

Need for Trained Social Work Staff: A Ten-Year Goal*

In the course of agency-wide program review within the Social Security Administration, staff of the Children's Bureau, the Bureau of Public Assistance, and the Office of the Commissioner examined the prospective need for trained social work staff in public assistance, child welfare, and juvenile delinquency programs. Their conclusion is not an exact one for these programs; nor, since the review deals only with these programs, is the goal even an approximate target for the total field of social work.

A GOAL for trained social workers is necessary in order to evaluate the measures that are taken to secure them. In addition, a goal provides a frame of reference for two questions that are not directly dealt with here. First, even if recruitment efforts are successful, some of the work of these programs will be handled by staff who are not professionally trained. How will they be prepared and what work will they do? Second, is it possible by broad social and economic measures to reduce the load on public welfare programs so that the need for professional personnel may not grow beyond reasonable hope of being met? These questions—the need for professionals, the work of technicians, and broader economic and social measures—are sometimes treated as being mutually exclusive. A specific goal for trained social work staff may help to set them within a single framework.

WHY IS A GOAL NEEDED?

The aims of public assistance, child welfare, and juvenile delinquency programs depend partly for their realization on the quality of their professional staff. These programs deal, in the main, with families that are broken and individuals who are suffering the severest kind of blows—parental disregard, crippling illness, chronic isolation, and so forth. They come for help that is their right

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under law (in some cases for help that they are required to accept) but bearing very often feelings of anxiety and failure. Their problems are complex and stubborn.

Statements of intention and adequate policies alone will not rehabilitate people, strengthen their families, or restore them to independence. Adequate policies must be administered by qualified social workers, educated to understand the people they see and to provide appropriate service in a manner that will help. Staff must possess, besides, the ethics and convictions that all professional social workers have—that every client is entitled to the fullest measure of respect and skill.

Not all positions in these programs need to be filled by trained social workers. Aside from the work that is done, or may be done, by other professional employees and by clerical and maintenance employees, a number of tasks now carried on by social workers may be performed appropriately by nonprofessional staff. Analysis of job functions should provide a framework for differentiating between tasks that do and do not require

TABLE 1.—Public assistance staff needed in 1970

Type of position	Number employed, June 1960			Estimated number needed in 1970		
	Total	Estimated number with 2 years' training or more		Total ¹	With 2 years' training or more	
		Number	Per cent		Number	Per cent
Total.....	34,887	1,608	4.6	66,850	22,400	33
Directors:						
State offices.....	530	109	20.6	550	400	75
Local offices.....	2,049	153	7.5	2,000	1,000	50
Director-workers.....	1,379	15	1.1	1,200	1,200	100
Caseworkers.....	24,862	295	1.2	52,900	12,000	23
Supervisors.....	3,552	461	13.0	7,500	5,100	68
Field representatives...	643	190	29.6	700	700	100
All other social workers.	1,872	385	20.6	2,000	2,000	100

¹ For caseworkers, based on projection of the 1960 caseload to 1970 in accordance with current population and caseload trends, with allowance for some reduction in average caseloads. For supervisors, estimated on the basis of 1 supervisor for 7 caseworkers. For other positions, number held relatively constant.

Sources: Total number employed, June 1960, from annual reports to the Bureau of Public Assistance on personnel in State and local public welfare agencies; number estimated to have 2 years' training or more in June 1960, from 1960 *Survey of Salaries and Working Conditions of Social Welfare Manpower*, Bureau of Public Assistance-Children's Bureau; and number needed in 1970, from unpublished estimates made by the Bureau of Public Assistance.

TABLE 2.—Public child welfare staff needed in 1970

Type of position	Number
Caseworkers ¹	10,200
Supervisors (1 for 5 caseworkers).....	2,100
Consultants (1.9 per supervisor).....	1,100
Directors (1 for 36.5 other staff).....	370
Total.....	13,770
Present staff with 2 years' training or more.....	-1,881
Additional trained staff needed by 1970.....	11,889

¹ Based on projected child population of 92.4 million in 1970 and assumption of 1.1 workers per 10,000 population.

Sources: *Report of the Advisory Council on Child Welfare Services, 1959* and *1960 Survey of Salaries and Working Conditions of Social Welfare Manpower*, Bureau of Public Assistance and Children's Bureau.

professional training. Wide attention is being given by agencies to such job analyses. An example is the educational standards project under way at this time in the Bureau of Public Assistance.

THE SITUATION TODAY

In all programs staffing falls far short of need, although in varying degree. Almost half our counties lack the services of a full-time child welfare worker; public assistance, in contrast, has coverage for every county. Only 5 percent of the social work staff in public assistance agencies have 2 years or more of graduate study in social work. Even at the highest supervisory and administrative levels, where trained staff is concentrated, only about 1 in 5 has had such training (table 1). For child welfare services, 26 percent of the social work staff are fully trained.¹ Fourteen percent of all juvenile probation officers and about 1 out of every 5 training school social workers are fully trained (table 3).

These percentages are the ceiling against which programs press in their effort to encourage the development of every individual to his maximum potential. As certain clients or problems assume priority, skilled staff are shifted to attend to them—but only by increasing the shortage elsewhere. States have attempted to improve this situation by providing educational leave. Federal funds for this purpose have been available (from administrative though not from earmarked

¹ 1960 *Survey of Salaries and Working Conditions of Social Welfare Manpower*, Bureau of Public Assistance and Children's Bureau, April 1961.

funds) by 50-50 matching in public assistance.² Federal funds allocated to States for child welfare services may be used to provide educational leave. These provisions have contributed to the number of qualified staff now at work. Nevertheless, the present rate of recruitment places a limitation on the ends that programs may attain.

