



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

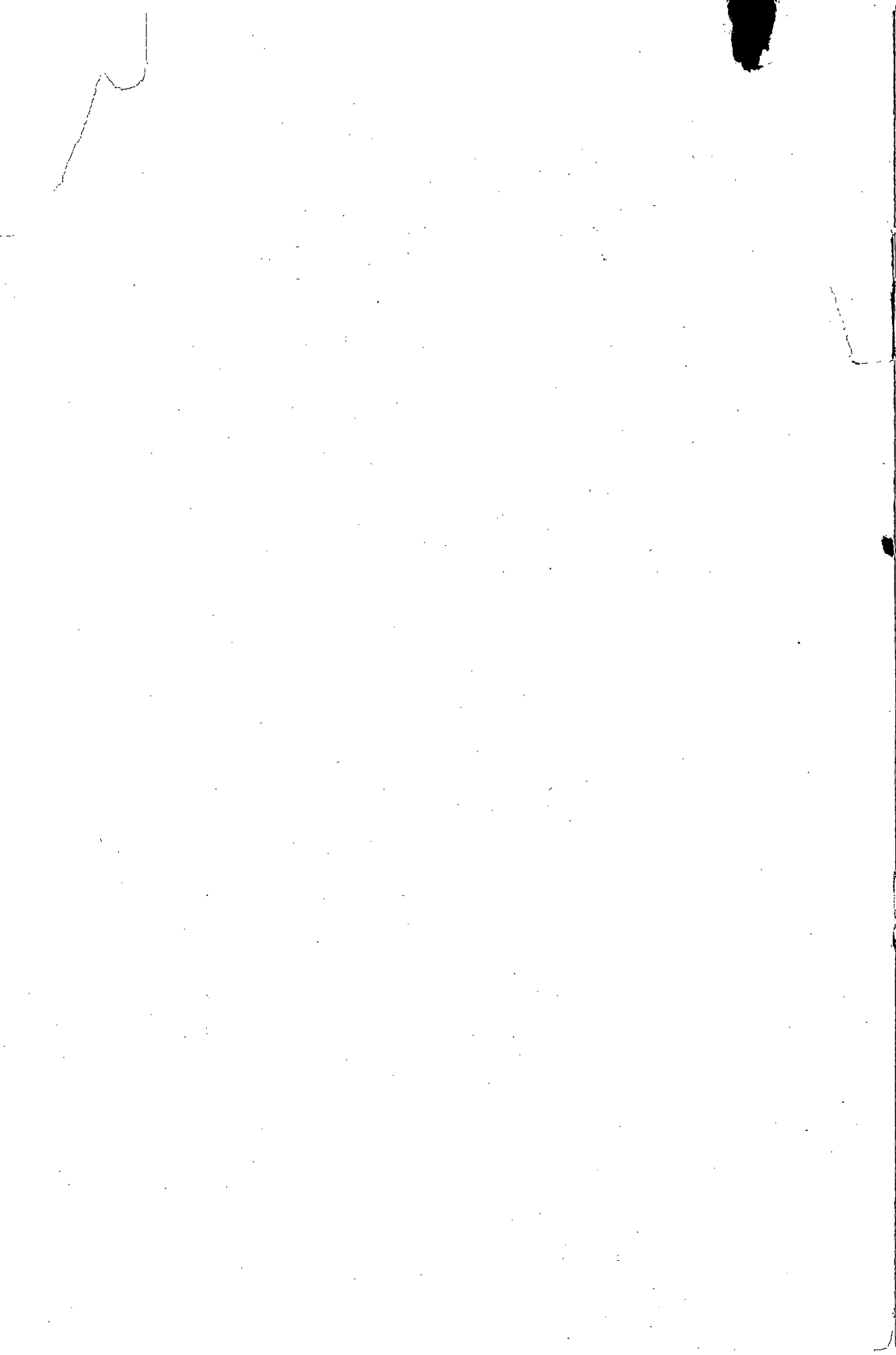
EXTENSION OF SUPERVISION OF
STATE WARDS

BY

WILLIAM J. ELLIS, DIRECTOR
DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND CLASSIFICATION

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EXTENSION OF SUPERVISION OF STATE WARDS

WILLIAM J. ELLIS, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND
CLASSIFICATION, NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF
INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES.

