

Collection #
M 0983
BV 3652-3692a

CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF INDIANAPOLIS RECORDS, 1855-2000

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Processed by

Maire Gurevitz
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Revised by

Amy C. Vedra
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 21 manuscript boxes, 44 bound volumes, 1 box of black and white images, 3 boxes of color photographs

COLLECTION DATES: 1855-2000

PROVENANCE: The Children's Bureau of Indianapolis, May 1976; October 2005; January 2006

RESTRICTIONS: All case records less than seventy-five years old are closed to researchers. Case records and other materials regarding individuals who obtained service from the Children's Bureau which are at least seventy-five years old are open to scholarly and genealogical research, pursuant to the regulations of the Indiana Historical Society Library.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: "For the Children's Sake: a history of the Children's Bureau of Indianapolis" HV885.I55 F67 2000; Annual Reports of Indianapolis Benevolent Society and Charity Organization Society, HV99 I42 I4; The Family Service Association of Indianapolis Records, 1879-1971 M 0102

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1976.0503; 2006.0012; 2006.0136

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Children's Bureau was originally formed under a charter in 1850 as the Widows' and Orphans' Asylum, and the organization officially began operations in 1851. The organization was run by the all-women Board of Managers and an advisory board of men, all of whom were prominent figures or of prominent families in the community at the time. Initially, the city of Indianapolis was divided into districts by the organization, and one woman on the Visitor Committee would be responsible for surveying the needs of the destitute in her district in addition to collecting donations from affluent citizens in the area. In addition, the organization provided funds to private homes that would board orphans or destitute women and children. Later, in 1855, enough funds were raised and an orphanage was erected at 14th and Capitol Streets, which allowed the organization to board orphans until the children were indentured or adopted by private families.

In 1875, the organization was incorporated for the first time as the Indianapolis Orphans' Asylum. Although the official title of the organization had changed, the mission and services provided by the organization did not. The Orphan's Asylum continued to board children, even taking in children that were charges of Marion and other Indiana counties, and sought out apprenticeships, indentures, or adoptions for the children in their care. However, the number of children under the Asylum's care was ever increasing. Therefore, to provide for larger numbers, the original orphanage expanded on three different occasions from 1869 to 1903, when the organization erected four new buildings at 4107 E. Washington Street. However, although the Orphan's Asylum was providing for many children as best they could, they were many times overwhelmed and most of those involved with or employed by the organization were not professionally trained.

The relative absence of a more professionalized system, in addition to Progressive Era concerns with mental health, hygiene, and juvenile delinquency, brought the Orphan's Asylum to partner with other benevolent and child welfare organizations and government agencies to address these issues. Most notably, the Orphan Asylum's relationship with the Indianapolis Foundation and the Child Welfare League of America resulted in an increasingly professionalized organization that incorporated social work methods for social services. By 1930, the Orphan's Asylum employed professional social workers and also a child psychiatrist, all of whom provided guidance and education to the rest of the staff and the Board of Managers.

The increasingly professional environment of the organization in addition to financial woes because of the Depression, led, in 1934 to a merger between the Orphan Asylum and the Family Welfare Society to form the Children's Bureau of the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum. It was during the Depression Era also that the fundraising arm of the Children's Bureau was established in 1932, the volunteer driven Auxiliary. The Auxiliary serves to provide recreational events or extracurricular activities for the children and publishes a newsletter for foster parents called the *Reflector*, in addition to raising the funds to provide these extras.

The ideological shift from focusing on caring for children in an institutional setting to caring for children through social work and case managed care, aided by the 1935 Aid to Dependent Children provision in the Social Security Act also spelled the end for the orphanage that was run by the Children's Bureau. In 1941, the orphanage officially shut its doors, and the organizational headquarters was moved to the English Foundation Building in 1953.

The Children's Bureau now began to focus strictly on adoptions, foster care, aiding unwed mothers, in addition to expanding their services to include (eventually) three group homes. The number of children up for adoption or foster care increased dramatically in the 1960s, with the largest amount of children, 153, being placed for adoption in 1970. However, after that peak in 1970, the numbers began to steadily decrease as more single mothers were keeping their children, and contraceptive methods were used more frequently. In order to respond to changing needs (i.e. more children needing foster care or temporary care), the Children's Bureau opened up the Garrard House in 1960, a girls home, the Mallon House, a boys home in 1969, and a year later in 1970, the Evans House, a home for unwed mothers, opened.

However, although the numbers of children available for adoption was decreasing, the number of children who still needed homes were increasingly minority children, specifically African American, or children who were older or had disabilities, backgrounds of abuse, or medical problems. In response, the Children's Bureau launched the Homes for Black Children program in 1978, in addition to working with the press to feature one of the children in a segment or column called "Thursday's Child" or "Sunday's Child". In the 1980s, the Children's Bureau also added counseling services and the operation of the Delaware Youth Center, the Crisis Shelter, Runaway Shelter, and Project Safe Place, all of which were residential, temporary care centers.

Due to the expansion of programs and services provided by the Children's Bureau, in the 1990s, the organization established its own foundation, the Children's Bureau Foundation, Inc. to manage and protect its assets. Additionally, in 1992, the Children's Bureau merged with the Family Support Center, which allowed the organization to provide even more services for children in Indianapolis, including the Adolescent Development and Primary Treatment Shelter (ADAPTS) and the Home, Education, and Respite Team (HEART) programs.

The Children's Bureau celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2001, and continues run over 20 distinct programs to serve, protect, and advocate for children.

Sources:

Materials in the collection; <http://www.childrens-bureau.org/corp/history>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains agendas, minutes, correspondence, financial registers and documents, records of children who were indentured, fostered or adopted through the Indianapolis Orphan's Asylum/Children's Bureau, records relating to group homes, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, publications, and a variety of photographs.

This collection is divided into groupings that account for the different functions of the organization. Series 1 (1851–1998), Administrative, contains documents related to the legal authority of the Children's Bureau, in addition to minutes and agendas from the Corporation and the Governing Board, along with a manual for Board members and the Children's Bureau Annual Report. This series also contains papers from Gertrude Taggart, a longtime member of the Governing Board. Series 2 (1907–1989), Committees, contains the minutes, correspondence, and reports from the various committees. Series 3 (1860–1985), Finances, contains donor lists, account books, financial statements, tax information, and payroll.

Series 4 (1871–1992), Services, contain records that speak to the services provided by the Indianapolis Orphan's Asylum/Children's Bureau have provided for children and families, such as indentures (in the earlier days), foster care, group homes, and adoptions. Series 5 (1925–1975), Child Welfare League of America, contains correspondence and studies that speak to the Children Bureau's accreditation and affiliation with CWLA. Series 6 (1891–1998), Publications and Publicity, contains scrapbooks (photocopies and originals), newspaper clippings, brochures, and newsletters, mainly regarding the activities of the Children's Bureau Auxiliary and also Homes for Black Children.

Series 7 (ca. 1960–1980), Children's Bureau Photographs, contain scans of old images from the Orphan's Asylum, in addition to miscellaneous photos from the Auxiliary, Homes for Black Children, the staff, and the children. Series 8 (ca. 1980–2000), Children's Bureau Color Photographs, document groundbreaking and construction on the group homes, events held by Homes for Black Children and FAME, and Project Safe Place. Also included are many miscellaneous photos of children and families that have been served by the Children's Bureau.

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