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Estimates of the number of trained social workers needed for the public assistance programs in 1970 are given in table 1. The goal is based on projections of the 1960 caseload into 1970 for each of the programs, as shown in the following tabulation:

Program	1970 caseload ¹	1970 caseload per visitor ¹	1960 caseload per visitor
Old-age assistance.....	2,230,000	125	214
Aid to dependent children.....	933,000	60	91
Aid to the blind.....	117,000	100	190
Aid to the permanently and totally disabled.....	559,000	60	129
General assistance.....	498,000	55	75

¹ Estimated in July 1960.

With 33 percent of the social work staff fully trained in 1970 and average caseloads per worker ranging from 55 in general assistance to 125 in old-age assistance, a total of 22,400 fully trained social workers will be required.

Table 2 gives the estimates of the public child welfare staff needed in 1970. These estimates are based on a projected child population of 92.4 million in 1970 and on the assumption that 1.1 workers will be needed for every 10,000 children (the average now effective in about half the counties in the country). Under these assumptions, 13,770 fully trained social workers will be required.

The basic assumptions regarding the number of juvenile delinquency staff needed in 1970 (table 3) are a constant juvenile delinquency rate and somewhat reduced but not yet standard workloads. It is estimated, on the basis of these as-

² Federal payments to meet the full cost of expenditures for training grants for public welfare personnel in the fiscal years 1961-62 and 1962-63 have been authorized under Public Law 87-31 of May 8, 1961. There is, so far, no appropriation for this purpose.

sumptions, that about 12,210 social workers will be required—all of them fully trained.

In terms of how many more workers will be needed, the goal for 1970 is 44,500 additional fully trained social workers. The number that will be needed for public assistance is 21,000; for child welfare services, 12,000; and for juvenile delinquency, 11,500.

Generally speaking, these figures represent levels of staffing that are essential now. They take trends in population into account, on the most conservative assumptions. They do not allow for adding new services, though such an allowance would be desirable. They allow for some reductions in workloads, but it may be questioned whether the result is the optimum that should be achieved. They do not attempt to estimate turnover or provide for replacements. Thus the estimate of 44,500 might, by several yardsticks, have been substantially increased. It is far from a precise number, but it sketches the magnitude of the progress that needs to be made.

IS THE GOAL FEASIBLE?

Schools of social work are now graduating about 2,100 students a year³ and would need, in order to meet the goal, to add 4,450 graduates a year. Thus, to achieve the goal of 44,500 additional social workers by 1970, the schools must at least triple the number of their graduates, assuming that all the increment of graduates would go to these programs. (Obviously, therefore, the need of other programs, public and voluntary, for additional social workers is not taken into account.)

In terms of the availability of schools, teachers, and field work placements, the effort required would be heroic but the goal achievable. Schools of social work have shown a tendency to expand to the degree that increased enrollments require and that increased tuition fees make possible. A few schools have unused capacity at present. Additional schools that have been contemplated would undoubtedly open their doors if they were needed. Careful planning for such an increase

³ Council on Social Work Education, *Statistics on Social Work Education, November 1, 1960 and Academic Year 1959-1960*.

TABLE 3.—Juvenile delinquency staff needed in 1970

Type of position ¹	Number
Juvenile probation officers.....	8,600
Present staff with 2 years' training or more ²	-600
Increase in number of trained juvenile probation staff needed.....	8,000
Training school and parole social workers ³	3,610
Present staff with 2 years' training or more ⁴	-120
Increase in number of trained school and parole staff needed.....	3,490
Total.....	12,210
Present staff with 2 years' training or more, total.....	-720
Additional trained staff needed by 1970.....	11,490

¹ Assumes a constant juvenile delinquency rate and reduction of average workloads from 150 work units per month per worker to 100, or twice the recommended standard of 50 work units per month.

² Total number of present staff is 4,400.

³ Assumes constant juvenile delinquency rate and 1 social worker for every 30 children in training schools.

⁴ Total number of present staff is 600.

Source: Juvenile Delinquency Studies Branch, Division of Research Children's Bureau.

would be required to foresee the need for teachers, to raise enrollments by steps, and to arrange for agencies to join in providing field instruction.

More basic, however, are the desire and the ability of students to enter training. For the next 10 years certain demographic facts are promising. Social work schools currently recruit most successfully among older students (those who have had some work experience after college) and among women rather than men. It is precisely from this group, mature women, that forthcoming expansion of the labor force is anticipated. The marked increase that is taking place in college graduations provides a larger reservoir of students eligible for graduate school, and there is some indication that social work's ability to recruit from this group is rising more than proportionately. Finally, many of the large number of untrained and not fully trained staff of the operating programs indicate that they would attend school if opportunity were provided.

Whether the increase will actually take place depends on a number of factors, including such intangibles as the satisfaction social work seems to offer in day-to-day work and the status that the profession achieves. The salary level will count. There is evidence that substantial numbers of men and women fail to enter social work schools because they cannot afford it. As many of them are older and have dependents, finances must be a serious concern to them. For the goal to be met, then, as it must, demands large-scale increases in scholarship and educational-leave funds. Finally, there must be vigorous, sustained national recruitment.