

Know Your City  
DIVISION OF  
SOCIAL SERVICE  
WELFARE DEPARTMENT  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI  
SECTIONS

- Case Work
- Parole & Pardon
- Penal Institutions

SOCIAL SERVICE DIVISION

The Social Service Division through the Charter of Kansas City, has charge of all work of the city having to do with social service and welfare, the management of all penal, corrective and reformatory institutions of the city.

This work is carried out through the CASE WORK, PAROLE and PENAL INSTITUTIONS sections of the Division.

Family Difficulties

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SOCIAL SERVICE DIVISION CASE WORK SECTION

We all have difficulties which at times are hard to solve unless we can talk to someone who will help us to think it through.

A person or family who has need for advice can come to the Case Work Section and find a person available who is ready and willing to listen to all members of the family who have an interest in the problem.

An active interest and participation in plans with the family, and also suggestions on how the family can help itself, will be given.

All relations with the family or person are held confidential, and thus great freedom is felt by the family in discussing all phases of the difficulty.

Many differences between members of a family can be reconciled by an open discussion of all concerned with an impartial third person who can help each person to see the give and take in family life.

Only a small percentage of domestic problems really need court action for the final solution and the family is better served if it can reconcile its own differences. Some families are in conflict with their neighbors, each thinking he is right. A third person, an impartial advisor, can help them in establishing the rights of each.

Many persons are at a loss to know the exact place in the city where they can find the information or service they need. All are welcome to call at any time for information. Many hundred such calls are answered each month. Close cooperation with city-wide resources and agencies makes this service possible.

Thirteen thousand six hundred and nine persons in 3,428 families asking for 109 different kinds of service came to the Case Work Section from October 31, 1940 to November 1, 1941.

Many asked for some service not available in the Case Work Section but found help with the 68 other agencies or persons to whom we were able to refer them.

The following story of Mr. A portrays some of the work of the Case Work Section—

Mr. A was a skilled workman. His family of five could

have a comfortable life if all his pay was used at home. However, he drank on pay days.

Mrs. A was patient in her efforts to make him see why the children were unhappy and all the bills could not be paid, but all to no avail.

Mrs. A. decided the family could not be deprived any longer nor Mr. A completely lose his self-respect because of drink. She came to the Case Work Section to discuss her problem.

Later, Mr. and Mrs. A were talked to together. After some planning and counseling Mr. A realized his family was more to him than a night out with the boys, followed by a headache and much unhappiness for the whole family.

#### PENAL INSTITUTIONS MUNICIPAL FARM

When you see the Black Maria leaving the Police and Courts Building you know a number of individuals are on their way to the Municipal Farm and Woman's Reformatory. Someone may say they are all convicts heading for the rock pile. Such a statement may be true, more often not. It's true each has run afoul of the law and society says they must atone. But atonement is not all the answer to the problem. The Social Service Division is concerned with the treatment of the underlying causes and conditions which have placed these persons in this position.

"John Doe," one of the thirty-three men, climbs out of the "big wagon" and as his name is called he steps into the office and empties his pockets. He answers a few questions in regard to his personal and medical history and with the others crosses to the main prison entrance where the door is unlocked and the men file down the steps into the basement corridor. Here he finds a box for his dirty and rumpled clothes. He strips and steps into a hot shower room where an attendant sees that he is bathed thoroughly. He misses the old familiar jail smell, gets a breath of clean air and is provided with sterilized clothing—shirt, overalls, socks, underwear, shoes and hat. Now John is subject to definite rules and discipline. He undergoes a physical examination under the supervision of the prison physician administered by a competent medical aid. His thirty days can be served in two-thirds time through proper behavior on his part. He will be assigned to institutional or farm work, rock pile, or in the fields. No one except himself is responsible for the fair and level treatment he will receive. He is away from former habits and make his choice of conduct under definite authority.

John is one of the many who has previously lost his job. His anti-social conduct has failed the confidences of his boss, friends and family. He is now face to face with the necessity of hard wholesome work and activity where he can get the liquor and hardness out of his system and have the chance through toil, proper food and discipline to keep from returning to his old habits and make a new effort towards his own reclamation. The entire program at the Municipal Farm is planned to assist John to the goal of helping himself.

