

HOME ECONOMICS IN THE FAMILY AGENCY

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SIGNIFICANT changes have taken place in the function and structure of the private agency during the past few years and these changes indicate the lines for future growth. Among the reversals of the previous trends in the field of Jewish family welfare were the declines registered in the number of families under care and in agency relief expenditures. Cases retained by the private agencies and those accepted as new intake are retained primarily for special services. With the public relief agency probably here to stay, the private agency is now trying to relieve the stress and strain of those families gravely in need of special help for which the public agency is inadequately equipped.

The function of the Jewish family agency today is to recognize subtle, significant symptoms of human behavior; to help those in distress regain their bearing, self-respect, independence, and to assist them in utilizing their potentialities; to rebuild self-esteem and strength; to improve disturbed family relationships and treat personality problems; and to assist families confronted with the need for economic adjustment.

The functions of the home economist should be evaluated in the light of the changing function of the private agency and new developments in case work practice. How do these changing functions affect the home economist's problem? Do her activities fit in with case work as it is practiced today? Have these changes enlarged the periphery of the home economist's activities? Have these changes made the home economist's work more vital in the agency's set-up? Have there

been parallel changes in the home economist's perspective?

To obtain the thinking of home economists and executives throughout the country on the problems confronting the home economist at the present time, 48 agencies were reached through a questionnaire, and from the replies received material salient to this paper was incorporated. It is significant to note that the leading Jewish agencies in the United States have a Home Economics Department, and data received from all of the other agencies indicate the necessity for providing this service, which they consider a vital factor in the life of the agency.

In order to distinguish between the previous activities of the home economist and her future functions, let us survey briefly the activities which heretofore have commanded the major time and attention of the home economist.

Formerly, the home economist included within the scope of her work studies in cost of living standards, compilation of the budget guide, responsibility for setting standards of relief, computation of special diets, analysis of weekly expenditures or expense accounts kept by families, consultative service to staff, diet therapy, home visits, supervising the vacation care work, visiting housekeeper service, teaching homemaking classes, supervising the distribution of relief in kind, arranging for moving families, and supervision of the Industrial or Supply Department. There are of course many agencies which have slightly altered or added functions due perhaps to conditions of a different nature existing in each community. One of the

major responsibilities was emphasis on budget planning. Relief was not given until the home economist had approved the budget computed by the worker for each family, based on the standard of relief evolved by the home economist. The analysis of relief expenditure sheets or estimates of relief for allocation of funds to districts, is in some agencies the responsibility of the home economist. Another important part of the home economist's work was developing educational programs within the agency to teach case workers and families under care some knowledge of nutrition and home economics such as advice on furnishing homes, household management, nutrition, marketing, selection and preparation of food, selection and making of clothing, meal planning, menu making, and low cost recipes. The worker was kept abreast with changes in the field of nutrition and food, and new trends in home economics.

With the shift of emphasis in the role of the private agency, the home economist's responsibilities have changed to a marked degree.

The most significant changes in the home economics program are:

1. The development of consultative service given to the worker in place of direct service to the client. The home economist is used as a consultant to a greater degree by the worker on specific home economics problems. The worker carries out the plans made with the home economist together with treatment given for other problems in the family. Individual conferences with clients involving intricate problems in home management, budgeting, diet therapy, marketing, etc., are held at the request of the worker.

2. The home economist is improving the educational program which gives factual information to the worker and as a

result the worker's interest is stimulated and she becomes alert to home economics problems.

3. The home economist prepares material on budget standards and supplies the case worker with information and material indicating the trends in home economics fields, such as budgeting, health, nutrition, child feeding.

4. She recruits, trains, places, and supervises visiting housekeepers.

5. She supervises the practice work of student trainees majoring in home economics.

6. She distributes to the case work staff pertinent literature on nutrition, health, diet, recipes and menus for use of workers and families. The home economist secures access for the case worker to some of the knowledge accumulated in the home economics field, making available such budgeting, nutrition and home economics information and instruction as the worker needs.

Clients are being encouraged, in most agencies, to ask for their specific relief needs as they arise. This has summarily brought about a shift in emphasis in budget teaching and planning for the family. The budget standard which the home economist computes and revises with fluctuating costs of living is used as a guide in computing a budget for every family, whether the family is receiving relief or service. The worker uses this budget in discussing with the client his relief needs, though relief is not necessarily given on the basis of the budget computed. Generally the responsibility for computing the budget rests with the worker and supervisor, and the home economist does not review the budget as previously, except, at the request of the worker, on specific budget problems. Periodic review of all budgets by the home economist is advis-

able once or twice a year to study the ultimate application of the budget standard.

