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The survey was carried out in cooperation with an advisory committee, consisting of the following members:

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- Edmund des. Brunner, Teachers College, Columbia University
- Antoinette Cannon, New York School of Social Work
- Louise des. Fitzsimons, State Director of Employment, Works Progress Administration, Georgia
- J. H. Kolb, University of Wisconsin
- Gertrude Valle, University of Minnesota

RESEARCH BULLETIN

Both the survey and the preparation of this report were under the direction of T. J. Woolter, Jr., Coordinator of Rural Research.

SURVEY OF SOCIAL WORK IN THREE RURAL COUNTIES

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June  
1936

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## SUMMARY

All three agricultural counties included in this survey had experience with professional social work dating back from before the depression. A welfare agency had been established in Redwood County, Minnesota in 1919, Wicomico County, Maryland in 1925, and in Escambia County, Alabama in 1928. Those in Redwood and Escambia were set up by the county governments under the stimulus of the state child welfare departments. The agency in Wicomico was privately initiated, for the most part privately supported, and had no official connection with the county government.

Prior to the depression, all three agencies were primarily concerned with child welfare. Those in Redwood and Wicomico also gave assistance to the mentally and physically handicapped and to persons needing medical aid. When the depression came the three agencies assumed the initial burden of meeting emergency unemployment needs.

With the coming of Federal and state relief funds and the establishment of local Emergency Relief Administration in 1933, the old welfare agencies lost personnel to the new organizations. Although nominally they continued to function in the field of service to children and the handicapped, this work was practically discontinued in Redwood and Escambia and was curtailed in Wicomico.

The enactment of the Federal Social Security Act in 1935 marked a third distinct period in the history of rural social work in the three counties. The possibility of obtaining Social Security Funds was undoubtedly the determining factor in the establishment of integrated state welfare programs in Maryland and Alabama. Wicomico and Escambia counties set up local county welfare boards, in accordance with state legislation, to cover various types of relief and welfare services, including general relief, old age pensions, aid to the blind, mothers' allowances, and care of dependent, delinquent, or neglected children. With the establishment of this new comprehensive integrated program in Escambia, the old Child Welfare Department was officially liquidated. The private Wicomico Welfare Department was officially liquidated. The private Wicomico Welfare Association continued to exist but apparently it was to lose its child-placing functions and juvenile delinquency work to the new Public Welfare Board.

The third step was not completed in Redwood County. Minnesota had made no plans to take advantage of Social Security Funds and had not set up an integrated state welfare program. The social work program in Redwood County continued under the domination of the county commissioners. Although they agreed to the establishment of a County Board of Public Welfare under supervision of the State ERA they apparently were to delegate to it only the administration of relief to unemployables and certification of workers for WPA. They themselves at the time of the survey directly administered old age pensions, poor relief, and medical care, and shared with

the probate judge the administration of mothers' allowances. A local county relief agency under their control administered general relief independent of the State ERA, pending the setting up of the proposed Board of Public Welfare. The Child Welfare Board continued to give services to children, feeble-minded, and miscellaneous cases, under supervision of the State Children's Bureau but also under the control of the county commissioners. The state directly administered aid to the blind, with the assistance of the Child Welfare Board.

The state social work supervisors in recommending these counties for study said that the general attitudes toward adequate standards of relief, professional service, state administration, and the entire social work problem in these three counties were more favorable than in neighboring rural counties. They attributed this fact in part to the longer history of aid to persons in need. Since the states themselves were chosen because they had relatively advanced programs of rural social work, findings of this study represent a higher quality of rural social work than exists in the country as a whole.

In none of the three counties, at the time of the survey was a complete social work program in force, when measured by the accepted area of social work. The fundamental human needs which an adequate social work program meets may be listed as follows:

- (a) The economic need of individuals and families who, either temporarily or permanently, cannot obtain the basic necessities of life.
- (b) The need of children left without guardianship or with inadequate guardianship.
- (c) The need of individuals for help with specific problems: children in conflict with the law or with parents, persons troubled about social relationships, etc.
- (d) The need of the physically ill for information in regard to medical resources and care, and help in using them.
- (e) The need of the mentally defective or mentally ill for understanding supervision or for help in obtaining custodial care.

The county welfare boards established in Escambia and Wilcox offered possibilities of expansion to meet the first four of these needs. No action had been taken in the field of mental hygiene by the social work agencies in any of the counties or states,<sup>1</sup> although Alabama had stipulated in its Department of Public Welfare Act of 1935 that such a program should be set up. The additional need for companionship, varied interests, and personal

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A mental hygiene clinic conducted in Wilcox had no direct connection with the social work agencies.

expression had not been recognized by any of the social work agencies in the three counties as their province.

At the time of the survey none of the social work agencies was actually meeting in full even those types of need which it accepted as its responsibilities. Relief of economic need, on which primary emphasis was based, was inadequate according to the agencies' own standards, both in the amount of assistance given to individual cases and in the extent to which assistance reached all individuals in the community who were in need. None of the counties had ascertained the extent of this or any other needs or had accepted full responsibility for meeting them. Limitations in financial resources, in personnel, in guidance from the state, and in sympathetic attitudes on the part of the community restricted the practice of the agencies.

#### Nature of the Rural Case Load

The general relief agencies in all three counties and the child welfare agencies in Wicomico and Redwood had largely undifferentiated functions. Analysis of their case loads reveals the wide variety of problems which they were attempting to meet. In all three counties, the general relief agency carried cases of unemployment, employment with insufficient income, medical care, old age, and maintenance of children. In addition, unemployables and feeble-minded were on the rolls in Wicomico and Escambia. The older service agencies in Redwood and Wicomico carried similarly diversified loads, except that none of their cases had applied for assistance because of unemployment or employment with insufficient income, the dominant reasons for applying to the relief agencies.

These same problems would be met by social work agencies in a city, but in no city would any single agency assume responsibility for such a wide range of problems. Except for the private agency in Wicomico, these rural agencies placed no definite limitations upon their field of service, other than the amount of funds, the personnel available, and the capacity of the workers.

#### Personnel of Staff and Governing Boards

The professional workers in the county were limited in training and social work experience. Only one out of a total of 18 had had so much as one consecutive year of formal social work training and this one was a case work supervisor paid by the state rather than by the county. Only one of the five workers in administrative positions had any recognized social work training.

The education of the 17 locally employed workers ranged from high school to college graduation. Only two of the workers had had experience in social work previous to their employment in the county. Twelve of the group had been teachers and others had a background of nursing experience.

All had the advantage of rural backgrounds, and most of them had been residents of the county before their present appointments. Residents of the county seemed to have an advantage in being more immediately acceptable to the community and in satisfying the demand that jobs be given to local persons. The Minnesota ERA

had had a policy of employing out-of-county residents for its staff but the visitors so employed in Redwood during the ERA regime had been severely criticized by local officials for their immaturity and their liberal relief policies.

The size of staff in relation to the case loads appeared to be in accordance with state standards in Wicomico and Escambia in October 1935 when active cases averaged 75-100 per social worker and 100-150 per clerical worker. The active case loads, however, would soon be augmented by old age pension applications which promised to double the number of cases per social worker in Wicomico and triple the number in Escambia, if additional staff members were not engaged. A review of practice showed that delays between application and investigation, between investigation and notification of rejection, and infrequent visits to clients were due primarily to lack of sufficient staff.

The governing boards of the various agencies represented the taxpayers and employers of the county, including prosperous farmers, business men, lawyers, county officials, and civic leaders. The money spent on social work was their money and it was being spent on their own neighbors consequently they showed a vital interest in all details of the work.

The county commissioners also were closely in touch with the work of the public agencies, and took an active interest in cases and plans, when the expenditure of county funds was involved or when new policies were being established.

The social workers had to spend much time conferring with governing boards and the commissioners. They seemed to accept this part of their work as necessary and desirable and to have smooth working relationships with the boards. In fact, the executives tended to allow the responsibility for the development of the agency to rest with the boards taking little or no leadership themselves. It was clear from the study that while this situation continued no real progress could be made; yet it also appeared questionable how much responsibility load boards would be willing to delegate and how long they would permit an executive to remain in her position if she insisted upon having clearcut responsibility or if she was impatient to see progress.

#### Facilities

In Wicomico and Escambia Counties there had been recent expansion in office space, since the discontinuance of the ERA. In turn the ERA in each of the counties had had better working conditions than the previous local agency. Privacy or semi-privacy was provided for interviewing clients.

On the other hand, in Redwood County where relief was in local hands and welfare services still unintegrated, office space was extremely limited at the time of the survey.

Transportation provisions made for workers in all three counties appeared to be relatively adequate.

Resources for institutional care were limited in all three counties. Provisions for the feeble-minded were especially inadequate. None of the counties had adequate provisions to meet the medical needs of families. Escambia offered the least adequate care, from the standpoint of both institutional and individual treatment. Escambia and Wicomico Counties both had some regular public health service, while Redwood had practically none.

