

1952

A study of neglect court cases in a district office of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children from January 1, 1949 to December 31, 1951

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Thesis  
Kirby  
1952

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A STUDY OF NEGLECT COURT CASES  
IN A DISTRICT OFFICE  
OF THE  
MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY FOR THE  
PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO CHILDREN  
FROM  
JANUARY 1, 1949 TO DECEMBER 31, 1951

A Thesis

Submitted by

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(A.B., University of New Hampshire, 1938)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

1952

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Introduction .....	1
	Purpose .....	2
	Scope .....	4
	Sources of Data .....	3
	Method .....	5
II	1. Some General Aspects of Protective Case Work	7
	2. History and Function of the M.S.P.C.C. .	10
	3. Setting of the F. Branch in Which Study Was Made .....	11
III	Case Studies .....	16
IV	Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations	53
	Table No. I .....	55
	Table No. II .....	56
	Table No. III .....	58
	Bibliography .....	64
	Appendix .....	65
	Schedule .....	66

## INDEX OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I	Marital Structure of the Home .....	55
II	Dominant Factors Involved in the Neglect Court Situation .....	56
III	Sixteen Cases Studied - The Neglect Court Picture .....	58

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study grew out of the experience of the writer in a District Office of the Massachusetts Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children which is a state-wide child protective agency in an authoritative setting. As the purpose of the agency is to protect children, the major function is to offer casework services to families where the parents have been unwilling or unable to recognize the need for help and do something about it and whose children are suffering from neglect, abuse, or other types of substandard care.

By agency policy these parents are, when practicable, given the opportunity to change and to provide a better standard of care for their children. In failing to do so, the agency has the authority by State charter to bring said parents and their children before the Juvenile Session of the District Court either for motivating purposes or to show cause why their children should not be placed in a different environment for their future well-being.

The agency has a responsibility to the community to protect children in families against whom a valid complaint is lodged, either through this helping process of offering casework services or by using its constituted authority by recourse to the courts, if necessary. Further material as to the policy, purpose and setting of the agency will be included in Chapter II.

The use of authority has a dualistic quality described as constituted and inherent authority which creates a basic framework and

primary dynamic in the casework structure and process in protective work.

Its dualistic quality likewise implies a dualistic concomitant with regard to agency activity and responsibility. The agency, first must stand ready to act in setting up a process of helping in a responsible manner so as to reach those individuals who are both able and willing to change in relation to the will of the community; secondly, the agency, in other situations must act decisively and directly in behalf of children whose parents either fail or are unwilling to make required adjustments thru utilization of the resource of referral to the court for legal action regarding children. <sup>1</sup>

"The agency concern and responsibility will be fulfilled most effectively only when it does operate on a casework basis." <sup>2</sup> The framework for this helping process in the M.S.P.C.C. is developed through its own policies and procedures in accordance with sound casework principles. These will appear elsewhere in this study.

The writer in this study was especially concerned about the second phase of the dualistic responsibility i.e. the need to act decisively- which resulted in a complaint of neglect in court against the parents and in behalf of the children in a group of cases in which these children were suffering and the parents were unwilling or unable to accept or use casework help.

Thus the purpose of this study is to determine what effect the court experience had on these parents and their children, if any, and whether or not the parents as a result thereof were better able to meet the needs of their children themselves. If not, were these children protected?

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1. Norma Knoll Page, Protective Service, P. 5

2. Ibid P. 6

This group of neglect court cases was selected because the families had been before the court for an unreasonable length of time either without disposition or with disposition prolonged while the parents and children returned to the court on numerous continuances.

Since it is a modern protective casework technique that the neglect court experience can be used as a constructive casework tool to further the casework process on a higher level of authority, the writer wondered, were the parents able to use this court experience in a constructive, purposeful and meaningful way in order to better meet the needs of their children? What were the parents real feelings and attitudes around the protective casework and neglect court situation? Were the parents able to use the court constructively? Were the parents able to use casework help; either in a personal relationship or through help with their environmental problems? Were the children protected?

No attempt was made to deal with these cases in terms of specific causation, but an attempt was made to develop the study in terms of three phases, namely: (1) the family situation which led to the neglect court complaint, (2) the time element involved in working with the family prior to the agency initiating court action and (3) the effects that followed from the court experience.

Sources of data were the case records of the F district of the M.S.P.C.C. Tables were prepared by the writer from the records studied. Court records on these families was incorporated onto the records of the agency, and dates as to court continuances etc. were taken therefrom. The theories and principles concerning the protective casework process were obtained from the literature and from lectures in Protective Case

Work at the Boston University School of Social Work which is listed in the bibliography. A schedule for the development of this study appears in the appendix. (see page 66)

The scope of this study covers the entire sixteen neglect court cases initiated by the M.S.P.C.C. in the F branch for the three years covering January 1, 1949 to December 31, 1951. These were the cases which consisted of the parents and their children which were placed on continuance by the court following the initial court hearing.

There were eight additional neglect court cases initiated by the agency during the period studied which were acted upon immediately by the court and the purpose was accomplished without need for continued supervision or casework after the initial hearing.

One hundred and twenty-five child protective cases were active in the branch during this three year period. Thus the ratio in which neglect court action occurred was one in seventeen and eight-tenths or five and six-tenths per cent of the caseload. This is within realistic measure of the "national average of ten per cent in 1947"<sup>3</sup> and a sharp decline from the "one in five state-wide court case average in the society prior to the year 1947 at which time the protective casework process per se came into being."<sup>4</sup>

At the conclusion of the study nine of the cases were active and seven closed. The nine active cases had been disposed of in court while the seven active cases were still on contiuance before the court.

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3. Robert M. Mulford, Lecture on Protective Case Work, Boston University 1948.

4. Ibid.

The method of procedure in working with these cases was to divide them into two groups, each group having a basic difference for the protective agency taking court action against the parent or parents and in behalf of the children as neglected. Group A represents five cases which were acute and in which the protective agency had to bring neglect action immediately without offering the parents an opportunity to change through casework prior to taking court action. In these cases it was necessary because of community pressure to initiate a complaint of neglect against the parents or else the police would have done so because of other serious criminal complaints against them resulting from the same emergency investigation. Group B represents eleven cases, that were chronic neglect situations and had been active with the agency for varying lengths of time during which the parents were unwilling or unable to accept or use the agency services and properly care for their children within minimal community standards.. This group of cases was brought before the court of jurisdiction as a higher level of authority in order that the parents might realistically face their need to change and care for their children by accepting help or, in failing to do so, in order that the children could be placed elsewhere by the court for their own protection.

There are definite limitations to this study in the amount of material presented, and in the amount of written material in the field.

Another limitation to this study is the large average caseload of sixty-five in the Branch which restricts the amount of casework service that the worker can devote to each family.

Because of these limitations and the small amount of material

presented only the most tentative conclusions to the questions can be drawn. The writer believes that the main value of this study will be to focus attention as to whether or not these parents are able to accept or use casework help with the shifting of the responsibility to the higher authority of the court and whether or not the children can be protected by other methods in court if the parents do not conform to change through their willingness to accept and use constructive case work help.

Chapter II includes some general aspects of protective casework, a review of the agency history and function and the setting of this study. The cases studied are presented in Chapter III together with an interpretation of each case and the conclusion drawn from them. The summary conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter IV, together with tables relating to the study and conclusion.

## CHAPTER II

### 1. Some General Aspects of Protective Case Work

As in other types of case work services Protective cases cannot be worked through to a satisfactory conclusion unless case work principles are both recognized and adhered to, and parents are willing and able to accept and use them with purposeful meaning by changing in order to meet the needs of their children. A protective case is one in which the parent is unable or unwilling to ask for, use, or accept help but whose child is receiving less than the minimum standard of care accepted by the community. In child protective work the agency initiates the service because of a complaint received.

Protective case work is only possible in terms of the acceptance the client makes of the service offered. Although treatment is directed toward the parent, focus is on what is happening to the child.

