

Safe And Proper Home Defined By Local Welfare Dept. Head

Child Welfare Worker Seeks To Preserve Child's Own Home First

BY MRS. JOHNSIE NUNN
As social workers we find that one of our most important and difficult duties is that of relieving, aiding and guiding children in special need due to poverty, misfortune or behavior difficulties. We are also to protect children from abuse, exploitation or moral hazard.

De-spoiling little minds and souls in our world of temptation and uncertainty, the molding of these little flowers into splendid men and women calls for the best that is in us. We must have instinctive love for the work, a joy in its performance and a skill and knowledge that is almost easier to illustrate than to express.

As Child Welfare Workers, we begin with the assumption that the home is the basis of the social fabric and the right and natural setting for any child. Any effort made to take a child away from his parents except when absolutely necessary is a mistake.

On the other hand, the preservation of the child's own home should be the first aim of the Child Welfare Worker. Surley we re-

alize that it is better to prevent an orphan than it is to care for one.

Any reasonable good mother is the best and most economical caretaker of her child an improvement over an orphanage or a foster home. So before moving a child from his home the Agency should see itself in the light of a reserve to be called upon when all else fails.

If many of our families are not to be broken up unnecessarily there must be a closer working relationship between the Child Caring Agency and the public and private organizations which aim to protect the home from disaster.

We sometimes find a mother who is embarrassed and hesitates to accept relief in order that she keep her home together. Our job is to help her see that it is far more self-respecting to accept relief than to be willing to part with her child.

us of the requirements of ADC applicants, and among those requirements is the one of a safe and proper home. They expect us through hard, conscientious work to help not only in financing dependent children but they expect us to supervise this home in such a way that the workers and the mothers can truthfully say that these children are in safe and proper homes because they have what every child should have.

HAY IN THEIR HOMES

Children who should not be removed from their homes are: 1. Children eligible for public assistance or entitled to insurance benefits. This group of dependent children being cared for from public

funds vary in different states, but all states recognize that this child is one deprived of parental support by reason of death, continued absence from the home or physical or mental incapacity of a parent and one who is living with his father, mother, grand-parent, brother, sister, step-parent, uncle or aunt, etc.

2. Children who are fatherless or motherless and for whom temporary care may be needed. In many cases the mother can carry on alone or possibly the father can carry on alone even though his house-keeping responsibilities cannot be taken care of without the assistance of a hired house-keeper.

3. Children whose fathers are abusive or will not support them but who have good mothers should be protected by court action. The mother and children should not have their homes broken up because of a good-for-nothing husband and father.

4. Children of parents who wish to separate but who give their children good care. Often a shaky home could be preserved if the parents could find no way of escaping their joint responsibilities.

5. Children of divorced parents, one of whom wishes to remarry. We find children quite frequently placed with the frank admission that a present or prospective step-parent objects to their presence in the home.

6. Children whose relatives can care for them are too often accepted by an agency without due investigation of family circumstances.

7. No rules can be laid down for children born out of wedlock except the general one that with encouragement and help a mother's love often triumphs over great obstacles. We should do nothing in haste without knowledge of all the facts and the lack of financial support should never be allowed to separate a mother from her child.

NEED FOSTER CARE

Besides these children, we have many who need foster care. For instance:

1. The orphan with no relatives to care for him.
2. Foundlings with no known relatives.
3. Children abandoned by the parents who are known but cannot be traced.

4. Children who have no parents in the home able to care for them because of illness or incapacity to maintain a home. Tuberculosis and mental trouble often cause a situation of this sort.

5. Then we have children removed from unfit homes by court action and this is only done as a last resort.

6. Children born out of wedlock—physical or mental unfitness of the mother to care for her child or because of the extreme youthfulness of the mother and various other factors.

7. Sometimes children with certain health problems are benefited with a short period of foster care in a favorable environment, particularly in the case of tubercular children and heart cases.

8. Children presenting such mental conduct or habit problems with which their parents have proved unable to deal because of the lack of understanding of children that allows them to judge and guide the individual case.

REMOVE FROM HOME

We have now considered the type of child who should be left in the home and the type of child who should be removed from the home. Regardless of which ever plan we accept each child in every home should have:

1. Security—a feeling of stability and of belonging and counting for something in our lives.
2. Family life—a chance to live in a normal family group of differing ages without being crushed by numbers; to develop mutual attachments and a sense of responsibility for others and for the work of running a household.
3. Sufficient nutritious food—this should be simple, well prepared, and adapted to the age of the child. It should be served at regular hours, and attractive surroundings, and eaten at leisure in a cheerful atmosphere.
4. Adequate shelter—a clean, light, well-ventilated, well-kept home, properly heated in winter, with sanitary toilet facilities. The child should have a separate bed and a place to keep private possessions and to entertain friends.
5. Comfortable clothing—clean, whole, attractive garments that fit and that are individually owned; sufficient changes for cleanliness; adequate protection against

inclement weather.

6. Health habits—Individual toilet articles; frequent baths; proper care of teeth; regular bedtime and plenty of sleep; abundance of fresh air and of pure drinking water; several hours of outdoor play each day; definite teaching of health rules and of wholesome, happy, courageous attitudes; sensible instruction in sex matters.

7. Educational essentials—attendance at a community school, of good standards as long as the law requires, and as much longer as the child's capacities warrant. Development of each child's fullest capacities through high school, commercial, or trade-school training in line with special abilities.

8. Recreation—a safe, clean, roomy place for outdoor and indoor play; suitable play material and tools; sympathetic supervision.

9. Community life—a part in community group festivities; opportunity to make friends in natural ways through entertaining and being entertained; normal neighborhood contacts and wholesome association with persons of the opposite sex.

10. Moral and religious training—positive teaching of standards of right and wrong aside from measures of discipline; daily con-

tact with adults of sound character and inspiring personality; attendance at religious services of the type preferred for each individual case.

To give these things to every child received under care may seem like a large order, but the task is simple compared with adult incompetency and delinquency. Children should have these rights regardless of race, color or situation.

(Continued on page 3)



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