The use of home economics as a tool in treatment processes is important in helping workers to plan better with their families. The home economist is occupied with the "development of the art of right living by the application of systematized knowledge." This "systematized knowledge" constitutes the tools given by the home economist to the case worker to help her families. In turn, it necessitates, with the changes that have taken place in case work techniques, case work knowledge on the part of the home economist. Courses of study, reading, participation in case discussion groups and the full responsibility for a few families to whom she gives case work treatment, should be encouraged in order to keep her abreast of the significant changes which have taken place in the case work field. This will enable the home economist to understand and appreciate the problems of the case worker and so plan her contributions toward cases in better relation to the situations presented, thereby making the home economist an integral part of the entire agency case work plan.

In addition to a good general education and the specific background for home economics work, the home economist needs special preparation for her job. Practical experience in home management and homemaking are vital factors. Personality, good health and training are essential. She must recognize the psychological moment when home economics information should be given and know the best methods of presenting her material. She needs to be extremely flexible in order to adapt herself to the constantly shifting techniques employed in case work treatment. The successful home economist is one who has understanding and insight, is wise in

dealing with human relations, skillful in teaching, has the ability to work in close harmony with others, is dexterous in her particular skills, and is able to plan and direct the work of others who are working with her. She needs a worthwhile philosophy of her job, carefully thought out goals, and the opportunity to develop to the best of her ability.

One of the responsibilities of the home economist is to define, interpret, and encourage adequate standards of living and relief, not only in private, but also in public agencies. She is a persistent advocate for the maintenance of high standards of family life and in the protection of the health of children and adults. Adequate standards of relief have usually been established by the private agency through the efforts of the home economist. The standards set by the private agency have usually resulted in requiring the public agencies to approximate these standards. Since adequate relief is the mainstay in an agency using relief, it is imperative that the private agency should continue to be in a position to influence the standards of relief giving of public agencies. This service can be rendered effectively if the private agency is equipped with a good Home Economics Department.

In most agencies the visiting housekeeper department is supervised by the home economist. Visiting housekeeper service is one of the significant developments in home economics work and presents an opportunity for teaching home economics on a reality basis. The basic policy of the housekeeper service is to maintain a family unit intact during a period of stress and strain, in the hope that after the crises have passed, the family will emerge, able to continue its family life which is frequently strengthened by the concrete guidance and demonstration of

the visiting housekeeper in home management, cooking, etc. Besides obviating the necessity for foster home, institutional, and day nursery placement, it has created the possibility of giving employment to untrained, unskilled women over forty years of age.

The outstanding difficulties in rendering effective service are the large amount of physical work under unfavorable conditions, the poor home equipment, and a limited budget. These general conditions have naturally brought with them very specific problems in practically each family; child training, special feeding problems, standards of living, budget problems, general housekeeping problems. Visiting housekeepers are chosen with very definite ideas in mind. An endeavor has been made to develop a corps of visiting housekeepers who can act as efficient mother substitutes. The success of the housekeeper plan is largely dependent not only on the type of housekeeper placed and the reaction of the family to the housekeeper, but to the worker's interest and methods of follow-up work. Frequently the housekeeper gives information about a family to the worker, for in the housekeeper's more intimate contacts with the family, she can observe situations more continuously and over a longer period and describe them to the worker. In addition to the supervision by the case worker, the housekeeper has regular conferences with the home economist. Frequently the home economist takes up certain angles of the case with the housekeeper in order to emphasize the plans which need to be carried out, and also to help the worker effectuate the plans formulated. It is advisable for housekeepers to attend homemaking classes weekly and receive instruction in nutrition, diet, home economics, meal planning, serving, marketing, child care, feed-

ing and similar problems as they exist or may come up in the case on which the housekeeper is placed.

In order to make certain that clients obtain satisfactory merchandise and so keep within their budgetary allotment, the home economist must be interested in merchandise quality, standardization of products, and in protective legislation. Her efforts on committees on standardization of consumer's goods and work for enactment of food and drug bills have enabled the consumer to become acquainted with quality, value and purity of merchandise. The home economist should become instrumental in urging governmental agencies to give to the public information on commodities, standards, and qualities.

For many years, home economists have been building up and teaching a philosophy of family life and family living which might well be extended to a wider field. This philosophy was based on the concept that families living within their income budgets will not be likely to become a financial or agency charge. This point of view concerning family life must be made clearer to the community at large. In so doing, the private agency will be extending its influence along preventive lines. The agency will thereby gain in prestige, power and influence, enabling it to broaden its scope of activities. In nutrition and health work, in child care and development, the home economist has endeavored to advance the idea of preventive work. Home economists, having a special knowledge and practice of nutrition, are qualified to assume part of the responsibility together with other agencies, such as schools, health stations, hospitals, etc., functioning in this field, for finding methods of preventing breakdown in the physical well being of people. A program can thus be formulated utilizing and adapting

nutrition information and made available to help preserve and restore health. If preventive work pays as far as the family under care is concerned, can it not be applied to a larger group in the community?