There are, five essential differences between the Protective Agency in which a complaint initiates the service and the voluntary case work agency in which the client asks for help.

1. The Protective agency initiates the service.
2. The individual being helped is not free to decide that he doesn't want the help of the agency.
3. The agency cannot withdraw service on the basis of the individual's refusal, unwillingness or inability to accept help.
4. If the parents are unable to improve conditions which endanger their children, the agency must take the case to court with recommendations for their proper care.
5. Although the agency respects parental rights, the child is the immediate concern in Child Protection. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Robert M. Mulford, Lecture on Protective Case Work, Boston University School of Social Work. 1948.

This service, which recognizes the primary value of maintenance of family unity and relationship, also accepts such limitations in people's capacity to change as may necessitate recommendation for substitute family care as necessary for the protection of the child in certain situations.

Therefore when parents, who either seem unable to make necessary changes in the children's living situation, or who failing to feel the agency's authority, do not come to grips with the reality of the unacceptable home situation, they must be informed that the agency will make court referral on a petition of neglect and recommendations as to the child's future custody and living arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

New structures can be formed through court hearings and probation by means of a similar setting of specifics when the authority shifts from the protective agency to the higher authority of the court. Thus, the court experience if used constructively, can become a strong reality factor in helping parents to achieve their objectives in meeting their children's needs. This can be accomplished by giving these parents specific and reasonable goals to accomplish, within definite time limits and thus make the experience meaningful to them.

Thus in the protective case work process, it seems necessary to assume from the beginning to the ending that most parents desire to be good parents and will yield to change through a skillful helping process.

This is a service, however, that is offered to a parent for him to use if he can. In the use he makes of it he has clear freedom of choice. It could not be otherwise. The agency's responsibility is to give him an opportunity to make that choice, knowing what is involved in it for him. The alternatives are narrowed down. He cannot go on indefinitely in the same way without facing the consequences of court action.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Norma Knoll Page, Protective Service, P. 12.

3. Jessie Taft, Editor, Counseling and Protective Service as Family Case Work, P. 104.

The parent-child relationship is of vital importance. Every child has a constant need of security in that relationship no matter who is responsible for his care. Therefore, the rights of parents should be consistently recognized. The need to preserve the rights when this is in the best interest of the child must be a major consideration.

However, the rights and interests of the child have priority and should be placed above all other considerations. When parents cannot protect the child's best interests, agencies must take appropriate steps to insure him properly constituted legal guardianship.<sup>4</sup>

It seems clear in the review of the literature that protective case work should be a helping process in which the rights of the parents must be respected through providing opportunities for change if they are willing and able to accept and use casework help.

It also seems clear from the literature that the protective agency must stand ready to act decisively through court action when the parents do not yield to change, and the rights of the children to become healthy citizens are threatened by parental neglect.

Thus, while treatment is directed toward the parents, the focus throughout is on what is happening to the child in the particular situation. The primary responsibility of the protective agency is to protect children. This does not mean necessarily that when a protective agency initiates a neglect complaint that the children should be removed by the court on the basis of the parents' unwillingness or inability to accept or use help. The court officials are in actuality a higher authority of protective workers who with proper understanding of basic casework principles, or even common sense objectivity, can make the court experience a reality situation to the parents by helping them to see that neglecting children is serious business that cannot be tolerated indefinitely by society.

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4. Report of the Membership Committee of the Child Welfare League of America, Inc., June 1951.

## 2. History and Function of the M.S.P.C.C.

The M.S.P.C.C. is a state-wide, non-sectarian, child welfare agency, incorporated in 1878 under the General Laws, "for the purpose of awakening interest in the abuses to which children are exposed by the intemperance, cruelty or cupidity of parents and guardians, and to help the enforcement of existing laws on the subject, procure needed legislation, and for kindred work."

The purposes are the same today with "Emphasis on the preventive aspects of its work. By the Society's constitution, "Its objects are the protection of childhood, the building up of family life and the improvement of community standards throughout the commonwealth."

The Society carries out these purposes through casework services by working on behalf of children who are suffering from neglect, abuse or other types of substandard care and whose parents are unwilling or unable to recognize the need for help and do something about it.<sup>5</sup>

"The history of the M.S.P.C.C. can logically be divided into four eras,"<sup>6</sup> beginning with the year 1878 and extending into the fourth era which began in 1947..... In the first era emphasis was upon the removal of the children from the home and upon court prosecution. In the second era the emphasis shifted from prosecution to prevention and the preservation of the home for the child. This was the beginning of casework service of "the process of helping people to help themselves." The third era increased the emphasis on casework service and marked a more complete organization of the society on a state-wide basis. The fourth era began in 1947 with increased emphasis upon understanding and treating emotional and psychological conditions adversely affecting both parents

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5. Mass. Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. A Handbook of Useful Information. Third edition 1951. P. 3

6. Ibid, PP. 14, 15.

and children. Emphasis is based on the principle of helping the client to help himself. The initial approach to the parents is to respect their rights and assume that they want to be good parents, regardless of the immediate situation. Consideration is focused on what is happening to the children during this process.

The philosophy of protective casework in the M.S.P.C.C. is consistent with the fundamentals reviewed in the literature.

Although approximately fifty per cent of the case workers throughout this state-wide Child Protective Agency are not graduates of graduate schools of social work the personnel has been well schooled in the protective casework process through Central, District and Regional staff meetings and supervision by a highly skilled Director of Case Work because of his graduate education and experience in the field of protective casework and as a former referee in the Juvenile Court of Toledo, Ohio. Psychiatric consultation is also available in the agency whenever necessary.

Therefore, casework principles are adhered to in the agency and, even when parents demonstrate their inability to change and a complaint of neglect in court is necessary for the protection of the children, the agency hopes that the higher authority of the court can serve as a casework tool and produce the desired result.

### 3. Setting of the F Branch in which Study was Made

The area in which the study was made, or the F branch of the agency, covers one city and eight towns and is largely rural. The estimated population at this time is 75,000. Unfortunately, voluntary casework agencies are lacking in the eight towns in particular which places a limitation on the protective casework services at the pre-court level as

some of these clients might have sought help before the situations affecting their children became too traumatic. If available, family and child placement agencies could have been used as a referral source in some instances and might have been of benefit to some of these families before the problems became so acute that court action was necessary. By the same token such resources could undoubtedly have been of benefit during the neglect court process.

Prior to the initial court hearing of a complaint of neglect, the agency caseworker sends a complete summary of the family situation with recommendations to the particular court representative of the State Department of Public Welfare, Division of Child Guardianship, in order that the department may prepare to receive the children in case they should be adjudicated neglected and placed in the custody of said department for foster care.

A summary is also sent in advance to the Juvenile Probation Officer who represents the court in neglect proceedings and who works with the particular family from the time of the initial court hearing until there is final disposition on the complaint of neglect.

This summary is a cooperative measure by the protective agency in order that all authorities concerned in court may have a clear picture of the family coming there and of the inability or unwillingness of the parents to accept or use the help of the protective agency by meeting the needs of their children. Focus is on what the situation is doing to the children rather than how bad the situation is. The court then assumes the authoritative role in the casework process.

There are three District Court Juvenile Sessions in the F branch to which these neglect court cases were referred, one of which is in the larger city and the others in small rural communities. The local justice usually sits both in District Court and in Juvenile Sessions, the latter being private, informal hearings where only interested parties may enter.

Those present during the court hearing, besides the family concerned and witnesses, are the Judge, the Chief Probation Officer, the Juvenile Probation Officer, the Court Chaplain, the court representative of the Police Department, a court representative of the State Department, Division of Child Guardianship, the Clerk of Court and the Protective Caseworker who initiated the neglect complaint and who presents the total neglect situation and calls on appropriate witnesses. Although none of these authorities have formal training in social work, they have had long and varied experience in the field and are participants in social work conferences.

