachment 1). However, it is difficult to determine exactly how much of this represents additional out-of-pocket expenses, as much of the work was done internally by people already employed. Nevertheless, the actual processing costs and those of outside consultants do represent "real" expenses.

#### Recurring Direct Fixed Costs

The second major cost category is recurring costs, which are expected to be incurred on an annual basis regardless of the effectiveness of RCP or the number of cases reviewed (at least in the short run). The primary cost in this category is that of the Case Review Unit, established at the Central Office to implement RCP. A reasonable estimate of the annual costs of the Case Review Unit would be \$95,000. This could go up substantially if this unit were expanded in the future, as the bulk of the expense is in personnel costs. The major expenses for the Case Review Unit in FY-75 are summarized in Appendix A, Table A-1.

In addition to the Case Review Unit there is also a cost associated with monitoring the review procedure by other administrative personnel. The administrative questionnaire to estimate the number of hours per month which they continue to spend in monitoring the RCP procedure. The average estimate was just above four hours per month. Each

person's estimate was multiplied by their hourly compensation figure which was calculated in the same manner described in the previous section. Extrapolating the average cost figure to those who did not return questionnaires suggests an estimated cost of \$10,000 per year. Again, this does not represent an "out-of-pocket" cost as such, but certainly does add to the duties performed by these administrators. This estimate would have to be revised upward in future years as salaries and fringe benefits tend to rise.

#### Direct Variable Costs

Unlike the fixed costs just described, variable costs are expected to vary with the magnitude of the case review, though not with its effectiveness. Remembering that we are only concerned at this point with "differential costs" (i.e., those resulting from RCP), there appear to be two primary subcategories of variable costs. First, there is caseworker time in actually performing the reviews. Second, there is supervisor time used in consultation with workers and in monitoring the procedure.\* These two costs for both the 1974 and 1975 reviews are summarized in the following table:\*\*

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\*This latter category may not be entirely variable with the number of reviews but the assumption is being made that with fewer reviews there is less administrative time required. We are ignoring clerical time for simplicity, but this of course was also involved.

\*\*The estimates by caseworkers and supervisors of how much time it takes to perform a "review" of a case were obtained from the in-depth interviews discussed in Chapter V of this report. The number of reviews which were performed in both 1974 and 1975 were obtained from the Case Review Unit. Mid-range salary and fringe costs were obtained from Personnel for the various job titles involved. For a detailed explanation of how each figure was determined, refer to Tables A2 - A5 in the Appendix.

VIII - 13  
TABLE VIII - 1

Summary of Costs of Field Personnel Time for RCP

<u>Employee Category</u>	<u>1974 Review</u>	<u>1975 Review</u>
Asst. Social Work Supervisor	\$21,716	\$15,559
Social Worker II	\$26,786	\$19,194
Total Cost	\$48,502	\$34,753
Total Reviews*	12,100	8,596
Average Cost per Review	\$4	\$4
Approximate Total for Both Reviews		\$85,000

The 1975 Review figures are the more appropriate for our purposes, since the 1974 Review was performed on virtually the entire active foster care caseload; this situation should not occur again. The 1975 Review was conducted for all children newly placed as of May 31, 1975, and for those cases from the 1974 Review who were still in placement and due for a "regular" (i.e., periodic) review. The average cost per review has remained stable at about \$4. The total cost will surely rise in future years as the caseload and salaries increase. However, part of this increase may be offset by streamlining the review process. The approximate field cost of \$35,000 for the 1975 Review does not represent an out-of-pocket cost, but does represent re-allocation of available caseworker and supervisor time.

Relative to this point, respondents were asked in the field interviews, "Has 'Review of Children in Placement' caused a reduction in, or postponement of, any of your other assignments?" Seventy percent of the caseworkers and supervisors interviewed, responded positively. Respondents were also asked "Has 'Review of Children in Placement' caused you to reduce the quality of your casework?" Only six caseworkers (14%) and one supervisor (8%) believed that it had.

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\*Total of initial, regular, and follow-up reviews

Provided, Intra-Division, Indirect Costs

In addition to what have been defined as "Direct Costs" there are likely to be substantial "Indirect Costs" (i.e., those that will be determined by the effectiveness of Review of Children in Placement.) These indirect costs can be further subdivided into those that will be incurred within the Division (i.e., "intra-Division costs") and those that might be incurred by other state agencies as a result of procedural changes within DYFS (i.e., "extra-Divisional costs"). Finally, we can further subdivide "intra-division" costs into those resulting from the purchase of services from outside (i.e., non-state) sources (e.g., day care, homemaker, foster care), and those costs which DYFS incurs as a result of services which it provides with its own employees.

The latter category (i.e., "provided service costs") is the most complex because it involves, in part, the cost of DYFS personnel time involved in placing and supervising children. If different types of placements require different amounts of field personnel time (both caseworkers and first-line supervisors), then these costs will be altered to the extent that RCP alters this distribution.

While these types of costs are very important, they are quite difficult to estimate for two reasons. First, since we are dealing with differential costs (i.e., those resulting from RCP) it is necessary to know exactly what parts of the changes in type, number, or duration of placement are attributable to RCP. As discussed elsewhere in this report, RCP as implemented thus far has not been found to have any demonstrable effect on case outcomes. Second, there is the continuing problem of insufficient data. For example, there seem to be no internal estimates of how long it takes, and therefore how much it costs, for a caseworker to establish a foster care placement. We cannot even make hypothetical cost and benefit estimates until we have appropriate time estimates on which to base them. Therefore, this latter issue must be addressed first. Please refer to Appendix B for a detailed explanation of how time and cost estimates were derived.

Costs Related To Changes In Types Of Placements:

Given the estimates from Appendix B of what it costs (in terms of field personnel time) to place and supervise cases in various types of placement, we can now estimate how those costs will change as the distribution of the caseload changes (for whatever reason). However, how do we decide which hypothetical distribution of the cases to consider? As there is extremely little information available on what might constitute a more ideal distribution, this decision becomes somewhat arbitrary. There is a fairly pertinent study of the New York foster care system which is helpful in



providing a point of departure (Bernstein et al., 1975). In using this data we are making the untested assumption that the New York results are applicable to New Jersey, which may not be the case. The Bernstein study proposes a distribution of the appropriate placements (based on a retrospective review of the case records) of the children in foster care in New York City at the end of 1974. After recombining the New York placement categories to make them comparable with the broader categories used in our study, it is possible to compute the number of New Jersey foster children who would be in each placement category if the New Jersey foster care caseload were distributed according to what the Bernstein report concluded was a more appropriate placement distribution.

Calculating the presumed number of foster children in New Jersey who ought to be in various types of placement in this manner has some inherent difficulties. In the first place, it assumes that the needs of the populations in care in New York City and in the State of New Jersey are sufficiently similar so that the distribution of preferred types of placements would be the same for both populations. We simply do not know whether that is true or not.

A second problem is that neither the Bernstein study nor the hypothetical New Jersey figures calculated from the Bernstein model really address the question of the number of children in the population at large who are not in foster care, but perhaps should be. Indeed, this is a statistic virtually impossible to estimate. However, the reader should be alert to the fact that, while potential exits of children currently in foster care are often counted in cost studies as potential savings in state expenditure on foster care, such dollar savings may not occur at all. To the extent that the number of children currently in foster care represents merely the limits of the child welfare system's currently budgeted capacity to provide placement slots, rather than complete fulfillment of the need for foster care, moving individual children out of the system may not reduce the caseload at all. It may only make room for many additional children who would already be in foster care, were it not for the system's lack of greater capacity. The fact that the agency caseload as a whole has been expanding much more rapidly than the foster care caseload suggests that this may be true. We know for a fact that there are formal "service limitations" on substitute case slot, due to financial constraints. If that is the case the benefits of removing inappropriately placed children out of foster care might be greater than usually imagined. But these benefits would go to other children in the form of foster care which they need for various reasons, rather than to taxpayers in the form of reduced agency expenditures!

In spite of these difficulties, we have proceeded with calculating the costs of redistributing the New Jersey foster care population according to the preferred locations of New York City foster children, as recommended by Bernstein

et al., (1975).

There are really two pieces of information which we need to know: 1) first, what would be the costs of redistributing the caseload so as to match more closely with the Bernstein, et al., (1975) recommendations; and 2) what would be the difference in monthly cost between maintaining (i.e., supervising) cases in the proposed pattern versus the existing pattern. In each instance we are considering the costs of field personnel time only (caseworkers and first-line supervisors).

To answer the first question we have calculated the percentage change in our study's placement categories which would reflect the recommendations of the Bernstein study. Second, we applied those percentages to the monthly New Jersey distribution of out-of-home placements (June, 1976), as shown in Table B-3 of the Appendix. This then provides an estimate of the absolute number of additions and deletions from each category required to correspond with the distribution suggested by Bernstein et.al. These calculations are shown in the following table:

TABLE VIII - 2

Hypothetical Changes in Placement Distribution  
of New Jersey Foster Children

Type of Placement	Number Placed June 30, 1976	Percent Preferred (from Bernstein Study)	Number Preferred	Number Additional
Own Home <sup>1</sup>	-	10	1,355	+ 1,355
Adoptive Home <sup>2</sup>	-	13	1,761	+ 1,761
Foster Home	10,125	49	6,639	- 3,486
Group/ Institution	<u>3,358</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>3,523</u>	+ <u>156</u>
Total	13,549	100%	13,549	N.A.

