An Overview of Child Welfare Services
in Valparaiso, Indiana

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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According to the Child Welfare League of America, child welfare involves providing social services to children and young people whose parents are unable to fulfill their child-rearing responsibilities, or whose communities fail to provide the resources and protection that children and families require. Child welfare services are designed to reinforce, supplement, or substitute the functions that parents have difficulty in performing, and to improve conditions for children and their families by modifying existing social institutions or organizing new ones. Child welfare services can include nearly every effort that society and the community makes that is likely to benefit children. However, there were four basic areas that I explored in the city of Valparaiso, Indiana. These include mental health, health, recreation, and special needs. In doing so, I not only gained an understanding of specific agencies and organizations, but also of how they interact - or fail to interact. In this paper, I have organized the agencies according to these four groups. They are listed as they would be found in a typical resource directory. I have included the name of the agency, the address and phone number, the administrator or director, the eligibility requirements, the purpose, and a description of the services offered. The agencies that I have listed are not the only ones available to Valparaiso citizens. They are, however, the ones that people will most predominantly take advantage of and the ones that offer the widest variety of child welfare services to the young people of this community.
MENTAL HEALTH

Agency: Porter Starke Services, Inc.
Address: 701 Wall Street
Phone: 464-8541
Administrator: Lee Grogg
Eligibility: available to all residents of Porter and Starke counties on a sliding scale basis
Purpose: to offer mental health facilities to children, adults, and families
Services: Porter Starke's child services are mainly dealt with on an out-patient basis. There is an in-patient facility functioning mainly for adults, which is only used for children in crisis situations such as a suicide attempt. All children treated must have parental permission with the exception of cases dealing with drug or alcohol abuse or venereal disease. All information given in the sessions is strictly privileged with the exception of child abuse or neglect cases which must legally be reported to the Porter County Department of Welfare. The fees for treatment are charged on a sliding scale ranging from three to twenty dollars an hour. The staff sees this as a contract between themselves and the individual and feels that this promotes responsibility. If a child really cannot afford to pay the fee, which occasionally happens in cases where parents are not informed, the fee will be charged and just left unpaid.

The Porter Starke Services, Inc. have several services that children can benefit from. One is the Child Specialty Team which consists of an educational psychologist and a counseling psychologist. They do family assessment, arrange for psychological testing, and work with various school systems in Porter and Starke counties. Along
with these, they participate in teacher conferences and spend one-third to one-half of their time working with the Porter County Special Education Coop. Another service that they provide is a parenting improvement class based on the STEP Program (Systematic Training and Effective Parenting). These are usually parents that are internally referred since cases of child abuse and/or neglect may come out during discussions. If one of their classes is not being held at a convenient time, the parents are referred to the STEP Program sponsored by the Youth Service Bureau. The staff will also make referrals to other programs that the Youth Service Bureau offers, as well as programs offered by the Valparaiso Boy's Club, Lighthouse, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

The staff at Porter Starke feels that there are gaps in the social services that Valparaiso offers to its children. They are currently participating in a task force whose purpose is to pinpoint these gaps and to recommend changes. One area that they would like to work with is a residential center for hospitalizing children. They would also like to do more outreach work in the schools dealing with such topics as alcohol and drug abuse and a special session for seniors focusing in on problems they may encounter after graduation.
HEALTH

Agency: Porter Memorial Hospital, Social Services
Address: 814 La Porte Avenue
Phone: 462-1121
Administrator: Ruth Ann McWhorter

Eligibility: offered to anyone requiring in-patient care as well as those requiring emergency services

Purpose: to provide social services to people in Porter Memorial Hospital beyond those of the patient's medical needs