Practice and Procedures

In all three counties practice was changing rapidly at the time of the survey. Much of the data obtained was based on past performance under the E.R.A. since current practice under the new organization, in each county was not always readily observable. By practice is meant the total contact with the client, including material assistance and other concrete services, and with the community in behalf of the client.

An attempt was made to learn to what extent the problem of distance in rural areas affected practice and to determine whether or not farm families received equal consideration with non-farm. In all three counties it was found that open country cases tended to be under-represented on relief while town and village cases were over-represented. Whether this reflects a tendency in practice to give less attention to farm families and those at remote distances or whether it indicates a greater need for aid among the village and town populations was not clear from this survey. In Escambia County the fact that many farm families were under care of the Rural Rehabilitation Corporation partially explains their under-representation on relief.

In general, Negroes were proportionately represented on the relief rolls in Wicomico County on the basis of their number in the general population but were markedly under-represented on the rolls of the private welfare agency. In Escambia County there was no consistent relationship between the proportion of Negroes in the general population and the proportion of Negroes in the various relief samples taken. There was evidence that Negroes received fewer home visits from the social workers than did the whites, and that amounts of relief to Negroes were less, since the budgets were based on usual living standards.

The principal type of help given by the relief agencies was material assistance. Some medical care, health guidance, financial advice, and help in finding employment were also extended. The private welfare agencies in Wicomico and Redwood, on the other hand, gave chiefly service, such as medical examinations, placement in institutions, advice and friendly contacts. The private agency in Wicomico also gave some direct financial aid.



Work relief was commonly given by the relief agencies in Redwood and Escambia Counties but usually in combination with direct relief, from 80-95 per cent of the cases receiving both types. In Wicomico County only about half of the cases received work relief and this was in combination with direct relief. In Redwood County when the survey was made the tendency was to give work relief in cash and direct relief in kind or orders; in Escambia also the three types of grants were employed; in Wicomico all relief was in kind or orders, but cash was about to be introduced.

The average monthly relief grant per family changed very slightly in Escambia and Wicomico Counties when the new integrated programs took the place of the E.R.A. In Redwood County, on the other hand, there was a sharp drop, probably due to the high average of \$24 a month under the E.R.A. The average grant in September when the county assumed responsibility for its relief load was about \$11. The amount rose, however, in October to nearly \$19 a month.

In all three counties relief continued to be given on a budgetary deficiency basis. In Escambia and Wicomico Counties the budget was related to the families' usual standard of living, and was based on food needs only. All other needs were ignored in Escambia; in Wicomico medical care was provided rather liberally and some clothing and bedding were furnished in kind, but no rent was paid. In Redwood under the E.R.A. a greater effort had been made to base relief grants on an accepted minimum budget. After the county withdrew from the E.R.A. local relief was calculated to meet emergencies only, and the usual-standard of living normal so prevailed here.

In the relief agencies of all three counties investigation for relief and service had been accepted procedures under E.R.A. Eligibility in Wicomico was established according to standards developed by the state and locality together. These had become increasingly liberal in recent months. In Escambia County there were no set standards for eligibility and the intake worker decided eligibility on a case-to-case basis.

The number of contacts with clients in Escambia and Redwood Counties appeared in general to be related to the case load per worker. Visits of clients to the relief office were more numerous than visits of the workers to the clients' homes in these counties. In Wicomico, on the other hand, home contacts exceeded office contacts, the number of home contacts bearing a close relationship to the number of months under care. There were few contacts between the clients and the social worker in the child welfare agency in Redwood County and such contacts as were made were mostly in the home. Home contacts were also more numerous with the Wicomico Welfare Association clients.

In spite of the greater distances to be covered in visiting clients in rural areas the social workers made approximately as many visits to open country cases as to the more accessible village and town cases.

Closing of cases appeared to be related more to funds available and to administrative policies than to the need of the clients. In Redwood County clients were removed from relief when it was discovered that they were new residents and cases were closed when employment was thought available. In Escambia relief to the farmers was cut to accommodate land owners or to encourage families to become Rural Rehabilitation clients. The Child Welfare agency in Redwood rarely closed cases, keeping them open on the books when they were not actually receiving aid.

Records of the relief agencies in each county were in better condition than those of the agencies which had existed prior to the E.R.A. They were fairly complete and adequate except for data on rejections, and, in some case, interview material and closing data. The child welfare agency records in Redwood and Escambia were much less satisfactory. The difference appeared to be largely due to lack of clerical personnel. The state child welfare department, like the E.R.A., had set up clerical procedures which the limited staffs had not been able to follow.

Practice in regard to child welfare was undeveloped in all three counties. Foster home care was insufficient to meet the need in any county, and no county had a worker with special training to help with problems of child care. Standards for boarding homes were not used and adequate investigations of homes were not made.

In their relations with clients the workers showed a variety of attitudes. Some attempted to inject themselves into the personal lives of their clients or even of persons not on relief and to impose upon them their ideas of correct conduct. On the other hand, one worker was so friendly with clients that she spent an unwarranted amount of time with them in social conversation. Another worker took a punitive attitude toward all clients. In all counties, however, there were workers who were evidently making a conscientious effort to be objective, considerate, and businesslike.

#### Community Influences

Interviews with leading citizens of the three counties brought out varying opinions concerning relief and social work. Some persons expressed approval of the more liberal standards of relief introduced under the E.R.A. Others contended that grants had been too high under the E.R.A. and that social work should be limited to a service program, especially for children. In one county some of the laymen interviewed expressed opposition to professional social work in general, both because of its cost and because social workers interfered "where they were not wanted."

On the whole, laymen interviewed showed little understanding of the meaning and purpose of professional social work. It is safe to say that in none of these counties had formal social work training been felt to be necessary. Social workers were

accepted or rejected not on the basis of training or superior skill in handling the details of the work but on the basis of general executive ability and of personal qualities.

Considerable opposition to state interference in local matters was expressed. State supervision was accepted, however, while generous State and Federal funds were flowing into the counties. When Federal aid ended in Minnesota, Redwood County immediately withdrew from state supervision, evidently preferring to do without a small financial contribution from the state, than to accept further state control of relief. Persons interviewed in Redwood and Escambia indicated that they believed work relief was the best type of public aid. Apparently this attitude was not so strong in Wicomico where much less work relief was given to rural workers and where much of the lay leadership was located in a town of 10,000.

In Redwood and Wicomico Counties influential opinion was in favor of sterilization of certain types of public dependents. Sterilization of unmarried mothers, permitted under Maryland law, and of feeble-minded women under Minnesota law, with the consent of the patient, were encouraged and there was some sentiment expressed in favor of a wider and more stringent application of the laws.

#### State Supervision

In the new public welfare programs which were functioning in Alabama and Maryland at the time of the study, the single state public welfare agency in each state assumed leadership in the development of local social work programs and practice. They set up personnel qualifications for local staffs, established record procedures, and recommended standards regarding case loads of workers, amounts of relief, eligibility requirements for clients, etc. The counties were not required to accept state recommendations, but in many states they were doing so at the time of the survey.

In Alabama representatives of the state office were sent out to supervise administrative detail and case work methods, but their number was limited in view of the area to be covered. The representative in Escambia gave very little time to case work supervision. In Wicomico, case work supervision was conducted continuously through a worker employed by the state, as had been done under E.R.A. Since she was subordinate to the local executive her authority was limited, but she was able to effect improvements in practice through suggestion and example.

In Minnesota the Children's Bureau of the State Board of Control supervised the work of local child welfare boards. With a limited field staff and no funds with which to supplement local work, it was seriously handicapped.

All three state agencies seemed to take a conciliatory attitude toward the counties, striving to introduce their methods without antagonizing local governments. ✓

The influence of the former E.R.A. supervision was still apparent in the counties. Under the E.R.A. supervision of county work by

the state agency had been legally authorized in each state and counties had been expected to meet certain requirements in order to receive funds.

Even when state policies were not strictly followed they had tended to raise standards in the counties. Undoubtedly more efficient personnel was employed because of E.R.A. standards as to training and experience. Office records improved greatly under E.R.A. Cash relief was introduced in Escambia. Case loads per worker were kept about at the levels recommended by the state E.R.A.'s. Such policies as giving relief on the basis of eligibility, making regular investigations of clients, and treating clients with consideration was introduced in all three counties and were accepted at least in principle.

The supervisory work conducted prior to the E.R.A. by the Alabama Child Welfare Department and the Minnesota Children's Bureau, while handicapped by the lack of funds and of legal authority, had helped to bring to public attention the needs of individuals, particularly children, and had encouraged the continuance of social work for meeting these needs. Without these state departments it is doubtful whether there would have been any organized social work in these two counties.