<sup>1</sup> Although the agency has many more children under supervision at home than in foster care, no children are shown currently at home in the table because these calculations take into account only those children in foster care. The question addressed is only the narrow question as to where the foster children ought to be.

<sup>2</sup> Although the agency did have several hundred children under supervision in adoptive homes, they are not entered in this table, since the only question being addressed here is where the foster children ought to be.

Next, for those categories which require additional placements, we multiply the number of replacements required by both the caseworkers and supervisors average cost per placement, as shown in Table B-9 in the Appendix. The sum of these two products then represents the estimated field personnel cost required to make a one-time shift in the placement distribution of the foster care caseload. We estimate this cost would be roughly \$160,000.

TABLE VIII - 3

Costs of One-Time Shift in Placement Distribution

(1) Placement Category	(2) Number of Additions	(3) Caseworker Cost Per Addn.	(4) Supervisory Cost Per Addn.	(5) Caseworker Costs (2 X 3)	(6) Supervisory Costs (2 X 4)	(7) Total Costs (5 + 6)
Group/ Instit.	165	\$100	\$12	16,500	1,980	18,480
Adoptive Home <sup>1</sup>	1,761	50	6	88,050	10,566	98,616
Own Home	<u>1,355</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>31,165</u> 134,715	<u>12,195</u> 24,741	<u>43,360</u> 160,456 <sup>2</sup>

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Since adoption placement workers were not included in the sample on which these time calculations are based, the estimates of staff time for adoptive placements are based on the estimates for foster placements. This probably means that these costs are underestimated.

<sup>2</sup> This represents the costs of field staff in making a one-time readjustment of the caseload so as to conform to what is recommended by Bernstein et al., (1975).

Finally, the second question asks, "What would be the difference in monthly costs between maintaining (i.e., supervising) cases in the proposed pattern versus the existing pattern?" This requires two steps similar to those just described:

First, what are the field personnel costs of supervising the current caseload as it is now distributed? This figure was estimated to be \$256,963 per month or \$3,083,556 annually, (see Table B-13) for those children placed out of their own homes.

Second, by applying the proposed distribution to the cost figures for case supervision (see Appendix, Table B-9), we can estimate the change in the monthly staff cost for the proposed distribution.

Two assumptions were included in the calculation of staff costs for maintaining the proposed distribution of agency foster children. First, it was assumed that the children returned home will not thereby have their cases closed any sooner than if they had remained in foster care. In the Bernstein study the opportunity for children in foster care to return home necessarily depended, in over 98% of the cases, on offering alternative social services to the natural families--services which were not in fact available.\* Indeed in a large proportion of cases several alternative services would be required. This means that staff time used in supervision of the case will not be decreased, but perhaps probably increased by return of the children home. Although this probably means that the continuing case supervision cost at home was underestimated, the cost per case figure used in the calculation was based on cost figures for children currently being supervised at home. (For additional costs involved in cases supervised at home, see the following section.)

The second assumption made in calculating the continuing supervision (i.e., maintenance) costs for the proposed distribution was that the adoption cases would leave the caseload. Of course this does not actually happen immediately. And there are certain additional costs involved in freeing and adopting children which are not involved in foster placements. Nevertheless, in order to provide ample opportunity to reflect potential savings through removal of adopted children from the caseload no costs for ongoing agency supervision of the adoptive children were included in the costs for supervising the proposed redistribution of foster cases.

The results of these calculations indicate that there would be a cost difference of only about \$200 a month (\$2,400 a year) for the entire out-of-home caseload between the staff time required to supervise the proposed distribution of children and the staff time required to supervise the actual distribution of cases in June, 1976.

Of course agency staff time would not be the only type of ongoing state governmental expense involved in many of these adoptions. For the type of cases involved, subsidized adoption would probably be necessary to achieve the proposed

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\* Thus the responsibility for those children remaining in care was not considered due to the inadequate planning or faulty decision-making of caseworkers (cf. Chapter II).

adoptions. The amount of these subsidies would represent only a relatively minimal dollar savings over the cost of foster care maintenance payments. One can only wish that there were also a satisfactory way to calculate the differential benefits to the child and to the social structure of the community between the two types of situations; these benefits would be considerable and would presumably make the financial costs worthwhile.

### Summary of Section

This section sought to estimate what the cost differentials would be if the present New Jersey out-of-home caseload were redistributed in a particular way. The Bernstein et.al., (1975) recommendations used as a benchmark for this purpose, because they reflect an idealized placement distribution from the standpoint of each individual foster child's needs. Since one of the goals of Review of Children in Placement is also more appropriate placements of cases, we believed that this was an suitable norm to employ. However, it is important to note that the cost figures derived earlier and the methodology used above could be applied to any proposed caseload distribution, whatever the anticipated source, in order to calculate hypothetical changes in costs.

This analysis estimated that there would be a one-time cost (for field personnel) of approximately \$160,000 in order to redistribute the current caseload to conform to the distribution suggested by the Bernstein study. Secondly, it was estimated that the cost of field personnel for "supervising" (i.e., maintaining) the caseload on a month-to-month basis would be only \$200 per month less under the distribution suggested by the Bernstein study as opposed to the current distribution. In other words, in this cost category there would be a cost of \$160,000 involved in changing over to the proposed distribution, but virtually no ongoing savings from it. In addition to the differences in staff time to supervise cases, there would be some potential savings involved in the prospective adoption group through the difference between foster care payments and adoption subsidies. Since foster care rates vary with child characteristics, and adoption subsidies vary with both child and adoptive family characteristics, it would be necessary to know which children and which families were involved to calculate the dollar difference adoption would make. The reader is reminded that nothing in the present study has indicated that Review of Children in Placement has been responsible for redistributing the caseload as suggested. The costs calculated have been solely estimates of hypothetical changes in the out-of-home caseload distribution.

Contracted, Intra-Division, Indirect Costs:

A final important category of costs, deals with contractual services and the impact (hypothetical or real) of Review of Children in Placement on such costs. These costs are termed "indirect" since they are related to the effectiveness of RCP. They are also "intra-division" costs: though not provided directly by the Division in most cases, the Division contracts with non-state agencies and individuals to provide these services to DYFS cases. This then is the distinction between "contracted" services and "provided" services, which were discussed in the previous section.

Perhaps the central issue here is the cost differential between foster care on the one hand, and returning a child to natural parents or relatives with the provision of necessary services (e.g., day care, homemaker, family planning, special counseling, etc.). As pointed out earlier, 98% of the recommendations for return in the Bernstein study were predicated on the assumption of the provision of supportive services. Obviously there are many non-quantitative factors in this situation which must be considered in actual caseworker decisions. However, the analysis presented here will be limited to specific monetary costs.

In planning this analysis we concluded that the existing foster care rate schedule was an inadequate schedule for reimbursement and therefore did not provide a proper benchmark for comparisons. Therefore, a separate study was conducted to determine more reasonable and appropriate foster care rates. This sub-study is included as Appendix C. However, as this report is written the Division of Youth and Family Services has announced foster care board rate increases which will become effective in two stages. The first increase will become retroactively effective on 10/1/76 and the second increase will be effective as of 4/1/77. Therefore, the new foster care rates (for 4/1/77) will be utilized for comparison with alternative services which would allow the child to be returned to the natural home.

It was not feasible to develop, a complete set of estimates of all the kinds of costs which might be involved in returning a given group of children home. However, in order to at least illustrate the magnitude of the costs (or the savings) which might be involved, this section will estimate the differences in cost between keeping children in foster care and returning the same children home with provision of day care. First the costs of New Jersey day care are calculated; these are then compared with the costs of foster care.

In estimating the costs of day care, the actual expenditure figures for 87% of the "community contract" day-care services paid for through DYFS in September/October, 1976

## VIII - 21

were utilized. The "actual reimbursements" to all of these contracting centers was divided by the actual "number of service days delivered" to arrive at a cost per day. This was done for various types of centers (e.g., pre-school, after-school, infant, etc.). These figures are presented in Table VIII-4 below. However, since various types of service represent different numbers of hours per day, the average hourly cost has also been calculated for each type of center. This breakdown is shown in Table VIII - 5.

TABLE VIII - 4

## Summary "Community Contract" Daycare in New Jersey

(September/October, 1976)<sup>1</sup>

Type of Center	Number of Centers	Actual Reimbursement	Days Delivered	Average Cost Agency/ Day Mo.	
Pre-school (P/S)	115	\$1,041,315	90,957	\$9,055	\$11.45
After school (A/S)	39	362,818	69,226	9,303	5.24
Infant (INF)	3	41,623	2,395	13,874	17.38
Before-After Kindergarten (B/A/K)	2	10,851	746	5,426	14.55
Combination Centers (Comb.)	38	519,729	49,356	13,677	10.53
Totals	197	\$1,976,336	212,680	\$10,032/mo. \$9.29/day	

Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Based on 197 out of 226 contracts (over 87%). October, 1976 figures are used for those agencies where available, otherwise September figures are used. This type of daycare represents 65-70% of all state supported daycare activities.