Prior to the initial court hearing a complete summary of the family situation with recommendations is sent to the particular court representative of the State Department of Public Welfare, Division of Child Guardianship, in order that the Department may prepare to receive the children in case they should be adjudicated neglected and placed in custody of said Department for foster care.

A summary is also sent in advance to the Juvenile Probation Officer who represents the court in neglect proceedings, and who works with the particular family until a final disposition on the complaint of neglect has been made.

After the worker from the protective agency brings a complaint against the parents for neglecting their children and in behalf of the children as neglected, the family shifts to the jurisdiction of the higher authority of the court and the case becomes what is termed by the writer a neglect court case. The agency worker prosecutes the cases and presents the evidence and recommendations, but the final decision as to what will be done with the parents and or with the children is the responsibility of the presiding judge.

In the neglect court proceedings the judge may, according to the "neglect law of Massachusetts" <sup>7</sup> make any number of legal decisions. He may, if there is insufficient evidence on the initial hearing to find the parent guilty of neglect or to adjudicate the children neglected, dismiss the complaint for lack of prosecution. Or even before the case is given a formal hearing in court, he may continue the case without a finding "ad infinitum" if he feels that the proceeding might motivate the parents to improve the standards for their children. On the other hand the judge may find either the parents guilty of neglect and or the children as neglected, and still continue the case in court indefinitely without making a formal disposition of the case. As a last resort he may find the parents guilty of neglecting their children and give them a suspended sentence to jail, probation or both, or sentence them. He may also, as a last resort, commit the children to the State Department, Division of Child Guardianship, or to the care of any responsible individual or child-care agency for proper home care.

In the F branch it is very seldom that the courts remove children

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7. Mass. G. L. Ch. 119, Ss. 42 - 44

immediately on the initial hearing of the neglect complaint. A Juvenile Probation Officer represents the court in neglect cases from the time the family appears in court and at least one investigation of the family home situation is made by her for further recommendations to the court before decisive action is considered, save for extreme emergencies.

Other authorities, such as the Court Chaplain, the senior Probation Officer, the representative of the State Department and the Police might be delegated to work with the court by making recommendations toward the future welfare of the children.

Thus in Chapter III the writer will present the sixteen neglect court cases studied together with an analysis of the findings in each case in order to determine what effect the court experience, if any, had on the parents and whether or not the fifty-six minor children in these cases were protected.

The writer defines a casework process as a helping process to help the client to help himself through some insight into the meaning of his behavior as it affects his children, and the constructive use that he makes of the worker-client relationship toward achieving the goal which in this study is the future security of his children.

The writer makes a distinction between environmental manipulation which is part of the casework process with the parent participating, and that which is forced on the parent through the use of authority.

Sometimes the parents are able to face reality, or the seriousness of their neglect, through the impact of coming face to face with the high authority of the court and the realization that their neglect of their children could result in the court removing them.

### CHAPTER III

#### CASE STUDIES

In considering the effect of the court experience upon the casework process it is necessary to consider a number of cases to determine whether or not these parents were able to use this level of authority in a constructive, purposeful and meaningful way in order to better meet the needs of their children.

As have been indicated in Chapter I, it is a modern casework theory that the court experience, by which there is a higher level of authority, can be used as a constructive casework tool to further the casework process. Therefore, the writer wonders, what type of parents were these? What type of an environment did their children live under? What were some of the major factors in the neglect situation? Was casework effective in any way by the protective agency prior to court action? What were the parents' real feeling and attitudes around the protective casework and the neglect court situation: both, prior to court action and at the conclusion of this study? Why was court action necessary? Finally, was a casework process effective in court and were these parents able to change in any way and meet the needs of their children afterwards? Were the children protected in any way as a result of the experience?

Interpretation is made by the writer in each case as to the total effect of the court experience on the casework process in terms of working with these parents and in their being able to face the reality of their failure and change to meet the needs of their children within minimal community standards. In the recording, however, there is a great

deal of material which concerns the over-all situation and factors which is significant to the entire casework process and this has been included.

There will be presented here two groups of cases in which neglect court action was initiated against the parents and in behalf of their children by the M.S.P.C.C. and in which the families appeared before the court on the complaint of neglect. In each group there was a realistic reason for the agency to take the neglect action and both were in order to offer protection to the children involved. The focus is on the effect of the case work process on the entire family unit.

Group I: This group of five cases represents a reality pressure type of an acute neglect situation because of the seriousness of the parents' immediate behavior on the children. Because of this it was imperative for the agency to bring neglect court action immediately, and without offering the parents an opportunity to change through a casework process prior to bringing the court complaint of neglect. This was necessary because of community pressure over the traumatic situation involved as detected by an emergency investigation by the police, the worker or both, which concerned additional serious criminal behavior on the part of the parent which was severely detrimental to the children at the moment. In all cases temporary emergency plans had to be made for some or all of the children outside of the home and the protective casework process began at the court. In all five cases, additional criminal complaints against the parents were issued by the police simultaneously with the neglect action by the agency worker. These included complaints against the parents of lewd and lascivious cohabitation, drunkenness, incest and extreme cases of non-support which resulted in serious hardship to the children. This group of cases is re-

ferred to as acute neglect situations.

#### CASE NO. I

The G family consisted of the parents and five minor children ages two to ten years. The two younger children were born to Mrs. G. out of wedlock. This created marital friction between Mr. and Mrs. G as Mr. G felt that his responsibility was to his legal children.

Although the G family was financially able to care for all five children their living quarters were inadequate and combined with the marital problem brought about by the illegitimate children of Mrs. G, her husband threatened to leave unless she made plans for the older children elsewhere. As a result Mrs. G placed her own children in various foster homes but was unable to pay their board resulting in a non-support payment against the family in district court.

When the district court justice listened to the evidence he immediately referred the problem to the protective agency on the basis that the illegitimate children were neglected and needed protection. A neglect court complaint was issued immediately with the court in authority from the beginning.

The G family was before the court on probation for two years during which time there were seven neglect court appearances without finding either against Mr. and Mrs. G or in behalf of the children. There was legal control over the parents on the non-support complaint and probation resulted.

Supplementary help was given the family through referral to the Welfare Department who arranged for medical attention and hospitalization for one child and also placed the two children born out of wedlock in excellent foster homes.

Help was given by the court to the family in locating a home which was adequate for the three children of the marriage but inadequate to meet the needs of all five.

With this opportunity for change provided in the court situation, the parents were better able to meet the needs of three children under the supervision of the probation officer and the protective worker. Voluntary placement afforded partial protection for the remaining two children.

This is an acute situation of neglect that illustrates the use of the court as a motivating factor in helping the parents to accept needed

change in order to properly meet the needs of their children.

The parents were unable to use casework help in terms of their own feelings because of their extreme defensiveness, and fear that all of their children might be removed by the court.

Casework was ineffective but the authority of the court did face Mr. and Mrs. G with the need to place two of their children voluntarily in order to relieve an over-crowded home condition and to relieve the marital friction between these parents because the two children placed had been born out of wedlock.

Environmental manipulation at the court level did offer temporary protection for the children. Probation for the parents on a simultaneous complaint of non-support did give the court legal control over the parents during the neglect court process.

#### CASE NO. II

The I family consisted of the parents and one infant child age six months. Mr. I had temporarily separated from his nineteen year old wife because of her openly keeping company with other men. As a result of family arguments, Mrs. I left her comfortable apartment with her child to live with a married girl friend who was separated from her husband serving a term in jail for non-support of his family. (see case No. III). Both Mrs. I and her companion were keeping company with other men who returned to their apartment at night and who according to complaints received by the police remained over night. Neighbors also complained of noise and apparent drinking parties in the apartment.

The complaint of neglect was made to the agency by the police who had gone to the apartment on a night complaint and found Mrs. I entertaining another man while her infant child slept in a bureau drawer in the same room. There had previously been a drinking party and the apartment was in a state of upheaval. The infant was sore and also suffered a painful rash from not being changed, and immediate nursing care was obtained.