Services: One of the main functions of the social service department in Porter Memorial Hospital is that of a referral agent. Because the hospital is set up to provide short term care, the social workers cannot depend on themselves to give aid to patients over a long period of time. They must rely on other agencies in the community to provide care once the patient has been released. Legally, all child abuse cases are referred to the Department of Public Welfare for investigation. Parents of such children are also referred to Parents Anonymous and Porter Starke Services, Inc. Children from the ages of three to six with emotional, physical, and/or educational problems are often referred to the Child Development Center. If the social workers feel that the child may need to be removed for any reason from the home, they will call the Youth Service Bureau concerning the Lighthouse Program or, possibly the Baptist Children's Home in cases of young children. For financial aid the social worker will refer patients to the township trust, the Department of Public Welfare, the Salvation Army, or various private organizations. The Valparaiso Shriners also give a great deal of financial aid to cases involving burn or orthopedic treatment. The social workers occasionally refer patients to the Porter County Association for Re-
tarded Citizens for counseling or job training and the Trade Winds in Gary for speech and hearing therapy and vocational evaluation. For further medical care, the services of the Visiting Nurse Association are engaged, especially to check on newborn infant care.

Besides acting as a referral agent, the Porter Memorial Hospital's social workers also help to operate a Well Baby Clinic in Valparaiso. This is done in cooperation with the Porter County Health Department. This service provides medical care for newborn infants and their mothers on a sliding scale basis. In the future, the hospital would like to provide more services for pregnant women to alleviate the great number of pre-natal problems.

Agency: Planned Parenthood Association of Northwest Indiana
Address: 54 Indiana Avenue
Phone: 462-5976
Administrator: Ann McFarren
Eligibility: family planning services are available to all men and women upon request
Purpose: health care for couples who want children but are unable to conceive and for women who want to postpone pregnancy for one reason or another
Services: Planned Parenthood offers a wide variety of services in the area of contraception. When a patient arrives at the clinic, she fills out a brief medical and social history. Then she's given a complete physical examination which includes the following: pelvic and breast exam, Pap smear, blood pressure, hematocrit, urinalysis, and V.D. screening. Pregnancy tests are given upon request. The patient is then educated on all methods of family planning through the use of films, literature, and the staff personnel. The method of birth con-
that the patient chooses is entirely up to her unless there are any medical problems. Supplies and instructions are then given out. Patients are seen one month after the initial exam so that they can receive their test results, then again after six months to check their blood pressure. A yearly examination is given for the renewal of prescriptions. Fees are based solely on ability to pay. No one is billed and no one's refused service because of inability to pay.

There are also several different types of counseling the Planned Parenthood staff provides. One is infertility counseling. This is offered to couples who are having a difficult time conceiving. A medical, social, and emotional history is taken of both the patient and her husband. Appropriate referrals can be made and occasionally funds can be appropriated for complete medical evaluation or treatment.

Voluntary sterilization counseling is provided for couples who desire a permanent method of birth control. All aspects are closely looked at and if a definite decision is made to go along with the surgery, referrals are made and funds may be given.

Finally, pregnancy counseling is available to anyone. All alternatives are discussed in detail until a decision can be reached. Referrals are also made to obstetricians, abortions clinics, and homes for unwed mothers. Referrals can also be made to other agencies in the community in all cases, such as to the Youth Service Bureau, Porter Starke Services, Inc., and the Department of Public Welfare.

Although the community has not been greatly receptive to this side of Planned Parenthood, the agency hopes to do more educational presentations in the future. Ideally, the staff could provide information to the public and professionals concerning all aspects of their services. Literature, films, and group talks would be made available to any community group. Training sessions would also be given to get new information that they could pass on to clients.
RECREATION

Agency: Valparaiso Park District
Address: 1158 Harrison Boulevard
Phone: 462-5144
Administrator: Ed Wegner
Eligibility: Valparaiso residents
Purpose: to provide public park and recreational programs and facilities for Valparaiso citizens

Services: The Valparaiso Park District offers a variety of activities for children throughout the seasons. It consists of thirteen park sites and a golf course. One such park site includes a lake which is used for fishing, boating, and ice-skating. Swimming lessons are given to people of all ages during the summer months. The golf course has special hours for youngsters to play and offers classes to help them learn to play or to improve their abilities. In the winter months, the course is used as a slope for toboganning and sledding.