One of the most pressing problems that confronts public officials charged with the supervision of state wards, is that of increasing its effectiveness in keeping with its responsibility, and at the same time remaining within the limitations of the budget allowed for this type of welfare work.

There are those who maintain that all supervision of state wards should be in the hands of a staff of paid social workers. There are others who feel that a great deal of this work can be delegated to volunteers in the local communities. Only those who have had experience in the care and supervision of state wards can appreciate the complications presented by this problem.

Since the last meeting of the American Prison Association, the Committee on Pardon and Parole, of which Mr. George B. Stebbins, Deputy Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Corrections is chairman, has had brought to its attention, a plan developed in a state which has central supervision of parole and social work. As a member of the committee which made a careful survey of the possibilities of extending parole activities during the past year, I have been asked to present this report. The aim is to give an outline of the plan and the accomplishments in securing more intensive supervision of parole and more extensive co-operation from local communities in meeting the State's responsibility for its dependent wards.

Early in November of last year, Governor George S. Silzer of New Jersey, who is a member of the State Board of Control of Institutions and Agencies, called together a group of men and women representing the churches of all denominations in the state to confer with him and Commissioner Lewis, for the purpose of enlisting the co-operation of the United Churches in the state in providing an extension of the efficient, sympathetic and humane guardianship over each homeless child and dependent ward of the state. In outlining the purpose of this conference, the Governor referred to the co-operation given by such organizations as the Boy

Scouts, the Elks, Rotary, Knights of Columbus, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America and others for the benefit of the unfortunate and the dependent. Governor Silzer pointed out that, splendid as this social and charitable work is, it is not sufficient. We must inject into our system, more humanity and care. He urged upon the representatives of the religious bodies, that they work out a plan, in conference with the State Department of Institutions and Agencies, emphasizing that it was of the utmost importance "that when this work is done, it should be done under and in connection with the Central Body, familiar as it is with all the details and management and charged with the responsibility for the state wards."

Following this conference with the Governor, Commissioner Lewis appointed a committee, which included, besides members of his own staff, Professor Edward R. Johnstone of the Vineland Training School, Calvin Derrick, formerly Director of Parole of the Department of Institutions and Agencies, and Director of Administration at the state prison, Dr. Frank Moore, Superintendent at the New Jersey Reformatory, and Miss Frances Day, Superintendent of the State Board of Children's Guardians. This committee held a number of sessions and made a careful study of the help which the state was then receiving in the care of its wards from the churches and other agencies. This study showed that there were 9,000 children, wards of the state, through the Department of Institutions and Agencies, and under the immediate direction of the State Board of Children's Guardians. Nearly 3,000 of these children are provided for in private homes, and there are 6,000 semi-dependent children left in the homes of widowed mothers, and assisted under the Widow's Pension Act, through the supervision of the State Board of Children's Guardians (which is one of the agencies under the direction of the State Board of Control of Institutions and Agencies.)

In addition, this survey shows that the state, through its Central Division of Parole and Domestic Relations had another group of about 5,000 children and youthful offenders under its care, over 3,000 of whom were in the communities under parole from the state institutions. This means that there are, all told, in the community 12,000 state wards to be looked after. The State had supplied only forty-six field workers for the supervision of these charges. In some instances, field agents of the State had as many as 200 children to supervise in a community.

Study on the part of the committee brought about the fact that for twenty-four years, ever since the organization of the State Board of Children's Guardians, there had been in operation, a plan for securing regular systematic help from local churches and from schools in the oversight, care and treatment of dependent children. In addition to the regular visits of the field workers employed by the State Board of Children's Guardians, there have been developed a reporting system, whereby the pastors of local churches made quarterly reports, showing the record of church and Sunday School attendance, and added remarks of information, as to the status of the child in the community. Similarly, the school which the child attended made monthly reports indicating the grade reached in school, the regularity of attendance, scholarship, deportment, condition of health, clothing, etc. Thus, the regular visitations of the field workers of the Board were supplemented by the reports from school and church officials. These reports directed attention promptly to any need for special supervision, and have proved to be of the greatest help in maintaining a close contact with responsible individuals in the community in which the dependent children were placed.