What has the role of the home economist been in the community and what are the possibilities of extending her influence here? This depends on the agency's concept of her role and also the part the agency has been taking in community developments. A good family service agency is necessarily drawn into the pattern of the whole community and it has vast opportunities to penetrate new fields and areas. The private agency should assume the responsibility for stimulating a movement for the recovery of the ground lost during the past five years in conditions affecting the health and vitality of families. In a number of communities there is a marked increase in children who are malnourished or in a borderline condition of nutrition. The restoration of these children to good health should, for the lack of other facilities, be a charge of the private agency, and the home economist is particularly adapted to help carry out this program. Immediate attention to these conditions might prevent serious family disturbances and obviate a possibility of such families coming under the agency's supervision. This work is a distinct departure from previous agency functions. The family agency is tending more and more to give specialized case work service only and is not developing within the community resources for meeting other needs. But it seems as if the responsibility for initiating such a preventive community service must rest with the family agency which has the facilities to organize and conduct this extended work. If new projects have been developed within the community, we can take the ad-

vantage of these facilities. The initiation and stimulation of these projects and their development offers a challenge to the private agency.

The visiting housekeeper service which the family agencies are giving serves a definite need in the community. Hospitals, maternity centers, and clinics are using the visiting housekeeper service of the private agencies. There is a real need for more adequate visiting housekeeper service in each community. By extending this service to the non-client group it would reach those who are now unaware of its existence and in great need of visiting housekeepers. The question may arise as to who will be responsible for financing this project. Some agencies are beginning to accept fees for various types of family service. A service fee could be charged members of the community for visiting housekeepers selected, interviewed and placed, with due regard to any laws which may affect such a service. An economic need would also be met through the development of a more complete housekeeper service for community use without competing with any of the existing employment agencies or government services. Women having good housekeeper potentialities would learn of the possibilities of employment in this field and this would be an additional employment resource for them. By placing visiting housekeepers who are clients in positions with non-client families, the agency is being relieved of an economic responsibility and the client is being rehabilitated. A service fee might also be charged the housekeepers when positions are given them. Perhaps the financial needs of a department of this type might be partially met in this way.

Another important addition to the role of the home economist in the community,

has been the development of Adult Education Classes in Homemaking. In one of the agencies, six homemaking classes are conducted in various districts. Workers refer clients who are in need of and ask for this type of instruction. Members of the community are also accepted in the classes and are given instruction in nutrition and dietetics, marketing, meal planning and preparation, management of incomes and allied home economics problems. These classes also serve as a training center for the agency's visiting housekeeper's staff. An increasing number of homemaking classes should be initiated by formulating a cooperative program with recreational settlements, schools, and other community agencies.

There are untouched areas and great possibilities for the further extension of home economics service into the community. Many independent families who are living on low income and marginal levels are in need of carefully discussed and thought out budget service, teaching of household management, planned menus, schedules for general housework, health education, and nutrition information for children. These families represent a new fertile field for short term service. Families hesitate to come to a private agency for specific service of this kind since many of them still associate the service of a family agency with relief giving. Perhaps if timely home economics service were given and families taught to live on their depleted incomes, it would avoid the necessity of the family applying for relief at some future date. In other instances, it may keep them independent for a period of time after loss of a job. This may affect the incidence of dependency. If a service fee were charged to those families who are able to pay, perhaps they would not be reluctant to apply for this service.

In household planning, it is the long time point of view which is stressed since clothing budgets are developed on a three year plan and household furnishings budgets on a three to five year plan. Thus, short time service might be given having long time service results. If home economics education is a good investment for the families under the care of the private agency, is it not as good an investment for a larger number of families in the community who are not ordinarily reached by the private agency, but who are in need of such service? Teaching of homemaking to these low income and borderline families is important and might have far reaching results. As a case work tool this service is designed to help develop in the individual self-maintenance to the fullest capacity.

The home economist who has interested herself in social movements and cooperative efforts, can serve in an advisory capacity to consider nutrition problems referred to such groups as the Councils of Social Agencies. She can help to appraise nutrition material; advise on standards of nutrition for individuals, groups, and institutions; assemble and evaluate nutrition information that deals with health education; sponsor the nutrition section of health education program; serve on nutrition programs being conducted by various organizations with a view to coordinating activities; point out urgent needs in the community.

