

# THE IOWA CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH STATION

Bulletin of Information  
for the Iowa State Council  
for Child Study and Parent Education

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“The State Board of Education is hereby authorized to establish and maintain at Iowa City as an integral part of the State University, the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, having as its objects the investigation of the best scientific methods of conserving and developing the normal child, the dissemination of the information acquired by such investigation, and the training of students for work in such fields.” *Act of General Assembly of Iowa, April 21, 1917.*

### PURPOSE OF THE BULLETIN

This bulletin is designed to acquaint the Iowa State Council for Child Study and Parent Education and other organizations and persons interested in the Station with its present status in regard to program and financial needs. It will be seen that the Station is at a turning point, in that large grants from foundations which aided in its development are not available for permanent support. Beginning in 1937 financial responsibility for the Station's program will devolve mainly upon the State.

## HOW THE STATION CAME TO BE

That the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station was established by a legislative act in 1917 is well known. That this action was taken in response to something like a folk movement under the inspired leadership of Cora Bussey Hillis, in which the representatives of 300,000 Iowa citizens united in support of the bill, is even more significant. The Station is a branch of the State University of Iowa, but it is more: it is an institution placed in the University (closely articulated with the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts and the Iowa State Teachers College) at the earnest and long-continued demand of the people of the State. As such it was the first institution of its kind in the United States.

Throughout its nineteen-year history the Station has been a center of attention for other states interested in similar developments. It is fair to say that it has come to be regarded as a contribution to public welfare of national significance, in which the State of Iowa has led the way.

The whole plan of research and service in the field of child welfare rests upon the belief that sound knowledge steadily applied to the rearing of children will not only reduce error and suffering, but will give to American children increasingly what is needed now as never before: *a good start in life.*

In addition to its State appropriations the Station has received substantial gifts from foundations. It now receives certain outside grants, but the time has come when the bulk of the work must be taken over by the State of Iowa—or allowed to go by default.

“ . . . . the best scientific methods of conserving and developing the normal child ”

The Station researches have shown

— that even in times of prosperity many Iowa children from birth onward are undernourished; that there are nutritional needs which cannot be met by trial-and-error methods on the part of individuals; that common diets for children may be defective diets; and that the effects of certain dietary deficiencies may not be noticed from day to day, but are found in later life and in the next generation.

— that it is feasible to introduce into our schools a program of simple physical measurements which will be of assistance in protecting the child's growth and health.

— that, for a given environment, there is an orderly process of child growth and development along physical, motor, mental and social lines and that a single child can only be judged backward, average or advanced in terms of measured group progress; that with radical improvements in the environment, beginning at an early age, we may expect to develop better children.

— that economic security, of and by itself, is not sufficient to insure adequate child development or a happy adjustment as between children and adults.

— that intelligence can be definitely improved through the forces of environment and education. In such improvement there is hope not only for the reduction of feeble-mindedness, but for increasing the mental ability of children at all levels.

— that the prime condition of learning among children, both at home and at school, is a strong sense of need and that motivation must be provided accordingly.

— that personality can be modified in young children; that the timid child may lose his fears and the “terrible” child learn to live and let live.

— that a good nursery school is a positive aid to the child and to the home.

— that stuttering is an unnecessary hardship which can always be reduced and often eliminated.

— that character is not fixed at birth, but is largely dependent upon childhood experiences in the home, school and community; that the forces which produce delinquency and crime will yield to scientific analysis — only then is there hope for prevention.

— that parents can be educated; that not only information on child rearing, but the more difficult arts involved in practices and attitudes can be mastered by parents; that such mastery is aided by the services in education and guidance sponsored by the Station.

— that the 688 publications of the Station taken together tend to support certain conclusions which have a crucial bearing upon the programs of human welfare proposed for Iowa and for the country as a whole:

1. The average child of today is far removed from the highest goals for childhood with respect to growth, health, education, adjustment and preparation for adult life.

2. There are still large research areas where little is known, for the work is relatively new and inquiries into human development and behavior are admittedly complex.

3. Even where research and laboratory experience do point to definite child needs, it is a long, hard way from such discoveries to the building up of improved home, school, and community practices. The gap between research and practice can only be closed by long-continued, widespread educational activities.