The other parks sites offer a nine week supervised program during the summer. Each week has a special theme with corresponding fun activities such as a watermelon day, a trip to Wrigley Field to see the Chicago Cubs, and a pet show. They also provide arts and crafts and a variety of playground equipment.

Also offered as part of the park program are softball teams for both girls and boys, a girls' volleyball league, square dancing, baseball for girls and boys, and soccer. Also, a class is offered covering various aspects of the theater and one dealing with puppets. Tennis and baton lessons are offered as well as a teen fitness program dealing with exercise, jogging, and weight training.

The programs are not as detailed in the winter months due to kids being back in school and many staff being back at college. However,
they do construct a hockey rink and flood a portion of a couple of parks for ice-skating. Ice-skating lessons are offered as well as an ice-skate exchange where kids can buy or sell old skates. Also offered is a Winter Olympics on ice which involves lap races, wheel barrow races, and tag. Refreshments are served and the whole family is invited to get involved. Cross-country skiing clinics are offered for groups with trails made on the golf course. Equipment can be rented from the Park District Office. Again, the whole family is invited to become involved in this activity.

The Park District offers other family-type activities such as community band concerts each week in the summer and a carnival. The park atmospheres also enhance family outings with the playground equipment, picnic areas and shelters, and softball diamonds.

Agency: Valparaiso Boys' Club
Address: Jefferson at Campbell
Phone: 462-7416
Administrator: Chuck Leer
Eligibility: any boys from the ages of six to eighteen
Purpose: to provide programs to boys in the Valparaiso community in order to stimulate and reinforce good behavior
Services: The Boys' Club provides a variety of recreational activities. In the area of sports, it offers baseball for boys ages ten to twelve. They participate in the Porter County Youth League. Because the Boys' Club now has an indoor basketball court, that sport is played year round. During the regular season, there are leagues for different age groups ranging from six to eighteen. During the fall, flag football is offered. In the winter months, the Park Department freezes a hockey rink which is used by the Boys' Club. Junior High aged boys have formed a physical fitness club which meets weekly for boxing,
wrestling, and camping.

The Boys' Club also involves kids in activities other than sports. They have a game room which is always available when the building is open. It has equipment inside ranging from shuffleboard to air hockey to ping pong. As an extra incentive to come, weekly tourneys are held with prizes. The kids also play other games in groups, such as relays and hobo races. Arts and crafts are offered during daily club hours. These include such projects as woodburning, kite building, and ceramics. A wood shop is also available during club hours. This is a fully equipped shop and there is always a skilled instructor around to answer questions or to demonstrate procedures. The photo lab has flexible hours, but can be used for black and white developing and processing. There special activities groups involving kids with similar interests. These kids meet twice a week with a V.U. social work student to explore areas such as drama, cooking, and travel.

Besides activities, the Boys' Club has an informal lounge for boys in the ninth grade and up that can be used for entertainment, discussions, or just to listen to music. The Boys' Club also offers more professional help to kids and their families in the way of counseling, outreach, or referral to agencies such as the Youth Service Bureau, Porter Starke Services, Inc., and to the Probation Office.
SPECIAL NEEDS

Agency: Department of Public Welfare, Child Services
Address: 1401 Calumet
Phone: 462-2112
Administrator: Sue Ruth

Eligibility: to Porter County residents with the exception or information and referral which is available to anyone

Purpose: to provide the needed financial, medical, and other supportive or protective service to children and their families

Services: The Department of Public Welfare offers several different types of services for kids and their families. One such service is that of providing financial aid. There are only certain persons eligible for AFDC, SSA, and Medicaid. If a person is not eligible for any of these or cannot wait for the paper work to go through, the department will refer these clients to the township trustee or to any other agencies or organizations that might be able to provide any assistance.