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TABLE VIII - 5

Computation and Distribution of Hourly Costs for  
"Community Contract" Daycare  
(September/October, 1976)

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<u>Type of Center</u>	<u>Average Daily Cost</u>	<u>Average Hours/Day</u>	<u>Average Cost/Hour</u>	<u>Federal (75%)</u>	<u>Non-State (17.5%)</u>	<u>State (7.5%)</u>
Pre-School	\$11.54	9	\$1.28	\$.96	\$.22	\$.10
After School	5.24	3	1.75	1.31	.31	.13
Infant	17.38	9	1.93	1.45	.34	.14
Before-After Kindergarten	14.55	4	3.64	2.73	.64	.27
Combination Centers	10.53	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

The portion of the costs reported above which are actually funded by state sources is only 7.5%. Therefore, if only this portion of the cost of day care were considered, the results would obviously be significantly lower. Nevertheless, the assumption here is that regardless of the funding source, the state is regarded as the administrator of these funds and as such must be concerned with the total cost and not solely with that portion paid from state funds.

On the basis of the calculations reported above in (Tables VIII - 4 and VIII - 5), it is possible to make a direct comparison between the costs of foster care versus the cost of providing day care services if the child is returned home. This should be done within age groups as the foster boarding rates vary by age and the appropriate type of day care service would also vary by age. This comparison is shown in Table VIII - 6 below.



TABLE VIII - 6

A Comparison of Monthly Rates for  
Foster Care and Day Care Services

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Foster Care</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Day Care</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>Difference</u> <sup>3</sup>
0-5	\$110.	\$231.	-\$121.
6-9	116.	105.	11.
10-14	125.	105.	20.

## Notes:

1. Based on the announced rates to be effective 4/1/77. Only board rates are included.
2. Based on 87% of "Community Contract" daycare in SEPT./OCT., 1976. Rates are based on 5 days/week or 20 days/month. The "pre-school" rate has been used for age group 0-5 rather than the higher "infant" rate. Ages 6-14 have been assigned the "afterschool" rate.
3. Negative values indicate that day care rates will exceed foster care rates.

It should be remembered that only foster care board rates are shown, as we believed that these yield the most appropriate comparison with day care. However, there may be medical and clothing allowances in addition to these boarding rates. If these other reimbursements had been included, the "difference" figures in Table VIII - 6 would be somewhat higher.

Furthermore, if there are several children from the same family in foster placement, all of whom can be returned home, then it may be cheaper to have a person go into the home and provide day care service at a lower per child cost. If this were possible then the "difference" figures in Table VIII - 6 would again be higher. In each of these cases, day care would offer a less expensive alternative to foster care than is indicated in Table VIII - 6.

Now, what would be the overall fiscal impact if a portion of the foster care caseload were returned home but provided with supporting day care services? Again, since our research has not indicated that RCP has been responsible for such a shift, it is necessary to apply the above figures to hypothetical changes in order to estimate differences in costs.

Let us assume, for instance, that 10% of the foster care caseload, within each age group, is returned home and provided with day care. For an estimate of the foster care caseload we will use the "monthly budgeted foster care caseload" for 1976: 9,045 cases (see Table 6 in Appendix C). In order to calculate the distribution of the caseload by ages we aggregate and calculate the percentage which each age group represents of the total non-WIN caseload as of June 30, 1974 (see Table 3 in Appendix C). The results are shown in Table VIII - 7 below:

TABLE VIII - 7

Monthly Cost Comparison of Returning 10% of the  
Foster Care Caseload to Natural Homes, with Day Care.

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># of Cases<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>10% Figure</u>	<u>Foster Care</u>	<u>Day Care</u>	<u>Monthly Difference(\$)</u>
0-5	25.4%	2,297	230	\$25,300	\$53,130	-27,830
6-9	20.9%	1,890	189	21,924	19,845	2,079
10-15 <sup>3</sup>	38.2%	3,455	346	43,250	36,330	6,920
Total	N.A. <sup>4</sup>	7,642 <sup>2</sup>	765	\$90,474	\$109,305	-18,831

## Notes:

- 1 Calculated from Table 3, Appendix C.
- 2 Based on the 9,045 figure taken from Table 6, Appendix C.
- 3 There is a slight discrepancy between the age categories used here and those used in Table 17.
- 4 These figures do not add to 100% because they do not include the percentage of children over 15. These were omitted as it was felt they were not relevant to day care services and therefore their inclusion would distort the results.

As shown in Table VIII - 8, there would a substantial increase in expenditures (i.e., \$18,831/month or \$225,972/year) if 10% of the foster care cases (from each group) could be returned home and supported with contracted day care service. However, this may disguise a potential saving as it reflects a 10% shift in all age categories. Actually it would be very costly to make such a shift for children in the pre-school age group (0-5), because they would be subject to the most costly types of day care - either "pre-school" at \$11.54/day or "infant" at \$17.38/day. However,

in the higher age categories, such a shift could represent substantial savings. A 10% shift of cases in the older age groups only (i.e., 6-15 years of age) could amount to a monthly saving of \$8,999 or an annual savings of \$107,988 - if day care were the only service offered instead of foster care in these cases.

But the fact is that there is not a sufficient basis on which to make a proper estimate of the costs or savings in contracted services which might be involved in returning a given proportion of the foster care caseload home, without a clearer idea of which foster children would be involved, and thus what the necessary alternative services would be.

#### Extra-Division, Indirect Costs

Here we are again considering costs which will vary according to the success of RCP (i.e., indirect costs). The term "extra-division" refers to costs which may accrue to other state agencies depending on the effectiveness of RCP in DYFS. The thought was that if RCP is successful in returning more children to their natural homes, it may decrease the costs to DYFS, but may increase costs to e.g., the County Welfare Boards by increasing eligibility for welfare payments.

However, in the preceding discussion of Cost/Benefit Analysis, it was decided to conduct the study from the perspective of DYFS only. That is, we decided to concern ourselves only with "non-welfare" public social services. For this reason, the costs we have labeled as "indirect, extra-division" costs will not be discussed in this report beyond the reminder that such costs for maintaining a child at home who would otherwise be in foster care may be comparable to the costs of foster care. If combined with costs such as those for day care, the total public cost for caring for poor children at home may be considerably more than the costs of family foster care. Of course this would not in the least represent an argument for putting poor children in foster care instead of keeping families together. But it does suggest that it is time to dispose of ideas about "saving public expense" by maintaining poor children at home instead of in foster care. On fiscal as well as on humane grounds, the decision about keeping a child at home or restoring him home needs to be severed from ideas about governmental economy. In contrast to previous studies of the costs of foster care (e.g., Fanshel and Shinn, 1972), this report suggests that the most desirable emotional and social circumstances for children may not also be the least expensive financially.

### Summary of Chapter

This chapter of the evaluation report has presented an analysis of the primary financial costs associated with Review of Children in Placement. To say that we have taken into account all costs associated with RCP would be unrealistic. A cost/benefit analysis is not as straightforward as it might seem. Several subjective decisions must be made in order to specify the exact costs and benefits which are to be included. The first section of the chapter discussed at some length these various decisions, as well as other problems of cost/benefit analysis.

Next, a taxonomy of various types of costs relevant to the evaluation of RCP was presented. The resulting typology took into account various distinctions between cost categories, such as:

- 1) How much of the cost is determined by the scope of RCP (i.e., by how many reviews are actually performed)?
- 2) How much of the cost is determined by the effectiveness of RCP (i.e., by how the review process affects the distribution, duration, or number of placements)?
- 3) Is the cost a one-time or recurring one (i.e., developmental or operational)?
- 4) Does the cost fall primarily on DYFS or on other state agencies?
- 5) Are the costs related to services provided directly by DYFS, or by contracts with non-State agencies?

Once these types of costs were determined, some of the primary costs within these categories were estimated. However, we also dealt with different "types" of costs in another sense. In some cases it was evident that the costs represented direct out-of-pocket expenditures. That is, there was a concrete expense which would not have been incurred were it not for Review of Children in Placement. However, in other cases the estimated costs did not represent concrete out-of-pocket expenditures, at least in the short-run.

In most cases, these costs involved personnel time. For example, we estimated the labor costs of performing a particular task. Were the task to disappear, the costs would not, at least in the short run, since people are already on the payroll, and their time would merely be allocated to other tasks. In the long-run, of course,

personnel adjustments would probably be made, and direct out-of-pocket expenditures would be affected. Many of the cost estimates for personnel derived in this section should have utility beyond the scope of the immediate evaluation of RCP. The methods and results of the study can be used to estimate costs which would be involved in program and caseload changes other than those related to case review.

Finally, the study considered what were termed "hypothetical" costs. Lacking a demonstrable effect of RCP, we attempted to estimate the costs of redistributing the foster care caseload to achieve a "preferred" pattern. Again this was done so that the information developed would have relevance beyond the evaluation of a particular case review system.

It must be obvious to the reader that there is no way of aggregating these various types of costs; that would indeed be analogous to adding apples and oranges. Nevertheless, the final estimates from the various sections have been drawn together in Table VIII - 8 for convenient reference. The reader should be aware that Table VIII - 8 is not a summary estimate of actual financial costs and savings from RCP. Such a table cannot be created, if only because too many pieces of the puzzle remain missing. To interpret the various figures summarized in Table VIII - 8 it is necessary to consult those sections of the chapter from which they are taken. Thus it would not be accurate to draw the conclusion from this table that case review cost only \$164,800 to do when it did not succeed, whereas it would have cost the agency at least half a million dollars if it had succeeded. There are too many missing pieces of information and there is too much ambiguity in the meaning of the information presented to permit such conclusions. The figures do correctly suggest a rough pattern or tendency, however: Achieving the goals of RCP would be more financially expensive than not achieving them, although the precise cost differential cannot be calculated. This conclusion is at variance with previous estimates of savings from the reduction of foster care (e.g., Fanshel and Shinn, 1972).