Because of the acuteness of the situation Mrs. I was ar-

rested on a complaint of lewdness made by the investigating officer. The protective worker simultaneously issued a neglect court complaint against Mrs. I who refused to return to her own comfortable apartment with her child.

Mr. I was located and arranged for voluntary care of his child while an effort was being made through the court to have Mrs. I accept proper parental responsibility.

The I case was before the District Court for fifteen months during which time there were three court appearances. At the conclusion of this period the neglect court case was dismissed without a finding when Mrs. I accepted the advice of the court and returned to her husband. Continued court supervision showed that the child received adequate care after the reconciliation. On the complaint of lewdness Mrs. I was placed on probation after receiving a suspended sentence to the Women's Reformatory.

During the fifteen months that the neglect case was before the court Mr. and Mrs. I were motivated through court authority to provide proper care for their infant child.

After the neglect complaint was dismissed without finding in court, Mrs. I separated from Mr. I and filed for divorce and custody of the child. In the meantime she voluntarily placed her baby to board through a Child Placing Agency and obtained work to supplement her support from Mr. I. Evidence showed that Mr. I himself began bestowing his attention on another married woman.

In this case Mrs. I did not accept casework in terms of the neglect of her infant child. Although she was found guilty on the complaint of lewdness and was motivated by the court experience to better meet the needs of her child, she was unable to relate her behavior to the neglect situation. Casework was on a superficial level with Mrs. I becoming extremely defensive and change was effected mainly to keep herself out of jail. An early finding of neglect against her relating to the lewd situation might have served as a corrective experience. Although the infant was afforded partial protection throughout the court process, this change in Mrs. I resulted because of authority in

court and not because of an understanding of the meaning of her behavior.

### CASE NO. III

The J family consisted of the parents and two minor children ages two months and two years. Mr. J was serving time in the House of Correction for non-support of his family.

Mrs. J was the companion of Mrs. I (see Case No. II) and both were arrested simultaneously on a complaint of lewdness with an acute neglect court complaint resulting following police referral to the protective agency.

Mrs. J was apprehended while entertaining a man companion while her two minor children slept in the same room and bed.

She was found guilty of lewdness and placed on probation after receiving a suspended sentence to the Women's Reformatory.

The complaint of neglect was before the court for fifteen months without a finding because Mrs. J agreed to move to another state with her aged mother and provide for the children there.

There was no opportunity for casework during that period.

Prior to the court continuance date Mrs. J returned to the original jurisdiction to live and reports received indicated that she continued carrying on with other men.

She later placed her children voluntarily through a Child Placing Agency and obtained work.

The neglect court case remains on periodic continuance without finding.

The J case shows that Mrs. J was not faced with the reality of her failure as a mother by means of the neglect court experience. When she moved out of the jurisdiction with her children there was no follow-up in terms of protective casework. The complaint of lewdness was acted upon but there was no acceptance of the seriousness of the behavior of Mrs. J in relation to the neglect of her children.

It was necessary, therefore, to help Mrs. J see the need of protecting her children through voluntary child placement services which she

accepted in order to relieve herself of the responsibility by accepting work and a room of her own. This was accomplished by use of authority rather than by a protective casework process. Although the children are partially protected, on a temporary basis, the use of authority thru environmental manipulation was the technique used to produce change and not a meaningful experience by Mrs. J. Mrs. J and the children were compelled to move from their previous inadequate home environment on the alternative that if she did not, the children would be removed by the court and placed in a suitable home environment.

#### CASE NO. IV

The K case consisted of the parents and three minor children ages eighteen months to four years. Mr. K was serving time for a service infraction which had resulted in the cutting off of his family allotment. Mrs. K was living in a one room apartment in a large apartment block and had inadequate finances and facilities to meet the needs of her children. As a result she obtained part time work as a waitress in order to provide minimum necessities. Her addiction to drink brought about a complex situation which resulted in her arrest.

Prior to Mr. K returning to the service there had been a great deal of marital difficulty between the K's because of Mrs. K's excessive drinking and her other associations.

Following the departure of Mr. K the young mother accepted waitress work when Mr. K's allotment was detached because of a military involvement. She reverted to her drinking habits resulting in her involvement with other men.

The complaint was made to the agency by the police and a neighbor in the tenement block because the children were left alone without supervision while Mrs. K left the home regularly with men who took her to local drinking establishments.

On the original complaint a letter was sent to Mrs. K to come to the agency for a interview. She did not respond.

The second complaint was referred by the police after the officer had gone to the apartment and found the three

infants alone crying, hungry, and soiled. Mrs. K had been seen leaving the home late in the afternoon in a car driven by a man companion. No plans had been made for the care of the children.

Mrs. K was later that evening located in a local bar intoxicated and dishelved to the point of complete incoherence. She was arrested on a complaint of drunkenness<sup>1</sup> by the police and a complaint of neglect against her and in behalf of the children was simultaneously issued by the protective worker. Temporary plans were made for the children with a neighbor.

The following day in court Mrs. K pleaded for a chance to change and properly care for her children. She was placed on probation on the drunkenness complaint while the neglect complaint was further continued without finding when she entered a not guilty plea.

The neglect court case was continued without finding for one year during which time there were seven appearances. Through the cooperation of the court authorities and protective worker, public assistance was obtained for the family to relieve financial needs.

Mr. K was later released from the service through court intervention and returned home to obtain work and an adequate home for the family with close court supervision. Mrs. K was able to control her drinking and the physical condition of the children improved considerably.

This change in Mrs. K was brought about by the authority of the court more than through a casework process. Regardless, the improvement in the children was remarkable over the one year period. Again there was no finding on the neglect court complaint which might have served as a corrective experience for Mrs. K. Continued marital friction existed between the parents because of the behavior of Mrs. K while her husband was away.

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1. Although the actual court complaint is legally referred to as "drunk," the court prefers to refer to it as a charge of drunkenness against the defendant, and for that reason the writer uses the word drunkenness in this thesis rather than the term drunk.

After the dismissal of the neglect court complaint, without finding, Mrs. K filed for divorce against her husband on the grounds of cruelty and requested custody of the children.

The use of authority at the court level motivated Mrs. K to control her excessive drinking and to remain home and care for her children. The complaint of drunkenness against her served as a reality factor that she must comply to community standards.

#### CASE NO. V

The M case consisted of the father, stepmother, a son age thirteen years and a daughter eleven years. Mr. M had been divorced by the mother of his children but retained their custody when she consented because he threatened her with violence if she attempted to take them from him. He later married the stepmother who had lived with his family prior to the divorce. Mr. M had a record in another state for an earlier moral offense against a minor girl. Since the divorce the mother has remarried and was unwilling and unable to consider plans for the children. There has been very little mother-child relationship during the interval.

The complaint was made to the agency by school authorities because of the boy alleging openly of his illicit relationship with his sister. Follow-up investigation indicated that Mr. M was also involved and that he was also extremely abusive to the son.

As a result of police investigation Mr. M was arrested on a serious morals charge and placed in jail while awaiting grand jury action. He denied the allegations of the children throughout.

As the stepmother was unwilling to care for the children with Mr. M away a neglect court complaint was made by the agency in order to protect the children in this acute situation.

Although the agency recommended that the children be placed in a neutral home the case of neglect in their behalf was continued without finding on the three appearances before the court over a six months period. They were placed in the care of paternal relatives against the advice of the worker. Later they were unwilling to testify against Mr. M

because they were falsely told that if anything happened to their father they might have to go to a reform school.

The case remained on continuance without finding at the conclusion of this study. Mr. M was still in jail and awaiting higher court action on the morals complaint. The children were in good physical homes of paternal relatives in another state but lived in constant fear that Mr. M might be released and retaliate against them.

This case illustrates an extremely acute situation because Mr. M was immediately confined to jail on a serious morals complaint concerning his children. The step-mother did not want the sole responsibility of the children and had a negative attitude against them, the worker and the police for reporting on their father.

