

ROUND TABLE PLAN FOR TRUSTEES OF INSTITUTIONS FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN

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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION



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The Round Table Plan has been prepared to assist boards of trustees of institutions caring for dependent children in their administrative duties. It comprises eight studies, or round tables, each of which is devoted to a vital problem of institutional management.

The Round Table Plan is intended to serve as a means, not of inspection by outside agencies, but rather of an intimate "round table" consideration of administrative problems by the trustees and superintendents themselves.

While the Round Tables may be used in any way desired, it is suggested that each take up an hour at a regular board meeting; and that its questions be divided among several trustees for their investigation a month in advance, thus insuring at each meeting concrete reports upon the points for the action of the whole board.

To discuss the questions raised, the Department of Child-Helping is preparing a series of eight monographs, one to accompany each of the Round Tables. Two of these, "The Job of Being a Trustee" and "Admission and Discharge of Children," by Dr. Hastings H. Hart, are now available. The price is five cents a copy.

Upon request, the Department of Child-Helping will be glad to assist boards of trustees, or individual members, in any way possible in connection with their use of the Round Table Plan.

L. C.

PART ONE

ROUND TABLE I

THE TRUSTEES AND THE INSTITUTION

TRUSTEESHIP

1. What is the purpose of this institution?
2. What is the legal relation of our trustees to the institution?
What is the moral relation?
3. What is the system of management by our board? Should our board manage through our members as a whole, through an executive committee, through sub-committees, or how?
4. Ought our number of trustees to be increased or decreased?

INCOME

5. Would it be desirable to receive all our income from endowment? If not, what per cent should be thus obtained?
6. Is our income sufficient? If not, how shall we raise more money? Through city, county, or state subsidy? By public appeal? If so, by what method? Through a paid field secretary or a volunteer? Through efforts of our entire board?
7. Should any of the industries of the institution be made to produce a profit? If so, to what extent?

COST

8. Can we improve on our system of purchasing material and supplies?

9. Could the per capita cost of maintenance be lowered and the institution still fulfill its purpose?

10. Would it be well for us to employ an efficiency expert to study the system and cost of conducting the institution?

INSPECTION AND CO-OPERATION

11. How often shall each trustee inspect the institution? Do any of the trustees stay all night at the institution to see how the day ends and begins? Should notification always be sent in advance of a trustee's visit?

12. Would it be advisable to appoint a committee to visit other institutions and agencies in order to study their plant, methods, spirit, and results and to promote mutual co-operation?

13. Is our board represented at local, state, and national conferences of social workers?

ROUND TABLE II

ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE OF CHILDREN

ADMISSION

1. What case study do we make in advance to determine the eligibility of a child for this institution? Who conducts this study and how? Do we consider sufficiently whether the child should be separated from his relatives? Is the institution willing to receive "undesirable" children—those who are in poor physical condition and may have been much neglected?

2. How are applications for admission made? Who decides upon the admission of the child?

3. What preliminary physical, mental, and psychological examinations of the child? By whom made? Of what should these examinations consist?

4. What observation of the child for a probationary period is maintained after admission?

DISCHARGE

5. Under what circumstances should children be discharged before our institution time limit is reached?

6. What methods do we use to find employment suited to the individual aptitude and development of our wards?

7. What methods do we employ in finding and investigating foster homes, and fitting our out-going wards into them?

8. What supervision do we make of the child in its home and at work? How often is he visited? For how long a period do we maintain supervision?

9. Should our institution employ an agent on whole or part time to place out and supervise children?

10. Should an investigation be made of the graduates of this institution to ascertain, among other things, how many have gone out, how many can be traced, what those located are doing, how much they are earning, whether or not they are married, and what their standing is in the community in which they live?

ROUND TABLE III

PHYSICAL WELFARE OF CHILDREN

QUARANTINE, MEDICAL EXAMINATION, AND CARE

1. Are all entering children quarantined for a proper period? Have we adequate quarantine and hospital facilities?
2. Do we give each child a thorough medical examination upon entrance to the institution? What should we do to remedy any defects thus shown?
3. How often should each child be re-examined after admission? Of what should this re-examination consist?
4. What medical service has our institution? Is it adequate? If not, how can we improve it?
5. What can we do for the child not actually sick but anemic, under weight, "run down" and in danger of sickness?

DIETARY, CLOTHING, DORMITORIES, AND SANITATION

6. What of the dietary from the standpoint of nutrition, variety, quantity, and "balanced ration"? Could we gain any advantage by consulting an expert dietitian? Are the dining room conditions such that the children enjoy their meals?
7. How is the milk tested? How often? How is the water tested? How often? What is the quality of the bread and other baker's stuff?
8. What kind of clothing do the children receive?
9. How many dormitories should there be? Of what size each? How much air space for each child in the dormitory? Are the windows kept open at night? Is there provision for cross ventilation? Shall we arrange to have some of the children sleep out of doors?
10. What toilet articles has each child, and where are they kept?
11. Is the institution kept clean?
12. What provision for bathing by tub, shower, or pool?

ROUTINE, DISCIPLINE, AND RECREATION

13. What part of the institution's work has each child? Is this work too much for the child? Too little?

14. What is the daily program of the children? At what hour do they arise? How much time is allotted for school (including preparation of lessons), housework, other work, industrial training, play, meals, sleep?

15. What provision have we made for play, outdoors and indoors? What opportunities for swimming, skating, coasting?

ROUND TABLE IV

EDUCATION—ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM

1. What does the educational training provided by our institution seek to accomplish?

2. How does our educational problem differ from that of the public schools?

USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

3. Can we utilize the public schools advantageously for all or part of the children? What are the reasons for and against sending our children to the neighboring schools? What is the practice of similar institutions where this is done?

