

## FUNCTIONAL PROBLEMS IN JEWISH VOCATIONAL AGENCIES

generally better established on a public or non-sectarian basis than service for the non-handicapped.

5. It tends to delimit rather than to define function in a JVS agency and in so doing confuses objectives with services in its view of the validity of demonstrational projects by JVS agencies.

6. It regards as separate services such activities as occupational library, services to veterans and refugees, etc., which are actually part of the basic placement and counseling services, and fails to see the relationship between placement and counseling and such activities as consultation on self-employment and combatting discrimination in employment.

7. It tends to place the professional in an inappropriate role with respect to cutting services to satisfy pressures from fund raising sources; the first responsibility of the professional is to develop a program to meet existing needs and to recommend cuts only after it has been determined that insufficient funds are available—not vice versa.

8. It does not recognize the role of JVS's in relation to the Jewish economic problems of discrimination, etc. JVS's cannot solve the basic economic problems of the country or of the Jewish people, but they can offer service to individual Jews in order to help these individuals meet the effects of discrimination and other economic difficulties.

In relation to these criticisms, Mr. Grumer stated that the Newark approach was a start and not the final answer to the problem. It was not a retreat to the reactionary approach of serving only philanthropic wards but was an attempt to reach all levels of community who were vocationally handicapped.

Mr. Lewine summarized his remarks by stating positively the advantage of a technique of registration for all with certain priorities for service, which priorities may include offering certain services to the "handicapped." However, the urgency of need and the applicant's ability to use the services of the agency should be the real criteria for eligibility.

## INDIVIDUALIZED INTAKE IN A CAMPING AGENCY

By **IDA OPPENHEIMER**  
*Jewish Vacation Association,  
New York*

**I**NDIVIDUALIZED intake for an applicant for family, child guidance or health care is so much an accepted practice that any other procedure is unthinkable. It is indicative, therefore, of the place of camping in the social work picture that only now such practices are being considered in relation to our field.

To camps sponsored by agencies with a year-round membership and program, intake presents no real problem. Members sign up and go. Though a set fee often obtains, this is usually adjusted in accordance with the family income or waived entirely. Some beds are made available to other agencies which are privileged to refer children usually at a fee slightly higher than that for members. If after both these groups have been served, there are beds still available, or—what is more usual—to balance the budget, children from the community at large are accepted. Their fee either meets the actual cost or exceeds it. For this third group there is no adjustment—they either pay the full amount or are not accepted.

Besides the agency-sponsored, fee-charging camp, there are, in most urban areas, camps operated by organizations of a wide variety which take children for two or three weeks without any charge at all. Eligibility to such camps is based entirely on economic need and acceptance of their services carries the stigma of charity. Such an approach is

unacceptable to a large segment of families even those of very modest incomes.

Unable within their budget to pay the fee set for outsiders, ineligible for any fee adjustment because they are not members, or do not live in a given neighborhood, and, unwilling to accept anything for nothing—many families whose children need and want camp—were, until recently, shut out from them.

To open to them the services of the short term camp has been one of the most serious problems faced by Jewish Vacation Association almost from its founding in 1926. At that time, few, if any, children not known to social agencies went to short-term camps. Families and agencies were in the same neighborhood. As, however, the Jewish community spread, the problems became more complicated, for movement of agencies did not keep pace with the shift of population.

Those who had had camp experiences in childhood, moved away from served areas. They wanted camp for their children and taught their neighbors to want it also. The less adequate maintained their membership status in the old neighborhood agencies but the vast majority became assimilated in their new environment and remained completely unserved. They did not passively accept their new lack of facilities but made known their wants by mail, by telephone, by personal appeal.

Though the Jewish Vacation Association had been set up to serve agencies only, the volume of community pressure made it obvious that something had to be done. The solution was not easy and did not come at once. The very fact that these families were unaffiliated made organized contact with them almost impossible.