Perhaps it would be better to characterize this chapter as a relatively systematic attempt to call attention to cost issues, rather than to consider it a cost-benefit analysis as such. While incomplete in many respects, the chapter does suggest certain cost implications of attempts to improve foster care services. It calls attention to income issues which may have been overlooked in previous estimates of the governmental financial savings allegedly to be expected from removing children from foster care. Among major points which must be considered in calculating such potential savings are the following:

- 1) The extent to which the size of the current population in foster care represents simply the capacity or willingness of the "system" to provide foster care, rather than the demand or need for foster care (thus, the question is whether more rapid exits from foster care should or will result in fewer children in foster care, instead of resulting in the vacating of slots for other children to fill).
- 2) The extent to which earlier returns home, or the prevention of children from entering foster care, depend on provision of services (such as public assistance, day care homemakers, etc.) which may ultimately cost more than foster care itself.

TABLE VIII - 8

Cost Estimate Summary

<u>Cost Category/Sub-Category</u>	<u>"Out-of-Pocket" Expenditures</u>	<u>"Paper" Expenditures</u>	<u>"Hypothetical" Expenditures</u>
<u>Direct, Fixed, Non-Recurring</u>			
Administrative Planning & Development		\$15,000	
Data Processing	\$5,000	5,000	
<u>Direct, Fixed, Recurring</u>			
Case Review Unit	95,000		
Administrative Monitoring		10,000	
<u>Direct, Variable</u>			
Supervisor Time, 1975 Review		15,600	
Caseworker Time, 1975 Review		19,200	
<u>Provided, Intra-Division, In-direct</u>			
Field Staff Time Related to:			
Case Supervision and Placement			
Changes in Placement Distribution			\$160,000 <sup>1</sup>
Changes in Number of Placements			
Changes in Length of Placements			
<u>Contracted, Intra-Division, In-direct</u>			
Return Home with Contracted Day Care			225,972 <sup>2</sup>
<u>Extra-Division, Indirect<sup>3</sup></u>			
TOTALS	\$100,000	\$64,800	\$385,972

Notes

- 1 The figures here are hypothetical and are based on estimated costs resulting from a hypothetical change in the placement distribution. The Bernstein et.al.(1975) study has been used as the benchmark. It was estimated that there would be a one-time expense of \$160,000 related to redistributing the caseload so as to conform to the proposed distribution.
- 2 This is based on the hypothetical assumption that 10% of the foster care caseload in each age group would return to their natural home as a result of providing supplementary contracted day care. See Table VIII - 7.
- 3 This category was not estimated, as we were analyzing the situation from the perspective of the Division of Youth and Family Services.



## Appendix A

Attachment 1

Computer Expenses<sup>3</sup>

System Preparation <sup>1</sup> (Compiling, testing, report generation)	\$4,596
Management Planning Unit <sup>2</sup> (Programming, 7/4/75 - 4/10/76)	4,295
	<hr/>
	\$8,891

Notes:

1. Figure does not include some overhead expenses, but does include the expense of some runs on the data base which were non-CRU related.
2. Figure includes some programming expense which was only tangentially related to CRU activity.
3. All figures are estimates obtained from Management Planning; due to the accounting system utilized by Human Services it would be inappropriate to assume these estimates are precise data processing costs for the Case Review Unit. Assuming that the above figure somewhat understates actual costs due to the exclusion of overhead expenses and the fact that programming costs are only shown for approximately 9-months, the round figure of \$10,000 represents an adequate estimate of these expenses for FY-76. However, it should be noted that this figure primarily represents one-time development expenses involved in the initial implementation of the system. According to Management Planning the on-going monthly data processing expense, once the system has been implemented, should be approximately \$500 (\$350 computer time and \$150 keypunching and miscellaneous charges).

TABLE A - 1

Estimated Expenditures for the Case Review Unit, FY-1975

I.	<u>Personnel</u>		\$81,315
A.	Number of full-time equivalent people	5	
1.	Supervisory	4	
2.	Non-supervisory	1	
B.	Annual Wage/Salary Expense	\$69,500	
1.	Supervisory	\$63,000	
2.	Non-supervisory	6,500	
C.	Annual Finge Benefit Expense (@ 17%)	\$11,815	
1.	Supervisory	\$10,710	
2.	Non-supervisory	1,105	
II.	<u>Space</u>		3,990
A.	Floor Space (700 sq. ft.)	\$3,640	
1.	Rent	\$3,640	
2.	Maintenance	(included in rent)	
B.	Utilities	\$350	
1.	Telephone	\$350	
2.	Heat, Light, etc.	(included in rent)	
III.	Major depreciable items* (Depreciation)		299
A.	Furniture	\$175	
B.	Equipment	54	
IV.	Material Costs		270
A.	Office Supplies (There is no charge for forms done by the print shop)	\$270	
B.	Minor furniture/equipment (covered in office supplies or depreciation)	—	

CRU Expenditures (con't)

V.	Other expenses		9,196
A.	Travel	\$500	
B.	Data processing	6,000 <sup>1</sup>	
C.	Miscellaneous	2,696 <sup>2</sup>	
			<hr/> \$95,000

\*Based on original value of all items on hand costing over \$100, per att. schedule.

<sup>1</sup>

This represents only the estimated on-going costs and not the development costs included under non-recurring direct fixed costs.

<sup>2</sup>

This is an estimate to round-off the budget estimate; the biggest items of duplicating and postage are not broken out for individual projects. This would also include other items (like forms) which are not charged for when done internally.

TABLE 1b

Schedule for MAJOR Depreciable Items for Case Review Unit

## A. Furniture Items:

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Total Price</u>	<u>Dep. Period</u>	<u>Annual Dep.</u>
5 Desks	\$144	\$720	10 years	\$72.00
4 Chairs, swivel	47	188	5 years	37.60
3 Chairs, side	33	99	5 years	19.80
1 Chair, sect.	42	42	5 years	8.40
1 Table, folding	85	85	4 years	21.25
1 Coatrack	75	75	10 years	7.50
1 Bookcase	84	84	10 years	8.40
Total Cost		\$1,293		
Annual Depreciation				\$174.95

## B. Equipment Items:

1 Typewriter, IBM	\$544	\$544	10 years	\$54.40
Total Cost		\$544		
Annual Depreciation				\$54.40

TABLE A-2

Cost of 1974 Case Review

## Assistant Social Work Supervisors:

Time:

Initial Reviews	11,500	
Regular Reviews	0	
Follow-up Reviews	600	
Total Cases Reviewed	12,100 cases	
Est. Hours per Review	.2 hours per case	
Total Hours	2,420 hours	
Monthly Equivalent ( $\div$ 140) (7 hours/day x 20 work days/mo. equals 140 hours/month.)	17.29 months	

Compensation:

Mid-range Annual Salary	\$13,105
Average Annual Fringes (@ 15%)	1,966
Estimated Annual Compensation	15,071
Estimated Monthly Compensation	1,256

Cost:

Total Time Required	17.29 months
Average Compensation	\$1,256 per month

Total Cost for 1974 Review (Assistant Social Work Supervisors)	\$21,716
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TABLE A-3

Cost of 1974 Case Review

## Social Worker II:

Time:

Initial Reviews	11,500
Regular Reviews	0
Follow-up Reviews	600
Total Cases Reviewed:	12,100 cases
Est. Hours per Review	.3 hours per case
Total Hours	3,630 hours
Monthly Equivalent ( $\div$ 140) (7 hrs./day x 20 workdays/mo. equals 140 hrs./mo.)	25.93 months

Compensation:

Mid-range Annual Salary	\$10,781
Average Annual Fringes (@ 15%)	1,617
Estimated Annual Compensation	12,398
Estimated Monthly Compensation	1,033

Cost:

Total Time Required	25.93 months
Average Compensation	\$1,033 per month

Total Cost for 1974 Review: \$26,786  
(Social Worker II)

TABLE A-4

Cost of 1975 Case Review

Assistant Social Work Supervisor:

Time:

Initial Reviews	4,561	
Regular Reviews	1,822	
Follow-up Reviews	2,214*	
Total Cases Reviewed		8,597 cases
Est. Hours per Review		.2 hours per case
Total Hours		1,719 hours
Monthly Equivalent ( $\div$ 140) (7 hours/day x 20 workdays/month equals 140 hours/month)		12.28 months

Compensation:

Mid-range Annual Salary	\$13,105
Average Annual Fringes (@16%)	2,097
Estimated Annual Compensation	15,202
Estimated Monthly Compensation	1,267

Cost:

Total Time Required	12.28 months
Average Compensation	\$1,267 per month

Total Cost for 1975 Review: (Assistant Social Work Supervisor)	\$15,559
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\*This figure includes approximately 1,000 questionnaires sent to the field relative to cases identified for adoption in both the 1974 and 1975 Reviews.



TABLE A-5

Cost of 1975 Case Review

Social Worker II:

Time:

Initial Reviews	4,561	
Regular Reviews	1,822	
Follow-up Reviews	2,214*	
Total Cases Reviewed		8,597 cases
Est. Hours per Review		.3 hours per case
Total Hours		2,579 hours
Monthly Equivalent ( $\div$ 140) (7 hours/day x 20 workdays/mo. equals 140 hours/month)		18.42 months

Compensation:

Mid-range Annual Salary	\$10,781
Average Annual Fringes (@ 16%)	1,725
Estimated Annual Compensation	12,506
Estimated Monthly Compensation	1,042

Cost:

Total Time Required	18.42 months
Average Compensation	\$1,042 per month

Total Cost for 1975 Review: \$19,194  
(Social Worker II)

\*This figure includes approximately 1,000 questionnaires sent to the field relative to cases identified for adoption in both the 1974 and 1975 Reviews.

