

THE RECENT TREND OF SALARIES IN CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

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REPLIES to a brief questionnaire sent to member and affiliate agencies of the Child Welfare League of America at the beginning of November, 1943, leave no doubt that the recent trend of salaries within this important group of children's agencies has been generally and substantially upward. They indicate also the size and nature of the recent demand for workers on the part of these agencies and the rates of salary they are now prepared to pay workers joining their staffs. The inquiry was planned to supplement the more extensive study of salaries of child welfare workers made in 1941,¹ and like the earlier one was made by the Department of Statistics of the Russell Sage Foundation at the request of the League.

The one-page schedule used for collection of data asked few questions and only for facts that could be supplied readily. The scope of the information obtained, therefore, is strictly limited.

The Agencies Studied

The schedule was sent to all member and affiliate agencies of the League, and by mid-January data had been returned by 262 agencies or about three fourths of those addressed. Twenty of the schedules received were from day nurseries or day-care centers; and since these agencies were not included in the earlier study, their replies have been tabulated separately and are not, except in one instance, included in this summary of results.

The functions of the other 242 participating agencies include child placing, protective casework service, and institutional care, many engaging in two and some in all three of these services. Of 32 public agencies, exactly half are members and half affiliates of the League. They include 21 child-care divisions of state welfare departments, nine city or county agencies, and two state institutions for children. Of the 210 private agencies, 109 are League members and 101 affiliates.

The geographical distribution of the agencies is naturally similar to that of the 203 agencies studied in 1941, since most of those participating before also supplied data for this inquiry. For this study, however, 10 fewer agencies reported from Middle Atlantic states, while the number reporting from the other areas is somewhat larger than before.

¹ Salaries and Qualifications of Child Welfare Workers in 1941. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1943.

General Salary Increases Since 1941

Two questions of the schedule related to the extent to which salaries have been generally increased within the past two years. One asked if general increases affecting professional or houseparent staffs had been made since October, 1941, and, if so, what groups of workers were affected and what the percentage of increase had been. The second asked if, although general increases had not been made, salaries were now generally higher as a result of individual changes.

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of agencies replying that salaries had been generally improved. More than three fourths of those reporting, including most of the larger agencies and all but two of the public agencies, stated that general increases had been effected. Frequently two or more increases had been made within the two-year interval. Another 15 per cent of the agencies stated that they had generally raised salaries by means of individual changes. Small agencies are included in both these groups. Together the two groups account for 93 per cent of the total number of agencies.

TABLE 1. — ANSWERS CONCERNING GENERAL INCREASE OF SALARIES OF PROFESSIONAL AND HOUSEPARENT WORKERS SINCE OCTOBER, 1941

	Private agencies	Public agencies	Total	Per cent
General increase made	158	30	188	78
Salaries otherwise higher	35	1	36	15
Salaries not generally higher	15	1	16	6
No answer given	2	—	2	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	210	32	242	100

Only 16 agencies replied that salaries were not generally higher than in October, 1941, and salaries were to be increased shortly by two of them. The replies to these two questions were similar for member and for affiliate agencies. (Of the 20 day-care centers, 16 reported increased salaries, three that salaries had not been increased, while one failed to answer these questions.)

The information returned concerning groups of workers affected and the rates of increase proved difficult to summarize because of its great variety. Some agencies replied that a general increase had been made but omitted further information, while others reported these facts in detail. Various methods of effecting general increases were mentioned, including cost-of-living adjustments, general revision of salary scales, extending the range of salaries by increasing maximum rates, and granting extra increases or advancing scheduled increases within existing ranges. Frequently more than one method had been used.

A majority of the agencies that reported concerning the rate of increase in-

licated that either the entire staff was affected or all but the executive or the higher paid workers. Frequently the increase was by a uniform percentage, but when identified as a cost-of-living allowance it was more frequently graduated, with the larger percentages applying to the lower paid workers. Ten per cent was the most frequently mentioned single rate of increase, but more agencies specified higher rates than cited 10 per cent or less. In a few instances uniform amounts rather than rates of increase were cited, several agencies reporting a general rise of \$10 monthly and one an increase of \$20 per month.

Some of the higher rates of increase probably represent adjustments of salaries that had been seriously substandard. Three agencies stated that cash salaries of houseparents had been advanced by more than 50 per cent, and 12 others reported increases in these salaries of from 20 to 40 per cent. Eleven agencies recorded increase of caseworkers' salaries by 20 per cent or more.