Over a period of years, however, by trial and error, a procedure was developed which gives the unaffiliated the same consideration of their individual needs as is given to those who are known to agencies. This is done through a city-wide Camp Application Bureau.

Established in 1941, the Camp Application Bureau has aptly been termed a mail order service. It is much more than that. It is a means for giving individualized consideration to requests for camp care to thousands whose personal applications would swamp the limited personnel of the agency. Its address is a post-office box; its worker reachable only by mail; it has never been advertised except by word of mouth; yet last year over 7,000 parents applied to it, and its correspondence with these families requires full time secretarial service.

How is this anonymous bureau administered and how can it give individualized service? It is administered by the Jewish Vacation Association which is the Camp Department of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies—but whose services are open to anyone in the community—Federated or non-Federated, professional or lay, affiliated or unaffiliated.

The Camp Application Bureau is open to anybody. All that is necessary is for a parent to send a postal card asking for an application for every child for whom he desires camp care. Within 48 hours application blanks go out, to be

filled out and returned by the parent. This is a very important point—the parent applies, the parent fills out the blank and returns it. This procedure is the same for the family under care as for the unaffiliated, since the Camp Application Bureau is available long after case has been closed by the referring agency. In the case of the family under care a summary of the agency contact and reasons for wanting care are also submitted by the worker.

Each application is first screened to eliminate those for whom there are no facilities. The overall camp situation in New York City is very disheartening—approximately one camp bed for every 5 children who need and want it. Kosher facilities, provisions for children with handicaps, for certain age groups, for residents of particular areas, fall far below that. If there are no facilities, the families are notified immediately to prevent undue anxiety. Where possible, in-town substitutes are suggested. This first step involves about one-third of all applicants.

Another third applies so late that placement for that season is impossible. It might be interesting to note that the first application for the summer of 1947 was received in October, 1946, and that none but actual emergencies can be provided for where application is made later than June 1st of the current year. Parents realizing this apply earlier and earlier. They have learned that to delay is to miss out.

With those for whom there are no facilities and those who apply too late out of the way, we can now follow the procedure by which those who remain are considered for camp. The first step is clearance through the Social Service Exchange and contact with agencies currently interested, as well as clearance through the Vacation Clearance Service

to make sure that no other agency is planning a vacation.

Social Service Exchange clearance, which is for information only, reveals that more than 50% of the families have never had agency contact. Therefore, the information submitted by them on the application is the only guide to their eligibility. We at the Jewish Vacation Association are full of faith in mankind—maybe we are naive—but of the thousands who apply every year, very few are trying to put something over. Our job is to keep them from doing too much—from depriving the whole family for the sake of the children. How do we know this? Because each camp candidate is interviewed by a skilled intake worker.

At this point, I must digress a little and explain the organization of the Jewish Vacation Association. As the Camp Department of Federation, it is concerned with the summer problems of the entire Jewish Community—Federated or not. This includes promotion of more camping; discovering new needs and seeing that they are met; setting and raising standards, etc.—the community organization aspect of camping—what we call its indirect services.

Besides these, it provides a variety of direct services of which only camp intake—a sort of intake laboratory—is the concern of this paper. This laboratory shifts somewhat in composition from year to year. This year it is made up of six camps with an age range of 5 to 30. They include a boys' camp, two girls' camps, one working girls' camp and two coed camps, one for fives and sixes, and one for sevens and eights. In addition, there are one family agency, two multi-function communal agencies; one child-care agency; one sending agency and one day camp.

The sponsorship of these is lay and professional, Federated and non-Federated. They have this in common: they have found in a specialized agency the service which they themselves, on their own, would find too costly to set up. Pooling the cost gives them the advantages of a staff with a variety of skills, plus expert knowledge.

Each camp is assigned its own intake worker who, besides having case-work skills, has a knowledge of the group-work process and an appreciation of the content of community organization, as well as, of course, a knowledge of camp and camping. Lest this give the impression that this is a very costly and elaborate set-up it behooves me to say that only one of these paragons is on the staff the year round. The rest come seasonally and often these virtues are the hope rather than the reality; they are what we aim for.