With regard to the possibility of making greater use of the churches and other social and charitable agencies in the community to supplement the supervision of parolees from correctional institutions, the committee urged that a routine report system, along the lines adopted by the Board of Children's Guardians should be developed by the Central Department's Division of Parole and Domestic Relations. It is intended that this would expedite co-operation with local pastors, schools, social workers and similar agencies, in checking up on parolees from the correctional institutions. The committee reported that the Division of Parole had been receiving extensive co-operation from local churches and philanthropic agencies. It urged that this work be extended.

Attention was directed to the fact that in some instances local social agencies employed paid workers, whose services were available in their own communities to supplement the work of the parole officers employed by the State.

A recent study of the extent to which co-operation of local community agencies has been developed indicates the variety of community agencies available. The religious agencies include such organizations as the Church Mission of Help, the Jewish Sisterhood, the Knights of

Columbus, the Y. M. C. A., the Y. M. H. A., the Council of Jewish Women, the Catholic Girls Club and many others. The health agencies include Rehabilitation Commission, associated with the State Department of Labor, the City Eye and Ear Infirmary, County Visiting Nurses, and County Tuberculosis Leagues, and the Public Health Clinics, including the bureaus supervising the venereal disease control, and the mental clinics operated locally and in co-operation with the state institutions. County organizations of every description have been utilized in connection with the development of community care of parolees and dependent wards. Perhaps the best illustration is that of the Monmouth County Organization, which has co-ordinated all the social work in a single county, supplying field workers for family case work, clinics for tubercular patients as well as for the mental cases, children's specialists, visiting nurses, and in co-operation with local school districts, school attendance officers and child study supervisors.

In addition, the Parole Division has had the help of recreational agencies, especially of the Boy Scouts. The parolees from the State Home for Boys at Jamesburg, who have qualified as Boy Scouts, through their training in the institution are put in touch with local troops in the communities to which they are paroled. Here they receive full credit for their success in scout activities in the institution, and become members in good standing upon parole.

The state agencies include the public health clinics, the various bureaus of the Department of Labor, the rehabilitation clinics and employment agencies and the district nurses, affiliated with the Department of Health. Organized labor through county councils and local unions has also assisted in securing employment for parolees who have had trade training in the institutions.

The local social service bureaus have been especially successful and helpful in connection with supplying to the local institutions the family histories, and a good deal of the social case work related to those committed to their care. Similarly, local probation officers have supplied copies of their records, and have supplemented this with advice as to their experience with charges whom they have had on probation from the courts.

An outstanding accomplishment of this extension of supervision supplementing the staff of the Central Department has been the help provided by such organizations as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks and other social and fraternal

organizations. The boys' work committee and the parole committees of the local social clubs and of their district organizations have been active in helping the state parole agents secure employment and provide homes and supply friendly aid and assistance in very many instances. These men have provided the Big Brother contacts which are of such vital help in re-establishing the parolee upon release from the institution into the community. They have not stopped at such valuable help as this. They have visited the state institutions, both in local groups and in large district convocations. Assemblies of as many as 500 Rotarians from one district of the state have met annually at the State Home for Boys, for the past four years. Here they see at first hand, the work of the institution; they meet the staff; they become acquainted with the boys from their home communities. They have generously supplemented the recreational facilities and have added a touch of friendship and of genuine interest to the lives of the youngsters in the juvenile training schools. The value of contacts such as these cannot be overestimated.

Whenever a parolee is released from a state institution a letter goes from the Central Parole Division to the pastor of the church with which the parolee may be affiliated, requesting the pastor to take a friendly interest in the state ward, and expressing a wish that efforts be made to link up the parolee with ^{the} work of the church. Previous to this time he had no means of knowing when a parolee was being returned to his parish. Every precaution is taken to avoid the embarrassments and difficulties that would attend a general advertisement of the institutional history of the parolee who is being returned to the community. Every proper means is taken to utilize the help of the many community agencies working toward rehabilitation. In like manner, every proper precaution is exercised to see that the best interests of the parolee are safeguarded.

The work of the past year indicates that the State can accomplish much in the direction of enlisting community assistance in the care and supervision of its wards. A state which is organized as New Jersey is, with a Central Department and with a Central Bureau of Parole and Domestic Relations, can make ready contacts from one central agency with hundreds of thousands of charitable, religious and philanthropic agencies in the local communities. They are not only willing but eager to supplement the services of the State in looking after its wards.