The department also is responsible for protective service to children in the form of foster care or adoption. On the average, thirty to forty cases are referred each month involving suspected child abuse or neglect. Of these, approximately two-thirds deal with neglect; the kids are being left alone or aren't going to school. The other third deals with actual sexual or physical abuse. The first goal of the case workers is to protect the child. The department is licensed to operate twenty-five to thirty foster homes. They are currently using five to ten. The second goal is to return the child to the family. This will hopefully occur if the parents have made progress throughout their counseling with Porter Starke Services, Inc., Parents Anonymous, or another private agency. If no progress is being made, the final goal is to place the child in a permanent family setting.
This may either be voluntary on the parents' part, or the judge has the power to officially terminate parental rights. This is only used as a last resort, however, because the agency feels that a child should be with his natural parents if at all possible. This can sometimes be done through the intervention of a homemaker. This may prevent unnecessary placement of a child. A homemaker can help the parents improve their skills in managing a household and in caring for children. If the Department of Public Welfare does not feel that it can provide the necessary services to a child or to his family, they are referred to any other agency in the community that may be able to help the situation.

Agency: Porter County Probation Office
Address: Porter County Courthouse, Room 412
Phone: 462-3638
Administrator: Marilyn Niequist
Eligibility: to provide a more regulated environment in order to encourage a youth to be more responsible for his own behavior
Services: The Probation Office takes referrals from many different sources in the community, including the police, the schools, parents, and private citizens. After a referral, a probation officer is required to interview the youth and his parents within at least two weeks. If the youth is currently in jail, a detention hearing must be held within forty-eight hours of his entrance. A probation officer is also involved in this. A hearing is only necessary when a youth is being held in detention, when he has committed repeated status offenses, or when he has committed a crime other than a status offense. In the latter two cases, a hearing does not have to be scheduled within forty-eight hours, but should be held as early as the court schedule can allow.
The Probation Office has a number of options to deal with various situations. One is to put the youth on informal probation. This can not be done in any cases where he has to go before the court. Informal probation involves counseling and a set of rules that the parents and the child contract to follow for a period of no longer than six months. Formal probation is another option. This is much more structured and can last until the youth is twenty-one years old. The Probation Office also acts as a referral agency for youths and their families. They encourage people to take advantage of services at the Youth Service Bureau, Porter Starke Services, Inc., and other private counseling services.

The probation officers also work closely with the detention officers. Although they all work out of the same office, the detention officers are employed by the circuit court. They were originally hired to work in a detention center which is being held up due to a legal matter. They are currently seeing juveniles every day as well as advocating a new building for them. All of the information gained from any of these juveniles from either a detention officer or a probation officer is strictly confidential. The only time it can be released is when the Probation Office refers someone to another agency. It can never be given to a school, college, or prospective employer. If a youth wants his juvenile record destroyed, he must apply and a probation officer will make a motion with the court. This cannot be done until the youth has had a clean record for two years after his delinquent act. Once the court has agreed, the records are literally burned.

Agency: Youth Service Bureau
Address: 103 Indiana Avenue
Phone: 464-9585
Administrator: Dennis Morgan
Eligibility: All Porter County residents

Purpose: to serve Porter County youth and their families as a re-
referrer agent, a catalyst, an advocate, and through direct service
Services: The Youth Service Bureau's direct services are divided into
three areas: pre-system, direct system, and post-system, with system
referring to the juvenile justice system. Pre-system programs are
designed to be preventative in nature. The Rent-a-Kid program is an
odd job referral service for youth in Porter County that are between
the ages of twelve and seventeen. The Bureau screens offers and then
matches them with teens. The Outreach Program is designed to "search
out" teens to find out what problems they see in the community and to
then create activities around these needs. The social action group
is a group of high school students who are interested in a career
such a social work or who just enjoy working with people. They visit
social service organizations, plan activities for other people, and
do service projects. Individual members volunteer an hour or two
each week at an agency to better acquaint themselves with the line of
work. Special Programs are also sponsored each year to provide a rec-
creational activity for Porter County Youth. These programs include
such things as "Job Day" to help kids learn how to look for a job,
how to prepare for an interview, and how to fill out an application.
"Project You" is designed for teenage girls and centers on self-
improvement in the areas of fashion and make-up. Other activities
include painting fire hydrants, dances, and an arts and crafts show.