No state supervision or stimulus had ever been available for the private child welfare agency in Wilcox County, a lack which may account in part for the static quality of the work of this agency.

The quality and content of what a state department can contribute to local units in the way of a permanent program is still to be definitely formulated. Moreover, the readiness of local workers to accept supervision and to use it to advantage will vary. Nevertheless it appears that the possibility that good work will be done in these three counties depends on the leadership of the state staffs. What the respective state departments do will determine to a large extent whether or not these same counties will be doing superior work according to current standards 10 years hence.

## INTRODUCTION

Since social agencies were first established in rural areas the limitations of social work practice in the country, as compared with the city, have been apparent. How to improve the quality of the work has been the concern of all those interested in the development of social agencies.

Progressive citizens in rural communities want the same variety of social work service from their single small agencies as may be obtained from several specialized agencies in the cities. Social workers going into rural work want the same opportunities for professional development that are available to staff members of well organized city agencies. Organizers of rural social work programs are looking for information on how to deal with local governments and how to select personnel that will most effectively meet rural situations. Supervisors of rural programs are searching for methods of improving rural practice. Schools of social work are asking for help in planning curricula for students preparing for the rural field.

With the extension of emergency relief agencies into practically all rural counties in the last few years and with the prospect of widespread development of permanent public welfare programs in rural areas in the near future, the problem of raising the quality of rural social work practice has recently become more pressing. As an agency directly concerned with the establishment of emergency social work programs in rural areas, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration undertook to study the problem. In July of 1935, the Coordinator of the Rural Research Unit of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration called together a number of persons identified with rural social work, training schools for social work, and social research to serve as an Advisory Committee in working out the details of the present study. It was hoped that through observation of current rural social work practice information would be gained that would be helpful in shaping future policies.

It was decided to make a preliminary study of current practice in several widely separated rural areas of the country to determine the specific problems social work meets in these areas.

A plan to make an intensive, observational study of social work practice in a single county in each of three states was adopted. The three counties, Redwood County, Minnesota, Wicomico County, Maryland, and Escambia County, Alabama, were chosen on the basis of the following criteria.

1. Location

- (a) The counties selected should represent contrasts in geographical characteristics and types of farming.
- (b) The counties should be in states where the state department of welfare and other state agencies as well as the administrative offices of the F.E.R.A. or S.E.R.A. were interested in having the study made and willing to give assistance.

2. General Characteristics

- (a) All of the counties should be predominantly rural in character.
- (b) Of the rural population, from 45 to 70 per cent should be engaged in farming.
- (c) All counties should have usual rather than unique problems.

3. Social Work

- (a) In each county there should be at least one agency, public or private, dealing with individuals, which had existed continuously since 1927 or earlier, and which was actively functioning at the time of the study.
- (b) In each county there should be a public agency for relief other than the overseers of the poor or the county commissioners.

Members of the state staffs indicated the counties in their respective states which answered these descriptions and which they considered to be doing comparatively effective work. They took into account such factors as the professional preparation of the local personnel for social work, the present workers' familiarity with the community over a period of time, the absence of unusual political involvements, and the capacity of the local workers to participate in a study of the practice of their agencies.

The study of the three counties began with the collection of background data on the local geographic and economic situations. Review was made of currently effective social legislation in the states and provisions for other state-wide or local social work programs serving these counties. The field study was made in each of the three counties as of October 1935; a social worker was assigned to take each county where she spent from three to four weeks. Observation of social work practice was limited to the work of the county public relief administration, and of one other major social work agency dealing with individuals, if such existed in the county. Sources of information were local case records, interviews with social workers, and influential citizens of the county, and direct observations of the staff at work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For outlines and schedules used, see Appendix.

REDWOOD COUNTY, MINNESOTA

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## I. The County

Redwood County is in the livestock and small grain area of Minnesota about 110 miles southwest of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The entire county is dependent upon agriculture. In 1930 nearly two thirds of the population<sup>1</sup> lived on farms and the others lived in villages and the one small town in the county, Redwood Falls.<sup>2</sup> More than 61 percent of the workers in 1930 were farmers or farm laborers and about half the remaining workers were engaged in trade.

The population is about nine tenths native white and the other tenth is chiefly of Scandinavian and German birth. There is a scattering of Indians and Negroes.

With favorable climatic conditions and well cleared land, agriculture has prospered here. In the depression and drought period it suffered serious setbacks, and the value of land depreciated, yet the county was able greatly to improve its roads in the five years 1930-35 and by means of plows to keep the roads to market clear for farmers during the winter.

Census data show that proportionately more farmers in Redwood County had radios and telephones in 1930 than was true of farmers in the state as a whole, more than half of Redwood farmers having these conveniences. On the other hand, the proportions with electricity (10.7 percent) and running water (4.8 percent) were lower than in Minnesota farm homes as a whole in 1930.

The illiteracy rate in 1930 was only 0.6 percent<sup>3</sup> as compared with 1.3 percent for the state as a whole. The school system of the county has had progressive leadership. Of the 111 schools in October 1935 eight were graded and five had vocational training. There was a commercial course in the Redwood Falls High School, and post-graduate normal courses for the training of rural teachers in Redwood Falls and the village of Lambertton. The majority of the teachers in the rural schools of the county had received their training in these local normal courses. The county had one class for subnormal children, located at Redwood Falls.

The one public library in the county, at Redwood Falls, was well housed, had a trained librarian in charge, and met American Library Association standards. However, the rural population of the county could use the library only by paying a yearly fee of \$1.00.

The Agricultural Extension Service had maintained a county agent in Redwood since 1913, the county paying expenses other than salary. Within the past two years a home demonstration agent had been added to his staff. The members of the 4-H clubs and home demonstration groups organized by these agents were the children and women from the more prosperous farms in the county.

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1. U. S. Census of Population, 1930, 20,620.

2. Population: 2,552

3. According to the U. S. Census of Population, there were 94 illiterates out of a total of 16,120 persons 10 years old and over.

The county had done little in the way of public health work. There was no public health nursing service, no regular school nurse, and no visiting teacher. A private hospital and small maternity hospital were located in Redwood Falls, but the nearest public clinic was in Minneapolis. Funds raised by the Public Health Association through the sale of Christmas seals provided occasional special health services in the schools, usually taking the form of a nurse's services for a few weeks, special clinics, and Mantoux tests.

State institutions available for the use of under-privileged or handicapped residents of the county included a hospital for the insane, schools for the feeble-minded, deaf, and blind, a colony for epileptics, a sanitarium for consumptives, a hospital for crippled children, two schools for delinquent children, and a school for dependent children.

The one public institution for dependent children in Minnesota was inadequate, and a number of private institutions in the state were frequently used by Redwood County. The state schools for delinquent children were used relatively little by the county, since the local probate judge was often able to dispose of juvenile cases without commitment. The school for feeble-minded was completely inadequate. It had a waiting list of more than 1,000 in October 1935, and many persons in Redwood County who had been committed could not be admitted. The waiting period had usually been from two to three years.

The school for feeble-minded performed the service of sterilizing feeble-minded women, under a Minnesota law which makes such practice legal with consent of the patient. This service was frequently used by Redwood County.

## II. Development of Social Work in Redwood County

Redwood County first assumed responsibility for its needy citizens in 1872 when it began to maintain paupers and to pay physicians' and hospitals' bills. The aged were first given outdoor relief. Later the county home was built. With its liberal standards and good management it perhaps marked an advance over outdoor care.

In 1901 the Minnesota State Board of Control was established and began gradually to develop institutional care for special groups in the state. In 1913 a state mothers' aid law was passed and the first standards of any kind in the state in regard to adequacy of relief were established.

The war and post-war years showed a sharp increase in activity in behalf of the under-privileged, both in the county and the state. Under the influence of the State Board of Control, state legislation was enacted in 1917 for the better protection of children and handicapped persons. In 1918 the Children's Bureau of the State Board of Control was set up to administer these new laws. Although the law was not mandatory, Redwood County established a County Child Welfare Board in the following year (1919), and a paid executive was engaged in 1921.<sup>1</sup> At about the same period (1918) Redwood County appointed a school nurse for the first time, a service which was later discontinued.

When emergency relief was first established in Minnesota in September 1932 the State Board of Control was made the agency in charge, under a State Emergency Relief Administrator appointed by the governor. The Children's Bureau of the State Board was delegated to do the work. Its division of relief administered relief in the state until June 1934 when it separated from the State Board becoming the State Emergency Relief Administration.<sup>2</sup>

Federal, state and county relief funds were administered by the state relief organization from December 1933 until September 1, 1935, first through the local Child Welfare Board and later through a separate E. R. A. A local county relief committee served as an advisory committee to the state-administered agency. In August 1935 Federal relief ended in the county. Since the state contribution was only \$32,000 a year for 1935 and 1936 the county withdrew from the state E. R. A., thereby waiving its right to receive state funds, but winning the right to administer relief itself according to local standards without state supervision or control.