CURRICULUM

4. What academic subjects should we include in our curriculum? What vocational subjects?

5. Do we correlate our academic and vocational instruction? Do we utilize in the class room the observations and experiences of the children in the shops, cottages, playground, garden, and farm?

6. How much vocational value have the housework, sewing, and "chores" as done by our children? Should additional vocational training be given?

7. Are the girls given the opportunity for regular work and instruction in gardening, care of chickens, and other outdoor tasks, or are those given exclusively to the boys?

8. Should we engage an educational expert from outside to make a report to the board upon our school of letters and vocational training, including a comparison of our courses of study and quality of teaching with those in the public schools?

TEACHING FORCE

9. What training have our teachers had? What experience? What teaching certificates do they hold?

10. Do we pay enough to get the right kind of teachers? Would it be better for us to pay higher salaries for teachers and cut down elsewhere, if necessary?

11. What are our teachers doing to increase their own efficiency? Have they sufficient opportunity for rest and recreation during free hours?

PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT

12. Is the physical equipment for our educational work adequate—school buildings, rooms, furniture, blackboards, books, maps, supplies, and machinery?

SANITATION AND SAFETY

13. Are there proper provisions throughout the school buildings with regard to lighting, heating, ventilation, cleaning of windows, care of floors, drinking water, toilet facilities, fire-escapes, and fire protection, including fire-drills?

ROUND TABLE V

EDUCATION—RELIGION, MORALS, AND ART

RELIGION AND MORALS

1. What religious instruction do our children receive? How far can we use the assistance of the churches and Sunday schools in the neighborhood? Does each child receive religious instruction and influence such as a good mother would give?

2. How and to what extent should sex education and instruction in personal hygiene be given?

ART AND SELF-EXPRESSION

3. What are we doing to develop the aesthetic? Drawing, music, gardening, horticulture?

4. What plan have we to develop enthusiasm, initiative and self-control? Could we use self-government? If so, to what extent? What instruction do we give in civic matters? What method to instruct the children in the value and use of money?

5. What opportunities are given the children for self-expression and the proper exercise of their imagination through public speaking, debates, dramatics, or any form of children's plays?

6. Is the play organized and conducted from an educational standpoint?

7. What provision do we make for educative lectures, illustrated by lantern slides or moving pictures, given by an expert from outside?

PART TWO

ROUND TABLE VI

THE INSTITUTION STAFF

QUALIFICATIONS

1. What previous experience, education, character, and other qualities should be required in our superintendent, matron, teachers, caretakers, cooks, farm hands, and other employes?

SELECTION, DUTIES, AND WAGES

2. Should our superintendent have authority to select employes? To dismiss at his discretion?

3. What are the duties of each employe? How many inmates to each employe?

4. What wages do we pay for each kind of service? Are these large enough to secure efficient helpers and enable them to take advantage of vacations and save for the future?

WORK, RELIEF, AND SPIRIT

5. What system is used for checking up the work of each employe? How often are staff meetings conducted by the superintendent or his representatives? Have we good team work?

6. How much time off has each employe every week? What vacation? What opportunities for recreation and social life? For reading books and magazines? For keeping up with the times? Are our employes chronically tired, overworked? How are they housed? How can the employes be stimulated to increase their efficiency?

7. Have our employes the right spirit of desire to help the child? What are their personal relations to the children?

ROUND TABLE VII

THE PLANT

SITE

1. Is our site well adapted for this kind of an institution?
2. Is the amount of land sufficient to adequately fulfill the purpose of our institution? Does the quality of land need to be improved? If so, what is the best method? Is the drainage sanitary?

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT

3. How well constructed are our buildings? Are they conveniently and economically arranged? Are they adequate? What repairs are needed? What provision have we made for classification of children? For recreation? Are there suitable sitting rooms? School rooms? Play rooms? What kind of plumbing? For what is the basement used? Is there sufficient protection against fire?
4. What is the quantity, quality, and adaptability of the furniture? Are the ranges doing satisfactory work? Are there adequate kitchen utensils, dining room furniture, dishes, drinking cups? Is the school room provided with proper desks (if used), maps, and other supplies? Would it be well to substitute tables for desks in the school rooms? Are the dairy and farm implements up-to-date and adequate?

FARM AND GROUNDS

5. What care is taken of the soil? What crops do we raise? What live stock? Have we our own butter, eggs, meat, fruit, fresh vegetables?
6. Is our property too valuable for its present use? Will it be necessary for us to move the institution in the near future? If so, what effect, if any, should that necessity have upon the policy of our board?

ROUND TABLE VIII

RECORDS

RECORDS OF CHILDREN

1. What is the best system of recording facts, so that the information shall be accessible and permanent?
2. What records have we of preliminary investigations of children and their homes? Do these show exactly what problems our institution is trying to solve for each child?
3. What records of physical and mental examinations do we make at the time of admission?
4. What record of physical re-examination after entrance and facts showing increase in weight, height, and so forth?
5. What records of school and vocational work?
6. What records do we make of the child after he leaves the institution?
7. What record have we to indicate each child's moral and spiritual growth?

RECORDS OF FINANCE

8. What records have we of institution expenses? Do we test the records of food cost by the records of height, weight, and endurance of the child? What records have we of each industry's cost and revenue? Of each department of the farm? What comparative record showing economy or extravagance of caretakers?
9. Are our books kept according to modern methods?
10. Are our vouchers made, certified, signed, and filed in the best way?
11. Are our accounts and vouchers audited according to the best business standards?
12. Have we such a system of receiving, issuing, and accounting for supplies as is properly demanded of an institution of this capacity?
13. Who is in charge of our records? Do we correlate and study them?

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