4. For childhood, from birth through adolescence, the greatest waste, both in money and in human energy, comes through belated attempts to patch up bad conditions which need not have existed.

“ . . . . the dissemination of information acquired by such investigation”

The previous section has outlined various discoveries within this area. They may be found by turning to the Station's publications. These are classified below:

	Number
General development and methods of study	30
Nutrition	56
Physical growth and measurement	49
Child psychology; child behavior	192
Preschool education; education	80
Parent education	106
Character education and mental hygiene	32
Studies in allied fields, such as physiology, dentistry, speech and art	37
Reviews and abstracts	24
Popular bulletins	82
Total	688
Total Distribution of Station Publications:	
Technical monographs	39,201
Standards, test materials	1,533,299
Popular bulletins and pamphlets	704,352
Total	2,276,852*

The publication of researches, studies and popular articles is of course one way to disseminate knowledge, but there are additional channels utilized by the Station.

For example, the Conference on Child Development and Parent Education held each June in Iowa City has, in its nine meetings, enrolled over 5,000 persons.

Child study classes organized in Iowa towns for the systematic study of the development and behavior of children have, in twelve years, enrolled over 20,000 parents.

The Radio Child Study Club, which during the past year has presented sixty-six radio offerings, has in four years enrolled nearly 7,000 persons.

At the same time traveling libraries, exhibits, and motion pictures have been brought to large audiences throughout the State. Lectures and demonstrations by staff members have been much in demand.

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\* This total does not include a circulation of many millions for articles published in magazines.

“ . . . . the training of students for *work in such fields*”

The Station's program in the training of students is almost entirely at the graduate level. The aim is to train experts in various fields of child welfare and not to overlap the work of any other department or State institution.

Number of Ph.D. degrees awarded in the Station	50
Number of Master's degrees awarded in the Station	71

These awards of advanced degrees indicate that the Station has steadily trained workers at the highest technical and professional levels. That these experts are in demand is established by the fact that even throughout the long years of the depression no graduate of the Station failed to secure a position.

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In carrying out the three parts of its legislative mandate, the Station has also served State organizations and institutions. For example, in co-operation with the Iowa State Board of Control, it has for a number of years carried on studies and rendered practical service to various child institutions. Staff members constantly give aid to State departments, county organizations, professional associations, municipalities and rural areas in promoting child welfare.

In 1925 the State Board of Education passed a resolution designating the Station as the co-ordinating center for all work in child development and child welfare in the State educational institutions, Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Iowa State Teachers College, and the University of Iowa. The co-operative relations existing among these three institutions have done much to extend child welfare services at a minimum cost.



## WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

It would be premature to say that enough is known to insure complete aid to the child. As a matter of fact research and inquiry must be kept up in order to conserve the gains which have already been made. The work moves forward, or it goes backward. For child betterment in the modern world, a program of research and demonstration is essential.

Such a program costs money. Over a nineteen-year period the State has appropriated for the Station almost \$600,000. At the same time outside funds have contributed over \$1,000,000. This large support from private foundations was known to be temporary and is no longer available.

It will cost the people of Iowa \$100,000 annually to support the work at its present level. This represents a per capita cost of four cents per year.

The questions to be answered by 1937 are simply these: Is the program worth while; and, if so, will the State finance it?



IOWA STATE COUNCIL FOR CHILD STUDY  
AND PARENT EDUCATION

American Association of University Women in Iowa  
Iowa Congress of Parents and Teachers  
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Women's Division  
Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs  
Iowa League of Women Voters, Department of Government and Child  
Welfare  
Iowa Physical Education Association  
Iowa State Board of Control, Bureau of Child Welfare  
Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Extension Service  
Iowa State Conference of Social Work  
Iowa State Department of Health  
Iowa State Medical Society  
Committee on Child Health and Protection  
Speakers Bureau  
Iowa State Department of Public Instruction  
Iowa State Teachers Association  
Iowa State Teachers College  
Iowa Tuberculosis Association  
University of Iowa, Extension Division and Iowa Child Welfare Re-  
search Station  
Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Iowa