Because of this there was no opportunity for casework at the court level, but the authority of the court did serve to protect the children by placing them elsewhere. This offered them protection on a temporary basis and they were protected from retaliation by their father for complaining against them through his being sent to jail. However, precedence was given to the incest complaint against Mr. M and disposition of the neglect was held in abeyance while awaiting finding on the more serious charge.

Thus in each of the cases in this group we find that there is no protective casework process in action either by the protective worker or by the court; especially in terms of casework participation by the parents.

In all five cases, precedence in court was given to the other criminal complaints against the parents and legal control was obtained over each of them by probation on the adult criminal complaint.

In terms of a casework process, the hearing of these other complaints to a finding in the neglect complaints against the parents might have

made their pathological behavior a reality to them and brought out their guilt. This might have served as a corrective experience and offered an opportunity for casework with these parents from that point forward.

At any rate, in all five cases, the authority of the court did provide the means of motivating the parents to make temporary plans for their children through the technique of environmental manipulation which was still accomplished by the authority of the court rather than because of a meaningful and purposeful experience as seen by the parents themselves.

The court did, however, serve a useful and constructive purpose in offering temporary plans for these neglected children.

The protective worker, in these situations, was an additional authority under the court and authority, rather than a casework process, resulted in some protection for the children involved. The worker was able to make plans for temporary placement of the children with the backing of the court.

Group II: This group of eleven cases is representative of chronic neglect situations which concerned families that had been active with the agency for varying lengths of time during which the parents were unwilling or unable to accept or use casework help and properly care for their children within minimal community standards.

This group of cases was brought by the protective worker before the court of jurisdiction as a higher level of authority in order that parents might realistically face their need to change and care for their children by accepting help, or in failing to do so, in order that the children could be placed elsewhere by the court for their protection. Thus the

original purpose in the agency bringing a complaint of neglect against the parents and in behalf of the children in these cases was to bring them face to face with the court in hopes that this would serve as a reality to them that their failure as parents must change or else their children might be removed. This is a technique in the protective casework process of attempting to use the court as a casework tool of last resort for these parents to change and properly care for their children, if possible.

#### CASE NO. VI

The A family consisted of the father and three minor children ages one to nine years. Mr. A had divorced the mother because of her becoming illegitimately pregnant by another man and he received custody of the children. The whereabouts of Mrs. A was unknown as she had moved away prior to the birth of the fourth child. The father refused to have a person care for the children during the night while he worked on a night shift and as a result the children were left unsupervised. He would lock the door of his apartment and insist that the children not let anyone in. The marital experience of Mr. A resulted in his being mistrustful and suspicious.

The complaint was brought to the attention of the agency by the police, neighbors, and a school nurse for fear of the safety of the children. In addition to the above factors, weekend drinking parties occurred in the apartment. All three children were afraid and the youngest child in particular was often punished severely by Mr. A who was of the opinion that he was not his child. The children were fearful, tired and enuretic.

The A family was known to the agency for eleven months prior to the neglect court complaint. Mr. A was hostile and unaccepting of casework services during that period and the relationship was entirely negative. Local resources were made available for supervision of his children but he refused to accept them until threatened with neglect court action at which time he accepted unwillingly the services of an elderly housekeeper. He later ordered her from the home and placed the children voluntarily in foster homes but took them home without supervision when the boarding parents

requested their board payments which he had promised. Mr. A had an adequate income to assume this responsibility.

Because Mr. A was unwilling and unable to accept help and there was no change in the care of the children, a neglect court complaint was brought which this father could not accept in terms of the reality situation. He remained hostile and negative toward the agency and later toward the court.

The case remained on continuance before the Juvenile Session of the court for one year during which time there had been four continuances without finding. On the initial hearing the court did motivate Mr. A to place the children which he did reluctantly and not in terms of insight. The court chaplain was given the responsibility of getting him to cooperate but Mr. A purposely kept the foster parents waiting for their board payments in retaliation.

Prior to the fourth court continuance Mr. A gave up his local job and went to a distant state where he married a young girl whom he had previously known.

On the basis that he had a mother for his children and wanted to take them with him to his new home the neglect court case was dismissed on the fourth continuance without a finding of neglect either against Mr. A or in behalf of the children. There was no investigation on the other end.

The record shows that a few months later Mr. A was killed in an accident and the children are now wards of the other state. It seems as though Mr. A maneuvered himself out of an uncomfortable situation by his second marriage which resulted in a lack of protection for his children.

This case illustrated a father who mistrusted everyone in general because the mother of his children had been untrue to him which resulted in his divorce. This suspicion and mistrust was used to the detriment of his three minor children, who he would leave alone in his home at night while he was working, and which experience had a detrimental affect on their health, psychological development and schooling.

Following a complaint of neglect, the protective caseworker offered

him services which he was unable or unwilling to accept or use because of his extreme hostility and defensiveness. After eleven months of attempting to reach this responsible parent there was no visible change in the care that the children were receiving, except for a temporary placement which was effected mainly through the threat of authority on the part of the worker. As a result a complaint of neglect was taken against Mr. A and in behalf of the children as a further step to face this father with the reality of his negative influence on the children.

He and his children were before the court for one year during which time there were four continuances without a finding against Mr. A, or in behalf of the children. His negative, hostile and defensive attitude continued around the court situation, and he only cooperated occasionally under direct pressure from all authorities concerned. The court procedure was meaningless to him in terms of his understanding of his problem, and only temporary protection was given to the children under the motivation of the court upon insistence that the children be placed by Mr. A. As a result Mr. A merely complied until he was able to remarry and take the children to another state where they are now under the care of that state following the death of Mr. A.

An early finding of neglect against Mr. A. might have faced him with the reality of his failure as a parent and release his guilt, thus offering a casework opportunity to work through his hostility and open the way to casework.

Although the court process offered authoritative and manipulative change, which gave temporary protection to the children, there was no protection in terms of change in Mr. A. himself.

## CASE NO. VII

The B family consisted of the parents and six minor children, ages three to sixteen years. Although Mr. B had an adequate income to meet family needs within minimal standards, both parents were chronic drinkers and Mrs. B was consistently seen in the company of other men. Home conditions were deplorable and most of the housework and preparation of meals rested on the sixteen and thirteen year old daughters. Later, during the neglect court process, Mrs. B deserted the family with another man and her whereabouts is unknown. She had been gone approximately two years at the conclusion of this study.

The complaint was brought to the attention of the agency by the school, the police, the school nurse, and a clergyman because of factors cited above and because the children were seen on the street at extremely late hours. They also appeared in school dirty, hungry and listless. Some of the children were being approached by men who offered them food and candy in return for requested adverse favors. The family lived in a poor neighborhood and parents brought home numerous visitors from a neighboring barroom for additional drinks.

The B family was known to the agency for three years prior to the filing of the neglect complaint. Both parents were unaccepting of agency services and the relationship was negative throughout. Mr. B was extremely hostile while Mrs. B was passively accepting but continued her drinking leaving no opportunity to use protective services. During the pre-court process Mrs. B was arrested on a complaint of having been beaten by a man with whom she had been to a dance where both imbibed in excessive drink. Both parents continued their excessive drinking and the improper associations of Mrs. B, in particular, led to continuous family quarrels which had a negative effect on the children. Both parents were unable to see their behavior in terms of parental neglect. The children were periodically left without supervision, were improperly fed and clothed and lacked positive parental identifications.

When Mr. B lost his job on the railroad due to an accident, reportedly brought about by his drinking, the worker helped the family to obtain public assistance and clothing for the children. The clergy also took an interest and helped provide added necessities for the family. In spite of these opportunities for change, conditions remained the same. A member of the clergy visited the home at ten o'clock of a morning and found Mrs. B presumably intoxicated, and found her associating with another man. The pre-school children were running around the home dirty and unclothed. Mr. B was

defensive of the mother and insisted that the man was himself. As a result of Mr. and Mrs. B being unwilling and unable to use agency services the problem was referred to the court on a complaint of neglect against both parents and in behalf of the six minor children as neglected. Soon after the initial court appearance which was continued without a finding Mrs. B deserted the family accompanied by a married father. Mr. B obtained a relative as housekeeper who also turned out to be a chronic drinker who continued on occasion to leave the children unsupervised. This relative was a good housekeeper, however, and the children showed physical improvement under her jurisdiction in spite of her intemperance. There was no moral training of the children under this mother-substitute and the older girl soon became involved as a delinquent child. The probation officer, police and clergy took further interest in this family at the court level with periodic improvements and set-backs. The case had been on continuance, without finding, for seventeen months during which time there have been nine appearances. Mr. B has not seen his family problem in terms of parental neglect. He blamed the desertion of Mrs. B for existing conditions.