Direct system programs are aimed at youngsters that have com-
mitted juvenile offenses or for some other reason are in need of aid.
Big Brothers/Big Sisters utilizes volunteers within the community
to spend two to four hours each week with such a youngster. The
volunteers are screened and trained before they are paired and are
periodically evaluated. A Play Counseling program for kids ages six to twelve was developed to help kids who are having problems belonging at home or at school. The children plan two activities each month which are generally recreational. Their supervisor plans the other two which center around values clarification of some kind. The Youth Service Bureau operates two group homes, one for girls and the other for boys. The teenagers who live here are between the ages of thirteen and seventeen and for various reasons, cannot live with their natural parents. The supportive environment helps them resolve their problems and hopefully reunite with their families as soon as possible. A Referral Education Program is aimed towards youth who do not particularly want counseling or may not really need it. The group sessions involve discussions of values, self-awareness, and the Juvenile Justice System. The foster care placements are for children that cannot function in their own homes; but need to be in a family environment. Screening and training is required for potential foster parents and the program is aimed at returning the child to his natural family. A jail volunteer program is set up to give teens a chance to talk to someone that cares while they are detained in jail. Volunteers are trained to improve listening skills and to educate them about the Juvenile Justice System. Finally, counseling is offered to clients who are self-referred or referred by a variety of community sources. Emphasis is placed on identifying the problems and clarifying basic needs. Referrals can be made to other agencies in the community or to programs offered by the Youth Service Bureau.

Post-system programs are designed for kids that have had prolonged contact with the "system". The one program currently offered in this category is the After-Care Program, which was developed to benefit Porter County residents returning from Indiana State Boys' School and Girls' School. Because of the great transition these youngsters
face, the Youth Service Bureau provides them with counseling, locating a job, returning to school, or preparing for the G.E.D.

Besides direct services, the Youth Service Bureau also acts as a referral agent. Clients can be referred to various community agencies. The Bureau's staff has made many efforts to create helping relations between themselves and other agencies in order to get immediate help for their clients. Because the agency is fairly young in Valparaiso, its advocacy program is still fairly undeveloped. As their credibility increases in the community, their role as an advocate will also increase. This is a gradual process, however. Although the staff is doing some things in this area, such as attending the hearings of clients, there are future plans to become more involved in school situations, law enforcement, and the disbursement of local funds. The Youth Service Bureau is becoming more and more involved as a catalyst in Porter County. Although this is similar to advocacy, it is on a more collective level with the public. It involves bringing issues to fore and the needed programs into existence. Programs they are currently involved in include a proposed detention center and a Substance Abuse Program.
There are many areas of improvement that the Valparaiso community could make in its social services to children. There are programs that need to be developed or updated in order to meet the changing demands of this society. By seeing that services coordinate instead of compete or overlap, each agency can function more efficiently and, in turn, provide a better service for its clients. I feel that social workers need to be integrated into a wide variety of community organizations and institutions in order to facilitate positive change and help services cooperate with each other. One such institution is the school.

As yet, the Valparaiso School System does not have a social worker. There are many problems that students face inside and outside of the classroom. Under the present system, if these problems are dealt with, they are handled by a teacher, a principal, a guidance counselor, or perhaps a nurse. The school system employs people to take care of educating children, nursing them, feeding them, disciplining them, entertaining them, training them, and occasionally babysitting them. That may be all that some children require, but others that are having difficulties of some sort need more attention, more time, and more understanding than the present school situation can realistically give to them. Going to an agency outside of the school can be a very traumatic and discouraging experience for a child because of several factors. Social workers are often given the image of someone that never follows through and really cannot help. A person's pride can really be hurt by admitting that he needs help. Transportation to an agency can be a problem for some children. Many may not be aware that anything's wrong, won't admit to to it, or are afraid to come forward because of pressure from another source. These are just a few reasons why I feel a social worker needs to come to them — to be available when situations come up that cannot properly be handled by
another school employee.