Information was not requested concerning increased hours of work, but three agencies specified that the reported salary change was in part to compensate for longer working hours. One of the larger private agencies reported increase of salaries by 20 per cent because of extension of the work week to 48 hours, but it had also granted a cost-of-living adjustment of 7 per cent and had increased basic rates somewhat. Another agency reported a general increase of 7 per cent early in 1943, followed in a few months by a 7½ per cent increase in both salaries and hours of work. A third agency made a general cost-of-living adjustment in 1942, and in 1943 raised salaries and "official but not actual" working hours of the casework staff by 10 per cent.

Several agencies had raised salaries as much as was permissible under the existing wage regulations. For example, one large agency reported adjustment early in 1942 of 5 per cent in salaries up to \$3,000, and a year later the increase was brought to 15 per cent for workers receiving less than \$2,400. This agency's request for permission to give the additional increase to workers receiving higher salaries had not been granted up to the time of reporting for the study. Another agency early in 1942 adopted a new schedule raising salaries on an average by 7 per cent, and a year later raised all salaries to the "Little Steel" limit of 15 per cent. Several agencies had granted 15 per cent increases in one installment.

Staff Changes in Two Years

To an important extent, undoubtedly, the recent salary changes have resulted from desire on the part of employing agencies to relieve the heavy pressure of rising prices on the budgets of their workers. But, as numerous comments entered on the schedules show, the difficulty experienced in finding and in holding qualified workers was frequently an important contributing factor, and in a good many instances the principal factor.

In order to obtain an indication of the volume of staff changes during the period under consideration, one question on the schedule called for the number of workers in three specified groups who joined the staff of the reporting agency in each of two years. The three groups were: workers above the grade of caseworker, caseworkers, and houseparents. The total comparable figures reported for the two years are given in Table 2. They relate to a few less than the total number of agencies, because in some instances figures were reported for the two years combined or exact figures were given for only one of the two years.

TABLE 2. — PROFESSIONAL AND HOUSEPARENT WORKERS JOINING REPORTING AGENCIES IN TWO YEARS

Position	Year ending October 31	
	1942	1943
Above caseworker	131	129
Caseworker	569	684
Subtotal	700	813
Houseparent	352	365

Lacking the total number of workers employed in these groups, it is not possible to compute replacement rates, but it seems probable that the figures reflect for both these years much higher than usual staff turnover. The 1941 study, which itself showed high turnover rates, registered 69 workers above the grade of caseworker, 390 caseworkers, and only 96 houseparents who had joined the staffs of 203 agencies within a year. These figures are not exactly comparable with the present ones for several reasons, including the larger number of agencies reporting for the present study. The additional agencies, however, are chiefly smaller ones, so that there is relatively less difference in numbers of workers than in numbers of agencies represented in the two studies. After making allowances for differences in the data, much more staff movement seems to be indicated for the past two years.

Table 2 shows substantial increase from 1942 to 1943 in the number of caseworkers joining staffs, but for the other two groups figures for the two years are about the same. For private agencies, however, hirings of workers above caseworker as well as of caseworkers increased in 1943.

Current and Prospective Vacancies

To throw light on the immediate demand for professional and houseparent workers, the agencies were asked to list their positions actually vacant and also those expected to become vacant within a few months. Space was provided on the schedule for recording for each such position: the title, extent of education and of experience expected of candidates, the salary offered, when

the position would be vacant, and whether or not a worker had already been found.

Table 3 classifies by position 437 present or prospective vacancies reported by 146 of the 242 agencies. Only vacancies in full-time positions are here included. Most of the positions were open in November; only 67, or 15 per cent, were to become vacant in later months, chiefly in December and January. It should be stated, however, that several agencies, including one large public department, did not report their prospective vacancies. Fifty-five per cent of these vacancies were reported by 118 private agencies, while 28 public agencies reported the other 45 per cent. In only 13 instances had a new worker already been found.

TABLE 3. — REPORTED VACANCIES IN FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL AND HOUSEPARENT POSITIONS, NOVEMBER, 1943

Position	Current	Prospective	Total	Per cent
Above caseworker	36	12	48	11
Caseworker	287	50	337	77
Other professional	10	4	14	3
Houseparent	37	1	38	9
Total	370	67	437	100

As the table shows, most of the vacant positions were those of caseworkers. The 48 positions above that of caseworker are chiefly of supervisors, but also included in this group are positions of three institution superintendents and four heads of agencies. The few "other professional" positions include those of two field representatives in a public agency, several group workers and teachers in institutions, and two psychologists. It will be seen that very few houseparent positions were reported as vacant, the explanation perhaps being that the urgency of work in these positions usually does not permit them to be long unfilled.