The B case also concerns a family living under extremely poor environmental conditions while the parents offer their children an atmosphere of negative attitudes, influences, and an example of pathological behavior. Court action followed their unwillingness to change on a pre-court level, and court was the last resort in an effort to effect a change. No finding was made and Mrs. B deserted during the continued court process. Except for occasional motivation through authority, the children remain unprotected.

#### CASE NO. VIII

The C case consisted of the parents and two minor children ages three and ten. Physical home conditions were above average and the children were adequately clothed and fed. The main problem concerned Mr. C who was a chronic drinker and left work quite regularly claiming that he had a bad back. While out of work he relied upon his aged father to help support the family and when this occurred too often and his father rebelled, Mr. C began drinking beyond control and became physically abusive to Mrs. C to the point where she

feared the safety of herself and the children. He would occasionally lock the mother and children out of the home and force them to sleep in the family automobile.

The complaint was brought to the attention of the agency by the police and the school because of the above factors and because the ten year old daughter was showing signs of extreme nervousness in school and not living up to her intellectual capacity. The three year old son was continuously upset and Mrs. C was upset to the point where she could not properly perform her motherly duties.

The C family was known to the agency for three years on a pre-court level and efforts were made to help this family through the casework process. When the paternal grandfather cut off the supply of income and Mr. C had not returned to work, temporary public assistance was obtained for the family through referral. Arrangements were made for a medical examination for Mr. C and the report indicated that he could work but he continued to deny this. He was extremely defensive about his behavior toward Mrs. C and denied her allegations even though evidence was substantial.

Mr. C was unable to accept the reality situation in terms of what was happening to the children because of his resistance to change. His abuse of Mrs. C continued periodically and although he controlled his excessive drinking to some extent, a traumatic incident occurred when he drove the family into a tree while under the influence of liquor resulting in a very serious head injury to the younger child. When Mr. C refused to accept this in terms of parental neglect, a neglect court complaint was initiated against Mr. C and in behalf of the children as neglected.

The case was before court on neglect for eight months without a finding during which time there were five continuances. There was also a non-support complaint issued against Mr. C when Mrs. C made a temporary move through voluntary separation at the home of a married sister. On the non-support Mr. C was placed on probation. The record shows that Mr. C was unable to use the higher authority of the court toward change and that he was never found guilty of child neglect.

There were no specific goals set up for Mr. C to achieve toward meeting the needs of his children. The neglect case was dismissed without finding on the fifth continuance as Mrs. C and the children had left and had filed for divorce and custody of the children.

This case indicated that Mr. C was unable to accept or use construc-

tive help by the protective agency over many months. The neglect court complaint was brought in order that Mr. C might face the reality of the seriousness of the neglect and result in a corrective experience. However, his attitude was one of denial, passivity and indifference, and he was never able to see his behavior in terms of the negative effect it was having on the children. By the authority of the court he was placed on probation for non-support of his family and complied through motivation. Mr. C was unable to change. The court experience might have been more meaningful if he had been found guilty of neglect. Mrs. C was motivated to take the children and leave him and later obtained a divorce.

#### CASE NO. IX

The D case consisted of the parents and six minor children ages three to fourteen. Mr. D was in the regular army and stationed far from home during most of the time the family was known to the agency. When the family moved into their home it was fairly new and very adequate for meeting their needs. It was later learned that this home was purchased in the name of another male companion of Mrs. D who lived there whenever Mr. D was stationed elsewhere. At the time the family was reported to the M.S.P.C.C. physical home conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that a health hazard caused concern in the neighborhood and community. Mr. D. was stationed overseas and although his allotment would have been sufficient to cover family needs, there was some delay in the allotment check resulting in temporary family difficulty on the financial level.

The complaint was brought to the attention of the agency by numerous authorities which included the school nurse, police, state health department, local health doctor, family physician and numerous neighbors because of Mrs. D having numerous night callers who were seen leaving the home at early morning hours. The children remained up at all hours of the night and their school attendance record showed that they were consistently absent in the morning sessions. The children had a considerable amount of sickness, suffered from pediculosis and were gradually being set apart from other children in school. The older ones were reacting in an anti-

social manner and were becoming defiant of the teachers and causing a great deal of disturbance in class. Mrs. D was first approached by the attendance officer and the school nurse in an effort to remedy the situation but refused to accept their help on the basis that her children were being picked upon by school authorities. She refused to accept medical attention for the head condition of her children or to use the prescription furnished.

The children were consistently dirty in body and clothing and frequent exclusion from school was necessary. On the basis that Mrs. D was unwilling to accept or use help, the problem was referred to the agency.

The D family was known to the protective agency for two years on the pre-court level. Temporary acceptance of agency help was made especially in terms of referral for financial assistance until the allotment checks of Mr. D were forthcoming. However, Mrs. D lost her relationship with the assistance agency when she continued to accept their aid after the allotment matter was straightened out and she received assistance on the false pretense that she was still awaiting the initial check.

Mrs. D was unaccepting of agency services in terms of her unwillingness to accept the reality of the fact that she neglected the children. She continued to project the blame on others saying that they did not like her and blamed her children for everything. She did make periodic temporary improvements but only under the pressure of numerous officials, all of whom were working toward the welfare and protection of the children. The school and public health nurses spent a disproportionate amount of their time in this one home in an endeavor to help. Local doctors gave unsparingly of their time in treating the children's illnesses. The problem was partially relieved for a few months when Mr. D obtained duty nearby and lived at home. When he was again transferred, conditions reverted to their former level and the agency was flooded with complaints from the above sources. Mr. D had been extremely defensive of Mrs. D while at home.

The children continued to suffer both physically and in their school contacts. The precipitating episode that indicated urgent need for court action was when the older boy attempted to stab his mother because of her in-the-home-conduct with service men. The military police ordered the home out of bounds because of numerous reports coming to headquarters.

Because Mrs. D would not accept the help of the agency by facing the reality of her neglect of the children, the agency initiated a court neglect complaint to protect them. At this point she immediately became extremely hostile for the first time toward the worker, school officials and all others concerned. She blamed them for her predicament and claimed that discrimination was used against her family. On this basis she pleaded with the court not to remove her children and claimed that things would be better if Mr D could come home. The court respected her wishes and the case remained on continuance for ten months without finding during which time there were six appearances. On the sixth appearance the case was dismissed without a finding because Mr. D had received a transfer and was living at home.

It was then necessary for the agency to withdraw contact as it was impossible to obtain a casework relationship with the family because of the parental hostility toward the worker for having brought the neglect complaint.

Later Mr. D was again transferred and the same pattern of neglect continued. The older boy became involved in delinquency and was sent away. There were some reports concerning the older daughters roaming the streets at night and being approached by men. The home is still under the watching of the local police. The children remain unprotected.

In this case the behavior of Mrs. D was extremely pathological and resulted in the agency receiving complaints, almost daily, from various leading authorities in the community. The children were suffering from physical, moral, medical and psychological neglect as a result of the behavior of Mrs. D. Many responsible authorities in the community attempted to help her, but her immoral behavior continued to the detriment of her children.