## Appendix B

### Derivation of Personnel Time and Cost Estimates

Following is a description of the methodology used to obtain this information, in lieu of the absence of a detailed cost study.

1. It was assumed that there are two broad types of tasks performed by the field personnel - the establishment of new or different placements and the on-going supervision or maintenance of cases in the various placements.
2. It was assumed that the variable costs resulting from the establishment and maintenance of placements would involve the time of both caseworkers (Social Workers I and II) and first line supervisors (Assistant Social Work Supervisors) as they are most directly involved with cases.
3. In depth interviews were conducted with 65 caseworkers and supervisors.\* Each was asked to "estimate the average number of hours per case which are required for you to initially establish each of the following services (foster care, shelter, other group and institutional care, parafoster care, and return home). Also estimate the average number of hours per case which are required of you each month in order to supervise the service on an on-going basis." The magnitude of the hours estimated differed substantially between the interviews. It appeared that the concepts of "establishing" and "supervising" cases were not well enough defined so that different people included a varying range of tasks within their estimates. Nevertheless, there did appear to be an internal consistency in the estimates (i.e., the same types of placement were consistently estimated to be the most time consuming.) For these reasons the decision was

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\*The sample was selected from caseworkers and supervisors who had been employed during the 1974 and 1975 reviews. They were chosen from eight District Offices which were selected so as to represent the range of D.O.'s in terms of average caseload per worker and type of population served. The distribution was as follows: Burlington--7; Newark--13; Gloucester--7; Hudson--10; Mercer--6; Middlesex--8; Sussex--7; and Orange--7. The sample included 23 supervisors and 42 caseworkers.

made to create a scale for each of the types of placements indicating the time required. Four separate scales were created which indicate the relative time required for various types of placements (e.g., foster care, shelters, group homes, institutions, etc.). They were:

- a. time required for caseworkers to establish various placements;
- b. time required for supervisors to establish various placements;
- c. time required for caseworkers to supervise\* various placements; and
- d. time required for supervisors to supervise\* various placements.

The following methodology was followed in creating these scales:

- (1) The absolute hourly estimates were recorded for each interviewee, within the four categories just described;
- (2) The estimates were then standardized to a scale of 0 to 100 by dividing each person's absolute estimates by their highest absolute estimate for any of the types of placement, and then multiplying the quotient by 100.

The mathematical notation for this procedure can be written as follows:

$$\frac{C_{ij}}{\bar{C}_{ij}} \times 100 = K_{ij}$$

$\bar{C}_{ij}$

Where:

C = estimated hours to perform task (i.e., either placement or supervision)

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\*The term "supervise" is used here to refer to the time required to follow-up and maintain a case in placement on a month-to-month basis.

$i$  = type of service  
 (e.g., foster care,  
 group home, etc.)  
 $\bar{i}$  = highest estimate for  
 any service category  
 $j$  = interviewee (caseworker  
 or supervisor)  
 $K_{ij}$  = average standard  
 score for service  $i$   
 for each individual.

The results of this procedure were:

- (1) The placement estimated to be the most time consuming for each person was set equal to 100 on the scale.
- (2) It placed the other types of placements on an ordered metric scale relative to the highest estimate.
- (3) After each estimate was standardized, the scaled estimates for each type of placement (i.e., foster care, shelter, etc.) were summed and divided by the number of interviewees providing an estimate for that type of placement. This provided an ordinal estimate of the time required to place or supervise each type of placement.

The mathematical notation for this procedure can be written as follows:

$$\frac{1}{N_e} \sum_{j=1}^{N_e} K_{ij} = K_i$$

Where:

$N_e$  = number of interviewees (i.e.,  
 caseworkers or supervisors)  
 making an estimate

$i$  = type of service

$j$  = interviewee

$K_{ij}$  = average standard score for any  
service i for individual j

$K_i$  = average standard score for  
service i

- (4) This provided a set of "average standard scores" which were again standardized in order that scores for different types of services can more easily be compared. This was done by again dividing all average standard scores by the highest average standard score for any category, times 100. The resulting four sets of standard scores are presented in the following table.

The mathematical notation for this procedure can be written as follows:

$$\frac{K_i}{K_{\bar{i}}} \times 100 = K_i'$$

Where:

i = type of service  
(e.g., foster care,  
group home, etc.)

$K_i$  = average standard score for  
service i

$K_{\bar{i}}$  = highest average standard score  
for any service category.

$K_i'$  = adjusted average standard  
score for service i

TABLE B-1

Weights Derived for Various Placements by Function and Task

<u>Type of Placement</u>	<u>Caseworkers<sup>1</sup></u>		<u>Supervisors</u>	
	<u>Placement</u>	<u>Supervision</u>	<u>Placement</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Family Foster Care	50	100	55	94
Para-Foster Care	33	69	45	74
Shelter	24	100	44	95
Other Group/Insti- tution <sup>2</sup>	100	80	100	100
Natural Home	23	96	75	96

<sup>1</sup> Only the 24 non-specialized caseworkers were used for these estimates as these were caseworkers dealing with a more complete range of tasks and cases.

<sup>2</sup> Includes "group home".

4. Next the actual number of cases which the Division processes per unit of time was determined for each of the tasks--i.e., placement and supervision. The figures used were taken from the Placement Matrix for June, 1976, compiled by the Bureau of Fiscal Affairs. For "placement," the sum of all new cases during the month and all cases changing placements during the month was considered the appropriate figure. For "supervision", the total of all cases under supervision at both the beginning and end of the month was used. These figures are presented in the following two tables. The placement categories from the Placement Matrix were aggregated into the six categories shown below.

TABLE B-2  
Placements by Type  
June, 1976

<u>Location</u>	<u>New Cases</u>	<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Total Placements</u>
Foster Care	127	319	446
Para-Foster Care	10	33	43
Shelters	15	81	96
Group/Institutional	103	216	319
Home <sup>1</sup>	3,979	1,040	5,019
Other <sup>2</sup>	41	421	462
Totals	<u>4,275</u>	<u>2,110</u>	<u>6,385</u>

<sup>1</sup> Includes placements with relatives or other free boarding placements.

<sup>2</sup> Includes such as camps, armed forces, ACI adoption home, out-of-state, etc.

TABLE B-3  
Cases Under Supervision by Type  
June, 1976

Cases Under Supervision at Beginning and End of Month

<u>Location</u>	<u>Same Placement</u>	<u>Changed Placement</u>	<u>Total<sup>1</sup></u>
Foster Care	8,078	319	8,397
Para-Foster Care	776	33	809
Shelters	130	81	211
Group/Institutional	1,965	216	2,181
Home <sup>2</sup>	34,554	1,040	35,594
Other <sup>3</sup>	2,176	421	2,597
Totals	<u>47,679</u>	<u>2,110</u>	<u>49,789</u>

<sup>1</sup> A prorating of deletions and additions during the month was not done as the two figures were largely offsetting and the effect would have been negligible.

<sup>2</sup> Includes placements with relatives or other free boarding placements.

<sup>3</sup> Includes such as camps, armed forces, ACI adoption home, out-of-state, etc.

5. Next the actual number of hours spent by caseworkers and supervisors in a month was calculated as follows:
  - a. The number of full-time equivalent caseworkers (1,006) and supervisors (243) was obtained from computerized records at Department of Human Services (Data Processing).
  - b. This figure was multiplied by the average number of working hours per month (140) to obtain the total number of caseworker or supervisory hours per month.
  - c. The resulting figure was multiplied by an estimate of the percentage of time which was spent in "case related" activities. This was an average of the estimates obtained in the field interviews.
  - d. This resulting estimate of the monthly case related hours for both caseworkers and supervisors was then multiplied by the estimate of the percentage of case-related time which was spent in either "case opening/initial placement" or "case supervision/follow-up". This was also an average of the estimates obtained in the field interviews. (The estimates used in c and d are shown in the following table.)

TABLE B-4  
Distribution of Normal Workday by Function<sup>1</sup>

<u>Function</u>	<u>Supervisors</u>	<u>Caseworkers</u>	<u>Non-Specialized Caseworkers</u>
<u>Type of Task</u>			
Non-Case Related	29%	13%	13%
Case Related	71	87	87
Case Opening/ Initial Placement <sup>2</sup>	21%	17%	15%
Case Supervision/ Follow-up <sup>2</sup>	79	83	85
Totals	100%	100%	100%

<sup>1</sup> All figures based on median for group estimates.

<sup>2</sup> The figures for "Case Opening" and "Case Supervision" represent percentages of the "Case Related" category.



- e. The resulting figure provides an estimate of the monthly hours spent by caseworkers and supervisors in case placement and case supervision activities. These figures are presented in the following table.