That welding a cohesive staff out of these seasonal workers requires a good deal of training on the job is self-evident. Therefore, the workers chosen must have, besides their professional background, flexibility, imagination, and ability to work under pressure, a sense of humor.

All available information regarding each applicant is put into the hands of the intake worker of the camp to which the child is eligible. She or he—we have both—schedules an appointment with parent and child. And, this I know will surprise some, most of these appointments are kept and where they are not, the parents in almost every instance notify the worker and make a new appointment—another indication that the Camp Application Bureau attracts the well organized, self-sustaining family accustomed to making its own plans.

Because children often drop out at the last moment, those registered fall into

two categories: (1) those who are definitely accepted and (2) those who will fill in should vacancies occur. To the latter, the element of doubt is made clear from the very start so that disappointment is not a traumatic experience.

Intake interviews provide opportunities for many kinds of service. Children not ready to leave home or not suitable for any existing camp, are referred, wherever possible, to in-town facilities. Sometimes it is obvious that the three weeks in the country will not be sufficient. Supplementary day camp or play school arrangements are then made—if they are available. Often the family is in need of some service, but is not aware of its existence. Such cases are referred to the follow-up worker—the one year-round case worker on the staff—for interpretation and referral.

Child and parent are seen together and separately and a summary of the interview is written. This is later considered by an intake committee which consists of the Executive of the agency, the intake worker, plus one other staff member. Further discussion with the lay group which supports the particular camp or sending agency sometimes follows. This latter step which unfortunately cannot be exploited in this paper, is an important phase of community education which, it is hoped, will serve as a discussion topic in some future conference.

The intake interview reveals not only the readiness of the child and his parents for the camp experience but also the relationship of parent and child, the child's place in the family and in the life of the community—his school, his friends, his other group activities, his home environment, the relationship of family members to one another, as well as the

social and economic background of the family.

The latter inevitably leads into the subject of fees. Fees at the camps with which the Jewish Vacation Association works most closely are set to attract the family of very modest income which would resent or shy away from accepting something for nothing. They have very little relationship to actual cost. Need I say more than that even under present conditions, they are set at about \$10 a week.

Parenthetically, I would also add that most parents realize that this cannot cover the entire cost. In answer to their questions they are told that scholarship funds made available by interested agencies or individuals cover the balance. But, are they accepting any more than any of us do when we pay tuition at college or a hospital fee or even taxes?

Ten dollars a week may sound like very little. But to a taxi driver, a post-office clerk or some of the less skilled seasonal workers whose income of \$40 to \$50 a week, must cover rent, food, clothing, insurance and all the other necessities of life, at prices prevalent in New York City, this is a sum to be planned for this.

Camp is not a necessity of life and in discussing fees, the worker must evaluate what this expense means to each family. In some cases, any sacrifice is not too great, in others Susie's camp fee is dependent on Sadie's piano lessons and Harry's dental care. Who are we to say which of these three is most important? Only the family can decide. Our concern is with the need of the child; and the child who needs camp must not be neglected because his brother's teeth need straightening or his sister gets piano lessons.

As one outcome of the interviews,

though no percentages have ever been set, about 1/6 of the children pay full fees; 1/3 receive full scholarship and 1/2 pay in part.

Because physical well being is essential to a good camp experience, each applicant is given a medical examination which takes place on a floor set aside for this purpose at the Jewish Vacation Association and manned by public health nurses and a panel of physicians. The parent is also involved in this experience. The appointment was made in the course of the intake interview and she is present at the examination where the doctor and the nurse, if necessary, discuss with her the findings and suggested follow-up.