The role of a school social worker must be developed into a full-time, twelve-month-a-year position. The person should be qualified to deal with many different types of clients in regard to race, age, education, and social background. A school social worker must not only deal with the students in school, but also their parents, teachers, the school system, the community, and social changes. Therefore, he must be able to deal with people individually, in groups, and have skills in community organization. It would be even more desirable to have a team of social workers for the school system, not only because of the great number of cases, but also because each member could facilitate the others. As a group, they could have more power to modify school and community conditions. More specifically, I feel that there are certain areas that a school social worker should concentrate on.

One of the more obvious roles of a school social worker is that of an individual counselor. This can involve a great many approaches depending on why the child is there. It may just be that the child is feeling discouraged and needs someone to listen. There could also be cases of truancy, in which the worker needs to talk with the child's parents. Perhaps the child is not in school because he is needed at home to babysit or because he is sick and the family cannot afford a doctor. Perhaps the child has a terrible phobia of school or has been physically beaten and is afraid someone will report seeing his bruises. A social worker is in an excellent position to deal with these sorts of problems and many more. He is trained to deal with situations like these that happen outside of the classroom. He can easily refer the child and/or other members of the family to other agencies or services that may benefit them. He has access to this information much more readily than others in the school system.
A school social worker can also help teachers find ways to deal with problems inside of the classroom. Children's difficulties need to be dealt with as early as possible before they become more serious. A child can demonstrate failure in many ways besides just in school work. He can demonstrate withdrawal or aggressive behavior among other things. The social worker and classroom teacher or team need to get together to discover what is causing the difficulty and what the best way to deal with it is. This remedy may only involve more encouragement or "I-messages" or it may require the assistance of other community agencies.

Another role that the school social worker can fulfill is that of a social service to the parents. The parents need to be aware of any problems that the child is having in the classroom. These need to be clarified and presented in such a way that the parents are not overly alarmed, but that they understand the situation and are concerned about it. Parents need to realize that adjustment to school can be very difficult for some children. Their encouragement can be very vital to the child's perception and attitude towards school in general. However, some problems that children encounter at school are their own and they must face up to that. Parents must also understand the fact that they are not responsible for every action their child gets into outside of their own home.

Besides individual work with students, teachers, and parents, a social worker could have an overall effect on the school system. He could help to develop school policies that deal with a child's welfare and in identifying major problems that he sees in that area. He could improve relations between the community and the school by organizing parent groups. These could also be educational. There could be seminars dealing with controversial topics such as drug abuse and contra-
There are a couple of groups that I think could help advocate this type of program in the schools. One would be the Porter County Youth Service Bureau. I think that the staff at that agency could be very helpful in advocating having a school social worker. They are organized to encourage the establishment of new facilities and programs to deal with delinquent or dependent children. The Probation Office could also help to promote this type of service. It may prevent them from having to process so many juveniles that really should be getting help from another source. It would also ideally save them a great deal of time not having to supervise all of the kids on probation. The Department of Public Welfare could also aid in creating such a position in the school system. They would have someone inside to help kids with difficulties before it gets to the point that their department needs to be involved. They would also have a very reliable source of information on cases that they have or of cases that are referred to them. I am sure that many smaller agencies would also encourage any step that could improve social services to the children in Valparaiso. Many of these could be involved in one way or another in the position of the school social worker, either in the planning or advocating or supervising. I think that various professionals from many areas of child services in the community should form a board to advise the worker. These services could include those dealing with education, recreation, health, mental health, and their special problems such as the Juvenile Justice System. I also think that social workers from other schools could be contacted to give ideas and suggestions for the set-up of such a position in Valparaiso. Hopefully, the school system would be receptive to the idea, although this would be another salary for them to pay.