The independent county relief agency set up on September 1, 1935 was functioning at the time of this survey (October 1935), but the county was about to affiliate again with the State Emergency Relief Administration.

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1. Her salary was first paid from Red Cross funds and later from county funds.
  2. The State Emergency Relief Administration was an extra-legal organization.

With the prospect of obtaining Federal Social Security funds the county commissioners had agreed to appoint a county Board of Public Welfare on November 1, 1935, under a plan proposed by the S. E. R. A. The plan provided for administration of relief by the local board under state supervision; the county would provide a fixed sum of money and the state would attempt to meet the budget deficiency of the county and would pay the salary of at least one person to administer the program.<sup>1</sup> The county had tentatively accepted this plan.

Since the state legislature had not authorized the establishment of such county departments of public welfare, the existence of the Redwood County Board of Public Welfare would be extra-legal and the county commissioners would be under no obligation to delegate any authority to it. At the time of the survey the county commissioners had entire responsibility for dispensing old age pensions, and mothers' aid (given on order from the probate judge) entirely from county funds and the state administered blind pensions from state funds with the assistance of the local Child Welfare Board.

The functions of the County Board of Public Welfare would be limited to the administration of county relief funds and service to needy unemployables and to certifying applicants for the Works Program. The social workers employed in the county at the time of the survey told the observer that they expected the county to meet the emergency needs of employable persons eligible for Works Program jobs but waiting for assignment to jobs. However, they and others interviewed could not predict whether or not this and other relief functions would be delegated to the new Department of Public Welfare by the county commissioners or whether the commissioners would retain direct responsibility themselves.

The Minnesota State Board of Control had prepared a bill to present to the 1936 state legislature which would establish county boards of public welfare and define their powers and duties.<sup>2</sup> This bill would integrate relief and other welfare services of the county with the service

1. At the time of the survey, the county was meeting none of the expense of administration of the Board of Public Welfare and the state was supplying the services of the county relief worker, one visitor, and one stenographer. The county worker was the same person who had administered the local E. R. A. for the state during the past year. She had been retained by the county when it withdrew from the E. R. A.
2. The bill incorporated some of the recommendations made by the Children's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor after a study of the Minnesota Children's Bureau in 1927. Katherine Lenroot in a paper "First Ten Years' Work of the Children's Bureau", Minnesota State Board of Control, read before the Minnesota State Conference and Institute of Social Work at St. Paul held September 8-13, 1930, made recommendations as follows: (a) study of the financial, needs and resources of the counties and the state and of the division of financial responsibility between the state and the counties with reference to payment for services and for the care of children in their own homes, in foster homes, and in institutions; (b) state aid to counties to provide for the services of a trained worker in every county, thus assuring continuous skilled service to all sections; (c) authorization of the State Board of Control to formulate minimum standards of training and experience and to approve appointments of persons employed by county child welfare boards; (d) readjustment of state and local responsibility for case work as trained service becomes available; and (e) encouragement of county child welfare boards to develop a general county welfare program.

to children being conducted by the Child Welfare Board, provide for the supplementation of county funds by state funds for both administration and service, and give the state authority to approve county personnel. Enactment of this measure would place all state and Federal aid again under the State Board of Control as in the years 1932-34. The prospects of its being enacted, however, were doubtful<sup>1</sup> and it appeared that the county commissioners would still have direct control of all relief expenditures in Redwood County.

At the time of the survey the state of Minnesota had worked out no plan for the use of Social Security funds.

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1. This bill did not get out of committee in the legislative session, January 1936.

### III. The Social Work Agencies

As indicated in the previous section, the relief and welfare program in Redwood County was in a transition period at the time of this survey. Two social work agencies had been functioning in the county, (1) the Child Welfare Board, under the supervision of the State Children's Bureau, and (2) the county relief agency which had existed in an independent status for less than two months and was about to give way to a state-supervised extra-legal Department of Public Welfare of limited powers. The existing agencies were both publicly financed. In addition the county commissioners were directly handling much of the relief work giving old age pensions and mothers' allowance directly and passing on all relief expenditures.

#### Functions.

Child Welfare Board. Since it was first appointed in June 1919 by the State Board of Control, the Redwood County Child Welfare Board had functioned actively in carrying out the program of the Children's Bureau and also in meeting a wide variety of local problems not included in the program.

The program of the State Children's Bureau may be summarized as follows:<sup>1</sup>

1. Special activities relating to guardianship, placements, and adoption of children, and illegitimacy and miscellaneous cases;
2. Inspection, licensing, and supervision of maternity hospitals, children's institutions, boarding homes, day nurseries, and child-placing agencies;
3. Action in all matters relating to guardianship, supervision, entrance to institutions, vacations, and discharges of feeble-minded persons committed to the State Board of Control.
4. Compiling and coordinating of statistics on cases under its care.

Protection of children born out of wedlock was a special duty of the bureau since this function was established by law. The bureau interpreted the law to mean that it should contact every mother of an illegitimate child, establish paternity, obtain support through the arrest of the father, wherever possible, see that the child had a three months' nursing period, and follow the case until the child was 16, barring adoption, death or some other definite disposition.

The County Child Welfare Board was the authorized representative of the State Children's Bureau in carrying out this program. The additional functions which the board assumed were not clearly defined. The observer noted that the board accepted any request for aid that came to it and attempted to meet all requests in some fashion.

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1. Annual report of Children's Bureau, June 1934.

Some indication of the area the board was attempting to cover in October 1935 may be given by analysis of case records taken from its files. The board had approximately 150 cases under care in October, according to the records, which were incomplete.<sup>1</sup> Information was available for 54 cases.<sup>2</sup> These were not limited to child welfare cases, as indicated in Table 1. Only about two fifths of the cases analyzed represented special problems of children, including unmarried mothers, mothers' allowance and dependent and neglected children. Cases of feeble-minded and mentally diseased amounted to nearly one third of the total and cases requiring medical care accounted for about one fifth. Unemployable cases due to old age were relatively unimportant on the rolls and there were no cases of unemployment alone or employment with insufficient income.

Table 1. Child Welfare Board Active Cases, October 1935, Classified by Type of Case and Residence Redwood County

	Residence			
	Total	Open Country	Village	Town
Total	54	15	31	8
Unemployable	4	-	4	-
Old Age	2	-	2	-
Blind	2	-	2	-
Insufficient Mothers' Allowance	4	-	2	2
Unmarried Mother	10	5	4	1
Dependent Child	7	3	3	1
Neglected Child	2	-	1	1
Feeble-minded	15	5	8	2
Mental Disease	1	-	1	-
Medical Care	10	2	7	1
All Other	1	-	1	-

In general, the cases are the type that remain dependent for a long period. Only five of the 54 cases had been under care for less than seven months, while 19 had been under care for more than four years (Table 5.) On the other hand, the agency's procedure regarding closing of cases was such<sup>3</sup> that many of the cases still recorded as active may have received no aid for some time.

1. See Records, p.
2. It is believed that these cases are fairly representative of the total case load, although a sound sampling procedure could not be used. Cases from Redwood Falls as well as from rural parts of the county were included since Redwood Falls, only slightly exceeded the Census definition of rural (places under 2,500 population).
3. See Closing of Cases, P.

A large proportion of the cases had had contacts with other agencies. Thirty-nine of the 54 had been aided by other agencies, 36 by the E. R. A., 28 by the county commissioners, and two by the Red Cross. The following tabulations show the number that had received aid from one, two, or all three of these agencies in addition to the Child Welfare Board.

Total Cases . . . . .	54
Known to other agencies . . . . .	39
County Board of Commissioners only . . . . .	3
E. R. A. only . . . . .	10
E. R. A. and County Board of Commissioners. . . . .	24
Red Cross and E. R. A. . . . .	1
Red Cross, E. R. A., and County Board of Commissioners . . . . .	1

It is evident that many of the cases were known simultaneously to more than one agency, a fact that is not surprising due to the inter-relationships of personnel in the several agencies and to the length of time cases were retained on the books of the Child Welfare Board.

Relief Agency. The county relief agency had 212 active cases<sup>1</sup> in October 1935. No data are available on this case load, but schedules were filled for the 60 cases opened or reopened in September after the agency had withdrawn from the S. E. R. A. When data on these cases are compared with data on 87 E. R. A. cases closed in June and 318<sup>2</sup> June cases continued from the previous month, some light is thrown on the nature of the need for which the local relief agency was assuming responsibility. Analysis of reasons for opening the June and September cases shows that the cases taken on by the independent county agency in September, like those on E. R. A. rolls in June, were predominantly unemployment and under-employment cases. In both the June continued cases and in the September openings, 70 percent or more were unemployment relief cases, and almost 20 percent were cases of employment with insufficient income (Table 2). Moreover, in June the county relief organization was supplementing a large number of old age pensions given by the county commissioners because the amounts of the pensions were too low to cover the expenses of a single individual.