TABLE B-5  
Estimated Monthly Hours by Function and Task

<u>Function</u>	<u>Case Opening/ Initial Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision/ Follow-up</u>	<u>Total</u>
Caseworkers	20,830 hours	101,700 hours	122,530 hours
Supervisor	5,072	19,083	24,154
Totals	<u>25,902 hours</u>	<u>120,782 hours</u>	<u>146,684 hours</u>

6. It is now possible to estimate the average number of hours spent by a caseworker or supervisor in placing or supervising a case. The procedure is as follows:
- First the appropriate weight (obtained in 3 above) was multiplied by the appropriate number of cases (obtained in 4 above) for each placement category. This provides the total number of "basic effort units,"\* if you will, which are required to place or supervise each type of placement by caseworkers or supervisors in a typical month.
  - These "basic effort units" are summed for all types of placements and divided into the appropriate number of hours available to perform the task (obtained in 5 above). This then provides an estimate of the number of hours required to accomplish one "basic effort unit" of case placement or supervision by caseworkers or supervisors, as the case may be.
  - This "hour per basic effort unit" figure is then multiplied by the appropriate weighting factor (obtained in 3 above), which in essence tells how many effort units are required to place or supervise a case by a caseworker or supervisor.
  - The resulting figure is an estimate of the average number of hours required to place or supervise a single case by a caseworker or supervisor. These estimates are provided in the following table.

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\* The concept of a "basic effort unit" is a hypothetical construct which is being used to break each task into its fundamental units which can then be aggregated in a number of different ways.

TABLE B-6  
Summary of Field Staff Case Related Time  
(Average Hours Per Case)

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Time</u>		<u>Supervisory Time</u>	
	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	5.85 hours	2.20 hours	.61 hours	.38 hours
Para-Foster Care	3.86	1.52	.50	.30
Shelter	2.81	2.20	.48	.38
Group/Institution	11.70	1.76	1.10	.40
Home	2.69	2.11	.83	.38
Other	1.17	.22	.11	.04

7. By multiplying the average hours per case figure just obtained by the appropriate number of cases in each placement category (obtained in 4 above) we have an estimate of the total monthly hours required to place/supervise cases by caseworkers/supervisors in each placement category. These figures are provided in the following table.

TABLE B-7  
Summary of Field Staff Case-Related Time  
(Total Hours Per Month)

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Time</u>		<u>Supervisory Time</u>	
	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	2,609 hrs.	18,473 hrs.	272 hrs.	3,191 hrs.
Para-Foster Care	166	1,230	22	243
Shelter	270	464	46	80
Group/Institution	3,732	3,839	351	872
Home	13,501	75,103	4,166	13,526
Other	541	571	51	104
Totals	20,819 hrs	99,680 hrs	4,908 hrs	18,016 hrs

8. Before being able to estimate costs it was necessary to calculate the average hourly cost of caseworkers and supervisors. This was accomplished as follows:
- The average annual salary for Social Workers I and II was obtained from Data Proc. The average annual salary for "caseworkers" was considered to be a weighted average of these two figures based on the number of people in each category.
  - An average fringe benefit factor of 17% (obtained from Personnel) was added to the average annual salary figure to obtain an average estimated annual compensation figure.
  - The average annual compensation figure was divided by 12 to obtain the average monthly compensation figure.
  - The average monthly compensation figure was divided by the average number of workdays in a month (20) to obtain the average workday compensation figure.
  - The average workday compensation figure was divided by the average number of working hours in the day (7) to obtain the average hourly compensation (or cost) figure for caseworkers. The same process was followed for supervisors and the results are presented in the following table.

TABLE B-8  
1976 Estimated Hourly Costs

	<u>Social Workers (I and II)</u>	<u>Assistant Social Work Supervisor</u>
Average Annual Salary	\$12,238	\$15,224
Average Annual Fringes (@ 17%)	<u>2,080</u>	<u>2,588</u>
Estimated Annual Compensation	\$14,318	\$17,812
Estimated Monthly Compensation	\$1,193	\$1,484
Estimated Workday Cost (average 20/mo.)	\$59.65	\$74.20
Estimated Hourly Cost (@ 7 hours/day)	<u>\$8.52</u>	<u>\$10.60</u>

9. Having obtained an average hourly cost figure for caseworkers and supervisors (in 8 above) we can multiply that by the average number of hours to place/supervise a case (obtained in 6 above) to obtain an estimate of the average cost to place/ supervise a case by a caseworker/supervisor. These results are presented in the following table.

TABLE B-9  
Summary of Field Staff Case-Related Costs  
Average Costs Per Case

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Costs</u>		<u>Supervisory Costs</u>	
	<u>Case Placement*</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	\$ 50	\$19	\$ 6	\$5
Para-Foster Care	33	13	5	3
Shelter	24	19	5	4
Group/ Institution	100	15	12	4
Home	23	18	9	4
Other	10	2	1	.50

---

\*The fact that the figures in this column are the same as the weights obtained for this category in (3) above is purely coincidental.

9. Having obtained an average hourly cost figure for caseworkers and supervisors (in 8 above) we can multiply that by the average number of hours to place/supervise a case (obtained in 6 above) to obtain an estimate of the average cost to place/ supervise a case by a caseworker/supervisor. These results are presented in the following table.

TABLE B-9  
Summary of Field Staff Case-Related Costs  
Average Costs Per Case

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Costs</u>		<u>Supervisory Costs</u>	
	<u>Case Placement*</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	\$ 50	\$19	\$ 6	\$5
Para-Foster Care	33	13	5	3
Shelter	24	19	5	4
Group/ Institution	100	15	12	4
Home	23	18	9	4
Other	10	2	1	0

---

\*The fact that the figures in this column are the same as the weights obtained for this category in (3) above is purely coincidental.

10. Finally, we can multiply the appropriate average cost per case figure just obtained by the appropriate number of cases (obtained in 4 above) to obtain an estimate of the total monthly cost of placing/supervising cases in each placement category by caseworkers/supervisors. These figures are presented in the following table.

TABLE B-10

Summary of Field Staff Total Case-Related Cost

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Costs</u>		<u>Supervisory Costs</u>	
	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	\$22,300	\$157,360	\$2,886	\$33,840
Para-Foster Care	1,419	10,477	228	2,573
Shelter	2,304	3,954	489	850
Group/Institution	31,900	32,715	3,720	9,247
Home	115,437	636,777	44,167	143,444
Other	4,620	4,856	541	1,091
Totals	\$177,980	\$846,139	\$52,031	\$191,045

11. Representing these total costs for each category as a percentage of the total placement/supervision costs by caseworkers/supervisors helps to clarify their relative importance. These percentages are shown in the following table.

TABLE B-11

Summary of Field Staff Relative Costs

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker</u>		<u>Supervisors</u>	
	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>	<u>Case Placement</u>	<u>Case Supervision</u>
Foster Care	12.5%	18.6%	5.6%	17.7%
Para-Foster Care	0.8	1.2	0.4	1.4
Shelter	1.3	0.5	0.9	0.4
Group/ Institution	17.9	3.9	7.2	4.8
Home	64.9	75.3	84.9	75.1
Other	2.6	0.6	1.0	0.6
Total	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%

12. Remembering that it is monthly figures which have been presented above, it may be helpful to show the annual equivalents. In doing so the separate figures for caseworkers and supervisors have been combined in order to show the total placement and total supervision costs on an annual basis. These figures are presented in the following two tables.

TABLE B-12

Estimated Annual Case Placement Costs

<u>Type of Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Costs</u>	<u>Supervisory Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>
Foster Care	\$ 267,600	\$ 34,632	\$ 302,232
Para-Foster Care	17,028	2,736	19,764
Shelter	27,648	5,868	33,516
Group/Institution	382,800	44,640	427,440
Home	1,385,244	530,004	1,915,248
Other	55,440	6,492	61,932
Totals	\$2,135,760	\$624,372	\$2,760,132

TABLE B-13

Estimated Annual Case Supervision Costs

<u>Type of Placement</u>	<u>Caseworker Costs</u>	<u>Supervisory Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>
Foster Care	\$1,888,320	\$ 406,080	\$2,294,400
Para-Foster Care	125,724	30,876	156,600
Shelter	47,448	10,200	57,648
Group/Institutional	392,580	110,964	503,544
Home	7,641,324	1,721,328	9,362,652
Other	<u>58,272</u>	<u>13,092</u>	<u>71,364</u>
	\$10,153,668	\$2,292,540	\$12,446,208



APPENDIX C

THE DIRECT COSTS OF FOSTER CARE

## INTRODUCTION

A recent project report<sup>1</sup> demonstrates, I believe, an appropriate approach to estimating the direct costs of foster care, which can then be utilized in establishing appropriate reimbursement rates to foster families and in projecting average and total costs of foster care to the agency. The methodology and data used are based on the work of Jean L. Pennock, Carol M. Jaeger, and Minnie Belle McIntosh in the Consumer and Food Economics Research Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.). The tables they have developed are in turn based on a Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey of consumer expenditure patterns completed in 1960-61. The tables aggregate various types of costs (e.g., food, clothing, housing, medical, etc.) and break down the results by region, location (urban/rural), various levels of living, and by child's age.

I have utilized those tables which deal with urban<sup>2</sup> areas in the Northeast region (which includes New Jersey), and the low cost budget.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Culley, James D., Barbara H. Settles, and Judith B. VanName. Understanding and Measuring the Cost of Foster Care. University of Delaware, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>This is based on the assumption that the great bulk of New Jersey's caseload would fall into this category as opposed to "rural farm" or even "rural non-farm" which involves towns of less than 2,500 in size.

<sup>3</sup>This is based on the money value of food used by families falling in the third quartile (i.e., 26th-49th percentile range) of an array of families according to the amount spent on food.

In addition, I have replaced the Pennock data with current data<sup>4</sup> in those two categories where I felt direct costs would be likely to vary considerably depending on the sex of the child (i.e., food-at-home and clothing). For the other expenditure categories where sex was not expected to impact so heavily the appropriate data from Table 5-1 of the Culley, et. al., study was used. However, their data was adjusted to December, 1975, using the appropriate Consumer Price Index<sup>5</sup> to correct for the changing value of money. Finally, all new and adjusted cost categories were aggregated to provide a current estimate of the direct costs of raising a foster child<sup>6</sup> of a particular age and sex on a low cost budget in a Northeast urban area. Both annual and equivalent monthly costs are shown.