"Thirty days at the Farm" means work in corn and potato fields, feeding hogs or cultivating and canning; or it may mean maintenance tasks, repair work and time on the rock pile. Sixty-seven per cent of those sent to the Farm have some mental or physical illness. Ill health does not excuse their petty crime but in many cases it does explain anti-social conduct. Because of the many individual differences in the background and physical condition of those imprisoned, work is prescribed to suit physical ability.

Sentences to the Farm are resorted to often only after all efforts at correction and rehabilitation have, through parole, been exhausted. The cost of maintaining prisoners over an eight-month period, including operation of the building, new equipment, repairs, food,

clothing, salaries of guards and officials connected directly with the institution per prisoner day, is \$1.59.

To offset costs of penal institution operation and to provide proper work for prisoners, a comprehensive work program is established.

#### Hog Feeding

The Farm takes the profit on the sales of fifty hogs a month, purchased at 100 lbs. and sold at 250 lbs. (at present market reading, a gain of \$15.00 a hog or \$9,000.00 a year). The last six months period shows a profit on 274 total sales, and an increased inventory of \$4,800.00.

#### MUNICIPAL FARM

Twenty-five hundred bushels of corn have been grown on the Farm this past season to supplement the garbage collection from the city institutions in feeding this stock. By the Municipal Farm collecting this garbage. The city is saved from \$235.00 to \$250.00 per month in former costs of collections.

#### FARM GROWN VEGETABLES

A total of 35 tons of fresh vegetables have been grown and marketed through the Farm Commissary. The bulk of these products was used at the Farm and Reformatory kitchens, with a delivery period in addition to the City Hospitals. Any surplus is released to the commission market. In addition, 4,200 gallons of vegetables were canned at the Farm cannery, amply providing for commissary needs through the winter months. The total value of these products is in excess of \$3,000.00.

Thus an effort is made to maintain the municipality's delinquents, when imprisonment is unavoidable, at occupations that will keep the prisoner busy and will at the same time yield to the community itself a partial dividend on a necessary, if unfortunate, investment.

#### REFORMATORY

"Mary Deed" was 21 years of age at the time she was admitted to the Reformatory. She was the oldest child of a family of nine children. Her mother and father were both drinking people and allowed the children to taste intoxicating liquors at a very early age. The natural result was that Mary was forced out of the home at an early age to make her own way. She soon fell into bad company and at the time of her arrest she was with a man much older than herself. He had a long record including drug addiction and alcoholism.

After Mary had been in the Reformatory for about thirty days it was noticed that she was thinking about her life and seeing things in a different light. The gentleman with whom she was arrested had been making regular calls on Mary on visiting days and about the third or fourth time he came, she suddenly dismissed him and told him never to visit her again. She reported this act of hers with the remark, "I would rather stay at Leeds the rest of my life than to go back to the way I was living before."

We worked with Mary for about three more months. She was very cooperative and was a good worker. At the end of this time she was ready for a parole. Employment was secured for her by a parole officer. At the present time she is still employed, remaining away from her old associates and habits and enjoying her place in the community we felt should belong to her.

In the past year 284 prisoners have been admitted from the Municipal Courts of Kansas City. The daily average is twenty-five.

All individuals admitted received medical examinations and are given medical treatment according to their needs. About 30% are found with venereal infection. Dental care is given

regularly.

When the prisoner is admitted she is given a shower bath and completely furnished with the institutional clothing. Her own clothing is laundered and put in a locker until she is released. If she is ill or suffering from the use of alcohol or drugs, she is assigned to the hospital ward until recovery, after which she is put into a separate cell room. After this she is assigned to her work duties. The average working day for each inmate is about seven hours. Work projects include work in the kitchen, sewing room and laundry, and the care of the building. Three substantial and well-balanced meals are served daily.

Further efforts toward the development of the delinquent's habits include a full recreational program. Music, reading, singing, dancing and out-door games, such as soft ball, basket ball and croquet are some of the activities taken part in by the prisoners. Any special talent is encouraged and developed.