It is plain, that the State will not add without limit, to its staff of paid employees for the purpose of parole supervision. It is equally plain that there is almost a limitless extent to which the local community organization can be utilized in giving intimate, intelligent and sympathetic co-operation in meeting this problem.

The experience of the past year has indicated that with such generous and wide-spread co-operation as the Central Department is receiving, it is possible to do something more than merely check up on a parolee from a correctional institution to see that he is obeying the rules and regulations governing his parole. The presence of a parolee in a correctional institution may be simply the symptom of a condition in the home or even in the community that needs treatment from several aspects. There is likely to be the problem of sanitation or of health. The field worker, either an employee of the Central Department or a volunteer representative from one of the local social service bureaus will report on the home conditions within sixty days after the commitment to an institution. Through the classification procedure operating in all the New Jersey correctional institutions, attention will be directed from the very start of institutional placement toward the rehabilitation of the parolee. This may mean, not simply that the inmate must be made ready for return to the community through such training as the state institution affords, but it may, and often does mean that the home conditions must be improved and made suitable for the release of this parolee, if there is to be any assurance of a successful community adjustment. Here is where the health authorities, social service workers, visiting nurses and other local organizations enumerated may be of the greatest service.

The case of Stephen B—— illustrates the extent to which this family rehabilitation may be carried. Stephen himself was a little fellow, ten years of age when he was received at the Jamesburg State Home for Boys in August of last year. The classification of this boy at the institution indicated that he was a small boy in good health. The psychiatrist, looking for causation of delinquency stated that it probably grew out of lack of parental supervision. The psychologist classified the boy as normal, with an intelligence quotient of 87 and a mental level of 9.3 years, and diagnosed him as somewhat sophisticated, alert and amiable. Stephen had ambitions to become a boy scout, but was not old enough to enter on this course during his early months

at the institution. His interest was in outdoor work, and he was classified for training in the academic school, and for industrial work in the gardens and on the lawns.

The reclassification, two months later, provided a home investigation with information supplied by the district nurse of the county in which Stephen's parents were living. The boy's father was an Italian farmer who had been reported to the State Rehabilitation Clinic as suffering from a cardiac condition, apparently unable to work. The mother was the principal support of the family and worked in a restaurant in a nearby town.

Stephen and his younger brother were left to wait on the father and look after the needs of the three smaller children. Their nearest neighbors lived a mile away, and the only recreation afforded was chopping wood to clear the land. The nurse reported that this failed to provide a suitable outlet for a boy of Stephen's tendencies. His delinquency started with truancy from school, led later into vagrancy and then stealing.

A further study by the psychologist, in the light of the social information, showed that Stephen was developing as a self-reliant boy, mentally alert and responding well to the opportunities offered by the institution. He had begun his training as a "cub" scout. He showed a steady and constant improvement in his assignments in the institution. There was no physical disability, and his reclassification recommended that he be given half a day in the manual education school and one-half day in the book school.

While Stephen was thus developing under the training in the institution, the community agencies were helping the family. The Crippled Kiddies Committee of the Elks Lodge in a nearby resort city, assisted the district nurse in providing transportation to have a specialist make an examination of the father who thought he was suffering from a heart condition. This examination showed that the father's fears were unfounded. The local Rotarians took up the cases of the two younger children in an effort to help them. Arrangements were made through the local employment agency of the Department of Labor to secure a more suitable position for the mother. The local district nurse, working in co-operation with the County Tuberculosis Organization, has had careful physical examinations made of the other children; their teeth have been attended to, and two have had tonsillectomies. A physical examination of the father, when carried further by the specialist, indicated

that his difficulty was an enlarged liver, and efforts to secure him light work and to encourage him in undertaking employment were being made.

Stephen is still under training in the institution, but it is practically assured that when he is released it will be to a home that has greatly improved. In the meantime the community discovered that this was not merely a case of a delinquent boy, but that this boy's delinquency was due to faulty home conditions and that the other children could be prevented from falling into criminal ways by such prompt measures as were taken.

This case is just one of many which could be cited to illustrate in some measure, the type of community co-operation which has meant so much for the wards of the State and their families.

The Central Department, organized as it is with a staff experienced in meeting social and institution problems, has supplied the necessary clearing-house for the many volunteer workers in the community to focus their efforts where they are most needed. The people of the state are learning to use their own governmental agencies. The State departments in turn are to a greater degree than ever before serving the people.