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<sup>4</sup>The new data for "food at home" was taken from the Family Economics Review, Spring, 1975. It is based on a family of four in the Northeast on a low cost plan in January, 1975. The data for clothing is taken from the Summer issue of the same publication. It represents costs for an urban family (per person) on a low cost budget in the Northeast. The figures represent the seasonally adjusted index for March 1975 from the 1960-61 consumer study mentioned above.

<sup>5</sup>"Food away from home" was adjusted using the CPI for "Food" in general in the Northeast. The "Housing" and "Transportation" categories were adjusted using the CPI's for these specific categories in the Northeast. The other categories were adjusted using the CPI for "All" items in the Northeast Region. All figures are taken from Table 24 of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Monthly Review).

<sup>6</sup>The assumption here is that there is a negligible difference in the costs of raising a foster child as opposed to a natural child, though the Culley report suggests some reasons why this may not be the case. (See pp. 5-27 to 5-29).

Northeast  
Urban  
Low Cost Budget  
January, 1976

T A B L E I

AVERAGE DIRECT COSTS OF CHILD REARING

Annual Estimated Costs by Expense Category

SEX/AGE	Monthly Direct Costs	Total Annual Costs	F O O D			Cloth. <u>3</u>	House. <u>4</u>	Med. <u>5</u>	Ed. <u>6</u>	Trans. <u>7</u>	All <u>8</u> Other
			Total	At <sup>1</sup> Home	Away <sup>2</sup> Home						
Male:											
Under 1	116	1,393	288	288	0	59	619	86	0	212	129
1	121	1,454	349	349	0	59	619	86	0	212	129
2-3	119	1,432	385	385*	0	118	530	72	0	198	129
4-5	125	1,498	451	420	31	118	530	72	0	198	129
6	136	1,627	578	547	31	149	486	72	14	184	144
7-9	139	1,672	623	592*	31	149	486	72	14	184	144
10-11	147	1,763	714	683	31	149	486	72	14	184	144
12	158	1,898	761	730	31	180	501	72	14	212	158
13-15	160	1,922	785	754*	31	180	501	72	14	212	158
16-17	169	2,028	833	802	31	208	501	72	14	227	173
18-24	168	2,019	812	781*	31*	234	501*	72*	0	227*	173*
Female:											
Under 1	116	1,393	288	288	0	59	619	86	0	212	129
1	121	1,454	349	349	0	59	619	86	0	212	129
2-3	119	1,422	385	385*	0	108	530	72	0	198	129
4-5	124	1,488	451	420	31	108	530	72	0	198	129
6	136	1,629	578	547	31	151	486	72	14	184	144
7-9	140	1,674	623	592*	31	151	486	72	14	184	144
10-11	147	1,765	714	683	31	151	486	72	14	184	144
12	153	1,831	675	644	31	199	501	72	14	212	158
13-15	153	1,831	675	644	31	199	501	72	14	212	158
16-17	163	1,960	675	644	31	298	501	72	14	227	173
18-24	172	2,067	658	627*	31*	436	501*	72*	0	227*	173*

Notes: for TABLE I

1. Family Economics Review, Spring, 1975.  
Figures for January, 1975. Interpolation (\*) for some categories was made on the basis of a weighted average of appropriate subcategories. Based on family of four (i.e., couple 20-54; children 6-8; 9-11).
2. Figures for 1970 taken from Understanding and Measuring the Cost of Foster Care by Culley, Settles, and Van Name, 1975  
These figures were then adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for "food" in the "Northeast" for December, 1975, taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table 24. (\*Extrapolation)
3. Seasonally adjusted index for March, 1975, was used to represent 1975.
4. Figures for 1970 taken from above source (Culley, et.al.) and adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for "Housing" in the "Northeast" for December, 1975, from BLS. (\*Extrapolation)
5. Figures for 1970 taken from above source (Culley, et.al.) and adjusted using CPI for "all" items in the "Northeast" for Dec. 75, from BLS. (\*Extrapolation).
6. Figures for 1970 taken from above source (Culley, et.al.) and adjusted using CPI for "all" items in the "Northeast" for Dec. 75, from BLS (assumes no school expense after 18).
7. Figures for 1970 taken from above source (Culley, et.al.) and adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for "transportation" in the "Northeast" for December, 1975, from BLS. (\*Extrapolation)
8. Figures for 1970 taken from above source (Culley, et.al.) and adjusted using CPI for "all" items in Northeast" for Dec. 75, from BLS. (\*Extrapolation).

### REIMBURSEMENT RATES

At the younger ages (under 12) there is a negligible difference between the direct costs of raising a boy or a girl. For older children, the cost of "food at home" is substantially higher for boys, but the cost of "clothing" is higher for girls. In certain age categories these costs are essentially offsetting. For the 16-17 age category the excess cost of food for boys is significantly higher than the excess cost of clothing for girls. However, in the 18 years and above category the clothing differential for girls becomes dominant. In total, there does not appear to be a large difference in direct costs for the two sexes, though it is slightly higher for boys in the higher age categories.

Given the minor differences between some age groups and between the two sexes at the lower ages, it seems practical to aggregate certain categories in order to simplify payment schedules. In addition, it is unwarranted to attribute too much precision to the cost figures used in constructing the table. For these reasons, a plausible rate reimbursement schedule is presented in Table 2-a. If it is desired to keep reimbursement for medical expenses separate, then the cost figure for this category should be subtracted out. The suggested reimbursement schedule has been so adjusted in Table 2-b.

T A B L E 2-a

SUGGESTED PAYMENTS  
(including Medical Costs)

Proposed Payment

AGE

0-5		\$120
6-11		140
12-15	GIRLS	155
	BOYS	160
16-24	GIRLS	165
	BOYS	170

T A B L E 2-b

SUGGESTED PAYMENTS  
(Excl. Medical Costs)<sup>7</sup>

Proposed Payment

AGE

0-5		\$114
6-11		134
12-15	GIRLS	149
	BOYS	154
16-24	GIRLS	159
	BOYS	164

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<sup>7</sup> Medical expenses interpolated for aggregate categories then rounded to nearest dollar and subtracted from monthly figure in Table 2-a.

T A B L E 3

Age and Sex Distribution of Non-WIN Caseload as of June 30, 1974

<u>AGE CATEGORY</u>	<u>ABSOLUTE (All Minus WIN)</u>			<u>Proportion</u>	
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
Under 1	792	397	395	.02	.03
1	1,088	554	534	.03	.04
2-3	2,595	1,377	1,218	.09	.09
4-5	3,082	1,663	1,419	.10	.10
6	1,525	813	712	.05	.05
7-9	4,693	2,556	2,137	.16	.16
10-11	3,391	1,927	1,464	.12	.11
12	1,702	1,001	701	.06	.05
13-15	6,269	3,541	2,728	.22	.20
16-17	3,556	1,867	1,689	.12	.13
18 up	<u>1,040</u>	<u>524</u>	<u>516</u>	<u>.03</u>	<u>.04</u>
Total:	29,733	16,220	13,513	1.00	1.00
Proportion:		.55	.45		

This was done first using the more detailed age categories and then also using the more aggregate age categories used in Table 2-a. The calculations using eleven age groupings are presented in Table 4. For the four aggregate age groupings the results are presented in Table 5. As can be seen, the differences between the two sets of figures are negligible.



### AVERAGE COSTS

Since the above reimbursement rates are differentiated by age and sex it is necessary to weight the individual cost figures by these two variables in order to obtain an accurate average cost figure. That is, the actual distribution of the caseload according to these two variables should be applied to the cost figures. In order to obtain this distribution, I utilized the state summary of the DYFS Report entitled "Social Characteristics of Children Under Supervision As of 6/30/74."<sup>8</sup> The methodology presented by Culley, et.al., was then applied to the direct cost data compiled above and to the proportional breakdown of the caseload according to age and sex as shown in Table 3.

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<sup>8</sup> While these figures included all children under supervision, the WIN population was subtracted out before computing percentages, as was the small number of cases where the sex had not been determined. This report was utilized as it was more current than an earlier report dealing only with the foster care caseload and because there did not appear to be a large difference between foster care and the general caseload in terms of the age/sex distribution.

T A B L E      4

CALCULATION OF AVERAGE COST PER CASE

Age Categories (Male)	Proportion of Foster Children of Ages:		Total Monthly Cost Data from Table 1:		Age Category's Share of Average Costs
Under 1	.02	x	\$116	=	\$2.32
1	.03	x	121	=	3.63
2-3	.09	x	119	=	10.71
4-5	.10	x	125	=	12.50
6	.05	x	136	=	6.80
7-9	.16	x	139	=	22.24
10-11	.12	x	147	=	17.64
12	.06	x	158	=	9.48
13-15	.22	x	160	=	35.20
16-17	.12	x	169	=	20.28
18 up	.03	x	168	=	5.04
	1.00				\$145.84

Average direct  
monthly cost of  
raising a ma hi  
in an urban area in  
the Northeast region  
at a low cost level  
of living (in Decem-  
ber 1975 dollars).