Salaries and Qualifications of Supervisors

Specifications of the education and experience expected and of the salary offered for supervisors of casework were given by 18 different private agencies that reported a vacancy in this position. Full graduate school of social work education was called for in all but one instance, and in this case either one or two years of school work was specified. The experience qualifications for these positions were variously expressed. Several agencies expected only some supervisory experience. One desired as much as possible. The definite amounts specified varied from one and one-half to six years of experience as a case-work supervisor.

The offered salaries for the 18 open supervisory positions in private agencies

varied from \$2,100 to \$4,500, the highest applying to one of two positions described as "director of casework." Seven agencies cited a range of salary rather than a single figure, and if the mid-points of the ranges are included the median salary is \$2,800. If only the single amounts quoted are considered, it is very slightly lower, \$2,760.

As compared with these figures, it is of interest to note that the median salary found in the 1941 study for 183 supervisors of casework employed by private agencies was \$2,400, while for 65 supervisors in public agencies the median was also \$2,400.

Only nine of the public agencies reporting for the present study recorded vacancies in supervisory positions. Several positions of junior supervisors and field supervisors were included. The education required for the supervisors' positions in public agencies varied from one-half year of school of social work training, for which in one case experience might be substituted, to full graduate social work training. The salaries for these positions were in general lower, varying from \$1,800 to \$3,000.

Caseworkers' Salaries and Qualifications

Qualifications expected of caseworkers were stated by 86 private and 22 public agencies reporting vacancies in this position. Some agencies having more than one vacancy specified different qualifications and different rates of salary for different positions, so that a total of 161 specifications were recorded for the 337 vacant casework positions. More than half of the specifications, 57 per cent to be exact, called for workers with two years of school of social work training, this group including requirements expressed as "full school of social work training" and "school of social work degree." Another 23 per cent of the specifications were for one year of school of social work education, while 20 per cent called for only one semester, or only one quarter, of professional school training, or for none at all. Public agencies reported most of the specifications calling for less than a year of school of social work training.

About half of the specifications for caseworkers required no experience, the proportion being about the same whether the expected amount of school of social work training was two years, one year, or none at all. In many instances it was explained that the requirements of experience were lower than would usually be asked because of difficulty already met in obtaining experienced workers.

The salaries offered for caseworkers in general bear an expected relation to the desired qualifications. Of five salary specifications for caseworkers with full school of social work training and more than two years of experience, \$2,040 was the lowest, while three were \$2,400 or more.

For full school training and two years of experience the median of 16

salary specifications, all by private agencies, was \$2,070. Only four of these quotations were less than \$2,000, and in the case of one of these four the salary was to be raised after six months to \$2,100.

Eighteen agencies specified salaries for caseworkers with two years of school of social work training and only one year of experience, the median being \$2,000, while of the amounts specified by 38 agencies for workers with two years of school training and no experience the median was \$1,800.

Of 15 quotations for caseworkers with one year only both of school training and experience the median was also \$1,800, while for one year of training and no experience 11 quotations gave a median of \$1,680.

For college graduates without school of social work training and without experience, four public and two private agencies quoted salaries varying from \$1,320 to \$1,500. For college graduates with one year of experience, three public agencies offered from \$1,440 to \$1,560.

These salaries offered for caseworkers with different combinations of professional education and experience are summarized in Table 4. It should be noted that the figures relate to starting salaries, which are usually increased after employment of a year or less. It should also be observed that the median figures are based on too few quotations to assure that they are entirely reliable; and also that there are important differences in the size and geographical location of the several groups of agencies concerned. Yet it seems probable that the table may give a fairly good indication of the present tendency of hiring salaries for caseworkers with different amounts of education and experience.

TABLE 4. — MEDIAN SALARIES OFFERED FOR CASEWORKERS WITH SPECIFIED AMOUNTS OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Professional education	Experience		
	None	1 year	2 years
Two years	\$1,800	\$2,000	\$2,070
One year	1,680	1,800	—
None	1,400	1,500	—

In comparison, the 1941 study showed for 1,096 caseworkers then employed in reporting private agencies, disregarding differences in education and experience, a median salary of \$1,700, and for 309 employed in public agencies, \$1,620. For employed caseworkers who were full two-year school of social work graduates and who had less than one year of experience the median salary found in the 1941 study was \$1,620. For school of social work graduates with three years of experience, the median was only \$1,740.

