

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING TYPE OF PLACEMENT*

by BERTEL GORDON

Foster Family Day Care Service, Brooklyn, N. Y.

A VIEW of the field of Foster Family Day Care Services throughout the country bears out our own limited experience in New York, substantiating need for and validity of, such service, as one in the gamut of placement services. Through the development of this type of service, there is created another possible choice for the client considering placement for his child.

The history of day care services takes us back to 27 years ago, when the foundation and standards for all day care services in the U.S.A. were set down by the First Family Day Care Association of Philadelphia. It was then that the need was recognized for individual care and supervised direction for certain groups of children from one to twelve years of age, who could not be absorbed in group care or other community facilities. Data compiled by child welfare agencies confirmed growing concern for the dangers of unsupervised, independent placements, where working mothers were forced to resort to sub-standard, unsatisfactory arrangements for placement of their children during their working

hours. Having come to recognize and accept the growing trend in our culture of a movement towards women's employment, it was then realized that properly supervised day care homes might prevent makeshift plans and deprivations that might well contribute towards personality problems of our future citizens. The First Family Day Care Association of Philadelphia, therefore, set out to establish a program of care for children under supervised agency direction. This is now the largest foster day care service in the United States.

The movement soon spread through many parts of the country. An experiment of the Jewish Child Care Association of New York many years before, under the leadership of Mary Boretz, always ready to pioneer in the field of child care, had been unfortunately, short-lived. In 1951 the growing number of requests for day care services for children of working mothers in New York, under the age of 3, who could or should not be met by group care centers, finally led to a study of this problem by a special committee under the aegis of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, initially sparked by the New York Jewish Child Care Council, which had been gathering evidence of need for some

years. Under the auspices of the Jewish Youth Services of Brooklyn, the Jewish Child Care Association of New York, and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, we established, in the summer of 1952, our experimental project of Foster Family Day Care Service.

In New York City, the subsidized day care program offers group care only, to children from 3 years up. We all know that group care is not advisable for the very young child. Therefore, the object of our program was to serve parents who needed day care for children under 3 years of age. We have thus evolved the following bases for considering day care service:

1. When a mother is employed or seeking employment, and it is essential to the well-being of the family and maintenance of the family unit.
2. Where the father is not in the home and the mother must work to maintain the family.
3. Where the parent-child relationship is such that partial separation, as involved in foster day care, is desirable.
4. When physical or emotional illness of either parent makes foster day care a sound plan for the family and child.
5. When the use of day care can serve to prevent full time placement.
6. While more permanent plans are being worked out, and day care can be utilized as a temporary service.

Our service was set up to provide foster day care for a prescribed number of hours, five days a week, to fifteen children between eight months and three years of age, and in some instances to older children when no group care program is available, or where it is advisable to keep together siblings of children under three years.

As in all other intake processes, we recognized the necessity for determining and evaluating resources to serve the child's needs, related to the obvious or potential strength of the family. In some instances, this was directed towards helping them to reach a different solu-

tion to their problems, and sometimes led to referrals to another agency. In others, we have helped the family recognize their own resources and stay together—not too different than what is done in any other casework service.

From the inception of our operating service in the thirty months, we received, within the boroughs of Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan, 450 inquiries for day care placement. Of these, 285 applications have been either rejected or withdrawn immediately (primarily because they were not Jewish, were out of the district, or not in our age group); 45 were referred to other agencies, and 42 children eventuated into placements. Considering the limits of our operation, in publicity, geographically, staffing, etc., we think these figures sizeable.

It is from this group that I shall give you brief illustrations, which I hope will serve to define our bases and criteria for the use of day care service. These brief presentations can only give an indication of the casework process with the parent, the child and the day care foster mother, so important to the ultimate help to the parent and his child.