Age Categories (Female)	Proportion of Foster Children of Ages:		Total Monthly Cost Data from Table 1:		Age Category's Share of Average Costs
Under 1	.03	x	\$116	=	\$3.48
1	.04	x	121	=	4.84
2-3	.09	x	119	=	10.71
4-5	.10	x	124	=	12.40
6	.05	x	136	=	6.80
7-9	.16	x	140	=	22.40
10-11	.11	x	147	=	16.17
12	.05	x	153	=	7.65
13-15	.20	x	153	=	30.60
16-17	.13	x	163	=	21.19
18 up	.04	x	172	=	6.88
	1.00				\$143.12

Average direct  
monthly cost of  
raising a fema hi  
in an urban area in  
the Northeast region  
at low cost level o  
living (in Decem-  
ber 1975 dollars).

SEX	Average Cost of Child by Sex	Proportion of Foster Children of Each Sex	Sex Category' Share of Total Average Cost
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Male	\$145.84	.55	\$80.21
Female	143.13	.45	\$64.40

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1.00

Average direct monthly cost of raising a child in the urban Northeast and at a low cost level of living (in December 1975 dollars).	\$144.61
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T A B L E            5

Calculation of Average Cost Per Case

(Using Aggregate Age Categories)

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>S</u>
	Proportion	Monthly Costs from Table 5-a		Age Group's Share of Total Average Costs	Proportion	Monthly Costs from Table 5-a		Age Group's Share of Total Average Costs	
0-5	.24	(120)	=	\$28.80	.26	(120)	=	\$31.20	
6-11	.33	(140)	=	46.20	.32	(140)	=	44.80	
12-15	.28	(160)	=	44.80	.25	(155)	=	38.75	
16-up	.15	(170)	=	25.50	.17	(165)	=	28.05	
	<hr/>			<hr/>	<hr/>			<hr/>	
	1.00			\$145.30	1.00			\$142.80	

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Proportion</u>	<u>Average Costs</u>		<u>Share of Total Average Costs</u>
Boys	.55	(\$145.30)	=	\$79.72
Girls	.45	(\$142.80)	=	64.26
				<hr/>
		Average Cost Per Case Per Month		\$144.18

## FISCAL IMPACT

If the direct cost figures presented in either Table 1 or 2 were utilized as reimbursement rates, then using the average cost figures derived by applying the foster care caseload distribution to those cost figures will allow us to estimate the actual cost of payments to foster families based on these costs. In order to do this the total number of foster and para-foster children as of mid-1975 were taken as an estimate of the average monthly foster care case load in 1975. A weighted percentage change for these two categories from 1974 to 1975 was applied to the 1975 figures in order to estimate the caseload (foster care) in 1976.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The appropriate figures are taken from the quarterly DYFS report entitled "Children Under Supervision," June, 1975. Note that the cost figures on which the rates have been based have not been increased for the 1976 estimate; only the caseload has been projected.

T A B L E 6

## Fiscal Impact of Suggested Foster Care Rates

	1 9 7 5 (Latest Monthly Caseload) <sup>k</sup>	1 9 7 6 (At Projected Monthly Caseload) <sup>l</sup>	1 9 7 6 (At Budgeted Monthly Caseload) <sup>i</sup>
Foster Homes	9,284	9,600 <sup>a</sup>	9,045 <sup>d</sup>
Para-Foster Homes	<u>806</u>	<u>1,047<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>1,050<sup>d</sup></u>
Total Foster Care Caseload	10,090	10,647 <sup>c</sup>	10,095
Est. Avg. Cost per Case (per month)	\$144.18 <sup>e</sup>	\$144.18 <sup>e</sup>	\$144.18 <sup>e</sup>
Est. Monthly Cost at Suggested Rates	\$1,454,776 <sup>f</sup>	\$1,535,084 <sup>f</sup>	\$1,455,497 <sup>f</sup>
Est. Annual Cost at Suggested Rates <sup>h</sup>	\$17,457,312 <sup>g</sup>	\$18,421,008 <sup>g</sup>	\$17,465,964 <sup>g</sup>
1976-77 Budget for Foster Care at Each Caseload <sup>j</sup>	\$14,804,855	\$15,622,130	\$14,812,000
Difference Between Annual Costs at Budgeted and Suggested Rates <sup>h</sup> for each Caseload	\$2,652,457	\$2,798,878	\$2,653,772

NOTES: for TABLE 6

- a. A 3.4% increase from 1974 to 1975.
- b. A 30% increase from 1974 to 1975.
- c. An overall weighted increase of 5.52% from 1974 to 1975.
- d. From "Budget 1976-1977; State and County Cost Breakdown."
- e. From Table 5 (this report).
- f. Product of caseload times "Est. Avg. Cost per Case."
- g. "Est. Monthly Cost at Suggested Rates" times 12.
- h. "Suggested Rates" is synonymous with direct costs; these are the rates suggested in Table 5 (the overall average rate is \$144.18).
- j. The budgeted annual cost of \$1,467.28 per case (from the 1976-77 Budget) times the caseload figure.
- k. From DYFS Report "Children Under Supervision," June 1975.
- l. Projected from percent changes shown in above report.
- m. Caseload used in "Budget 1976-77."

## CONCLUSION

This rather brief report has attempted to provide three pieces of information:

- (a) To estimate what the direct costs are of raising a child (and therefore a foster child) of a particular age and sex in an urban area, in the Northeast Region, on a low-cost budget, at current dollars.
- (b) To determine what the average cost to the agency would be, given the prevailing distribution of the caseload by age and sex, if these direct costs were used to establish more realistic reimbursement rates to foster families.
- (c) To calculate the fiscal impact (total cost) to the agency by applying these average cost figures to the existing and projected foster care caseload.

To accomplish the first objective, various data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Labor Statistics were aggregated. A direct cost figure was obtained (at 1975 dollar value) which was broken down by the age and sex of the child. While fairly substantial cost differences were found between various age groups, the differences between sex categories were not large. Even in the higher age categories, the differences between boys and girls in terms of "clothing" and "food at home" costs were primarily offsetting.

In terms of the second objective, it should be remembered the new rates are being suggested to cover only direct costs, and not any indirect costs (e.g., time and services of the caretaker). Also, only the costs of raising a child on a low-cost budget are calculated. The average cost (given the current makeup of the caseload) would be approximately \$145 a month for boys and \$143 a month for girls if foster family reimbursement rates were set so as to cover these direct, low-budget costs. The over-all average cost of \$144.18 per month or \$1,730.16 per year compares with a budget figure of \$1,467.28 per year for 1976-77. This amounts to an annual differential of \$262.88 per case.



Finally, the proposed rates (which are approximately 18% higher than current rates) would result in about a \$2.6 - 2.8 million in additional payments per year, depending on the caseload. However, the higher rates may be successful in attracting more foster families thus enabling a greater portion of the caseload to be shifted from high-cost institutional placements to less costly foster placements. It is difficult to estimate the savings that may result from such a shift. However, in spite of this potential savings it is important to remember that rates tend to be set "post-spectively" and therefore tend to continually lag behind actual costs. As the gap between actual costs and reimbursement rates grows for the foster family the logical result is a devaluation of the care and services which accrue to the child. Given this high relationship between costs and care it is mandatory that the above gap not become too large. Ideally, once adequate rates are established they should be adjusted annually for changes in the cost of living. The great shame of our society is that this is more easily done with military budgets than for those dealing with foster children.

## APPENDIX D

## APPENDIX E

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

☐ I was and/or am now

☐ I have never been  
(complete only A)

} involved in an administrative capacity  
(i.e., planning, development, supervision,  
evaluation, etc.) with the "periodic  
case review" procedure currently admin-  
istered by the Case Review Unit directed  
by Bill Van Meter.

A. Contact Information:

1. Respondent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Prior to "Periodic Case Review" (before October 31, 1974):

1. General Information (at that time):

- a. Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Monthly Salary: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Monthly Fringe Benefits: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ %
- d. Hours worked per month (average month): \_\_\_\_\_

2. On the average, I spent \_\_\_\_\_ hours per month for \_\_\_\_\_ months in the planning and development of "periodic case review" as now conducted by Bill Van Meter's Case Review Unit.

3. What kinds of duties (if any) which you were already performing, were you forced to cancel, postpone, or delegate to someone else as a result of the time you spent on "periodic case review?" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. On the average, how many hours per month did the duties listed in the previous question represent, or what percent of your total worktime?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours/month or \_\_\_\_\_ % of work time.

C. Subsequent to "Periodic Case Review" (after October 31, 1974):

1. General Information: (check box prior to item if it is the same as B.1)

- ☐ a. Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ b. Monthly Salary: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ c. Monthly Fringe Benefits: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ %
- ☐ d. Hours worked per month (average month): \_\_\_\_\_

2. On the average, I continue to spend \_\_\_\_\_ hours per month in the administration (i.e., development, supervision, evaluation, etc.) of the "periodic case review" process.

3. Please indicate whether you expect the hours listed above to increase, decrease, or remain fairly stable in the coming year:

☐

increase

☐

decrease

☐

remain stable

4. Have you held more than one position since October 31, 1974?  
If so, please list other positions:

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D. Evaluation of Periodic Case Review:

1. In your opinion, have there been any significant effects of "periodic case review?"

☐

a. Yes! Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐

b. No. Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In terms of the following scale, how would you rate the general effectiveness of periodic case review? (circle your choice)

1	2	3	4	5
very	somewhat	negligibly	somewhat	very
ineffective	ineffective	effective	effective	effective

3. In your opinion, what three administrators made the greatest contribution to the planning and development of "periodic case review?"

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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