That \$1,800 was in the fall of 1943 the typical offering salary for school of social work graduates without experience is indicated by other information from the present study. In a separate question on the schedule, all agencies

employing caseworkers were asked to record the salary they would now offer, assuming a vacancy existed, for a "caseworker, graduate of two-year graduate school of social work, with no experience except as student worker." Nineteen public and 148 private agencies answered this question and for both groups the median of the salaries specified was \$1,800. Nearly a third of those replying to this question recorded that amount. The number of agencies citing less than \$1,800 was, however, larger than the number citing more than that amount. Six agencies, quite unrealistically it would appear, specified salaries lower than \$1,500. At the other extreme, nine agencies quoted amounts higher than \$2,000.

TABLE 5. — MEDIAN SALARIES QUOTED FOR CASEWORKERS WITH TWO YEARS OF SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK TRAINING AND NO EXPERIENCE, BY REGION

Region	Agencies	Median salary
New England	26	\$1,700
Middle Atlantic	36	1,785
East North Central	36	1,800
West North Central	19	1,800
South	31	1,700
Pacific	18	1,800

When classified by geographical location these replies give the results shown in Table 5. Here again the figures are offered with the reservation that the number of agencies concerned in the case of each of the median salaries shown is small. They should be interpreted only as giving some evidence rather than final measurement of regional differences. The principal significance of the table lies, perhaps, in the fact that \$1,800 is the median of the quoted salaries for three regions, while for a fourth the median is just short of that amount. From New England and the South the quotations tended to be somewhat lower than those from the other geographic areas, but high as well as low salaries were cited from each region.

Salaries and Qualifications of Houseparents

Although only 25 agencies reported qualifications expected of workers needed to fill existing houseparent vacancies, 71 different agencies quoted the salary they would be prepared to pay, should a vacancy occur, to a house-mother with specified qualifications. Together the two sets of data give some useful indication of the current trend of salaries for this position.

Most of the agencies that recorded such vacancies were seeking house-parents with no more than high-school education. "High-school graduation," or merely "high school," was specified most frequently. One agency, offering the highest of the salaries quoted for a houseparent position, desired as cottage director a worker who had had special formal education in the care of

children. Only two agencies stated definitely that college education was required, while two others indicated it as a preference. In three instances graduate nurses were called for. One agency replied that education was no longer a factor. Another, but only one, specified as little as two years of high-school work.

Only four agencies called for as much as two years of experience as a houseparent on the part of new houseparents and four others for one year of such experience. Several stated definitely that no experience was expected, others asked only for some experience with children, and still others omitted any mention of experience.

Regardless of qualifications specified, the median cash salaries offered for houseparents by the 25 agencies reporting vacancies was \$900. The range was wide, from \$600 to \$1,500.

The answers of the 71 agencies quoting salaries they would offer, assuming a position were open, for a cottage or housemother who was a high-school graduate and who had had one year of successful houseparent experience also yielded a median salary of \$900. Six of these quotations were at or above \$1,200; seven were at \$600; none was lower than \$600.

Again comparison with the data of the earlier study is of interest. In 1941 the cash salaries of 270 employed houseparents were found to vary from \$300 to \$1,460, the median salary being \$660 in addition to maintenance.

Maintenance of Personnel Standards

The final question of the schedule invited comments concerning the extent to which agencies had so far found it necessary to lower education and experience qualifications in employing new workers. A fourth of the total number, including more small than large agencies, did not answer this question at all or else not specifically. Some remarked only on the great difficulty already found, or expected, in obtaining qualified workers. Some of the smaller agencies had not recently replaced a worker and omitted comments on that account.

Nearly a third of the total number of agencies replied definitely that personnel standards had not so far been lowered. Fourteen of these replies specified that standards had been raised rather than lowered within the past two years. Some agencies that had not lowered qualifications for new workers expressed doubt that it would be possible to continue to maintain the present ones, and some had found it necessary to abandon plans for improving standards. In two agencies which had been unwilling to relax standards for the position of supervisor, the position had been vacant for more than a year. Others reported that although standards had not so far been reduced, casework vacancies had remained open for several months, with no candidates applying who could meet the established qualifications. One agency re-

corded despairingly that search had demonstrated that qualified workers could not be found at the salaries it was able to offer.