Community work in home economics can be further interpreted through talks to groups, short newspaper articles, radio talks, exhibits. Of special interest are exhibits of low cost regular and special diet projects. Within the home economist's wide and varied scope come such possibilities as participation in community health programs, cooperating with

schools, health and recreation centers, and settlements and other agencies. Homemakers in the low income level could be given the opportunity to learn to manage the home more intelligently. Present facilities for such education are inadequate. We could act as a consultative service in addition to giving a teaching program to those who desire it. Individual consultative service though given in a relatively brief time may have great significance in educational work in the community.

One of the outcomes of the depression has been the realization of the worthwhile contribution home economics makes to home, family, and community. Home economics has rendered a creditable service in the present economic and social crisis. It has endeavored to help teach families how to use their limited resources effectively by reducing expenditures and still maintaining good health standards. Home economics will occupy a place of paramount importance in coming years. The private agency should recognize the need to assume as theirs the responsibility for making a conscious effort in sponsor-

ing the development of home economics resources. Agency policies must be flexible enough so that the service projected above, and needed most by the community, can be rendered.

There has been sketched for you the modification and changes in the private agency with particular emphasis to the Home Economics Department. There has also been projected for you the functions which should become part of the Home Economics Department in the future. These extended services consist of the extension of visiting housekeeper service to the non-client group; the intensification and broadening of the adult education program; community health program; budget service to non-client, low income and marginal groups; advisory service to organizations, committees, legislative bodies, and publicity groups. Implementing these plans together with a continuation of the present service by the Home Economics Department may bring a better understanding of the agency to the public at large and assist in setting a milestone in preventive social service efforts.

DISCUSSION

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There are many points in Miss Landis' paper which merit consideration and discussion. I wish to confine my attention to her statements on two functions customarily in the scope of the Home Economist, but which were assigned to me, a caseworker. My experience permits me to speak about budgeting and visiting housekeeper service with more ease than I could muster for a discussion of nutrition and health education.

I am glad that Miss Landis considers instruction in budgeting and home management a matter best left in the hands of caseworkers, with consultation from the Home Economist. The bases used by the latter for the calculation of budgets are a source of security to the worker, as is all theoretical knowledge in relation to social work. In practical application, however, problems arise which are definitely within the scope of the caseworker. For ex-

ample, there is often a great deal of emotional conflict tied up with the acceptance of a relief standard. The whole problem of acceptance of limitation in other matters may be involved. The caseworker can appreciate from the knowledge of the family just how much instruction they can accept. She knows the individual differences and how much allowance to make for them.

Just how much demand there may be for help in budgeting from the lay group I do not know. I can conceive of it as a service for which the community has to be further educated. They need to learn that it would be possible to secure it from specialists.

In discussing demand of the public for the kind of housekeeper service we give our clients, many things must be taken into consideration. Housekeeping service is part of the casework job. In the Jewish Welfare Society in Philadelphia, we made a study of cases using housekeepers during a period of three months and we found that the housekeepers were used for definite casework reasons. In the majority of cases, a visiting housekeeper was sent to a home where the mother was ill and had to go to a hospital. Such homes were integral units where the father and children were attached to one another and where there were good reasons for keeping the family together. I believe that housekeeper service originated in most family casework agencies as a solution for temporary placements and to prevent disintegration of families. I need hardly mention an instance of the use of the mother-substitute when the mother is absent. You are familiar with examples of your own. The value of such service lies in its very purpose. It spares the family the shock

and worry of leaving their own home, and separating from one another and their friends. It eliminates the necessity for re-establishing the home when the mother returns with the possibility that she will find changes in her children which she cannot understand. We like the mothers to meet the housekeeper so that she may explain the habits of the family to her and so that she may feel that she is participating in the arrangement. Keeping a housekeeper in a home after the mother returns from a hospital has sometimes made complications. A housekeeper may be a threat to a mother by her very excellence and proficiency. She may fear that her own position in the home will be affected by contrast with the housekeeper. Substituting a domestic for the housekeeper, if household help is needed, seems to be the best solution.

We have used visiting housekeepers in homes where the mother has died and where the others in the family wanted to keep together. We have also used them for parent education. Just how beneficial this may prove depends, of course, on the sincerity of the parents' desire for this method of education. Its very process may only increase the feeling of inferiority in the mother. I am thinking of the G. family, where this plan was used to advantage. The housekeeper served not only to lighten the mother's burden during periods of illness, but taught her better methods of household management, removing indirectly one of the causes of marital friction. There have been several periods of housekeeping service in this family, but with each one the mother's tension is lessened and her physical health is restored, so that she can handle her problems for

herself for a period without becoming overwhelmed. In this case, although the parents are both limited, the children benefit so much from this arrangement, that it is worth continuing.