The S family presented a picture of serious emotional disturbances, for which they had sought counseling in a family agency for some time. Both parents, threatened by their own pathological background, were showing unrealistic fears and anxiety over their two and a half year old son's "wild" behavior and his refusal to speak. On psychiatric consultation the child was found essentially normal and his behavior not inappropriate to his age. Both parents genuinely rejected any thought of full time placement, but, with help, could accept the partial separation of day placement, which would lessen the heavy burdens of living with their youngster. As the S family found relief from the tension of constant care, they realized their own

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part in the difficulties. Witnessing the change in their child's behavior in a relaxed and enriched environment, even on a part time basis, was reassuring to them. The S family continued with family counselling, and Mrs. S soon was able to return to her profession of nursing and to accept psychiatric help for herself. The father recently followed suit, and little Sonny, after seven months in day care placement, is now ready to enter group care nursery.

Giving these parents an avenue for relief from the tension in their family, thus enabling them to face their own personal problems more fundamentally, was the dynamic for help to Sonny's family as well as himself. The Ss doubts regarding Sonny's normalcy and adequacy were reflections of their questions about themselves, and in relation to each other. We know well that the parents' actions and attitudes determine the kind of home created for the child. Reaching these parents at this early stage, through this specific service, and helping direct them to pertinent consideration of their problems, safeguarded the child's opportunity for a more normal development and some measure of security.

It has been apparent, from our observations and experiences, that most of the requests for day care placement, although brought presumably on the basis of economic need, present in actuality, factors of intrafamilial conflicts and threatened family breakdowns, which in turn precipitate the impaired economic status. I am thinking of a number of applicants who, in coming for day care requests, could see only their need for the tangible service of placement. Even though we recognize that placement is not the basic difficulty nor the total problem of these families, we accept these clients unhesitatingly. Placement here is a beginning step towards their acceptance of help.

The Ms, a young couple, applied for day care placement of their two and a half year old son, to leave Mrs. M free to look for employment and enable her to support the family. Mr. M, a commercial artist, unemployed for several months, expressed confidence in finding work in his own line, at the same time holding to his unwillingness to accept a job outside his field. Both parents emphasized that day placement of little Andy would solve their present need, and that relief in their financial stress was the ultimate answer to their problem. Using the placement period, which became a very constructive experience for the youngster, as a dynamic situation for the entire family as well, Mr. and Mrs. M came to see their actual situation in a different perspective. Soon they could acknowledge a marital problem, which had enmeshed and overwhelmed them for some time, to which they had closed their eyes. Both admitted that their conflicts were increased by family interferences. The difficulties now emerging pointed up Mrs. Ms disappointment in her husband as an inadequate provider, in spite of his grandiose ideas about himself, and with his inability to take hold of his family responsibilities.

Mr. M too, began to display some awareness of doubts over his wife's feelings towards him, as indicated by her indifference to his sexual demands. In the ongoing interview processes, he was able to acknowledge some connection between his personality pattern and the deterioration of their marital relationship. Although, in the beginning, he held staunchly to his belief that financial security and the advent of a well-paying job would cure their difficulties, both of the parents began to recognize that their deeper personal problems threatened to break down their marriage, and both willingly agreed to accept counseling help from a family agency.

Thus, in using day care service as a springboard for the parents' ability to mobilize themselves, this young couple, intelligent and accessible for help, was given the opportunity to develop some insight into their fundamental disturbances and ultimately to work on the real issues of their conflicts.

Family Day Care has been utilized quite effectively as a partial placement plan for the child whose parents are not yet ready for total separation. The family agency referral for day care placement of a 9 months old baby boy, involved parents whose immature and utter incompatibility had made for their separation a short time before. The recommendation was for separation from the child on a partial basis, since the mother could not have sustained a complete separation at that point. It was suggested that she work to support herself and her child. The family agency continued to plan with the parents on more permanent arrangements. Day care here functioned as an adjunctive service, supplying a concrete help. Thus this mother was afforded an opportunity to experience, through part time separation, a preparation for full time placement. Day care too, has enabled this mother to mobilize her resources towards some measure of self-direction and independence.