A little more than 40 per cent of all the agencies indicated that standards had been reduced. For perhaps a quarter of this group the concessions so far made had been slight, consisting of acceptance of a single worker, or in some of the larger agencies only two or three workers, with less experience or less education than was usually required. The rest of this group, comprising nearly a third of the total number and more than half of the public agencies, indicated that more general reduction of standards had occurred. Agencies employing houseparents are included in these several groups in much the same proportion as are those employing caseworkers.

A substantial proportion of the private agencies that had lowered standards had accepted for beginning casework positions one or more workers without either formal training or experience. They were variously designated as casework aides, workers in training, apprentices, junior workers, or merely untrained and inexperienced caseworkers. In many of these instances some definite plan for training such workers had been made. Three agencies, in mentioning provisions for in-service training, commented that while standards for caseworkers had been lowered, those for supervisors had not been relaxed or else had been raised. A dozen or more of the agencies referred to provision made for part-time attendance of untrained workers at a school of social work, or else stated that they would allow or require leave later for full-time school work. A few agencies reported adoption of definite plans for recruiting as well as for training apprentice workers. One of the larger agencies explained that a ratio of one untrained to four trained workers had been established and was to be maintained in making replacements on its staff.

A considerable number of the private agencies reported that standards had been lowered to the extent of requiring one year instead of two years of graduate school training, several indicating that for the first time, or for the first time in many years, they were employing a caseworker without full school of social work education.

Some of the large public agencies recorded that they had not reduced the standards established for workers in particular categories, but that changes had, nevertheless, been made in the kind of work assigned to workers in the lower categories and that change in the relative numbers of these workers had resulted in lowering of the average qualifications of the casework staff.

Several public agencies reported the introduction of a new category of beginning workers. In two instances the new title is "casework aide," and for these positions no professional training is required. In another state agency a classification of "junior visitor" had been added, to which college graduates without formal social work training or experience are eligible.

One large state department had experimented with a new category of

junior workers, for which only college education and one year of social work experience was required. But this provision had not produced desired results and another new classification, entitled "trainee," and calling for selected workers having only senior college standing and no experience, was under consideration at the time of reporting.

One state agency had created a new position of junior child welfare worker, requiring either one year of school of social work training and no experience or a half year of both training and experience. Still another of the larger state departments, commenting that it had experienced staff turnover of 37 per cent during the past year, chiefly in social work positions, reported that in order to maintain welfare services it had been found necessary to reduce requirements for several of the social work positions.

Pertinent comments were offered by several agencies concerning the inadequate number of students now in training at approved schools of social work. A large private agency, describing the great dearth of candidates for beginning positions in its area, complained that the bottleneck was to be found in the limited enrollment in the professional schools, and added that as a result the department of welfare of its large state was now embarking on its own program for training social workers. Another private agency explained that scholarship students, who were already committed to accept employment with a state agency or the Red Cross, were so large a part of the small enrollment of the only school of social work in its region that the prospect was dismal of obtaining any candidates for its positions from that source.

Conclusions

The main conclusions which the limited data of this study seem to justify may be stated briefly as follows. Although they apply specifically to the group of constituent agencies of the Child Welfare League of America, they may very well reflect tendencies that are affecting agencies and workers in other fields of social work.

Child welfare agencies have substantially improved their salaries during the past two years.

For caseworkers with full school of social work training and no experience, \$1,800 is probably now the typical offering salary. The better qualified graduates of certain schools, with experience only as a student worker, can now probably expect starting salaries considerably better than \$1,800. This salary is probably comparable with one of not more than \$1,620 in 1941.

For capable houseparents, with no more than high-school education and without experience, the limited evidence of the study indicates \$900 with maintenance as the present typical starting salary.

Although many of the recent increases in child welfare salaries have been granted as temporary cost-of-living adjustments, many also have resulted

from revision of basic salary schedules. Of whatever type, it does not seem probable that many of the recent salary advances will prove to be temporary.

Staff turnover in both professional and houseparent positions has probably been much greater during the past two years than before, and many agencies have experienced great difficulty in finding satisfactory replacements even with increased salaries. As a result, personnel standards have been reduced in many agencies.

To an important extent apprenticeship is reappearing in private children's agencies, while in public agencies the tendency is already strong for employment of college graduates without social work training as beginning case-workers. In an important number of instances in private agencies and in some public agencies provision is being made for current or later attendance of untrained workers at a school of social work.