That the unemployment and under-employment dependency problems in the county were of a serious nature is indicated by the fact that two thirds of the June continued cases had been on relief continuously for more than 18 months and only about 10 percent had been on relief for that short a time as one year or less (Table 6). None of the cases had had a previous relief period, indicating that once on the relief rolls they had

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1. The only town in the county, Redwood Falls, was included in the enumeration since it only slightly exceeded the Census definition of rural (places under 2,500 population).  
2. The total June case load, according to the official F. E. R. A. report was 481.



Table 2. Continued and Closed Cases of the Emergency Relief Administration, June 1935, and Opened and Reopened Cases of the County Relief Agency, September 1935, Classified by Reason for Opening and by Residence, Redwood County

Reason for Opening	Type of Case by Residence							
	June Continued Cases				June Closed Cases			
	Total	Open Country	Village	Town	Total	Open Country	Village	Town
Total	318	96	159	63	87	28	35	24
Unemployment	225	45	129	51	65	12	32	22
Employed - Insufficient income	54	39	9	6	19	16	2	2
Old Age	30	6	18	6	-	-	-	-
Insufficient Mothers' Allowance	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Care	6	6	-	-	1	-	1	-

Table 2 - Continued

Reason for Opening	September Opened and Reopened Cases			
	Total	Open Country	Village	Town
Total	60	14	24	22
Unemployment	42	8	19	15
Employed - Insufficient Income	11	3	2	6
Old Age	3	1	1	1
Insufficient Mothers' Allowance	-	-	-	-
Medical Care	4	2	2	-

stayed there, unable to find any other source of livelihood.<sup>1</sup>

The emergency nature of the relief agency case load as compared with that of the Child Welfare Board is indicated by the smaller proportion of clients that had had contacts with other agencies either prior to or at the same time that they were receiving relief from the county relief agency or E. R. A. More than half of the June continued and the September opened and reopened cases had had no contacts with other agencies. More than three fourths of the June closed cases had had no other contacts. Of 156 June cases that had had contacts with other agencies, 114 had received assistance from the county commissioners, 63 from the Red Cross, 33 from the Child Welfare Board, three had had drought relief, and three had had feed relief. Table 3 shows that only 51 cases had had contacts with more than one of these types of relief in addition to their contact with the relief agency. Of the 60 cases taken on the county relief rolls in September only nine were known to more than one other agency.

On the other hand, as in the case of the Child Welfare Board, the appearance of cases on the rolls of more than one agency may reflect the inadequacy of the aid given by any one agency, especially by the county commissioners, or deficiencies in the records rather than the extent of need represented.

#### Governing Boards

The Child Welfare Board and the County Relief Committee which existed in Redwood County in October 1935 had advisory powers only. The Board of County Commissioners had administrative control of relief and welfare services.

The Board of County Commissioners included five members elected by the county and paid \$50 a year. The Child Welfare Board included five members - one from the county commissioners, the county superintendent of schools, and three members-at-large, appointed by the State Board of Control, on the recommendation of the county, for terms of three years. The County Relief Committee also included five members, two from the Child Welfare Board, two from the county commissioners, and one member-at-large.

The over-lapping in membership among the three boards is noteworthy. The observer found that they functioned together rather closely like committees of one organization, and the staffs occupied the same office.

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1. On the other hand, all but two of the 60 cases opened or reopened in September had been on relief once before; However, their return to relief rolls does not mean that they had been able to support themselves adequately in the period since they were last on the rolls. Most of them were cases arbitrarily closed by local officials in July when Federal aid ended and relief rolls were sharply reduced from 393 (July) to 67, including all employables and some unemployables, regardless of whether employment was available. See Closing of Cases, p.

Table 3. Continued and Closed Cases of the Emergency Relief Administration, June 1935, and Opened and Reopened Cases of the County Relief Agency, September 1935, Redwood County

Agency	Number of Cases
June Continued Cases	518
Red Cross only	27
County Board of Commissioners only	66
Child Welfare Board only	6
County Board of Commissioners and Child Welfare Board	15
Red Cross and County Board of Commissioners	24
Child Welfare Board and Red Cross	3
County Board of Commissioners, Child Welfare Board and Red Cross	9
Drought Relief only	3
Feed Relief only	3
No other Contacts	162
June Closed Cases	87
Red Cross only	2
County Board of Commissioners only	11
Child Welfare Board only	4
County Board of Commissioners and Red Cross	2
No other Contacts	68
September Opened and Reopened Cases	60
Red Cross only	3
County Board of Commissioners only	7
Child Welfare Board only	9
Child Welfare Board and Red Cross	4
County Board of Commissioners and Red Cross	5
No Other Contacts	32

1. The county commissioners were the dominant group. Their emphasis was on saving money, on controlling the use of what money was expended, and on retaining authority over relief. They expressed the opinion that relief had been given too liberally under the S. E. R. A. and indicated that they were opposed to some of the E. R. A. procedures. They appeared determined to resist any arrangement that would take relief-giving out of their hands and set it up as a specialized job. They accepted the new plan of the S. E. R. A. for a County Department of Public Welfare only tentatively because S. E. R. A. standards of administration and relief, if carried out, would entail greater expenditures of county funds than would be necessary under county control.

On the other hand, they showed that they had been influenced to some extent by S.E.R.A. policies. Although they had withdrawn, the local relief agency from the state organization, they had retained a professional worker to administer relief, the same person that had been paid by the state under E.R.A. Furthermore, they no longer examined all applicants personally and seemed more ready to accept the social worker's estimate of need.

There was no indication that the county commissioners had changed their basic attitudes toward relief clients. It was the expressed opinion of the chairman of the Board of County Commissioners that all the people on relief were "riff-raff" and that it was important to "give them just a little less than they need and keep them hungry because they can help themselves if they really have to."

2. As might be expected from its composition the County Relief Committee was under the influence of the county commissioners and exercised its advisory function to only a limited extent.
3. The Child Welfare Board appeared to be more interested than the other boards in the handling of problems other than those of financial need, but, like the others, was not concerned with the development of a broad program.

#### Financial Resources

Child Welfare Board. At the time of the survey, the County Child Welfare Board, originally financed by Red Cross funds, was being supported entirely from county poor relief funds. The county was paying the full-time salary and traveling expenses of the one social worker, the salary of the stenographer and all other administrative expenses. There was no definite budget. The county commissioners passed on all expenditures, item by item. The state furnished no funds for the county work either for administration or for care of clients.

Relief Agency. The county relief agency was also financed entirely by the county in October 1935 which meant that it was paying the salaries of the full-time worker and the stenographer besides other administrative and relief expenses. This agency also had no definite budget and the county commissioners controlled all expenditures.

#### Staff

In October 1935 the Child Welfare Board with about 150 active cases had one worker and one stenographer whose time was divided between the board and the relief agency. The relief agency with 212 active cases had one full-time worker, one full-time stenographer, and the part-time assistance of the Child Welfare executive and stenographer. The state was also employing one worker for W.P.A. intake and certification.<sup>1</sup>

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- L. When the county accepted the new plan as of November 1, this worker was transferred to another county and the county relief worker was given responsibility for intake and certification as executive of the new Department of Public Welfare. A new visitor was later added to the staff of the department.

During the time that Redwood County was receiving state and Federal funds the average case load per worker had been 175 although the S.E.R.A. had worked to achieve a maximum case load of 100. There was often a waiting period of three weeks between application and investigation, but emergencies were always taken care of. Workers averaged two hours a day over-time.

Executives of both agencies functioning in October had formerly been executives of the county E.R.A. The executive of the Child Welfare Board had inaugurated the E. R. A. program in the county. She was a native of the county, 47 years old, the widow of a lawyer, and the mother of two children. She was a high school graduate and registered nurse. She had had no formal training in social work but had been a member of the Welfare Board for years. After two years as school nurse for Redwood County she had become executive secretary of the Child Welfare Board.

During the last two years she had devoted most of her time to relief work, although functioning also as executive of the Child Welfare Board. She was still paid by the county rather than by the state. Her salary at the time of the survey was \$125 a month.

This worker did not conform to the Children's Bureau personnel requirements on two counts : (1) The state required a college education; (2) The state's policy was to place workers in counties other than the ones in which they lived. This worker had a knowledge of the county and of the people living there, but she had a professional objective approach toward clients, even when she knew them personally. She seemed to be anxious for standards which in her estimation would contribute toward the well-being of clients.

She had had no specific training to give her confidence in her work, and ability to evaluate different practices. Hence, she sometimes accepted policies and procedures which came from a higher authority such as the State Children's Bureau even when they did not apply to the individual case. She had such flexibility in examining her own ideas and in contemplating change, however, that it seemed possible that she could develop greater ability to meet the needs of clients and the demands of a difficult professional job.