As Mr. D was away in the service efforts resulted in his transfer home, as a possible motivating factor, but he was defensive of Mrs. D and insisted that local authorities were picking on her. There was

slight change on his return but when he went away again, the same conditions existed. Court action resulted in the judge identifying with Mrs. D and although the neglect case was placed on numerous continuances there were no findings either against the mother or in behalf of the children, some of whom began to show delinquent tendencies. The court experience was not meaningful to Mrs. D, either from the point of view of casework or authority. Although Mr. D was again brought home by the effort of the court, he was later transferred and the conditions remain the same.

#### CASE NO. X

The E family consisted of the parents and one minor daughter age six years. The physical condition of the home was good and Mr. E held a responsible position in a local mill for over twenty-five years. Both parents were chronic drinkers who over-indulged to almost unconsciousness on occasional weekends. The home atmosphere was emotionally charged because of Mrs. E's feeling that she should make room for her mother who was a patient in a mental hospital. Neither Mr. E nor the older children, who lived elsewhere, felt that Mrs. E could assume this responsibility as she herself had suffered a severe nervous breakdown following the birth of this last child which had resulted in temporary hospitalization. Family quarrels resulted which occasionally reached a state of violence.

In an earlier agency contact a violent parental quarrel during a drinking spree resulted in drunkenness complaints against the parents and a neglect court complaint. The six year old daughter was fearful and emotionally upset and the close relatives, including a married sister, feared for the child's safety. In the earlier neglect court complaint the case was continued periodically for one year without finding and the parents agreed reluctantly to voluntary placement of the child with a near relative.

On the drunkenness complaint the parents were placed on probation and the chief probation officer and worker under the authority of the court worked with the parents who remedied the situation which resulted in the child being returned to the parents at the end of her first school year

which she had to repeat because of many earlier absences. The first neglect court complaint was dismissed without a finding either against the parents or in behalf of the child. The parents temporarily remedied conditions in an earnest effort to get their daughter back and the reality of the court situation seemed to create the desired effect. The parents during the year of continuances were accepting of casework services motivated by the authority of the court and the temporary removal of their child.

However, the parents refused to accept full responsibility for the neglect of their child and both projected blame for the original complaint on a married daughter, who in recent years preferred that her little sister live with the more responsible relatives.

The E family was known to the protective agency for three years prior to the second neglect complaint including the time known originally.

This second complaint was brought to the attention of the agency by the police who had gone to the home on a holiday evening on a call by relatives who had attempted to visit but found the doors locked. They entered a window and found both parents in a drunken stupor and the home in a physical turmoil because of a violent parental quarrel. The little girl had run to the home of a neighbor in fear.

The parents were immediately arrested for drunkenness and an acute neglect court complaint was initiated by the agency. Because the parents again agreed voluntarily to place the child in the same home as previously, the neglect court complaint was continued without finding over a thirteen month period during which time there were three court appearances. In the three years that the E family was known to the agency and the court on both the first and second neglect court complaints there had been thirteen court appearances without finding. The child was protected to some extent during the placement but the court experience was insufficient to motivate change by the parents. After the second court complaint the parents were hostile to the worker and any attempt for a case work relationship was diluted. An earlier finding of neglect against the parents might have served as a corrective experience and a second traumatic episode shared by the child might have been avoided. In terms of protective casework the child was not protected but voluntary placement ordered through court authority did offer temporary protection for the child.

In the case of the E family, the child went through continuous violent and traumatic experiences over a three year period without the parents accepting their responsibility, and without a guilty finding. The case remains on continuance without a finding following thirteen court appearances of the parents and the child. Both Mr. and Mrs. E were given an opportunity to change and did so temporarily during the first complaint, with the child being returned to them after a temporary placement. The court experience seemed at this point to have been a corrective one for them but, soon after, a similar pattern of extreme alcoholism continued, resulting in a second neglect court complaint within a two year period. Thus, there was some authoritative motivation to protect the child temporarily, but the temporary removal did not seem to have a purposeful meaning to either Mr. or Mrs. E except through occasional court motivation and close supervision by the probation officer and worker. There was never a finding on the neglect complaint as the E's willingly agreed to voluntarily place their child through the authority of the court when the authorities insisted. The case is still on continuance with the child in temporary placement with a relative. There is no casework process with the parents, but there is motivation by the authority of the court toward occasional change on their part.

#### CASE NO. XI

The F family consisted of the parents and four minor children, ages three to twelve years. They lived in a home rented by the paternal grandmother who was quite elderly and sickly and with whom Mrs. F did not get along. The agency had known this family for three years previously, in another office of the district, during which time there

had been physical neglect and abuse of the children to a lesser degree. Mr. F shifted jobs often and left home periodically on the pretense of looking for work elsewhere. This usually resulted in the mother applying for assistance through public welfare.

The complaint was made to the agency by the police, public officials, a business man and the town physician because the mother was physically abusive to the five year old daughter, in particular, and called her obscene names. She was seen beating and kicking the child by neighbors and by visiting business men. All of the children were using obscene language in the neighborhood which caused community concern. Mr. E was absent from the home, presumably looking for work in another state.

When Mrs. F was faced with the complaint about the abuse of one child in particular she denied it, and in the presence of the worker she subconsciously pounded the head of the child against a wall while asking her to tell the worker that she was not abusive. Mrs. F was committed to a state hospital for observation and later committed as psychotic.

Because the grandmother could not assume responsibility of the children alone, the agency accepted temporary guardianship of the children in probate court and the children were placed in foster homes with the local welfare department accepting temporary responsibility for their support.

A complaint of neglect was made against Mr. F in district court and in behalf of the children, in order that Mr. F could not return and take them without facing his responsibility for deserting them.

Mr. F was later apprehended when he returned to the town and was made to face both a non-support and a neglect complaint. On the non-support complaint he was sentenced to six months in the house of correction and he received a suspended sentence on the complaint of neglect, with probation. The case of neglect in behalf of the children was continued without finding for thirteen continuances over a three year period. The children however were receiving adequate foster home care through their placement in foster homes by the protective worker who served as their temporary guardian through probate court.

While on probation, Mr. F again deserted the children

on a pretense of finding work in another state. While there he was arrested on a statutory rape charge and received a long term sentence which he was still serving at the conclusion of this study.

The children were protected through the temporary guardianship and placement initiated by the protective agency as there were no responsible parents available to assume responsibility.

There was no control of the children accepted on the neglect court complaint because of the guardianship taken by the protective worker in probate court and there was never a finding of neglect against the children.

From the point of view of control of the children this was not necessary, but did seem essential when one child showed adverse sexual tendencies in the foster home and she was later transferred to institutional care with the help of the court chaplain.

The court probation officer helped supervise the foster home care of the children with the protective worker because of Mr. F being on probation to him.

As a result the children were adequately protected through court action, and supervision, in spite of the numerous neglect court continuances.

In this situation, Mrs. F was not culpable of neglect because of a psychosis which resulted in her commitment to a mental hospital. Thus, she was not legally responsible for her extreme physical abuse of the one daughter in particular.

The agency had known this family previously at which time they were living in another District, and conditions were poor, physically and psychologically, in their home environment. However, at that time, there was insufficient evidence for court action, and the parents were unwilling and unable to accept and use casework help which resulted in the closing of the case.

At the time of the recent complaint, Mr. F had deserted the family

and was not supporting them. Because of this, and the hospitalization of Mrs. F, it was necessary for the agency to make plans for the placement of the children and did so by obtaining temporary guardianship of them in probate court.

A neglect complaint was also issued in court by the agency against the father (pending his return to the jurisdiction), and in behalf of the children, in order that Mr. F might face his responsibility as a father. At the same time, the town issued a complaint of non-support against him. Upon his return he was sentenced to a short term in jail on the complaint of non-support, but upon his release he again deserted and is currently serving time in jail in another state.

Thus, there was no case work process in effect with the parents in this case either prior to or during the neglect court action. Neither parent was able to accept casework.

Manipulation of the environment of the children was effected through the court process. The agency worker and court probation officer supervised the children, as substitute parents, with help in institutional placement for one of them, being rendered by the court chaplain.