I should like to mention our use of housekeeper service in corroboration of diagnosis. I am referring to a case in which we were asked by the court to send in a housekeeper to teach the mother better child-care and home-management so that the children might not need to be placed. We were recommending placement. However, we sent in one of our best housekeepers. We found that the mother was unwilling to care for her family and that she revealed symptoms of a mental condition. When this was reported back to the court, the children were placed. The period of housekeeper service was expensive but it corroborated our diagnosis and indicated the only treatment possible.

In almost every case in which housekeeper service is needed there are environmental problems and frequently personality disturbances. An understanding of case work is required to plan satisfactorily. We feel that it is important not only to appreciate the individuals in the case and their problems, but also the personality of the housekeeper. A housekeeper may be perfect in her management of a home on a low income, but she may not necessarily be suitable for all families. We have among our most experienced housekeepers a woman of forty-nine, who is fairly well educated and intelligent. She has no children so that when we use her we are not drawing her away from her family. She has done excellent work in the establishment of system and organization in a household. She can manage on small allowances. She

secures excellent results in diet care, in the case of infants and small children, but she cannot establish any working relation with adolescents. Her criticism of failure is apt to be harsh and she has made mothers jealous by her outstanding proficiency. Nevertheless, it is possible to use her assets constructively, especially her pride in her job. All the information that we have on the housekeeper, the original application interview, her personal history and her contacts, can be utilized in order to estimate her ability to suit the cases for which we need her.

We try to "fit the housekeeper to the case." Just how far can we do this if a lay person should apply for a housekeeper? Would we be permitted to know something of the personalities in the family so that we might select a housekeeper that would be more than just a houseworker? Housekeeping services in casework agencies are not employment agencies; and if extended to the lay community, they should be more than that too. Since the lay community does desire the trained housekeeper that we supply, can we through education develop a relationship which will maintain the identity of our housekeeper services? I wonder if the extension of a homekeeper service to the community is not much like the offer of foster-homes to lay people. We know that just giving the address of a foster-home is not adequate. We want to know the foster-family and the child to be placed, so that they may suit each other. We wonder whether the same philosophy might not apply to placing substitute-mothers with families. We believe this is a specialized service which functions best when it can utilize all the available skills.

LABOR APPROACHES TO THE JEWISH PROBLEM¹

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THE Practitioner's Section has been interested in a study of the Jewish problem. In attempting to define it, we found a variety of theories as to what it constitutes, these theories being organically related to the philosophies of various organizations and groups. As Jewish social workers who consider themselves an integral part of the various labor movements in America, we are primarily interested in the philosophies and approaches of labor to the solution of the Jewish problem. The rise in the importance of labor makes it necessary to understand its position, including the variations and similarities among the various groupings within it. As workers in Jewish social agencies, we are constantly confronted with the manifestations of economic discrimination and the cultural and psychological maladjustments resulting from our minority status. The continued attacks on the Jews in Poland, Germany, Rumania, and other countries have had their reverberations in the development of discrimination here. The growth of anti-Semitism in the United States, concomitantly with the rising tide of reaction and Fascism, calls attention to the precarious position of American Jewry.

In surveying the field of organized labor, the committee found numerous labor organizations which might have lent themselves to the study at hand. Such groups as the Committee on Industrial Relations, the Farmer-Labor

Party of Minnesota, the Workers' Alliance of America, and the Farmer-Labor Federation of America, among others, presented themselves as possibilities. However, for purposes of analysis, the committee agreed to limit the study to four labor and political organizations: the American Federation of Labor, the Poale-Zion-Zeire-Zion Party or the Labor Zionist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. It was felt that these four groups representing labor are typical of the situation in the United States, not only because of their history and development, but because they have articulated a program which attempts to meet the present needs of American workers.

The Committee was aware that although some of these programs may not as yet have been fully developed, they are nevertheless rapidly assuming a significant role in American life. The Committee, therefore, felt it important to find out whether these organizations recognized the Jewish problem, whether they had formulated a program to meet it, and how they had carried their theoretical views out in practice. We noted that each of these organizations had large sections of Jewish workers and we expected them to have a specific program for their Jewish membership.

The Committee was divided into four sections, each section being responsible for the investigation of one of the four labor groups. The information was obtained through interviews with the leading exponents of the organizations,

¹ Paper prepared by a Committee of the Association of Practitioners in Jewish Social Agencies.