A summary of the intake interview together with the medical report serves as an introduction of the child to the director of the camp who interprets the material to her staff. To aid in this process, a member of the Jewish Vacation Association staff visits camp once during each three weeks period for, though short-term camps, by their very nature, can serve only the average run of healthy, normal youngsters and all the skill of the intake worker are directed to such selection, no one can predict the reaction of a child in a given group setting. These visits serve not only to get acquainted with the personnel and see camp in action, but also to discuss problems that have arisen, for children, away from home often for the first time, not infrequently reveal needs up to then unrecognized.

At the end of the season, reports from the camps come in to the Jewish Vacation Association; though sometimes if the situation is acute, they come in while the child is still at camp. Some camps write a report on every child—some only on those who manifest specific needs. These may vary all the way from interest

in music, or leadership qualities, to the need for group experience or severe behavior problems.

Every report is read in connection with the intake summary. Where the child is known to an agency, the report is sent back. The unaffiliated child is treated very much as he is when he first makes application. The parent is notified that a camp report has been received and is invited to come in and discuss it. More than 90% of the parents respond—perhaps with no more than a telephone call but they do take that one step.

Sometimes that telephone call suffices—the parent, aware of the situation, has already taken steps to rectify it. Where necessary, however, office interviews are arranged. Here again, one may be sufficient; or a protracted series of discussions may be required before the parent can accept referral. At this point, the skill of the follow-up worker comes into play.

Due to pressure on agencies, especially child guidance services, and the resultant waiting period before a case can be accepted, the relationship with the parents is often prolonged. The worker must at all times keep it such that full confidence is inspired, yet so tenuous that referral at any moment is possible. Once the family is referred, all contact with the Jewish Vacation Association ceases.

Experience with the Camp Application Bureau has proved that individual intake for the unaffiliated is feasible; that the same discriminating, personal consideration can be given those who apply from the community at large as is the accepted practice with those who are known for long-time care to other professional social work agencies. It has proved also that people who ordi-

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narily shy away from social agencies, those referred to by Frances Taussig in her paper at the 1946 New York State Conference, as "shrinking from the philanthropic implications of the tradition and history of the (former relief) agency—they do not want charity"—will readily come to a specialized agency which has no connotations of relief-giving.

Through this contact, other needs are often, though by far not always, uncovered. Where this is so, skilled interpretation can help guide the family to existing services. The large majority of applicants, however, need and want camp only. Through a specialized agency they can get such service to meet their individual needs on terms acceptable to them.

## SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENT REFUGEES

By MRS. BETTY MAZUR  
*Philadelphia, Pa.*

### CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

**S**INCE 1934, the year in which the German Jewish Children's Aid sponsored the immigration of the first group of children from Germany, who were escaping Nazi persecution, and proceeded to allocate them to various communities, child placing agencies, who assumed responsibility for the actual placement of these children, concerned themselves with the development of most helpful ways of offering their service to the new arrivals. In the process of re-evaluation of their function in relation to these children the first and natural reaction has been that these children being so different in language, customs and culture needed a different approach to the problem of their placement in this country.

A careful scrutiny of the process through which these children finally were able to settle down in placement revealed that this process was psychologically akin to the one the native child went through in experiencing the separation from his parents and in learning to live in a family other than his own under agency supervision. Furthermore, it also revealed that this feeling of difference related to the way the community and possibly the worker reacted

in feeling against the forces which made this transplantation necessary. The placement worker and community felt almost called upon to atone for the injustice done to these children.

Most placement agencies are in a sense multiple function agencies, in that the types of placement they offer range from adoption, to free home placement, to "boarding" home placement, etc. Each type of placement is a service in itself in that it involves different responsibility on the part of the agency, the foster parents and the child. The type of placement a particular child may need depends upon whether or not he is free, socially and emotionally, to enter a new relationship.

The placement agency can find within its structure the way to meet the needs of the new arrivals, despite the many differences they present emotionally and in terms of their reactions and behavior. It is a challenge to the skill and creativity of the professional worker to find new ways in the old structure to meet their particular needs, to help them to a new beginning in the new land. Transplanted into new soil through the natural process of growing the new arrivals will form new roots, weak or strong, as the case may be.