The executive of the relief agency was 50 years old, a widow with four children. She had always lived in the middle west and in Redwood County since October 1934. She had a degree of Bachelor of Science in home economics with a major in nutrition and a minor in education. She had had no formal training in social work. Until 1932 her work experience had been in teaching and in research in food and nutrition. In 1932 she became a relief worker in another Minnesota county and two years later came to Redwood in a similar position. Her salary at the time of the survey was \$150 a month.

This worker had amature, posed, objective manner, and her relationships with olients appeared definitely professional. She seemed to like the county commissioners and other layment with whom she worked. The observer thought that in spite of the fact that she received her training and experience in another field, her interest in social work was so great that with the right sort of opportunity she would doubtless develop a great deal professionally.

#### Physical Facilities.

The two social workers in the county in October 1935 had cars of their own and were paid mileage (5 cents per mile) by the county commissioners. Mileage was an expense which the county commissioners had gradually accepted as an outcome of the S.E.R.A. During the period that the Redwood relief agency was part of the S.E.R.A., the agency provided transportation by renting cars and hiring drivers from a garage, a practice which had many handcaps.

The two agencies shared office space with each other and with the county commissioners. Both executives were located in a small room on the first floor of the court house. The desks of the two social workers and one stenographer almost completely filled the space. The other secretary worked in the county commissioners' room next door. One corner of the executives' office, large enough to hold two chairs and a tiny table, had been screened off for interviewing olients. Clients had to wait outside the door when there were not enough chairs to accomedate them.

#### State Supervision.

Child Welfare Board. The only social work supervision being provided in Redwood County by the state at the time of the survey was that of the Children's Bureau. This bureau had a staff of 17, including the director and his assistant, nine special supervisors or visitors of special departments, and six district representatives to cover the state. These 17 persons all shared in the work of supervising the Child Welfare Board in the 77 counties which had them, as well as doing the active work on cases for which no county or private agency assumed responsibility. The main task of supervision rested with the district representatives.

The representative who covered Redwood had 15 other counties in her area, most of which did not have a paid child welfare executive. The total case count in her district for September 1935 was 1,493. This volume of work made frequent visiting impossible and contact with the county had to be devoted largely to the handling of emergencies and obtaining of reports on active cases for the records.<sup>1</sup> This district representative was a middle-aged woman who had been with the Children's Bureau since it was set up and had recently been transferred to this territory. She had no social work training.

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1. The State Children's Bureau kept duplicate copies of all case records.

The Children's Bureau was working under several handicaps. The law providing for local Child Welfare Boards was permissive rather than mandatory; only 17 of the 77 counties with Child Welfare Boards had paid executives; no state funds were available to supplement the local work. Furthermore, during the year and a half that the State Children's Bureau had administered the Emergency Relief program the time and energy of the staff were diverted from the regular work. Also, when the separate E.R.A. was set up in June 1934 many of the experienced staff members of the Children's Bureau went over to the new agency.

At the time of the survey the Children's Bureau was requiring no monthly or annual reports from Redwood County.

Relief Agency. Before Redwood County withdrew from the S.E.R.A. it had been subject to supervision by the state office. The S.E.R.A. had selected the Redwood County worker and had appointed the County Relief Committees in consultation with local officials. The same worker and same advisory committee continued to function after the relief agency withdrew from the E.R.A., so that to this extent at least the influence of E.R.A. state supervision remained in force.

Since Redwood County had rejected state supervision two months before but was about to return to it on November 1, it is pertinent here to describe the major features of this supervision.

The state E.R.A. stood for the following policies:

- (a) trained and professional personnel;
- (b) thorough investigation to establish eligibility;
- (c) adequate standard of relief;
- (d) objective and humanitarian attitude toward clients as individuals rather than as a group;
- (e) business-like and efficient administration of relief.

Supervision was conducted through the Division of Social Service. The staff of this division in October consisted of a director and assistant director, an assisting central office staff of three, 10 district representatives, two nursing supervisors, and three members of the "flying squadron." The district representatives were directly responsible for work in the counties. A recent bulletin outlined the duties and responsibilities of the district representative as follows:

- (a) Represent S. E. R. A. and act as liaison worker for S.E.R.A. and county office.



- (b) Certify all persons for W.P.A. employment in out-counties. Assume complete responsibility for the determination of eligibility and certification for work and submit monthly report to the state office.
- (c) Certify to the state office that all expenditures - state, Federal, and local, are in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down by the state office.
- (d) Advise with both the county and state organizations as to the professional staff and the policies as they affect relief-giving within the county.
- (e) Review and approve or disapprove:
  - All state and Federal reports, monthly and semi-monthly which that office may request; also all surveys and special reports.
  - All requests for funds, state or Federal, to supplement local relief moneys.
- (f) Certification of student aid cases, G.C.C. enrollment, and recipients of surplus commodities in out-counties.
- (g) Certification of all intake for Rural Resettlement in out-counties.

Besides Redwood County, the district representative had 11 other counties in her area, all largely rural, with an average population of about 17,000. She told the observer that she spent about 40 percent of her time in public contacts, working with county board members, county officials, county relief committees, labor groups, physicians and other professional persons. She spent much time with the county relief workers, holding county or area staff meetings. She supervised expenditures by the relief workers, working out budgetary needs with them, and giving suggestions for curtailing apparently unnecessary expenditures. She helped members of the social service staff to budget their time, assigned duties to members of the staff, and interpreted state policies to local boards. Occasionally she supervised case work from office observation; or took direct charge of difficult clients.

She tried to contact the counties once a month, but expected that as the program became more stable, it would be possible for her to make less frequent contacts with the counties but to spend a longer time in each. She had spent an unusual amount of time in Redwood County, contacting public officials, because of the interest they took in all expenditures and other phases of the work.

This district representative had been in the area since Redwood came into the S.E.R.A. in December 1933. She was a young woman, quiet, and capable with training and previous experience in social work. She seemed to be well liked by the social workers, officials and laymen of the county. Apparently their objection to state supervision was based on its policies and procedures rather than on the personality of its representative in the area.

Public Attitudes

The observer interviewed a number of private citizens concerning social welfare programs in general. Two attitudes seemed to be outstanding on the part of most of the laymen: that Redwood County should take care of its needy citizens and that relief clients should work. Practically all of the laymen interviewed expressed the idea that the county needed a social work program, but there seemed to be very little conception as to the form that this should take and practically no realization of the professional aspects of social work. They did accept the fact that relief had become a problem with which laymen could not deal and with which the county commissioners needed help. They also expressed the opinion that two social workers then employed had done a good job.

The Tax Reduction League had attempted to organize opposition to all social work in the county including both the Child Welfare Board and the relief agency.

Persons were also approached on their opinion of S.E.R.A. in particular.

The general attitude among the persons interviewed was one of resentment against the amount of authority the state had exercised locally under the S.E.R.A. Among the employers the observer found general criticism of the wage rate of 55 cents an hour on work relief jobs. Farmers said that this made necessary a much higher wage for labor than they were accustomed to pay. One farmer said that \$1 a day for farm labor had been customary before the depression but that farmers had been obliged to pay \$2.50 to \$3.50 during the summer of 1935. The head of the Tax Reduction League, a farmer claimed that \$30 a month in summer and \$10 in winter with living were good wages for a farm laborer and amounted to more than the farmer made.

There also seemed to be a general feeling among the persons approached that standards of relief were too high under E.R.A., that relief was too freely given, and that clients were treated too gently. Some of the laymen interviewed said that the state would give money but not dictate policies. On the other hand, others thought the state would have to give some supervision if it provided funds. The county attorney, the strongest single factor in the county government, said that he felt the county needed supervisory as well as financial help from the state "to make studies and help us set up our program."

Both the county attorney and the county engineer, expressed the opinion that the state law permitting sterilization should be made more stringent and be applied more widely. The county attorney was making a study of feeble-mindedness in Redwood County and was planning to test the children through the schools and to test all relief clients.

Other measures of public interest in social work and welfare programs were the policies of the newspapers and the contributions by the public to private welfare agencies.

The newspapers of the county had cooperated with the social workers, giving good publicity and respecting the social workers' wish to keep facts from public notice which would have made good "stories."

Private contributions to welfare work in the county were found to have been extremely small. Practically no private contributions had been made for the support of social work in Redwood County since 1918. The Red Cross had assisted with clothing, churches had helped their own members, and together with clubs and lodges had made occasional gifts to individuals at special seasons of the year. The Public Health Association, by selling Christmas seals, had provided funds for medical service in the schools.

#### IV. Rural Social Work Practices and Procedures

Except for conforming to state policies, the Child Welfare Board had few established procedures for its work. The relief agency had a heritage of the procedures introduced to the county by the S.E.R.A., which favored the following policies.