Before the day of release arrives plans are under way, through the cooperation of the Parole Office, to place each girl in a respectable environment. Some are sent to their homes and to places of employment and others without families are assisted with their needs, until they can make their necessary adjustments in the community.

The entire program is planned with the thought of assisting each individual towards a new social attitude which shall help her in her future mental and moral life.

#### After Court PAROLE SECTION

The Parole Office of the Division of Social Service supervises cases of individuals who have been found guilty in the Municipal Courts, and have been recommended for parole before commitment, by the sentencing Judge. It also investigates and makes recommendations on all applications for parole from the Municipal Farm and Women's Reformatory and supervises all those who are granted paroles from either of these institutions. At the present time the case load of the Parole Office averages 694 individuals, of which about 85% of the cases are paroled from the Municipal Courts and 15% paroled from the corrective institutions. Persons are placed on parole for violation of any city ordinances or laws. Some of these are: traffic violations, drunkenness, disturbing the peace, petit larceny and non-support.

During the year ending July, 1941, the following cases were supervised by the Parole Office:

Men granted parole before commitment	901
Women granted parole before commitment	237
Men granted parole from the institutions	137
Women granted parole from the institutions	64
Total—	1,339

Of the 1,339 paroles granted, it was necessary to revoke the following number for violation of the conditions of their parole:

Men granted parole before commitment	54
Women granted parole before commitment	43
Men granted parole from the institutions	23
Women granted parole from the institutions	25
Total—	145

These figures indicate that approximately 89% of all persons granted parole lived up to the confidence we have placed in them.

Cases which present difficult problems when they appear in Court, are continued for a period of time in order that the Parole Office may make a pre-sentence investigation for the Judge. The Parole Officer gathers all the facts in the case, inquires into the offense involved, and attempts to gain other pertinent information which, when presented to the Court, will help the Judge in making an unbiased objective appraisal and disposition of the case. All paroles must be approved by the Mayor upon recommendation of the Director of the Department of Welfare, as provided in the Charter.

When a person is placed on parole, he is required to obey certain special conditions which are explained to him. He must refrain from the violation of any city ordinances or laws; he must abstain from the use of all intoxicants; he must secure employment, if possible, and he must assist with the support of his family. Further, special conditions may be imposed at the discretion of the Parole Office in order to cope with or regulate some specific factors connected with the case.

The individual's case is assigned to a Parole Officer. The parolee must report to the Parole Office at stated intervals. During these visits the Parole Officer attempts to gain some insight into the problems, economic, physical and social, with which the individual may be confronted. Close contact is maintained with the family situation by periodic visits in the home, at the place of employment, or in any place important to the rehabilitation of the parolee. The Parole Officer may enlist the aid of other social agencies, both public and private, in an endeavor to assist the parolee in every possible way.

At the termination of the parole period, provided the individual has satisfactorily fulfilled the conditions imposed upon him, he is released from supervision. This does not, however, terminate the contacts of the parolee with the Parole Office. He may, at any time, come to the Parole Office to discuss his problems, request assistance, advice or counsel.

A person found guilty of the violation of traffic laws may be paroled in order to pay his fine in installments. This prevents hardships in the family of a convicted person which would otherwise result, due to his commitment to the Municipal Farm. He would also lose his employment, suffer the stigma of a prison record, and possibly cause his family to become a public charge. An individual on parole on a nonsupport charge makes payments through the Parole Office for the support of his family. During the past year the Parole Office collected approximately \$16,500.00 in traffic fines and \$33,500.00 on non-support cases.

An example of some of the work done by the parole office is the case of a middle aged man who had been arrested several times in the past few years for being drunk. This man had always served a little time at the Farm and was released, or paroled without any follow-up or supervisory work being done. He had had a good home and had held a responsible position, both of which had been lost because of his drinking. After a long and careful study of this case a parole plan was formulated and a parole was granted. He first received some much needed medical attention and hospitalization, after which he was counseled for employment and secured a position. For some time now he has been working regularly, is staying away from drink and has a bright outlook on the future. He has regained his health and his social adjustment has reached the point where he is re-establishing his home and family life.