Day care service has been a valid service in other situations when psychological impacts are involved. I am thinking of a bright little boy of two whose mother, a compulsive neurotic, found herself unable to adjust to the new duties of a parent. A highly creative, extremely intelligent woman, this young mother was advised to work, thus giving constructive outlet to her compulsive pattern, and to forestall a complete breakdown. Working seemed one way to achieve satisfaction from the drudgeries of home plus the burden of motherhood,

yet partially functioning as a mother. In this case, making day care available served to sustain this mother as well as the artistic father, and contributed greatly to the stability of this family. Placement itself played a significant and healthy part in the little boy's development, as manifested in his changed behavior and personality development.

We have come to recognize in our day care program the validity of accepting those parents who may need continuous help, and although some improvement can be effected, sustaining support probably will always be necessary.

We have learned, for instance, in working with one of our mothers for almost two years, that casework efforts and ongoing help with day to day care of her child in day care placement can offer important points of learning. This mother needed help with having pinpointed for her, her children's basic needs. She seemed completely ignorant of actual child care, and of the tangible meaning of child-parent relationship.

Mrs. K was a harassed young woman of 27 when she requested day placement of her 14 month old daughter. She was working to supplement her husband's sporadic, meager earnings, and had been holding down, quite competently, her civil service job. Contact with the parents indicated a very disturbed relationship, with frequent desertions and reconciliations. We recognized soon that in concentrating on reforming her husband, Mrs. K, despite her concern for her children, was neglecting her baby girl and her six year old daughter who was enrolled in a day care center.

During the period of this child's placement and our work with Mrs. K around her obvious lack of child care knowledge, little Joan has developed remarkably. She is no longer a puny, ill-kempt child suffering from frequent colds, but has blossomed into a healthy, well-cared-for

youngster. Mrs. K has been able to learn some of the practical realities of child care, and with our continued and steady efforts, she has come to know some of the essentials that go into a child's needs in such simple things as sleeping, eating, playing and clothing. Supporting these parents while consistently recognizing their emotional limitations, over a long period of time, and offering them help with the simple everyday needs of their child, have actually safeguarded little Joan's well-being. This mother has been sustained in a beginning understanding of parental responsibility which is reflected in her better care of the two sisters. The mother actually is a disturbed, even unrealistic person, and the father, though kindly, is unstable. No court, however, would consider removing these children from the home—for, in their own peculiar way, they are responsible. In spite of their liabilities they have been able to use our supplemented help in child care, and have learned to follow through when specific advice and directions are given.

I have given no illustrations of straight financial need as a precipitating factor, which we had anticipated might account for a sizeable number. In our experience thus far, the economic factor is certainly a complicating one, but it usually seems to be one of several factors pointing to the need for this type of help.

I have endeavored to bring out in this paper how criteria for day care placement present themselves in various

ways: in economic struggle, in marital difficulties with threat of family breakup, psychiatric needs, and supportive help of inadequate parents. Whatever may be the different facets and variations of the requests for this service, we have come to feel that our most valid guide is the evidence of family strengths which can be utilized in day care placement and casework services to mitigate or resolve basic problems. By reaching families at an early stage, and by accepting their requests for the tangible service of day care as vital in helping these families recognize other roots of their problems, and by directing them towards working out fundamental difficulties, we have prevented total breakup of family units. It is never too early for prevention, particularly when the welfare of families is concerned!

Our experience has been limited by time, funds and scope. I am not prepared to present substantial statistical figures or final developments. Still, it has been outstandingly evident to us that the project has steadily gained momentum, and that day care can be a significant social service. From our own practice of these past two and a half years, we feel that family day care program, while its concepts and trends are still being written and experienced, has a real place in the field of child welfare. With this service another avenue is added to our development of sufficient variety of services, to meet the wide range of needs of children and families.