1. Thorough investigation.
2. Objective establishment of eligibility for relief on the basis of need.
3. Use of a budget in planning relief.
4. Confidential records (instead of having names published.)
5. Payment of cash for work relief.
6. A continuing relationship with the client for the purpose of having current knowledge of eligibility and meeting new needs as they arise.

The policy of keeping records confidential was rejected outright by the county commissioners who insisted upon having the names of recipients of poor relief printed in the newspapers. They accepted the other policies in principle, although these policies were not always carried out in actual practice.

#### Types of Assistance

Child Welfare Board. The types of assistance which could be given by the Child Welfare Board were nowhere defined. Analysis was made of the 54 Child Welfare Board cases for which data were available for this study in order to determine the types of service actually rendered. None of the cases received relief grants from the board. The 15 feeble-minded persons were given mental tests and 10 were placed in institutions. The 10 unmarried mothers were given advice and assistance in establishing paternity of the child and in obtaining financial assistance from the father for its support. In 11 cases, nursing, medical, or dental care was provided and physical examinations were made in four cases. One case was assisted in obtaining a mother's allowance and two were aided in obtaining blind pensions. In most instances more than one type of service was recorded. In several cases "friendly contacts and interest" were listed as the only types of service rendered.

The Child Welfare Board had an arrangement for transporting patients by ambulance to the clinic in Minneapolis. The social worker herself frequently drove clients there.

The State Children's Bureau advocated a regular investigation and set up definite standards for boarding homes for children. The Redwood County Child Welfare worker, however, did not always make the formal investigation, claiming that it was impossible to find home in the county which were available for placement that would measure up to the standards.

No program of foster home care had been developed in the county. The county commissioners paid the board of a few children in boarding homes.

Relief Agency. In contrast to the Child Welfare Board the types of assistance rendered by the relief agency centered about the need for financial assistance.

Data were not available on the types of assistance being given by the local relief agency in October 1935, but something of past policy may be learned from analysis of the cases on E. R.A. rolls in June. All of the June continued and closed E. R.A. cases, analysed for this study, received either direct or work relief. The great majority received both types (80 percent of the continued cases and 93 percent of the closed cases.) Work relief was issued in cash but all direct relief was in the form of orders. In a number of cases, financial guidance was listed as a type of service given to the client. Health guidance was also emphasized. There were a few cases in which medical care was provided. A number of boys were given assistance in enrolling in the G.C.C.

#### Standards of Relief

The average relief grant given in September, the first month that the county was entirely independent of the S.E.R.A. and that the county commissioners were paying the entire bill, was slightly more than \$11 per family. In October when the county had accepted state supervision this rose to almost \$19.

This was considerably less than had been given during the first six months of the year under the S.E.R.A., but somewhat more than was given to families in September 1934 (Table 4.) For the 15-month period May 1934 to July 1935 inclusive the average monthly relief grant per family had been \$24, not including all of the medical care given by the county commissioners

The S.E.R.A. standard of relief was based on an estimated budget, which included the minimum essentials of living - rent, food, fuel, light and clothing. The food allowance was estimated on the basis of the nutrition table prepared by the nutrition department of the S.E.R.A. Surplus commodities were extra. Under the S.E.R.A. most doctor's bills were paid, but the county commissioners had continued to pay some which the state considered too high and also had paid for hospital and institutional care.

Families receiving work relief were given more liberal grants than those receiving direct relief. The granting of general poor relief, which had been given for over 55 years by the county commissioners, was based on no consistent plan. Amounts spent for hospital and doctor's bills were liberal. Rent was often paid in full. Orders for food were generally inadequate.

The special types of relief given entirely from county funds varied widely in its adequacy. The average old age pension was \$6 monthly, whereas the average for the state was \$11. The average mothers' allowance grant was about \$30 monthly, while the average for the state was \$21. The county commissioners gave old age pensions quite generally to persons who met the qualifications, not even making investigations of the applicant's

resources, but they usually gave poor relief instead of mothers' allowances. Consequently, only 10 persons in the entire county were receiving a mothers' allowance in October. The county commissioners supplemented old age pensions with poor relief, in the form of orders, and in the past with Federal or state funds, rather than raise pensions to an adequate amount. Interestingly enough the per capita monthly expense for residents in the county home was considerably more than the average old age pension—\$18 without any allowance for deterioration of buildings.

Table 4. Average Relief Grant per Month per Family and per Single Person, May 1934 through July 1935, Redwood Emergency Relief Administration.

	Families			Unattached Persons		
	Number of Cases	Total Expenditures	Average per Family	Number of Cases	Total Expenditures	Average per Person
1934						
May	281	\$ 5,347.60	\$19.03	5	\$ 37.90	\$7.58
June	1,137	19,841.64	17.45	20	296.76	14.84
July	1,184	15,658.41	13.23	13	68.00	5.23
August	1,034	17,420.38	16.85	17	131.49	7.73
Sept.	1,179	17,971.28	15.24	26	216.77	8.34
Oct.	621	13,002.74	20.94	31	339.41	10.95
Nov.	793	21,585.90	27.22	28	290.99	10.39
Dec.	836	20,347.35	24.34	36	396.42	11.07
1935						
Jan.	610	19,134.41	31.37	45	408.60	9.08
Feb.	673	19,810.71	29.44	36	385.36	10.70
Mar.	568	17,858.54	31.44	38	456.28	12.01
Apr.	527	16,123.15	30.59	38	350.12	9.21
May	531	14,585.62	27.47	26	256.57	9.87
June	455	12,758.63	28.04	26	228.66	8.79
July	371	11,288.27	30.43	22	288.19	13.10

Records.

Child Welfare Board. The records of the Child Welfare Board began with the letter of referral from the State Children's Bureau or some other source, or by the interview with the applicant or referring person, and proceeded in more or less chronological order. Since duplicate records were kept in the state office. Much of the record was composed of correspondence with the Children's Bureau as well as interview material. Regular forms were supplied by the Children's Bureau for application

to state institutions, investigation of foster homes, etc. The local executive evidently made an attempt to record every important interview when time permitted. Sometimes the reports of interviews gave an indication of the worker's part in the contact with the client and sometimes merely a picture of the client's situation.

There was no central index file, the agency records being filed in several different places. No reports of any kind, either monthly or yearly were made since none were required by the state office. Thus it was impossible to determine how many active cases there were at any time or how many cases had been closed in any given period. Lack of time on the part of the one worker was apparently not the only reason for this deficiency. Her lack of interest in office routine and the lack of requirements from the state office were other explanations.

Relief Agency. The S.E.R.A. had instituted a regular record and card index system in Redwood County. These records began with the face sheet which carried the information necessary for identification and for establishing eligibility for relief, including the family's budget. Interview material followed and was chronological and in narrative form. Very few records examined in this study gave much idea of the worker's contact with the client except when some definite action was taken. Although interview material was not complete, there had evidently been an attempt to develop clear and concise records, with full face sheet material.

Records were not always kept of applications made or visits to the office by clients when no disposition was made of the case. Therefore no reliable data on rejected cases was available.

The executive of the relief agency kept the records fairly up-to-date, and made careful reports. Although she seemed to handle the administrative and routine end of the work adequately, she expressed the opinion that some of the routine was unnecessary, such as some of the information on the face sheet. She said, however, that she had tried to carry out the regular requirements of the state. The observer was told that fewer irregularities were discovered here by the "flying squadron" of the state E.R.A. than in most other counties in the state.

#### Residence of Clients.

Child Welfare Board. Open country cases were under-represented and village and town cases were over-represented among the cases on the Child Welfare Board rolls in October and analyzed for this study. Of the 54 cases analyzed, 39 were from the villages and towns. (Table 1).

Relief Agency. The same was true of cases on county E.R.A. rolls in June and among the cases opened or reopened in September (Table 2). It is probable that village and town cases came more directly to the attention of the two agencies, that unemployable cases were concentrated in the villages; and that seasonal employment in agriculture may have tended to reduce the open country load.

### Intake Procedure

Child Welfare Board. The clients applying to the Child Welfare Board for aid were frequently referred to it by some other individual or by the Children's Bureau. The executive as a representative of the state visited all cases so referred whether the client expressed any desire for service or not, and frequently tried to persuade the client to take some action determined by state policies such as helping to bring about the arrest of the father in cases of unmarried mothers.

The attitude of the Child Welfare Board executive toward applicants, whether they were seeking help themselves or were referred by some one else, was sympathetic. She frequently went out of her way to extend help even when she heard only indirectly that someone was in trouble.

Both executives accepted cases without evident discriminations. This attitude was not entirely upheld by the community at large nor by the county commissioners, who drew lines between the "worthy" and the "unworthy". For instances, in the case of one unmarried mother the county commissioners did not want to pay for maternity home care because the girl came from what they called a "disreputable" family. The executive of the Child Welfare Board took a firm stand and finally got some money for this case. Many laymen express criticism of "worthless people" who were accepted for relief and indicated that they thought the social workers were not strict enough in rejecting cases.

Relief Agency. Applications for relief were usually made by the clients themselves either by letter or by an office visit. Applications by letter were accepted because of the inadequate office space for interviewing and because clients from some parts of the county had to travel many miles to the office. The applicant was then visited at his home.

The executive of the Child Welfare Board, who assisted with relief was assigned to the important work of the first interview. She took identifying information in the office but to a great extent the first real interview always had to be taken in the home of the client because of the inadequate space for interviewing. The executive of the relief agency said that she would have preferred to have the application taken in the office since in her opinion an office interview emphasized the business aspects of the relationship and frequently both client and worker felt more free and comfortable than in the home.

The workers showed consideration toward applicants and understanding of some of the problems involved in asking for help. They were business-like and matter-of-fact; they did not press for information which the client did not have at the moment (such as dates of children's births); they explained each step of the way with great patience. One worker in describing her discussion of the food budget with a farmer's wife said she began by asking what it actually cost the family for food. When she failed to get a definite answer she went over actual expenditures with the woman until together they arrived at as accurate a figure as possible.



The policy of the S.E.R.A. had been to give relief to transients in the place in which they were located. The county commissioners in Redwood County resisted this and were inclined to give poor relief even when the person did not need it in order to prevent the establishment of residence.

Continuing Contacts with Clients.

Child Welfare Board. The Child Welfare Board cases received few contacts after intake, as indicated by Table 5 which gives data on 54 active October cases. These data indicate that the majority of the contacts with clients were made in the home.

Table 5. Child Welfare Board Active Cases, October 1935, Classified by Number of Months under Care and Average Number of Contacts, Redwood County.

Months under Care	Total Cases	Average Number of Contacts per Case	
		Home	Office
Total	54		
1 month or less	-	-	-
2-3 Months	1	3.0	2.0
4-6 "	4	2.5	1.5
7-12 "	5	3.0	2.4
13-18 "	6	5.8	7.7
19-24 "	12	8.2	4.9
25-36 "	-	-	-
37-48 "	7	14.4	7.1
49 months and over	19	14.6	4.8

In its contacts with clients, the Child Welfare Board placed emphasis on what the social workers and the dominant group in the community thought best for the client rather than on what the client wanted.

An example is the case of a widow who had been on county relief since 1924. When she complained that her grocery order was not enough, the county commissioners directed the Child Welfare Board executive to buy all groceries for the woman. At one time this client applied for a mothers' allowance. The worker persuaded her not to take it on the grounds that she would get more in grocery orders from the county commissioners, but really because she thought the woman's spending would be "unwise" if she were given cash.

Another case in point was that of an unmarried mother who was regarded as "disreputable" by influential members of the community. This woman came to the Child Welfare Board for assistance in finding a job, and failing to get such help found a job for herself as housekeeper to a man whose wife was in the hospital for the insane. After a short time she left the job, telling the Child Welfare executive that the man had asked her to live with him. She again requested help in finding a job for the girl because of the reputation the girl had in certain sections of the community. No money was made available for boarding the child in a home and the mother refused to give the child up for adoption. The one action apparently taken by the worker in this case was to visit the mother during the short time that she was working as housekeeper.

Under the E.R.A. home visits were made to relief clients on the average of once every two to three months in the majority of cases, according to data obtained on June cases. The clients visited the office more frequently (Table 6). The larger number of office than of home visits reflects the heavy case loads per social worker rather than an agency policy of preferring office visits.

Table 6. Continued and Closed Cases of the Emergency Relief Administration, June 1935, Classified by Number of Months under Care and Average Number of Contacts per Case, Redwood County

Months under Care	Average Number of Contacts per Case					
	June Continued Cases			June Closed Cases		
	Total Cases	Home	Office	Total Cases	Home	Office
Total	318			87		
1 month or less	-	-	-	-	-	-
2-3 Months	-	-	-	1	2.0	2.0
4-6 "	12	1.3	2.8	12	3.0	4.0
7-12 "	21	5.9	9.0	21	5.0	6.5
13-18 "	72	7.7	10.1	53	6.7	10.1
19-24 "	215	9.3	14.0	-	-	-

Infrequent investigations of clients also was in line with a liberal policy of the county toward changes in family resources. The same relief budget was maintained even when there had been a slight increase in family income.

Similarly in the case of adult children living at home and working, the agency did not expect them to contribute all of their earnings to the family budget.

On the other hand, where relief was given in cash, as in the case of work relief, the agency had formerly had the policy of requiring project workers to keep accounts of all expenditures and present them for the inspection of the social worker from time to time. This policy had been rejected by the executive at the time of this survey.

The workers sometimes used their contacts with clients as a means of attempting to change the personal lives of the clients, in such respects as health and cleanliness, child welfare, care of homes, family relationships, or moral issues. For example, they sometimes withheld blankets until a client had cleaned up his house. Even with families who were not on relief the social workers sometimes tried to bring out changes in their manner of living. One of the workers had been interested in an Indian family in which she said there was great discord between husband and wife, drinking on the part of both, and a recent suicide attempt on the part of the wife. After this last episode the worker said she got the man to promise that he would give up drinking and suggested definite steps for him to take.

#### Closing of Cases.

Child Welfare Board. The Child Welfare Board had no definite policy regarding closings. At the time of the survey the executive seemed to be tending toward limiting the work and clarifying reasons for keeping cases open or for closing them.

None of the 54 October cases analyzed for this survey had had a previous period under care of the board, indicating that cases were carried indefinitely on the records although little assistance might be given after the initial service.

Relief Agency. Usually cases were closed by the relief agency when the workers decided that the client no longer needed financial help. In August 1935 when Federal relief stopped and when there was no prospect of state or Federal aid, the agency arbitrarily removed all employables and some unemployables whose resources were not definitely known to the social workers. The manner of closing was to tell the clients that he might be able to find employment.

Of 58 September reopenings analyzed for this study all but six had been closed in July as a result of the drastic reduction in the relief load when final Federal grants were received. The other six had been closed earlier in 1935. It seems apparent that these reopened cases were probably in need of assistance when they were closed.

Recent residence was another reason for closing cases in the post-E.R.A. period. When the county commissioners learned that new residents were on relief they instituted immediate action to have them removed from the rolls.

On the other hand, cases which had not requested relief or which had no possibility of receiving it were often kept on the rolls when the social workers were particularly interested in the families concerned.

An example of a case that was not closed was that of a man who had been assigned to a work relief project and who failed repeatedly to report for work after having received his pay in advance in the form of orders. The agency continued to give him orders but reduced the amount. The man, indignant at this treatment, said he would not accept relief at all. Instead of closing the case, the workers urged him to come back on relief because "the agency is really more interested in his children than in whether or not he works."

#### Workers' Relation to Boards and to the Community.

The executive of the relief agency had certain standards which were ahead of present attitudes in the community. Some of these she steadily tried to attain - such as adequacy of relief; others she disregarded for the time being, but hoped to change ultimately - such as the practice of printing the names of recipients of poor relief. It was difficult for her to see all issues clearly from the standpoint of sound practice, especially when community pressure was strong, as in the case of non-residents. The worker saw non-residents as individuals who should be helped but also as a possible menace to Redwood County, and said "we must protect Redwood County."

The executive assumed responsibility for interpreting the work to the advisory board and to the county commissioners and for keeping both boards constantly in touch with problems. She did this through personal interviews, charts, maps, and well planned board meetings.

In general social workers who had formerly worked in the county E.R.A. had not furthered the knowledge and acceptance of social work in the community. The present Child Welfare Board executive had been the first E.R.A. county worker,<sup>1</sup> followed by a young man, apparently an earnest hard-working person, who was more intent on carrying out state procedures than in interpreting them to the county. He was transferred at the request of the county officials.

Six visitors who had served the E.R.A. at different times were all under 30 years of age, a few had had brief courses in social work, and one had had a year of training. All came from outside the county and failed apparently to make a favorable impression on the community. Commissioners and laymen lumped them all together as "those young people." They were criticized for their immaturity, emphasis on red tape, inability to get at the bottom of situations and to know when clients were "no good" or were concealing resources, and for their treatment of clients which was considered too indulgent.

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1. Title given to executive.

Prior to the appointment of the present Child Welfare Board executive, four other persons had occupied this position. Two had stayed only a short time and their influence had been negligible. Two were trained social workers who were there for two to three years and apparently were well liked in the community. All four came from outside the county.

The present executive of the Child Welfare Board had satisfactory working relationships with the county commissioners and her advisory board and her contacts with individual board members were always pleasant.

The executives of both agencies at the time of the survey had much in common in their attitudes toward the community and in their interest in developing better service for people in need. They thought that while the work of the Child Welfare Board was important and should have more emphasis than it had been receiving, it was not a service which should be maintained by a separate agency. They welcome the idea of one social work agency in the county which would integrate all services.

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