#### CASE NO. XII

The H case consisted of the parents and three minor daughters ages three to eleven. Environmental conditions were deplorable because of the smallness of the apartment in an unhealthy apartment block which lacked proper health facilities. This coupled with the excessive drinking on the part of both parents resulted in the children being on the streets at late hours, dirty and unsupervised.

Complaints were made to the agency by the police, clergy, school nurse, the city physician and neighbors at periodic intervals. The family was known to the agency

for sixteen months on the pre-court level. Both parents verbalized their willingness to change and when sober showed indications of doing so.

Mr. H was not working and depended upon his mother to supply the necessary resources to provide for the family. Opportunities were furnished him through referral to find work but he was unwilling to accept a position on the pretense that he had a better job in view.

Continuous complaints of shorter intervals came to the agency because the police were taking the children off of the street at night and the older girl was occasionally accosted by men in a nearby tavern.

Although intelligent, both older daughters began to show a decline in their school work.

The parents declined to accept referral to alcoholic anonymous or family casework on a voluntary level.

When the parents were both arrested on a charge of drunkenness on an evening, the three children were observed by a police officer and the protective worker attempting to lift them from a drunken stupor on the floor onto their bed.

With the parents unable and unwilling to see their behavior in terms of what was happening to the children a court complaint of neglect against them and in behalf of the children as neglected was initiated by the agency. They had both been found guilty of drunkenness and placed on probation. Both complaints were heard simultaneously throughout the casework process.

The neglect court case was on continuance before the court for thirteen months without a finding being made, until the fourth appearance. At this time, all three children were permanently committed to the foster home program of the State Department as neglected.

During the court continuances the parents became extremely defensive of the worker, and of court authorities, who visited, resulting in an impossible casework situation. They were able to see their chronic alcoholism as wrong but could not relate their behavior to their child neglect. They denied that they neglected the children.

Continued drinking episodes and traumatic experiences suffered by the children resulted in their placement. On the last occasion both parents were again found in a drunken stupor in the children's presence with Mrs. H obviously carrying on with another man.

In the H case, it is obvious from the beginning that both Mr. and Mrs. H. were unwilling and unable to accept or use casework help in terms of their failure as parents to provide for their children. Their extreme alcoholism, causing frequent absences from the home, resulted in the children being subjected to many traumatic experiences. Because of the seriousness of the neglect, and the traumatic affect on the children, immediate placement of the children by the court might have motivated the parents to conform to reasonable standards. The children were placed following many court continuances, but the parents were too far deteriorated from alcohol to know the difference, and Mr. H. later died a young man.

#### CASE NO. XIII

The L case consisted of Mrs. L and her two minor children ages two and six months. Mrs. L was separated from her husband.

The family had previously been known to the agency because of medical neglect, and the children were protected through referral to the public health nurses and medical social worker.

Later Mrs. L and her children moved in with a former married school chum who was, also, separated from her husband. Conditions were over-crowded. (see case No. XVI)

Drinking parties were reported in the home by the neighbors and police. As a result of complaints, the police raided of an evening and found Mrs. L associating with a male companion while her children slept in the same room. The children were filthy dirty, hungry and crying.

An immediate complaint of lewdness was issued against Mrs. L and an adjoining neglect court complaint was made by the protective worker because of the seriousness of the problem.

Mrs. L refused to accept casework help in terms of the child neglect. She claimed that she did not know the male companion was in bed with her and that she was not neglectful of her children.

However, needed medical attention was obtained for the children in an effort to show this mother that we were tolerant and wanted to help her meet the needs of her children. She was unaccepting and defensive throughout the court process and only the threat of court authority enabled her to yield to minimum change.

The neglect court case remained before the court for fifteen months and was still on continuance without finding at the conclusion of this study. There had been five court appearances.

Mrs. L was motivated to leave the home of her married girl friend and obtained a home in a neighboring community. Welfare aid was obtained to help her supplement her inadequate income, which was low because of the separation from Mr. L.

Close supervision by court authorities offered some degree of protection of the children on an authoritative level.

This case again shows that the court may be used as a motivating force in getting a client to move from an immoral environmental situation to another home. Although, Mrs. L was unable to use casework help, and was of such limited intelligence that she could not understand the meaning of her behavior in terms of the neglect of her children, her probation on a complaint of being a lewd person, coupled with the complaint of neglect which is on continuance without a finding, places her under sufficient authority and supervision to afford a partial degree of protection for the children involved. Casework with the parent herself is ineffective, but the use of authority is helpful.

## CASE NO. XIV

The N family was composed of the parents and three minor children ages six months, seven and thirteen years. There were two older sons living in the home ages sixteen and seventeen who did not come within the jurisdiction of the neglect law. A child cannot be considered neglected in Massachusetts once he has reached his sixteenth birthday.

Although Mr. N was a steady worker and earned a sufficient income to meet the needs of his family, constant violent quarrels between the parents over financial matters resulted in Mr. N being extremely abusive to Mrs. N and the children.

The home atmosphere was emotionally charged and vile, obscene language reached the ears of the children. Mrs. N was of suspected feeble-minded intelligence, but could probably have functioned in a limited capacity under a better parental relationship.

The complaint was made to the agency by the police, school nurse and welfare board because of the constant parental quarrels. The two children of school age were nervous and troublesome in school because of the home unrest.

Periodic complaints were made by the above sources over a twenty month period and regular home visits by the worker did serve to calm the family turmoil on a temporary basis.

Mr. N however, was extremely hostile and projected the entire blame on Mrs. N, and both parents were unwilling to assume even partial responsibility for the neglect.

In the meantime Mr. N was arrested for assault and battery on Mrs. N's complaint and received probation. This resulted in increased parental tension. When Mr. N again assaulted Mrs. N and forced her and the three minor children to leave the home and live with a neighbor, the neglect court complaint against Mr. N and in behalf of the children was initiated by the agency. A third complaint of non-support was made against Mr. N because he refused to support the family outside of the home.

Mr. N was sentenced to jail on the non-support

complaint for three months. The complaint of neglect against Mr. N and in behalf of the three minor children as neglected was before the court for nine months and had been continued on four occasions without finding during that period. At the conclusion of this study the neglect court case was still on continuance before the court.

There was some improvement following Mr. N's return from jail, and the family at this point are getting along better. Numerous court authorities are investigating regularly, and the steady threat of further action is serving a tentative purpose.

This is an extremely negative home environment in which the violent quarrels between the parents has had a severe physical and psychological effect upon the children. Mr. N was extremely hostile and projecting of the blame on Mrs. N, while she in turn placed all of the blame for the neglect on him. As a change did not occur within a reasonable time, neglect action was initiated by the agency. Mr. N was sentenced to a short term in the House of Correction when his home violence continued, and since his return there has been some improvement in his behavior, and the care the children are receiving. Casework is ineffective because of the deep rooted hostility on the part of Mr. N, but close supervision on the part of the probation officer and worker has resulted in some degree of protection for the children.

#### CASE NO. XV

The O family is composed of the parents and ten minor children ages two to thirteen years. The older boy had been conceived prior to the marriage and was admittedly by Mrs. O born of a pre-marital relationship. This seemed to precipitate a need by Mr. O to have children as often as possible.

Parental quarrels developed because of the older child which gradually developed into extreme intemperance on the part of both parents. Physical, psychological and moral

neglect of the children resulted.

As the thirty-two year old mother continued to give birth to children her ability to meet their physical needs was lessened. As the family increased both Mr. and Mrs. O drank excessively as an escape from an impossible situation.

This situation led to a diluting of the family income to the point of the extreme malnourishment of the children.

Complaints were received at the agency by the police, neighbors and school officials. The children were coming to school ragged and dirty and set apart from other children to the extreme.

As the family increased, supplementary aid was obtained for them through the local welfare department. Additional clothing and food was obtained through the generosity of the board of directors of the agency, and others.

Mr. and Mrs. O accepted this help with thanks but continued their excessive drinking. They left the children alone at night, and Mrs. O began to absent herself from the home on weekends without making plans for the care of the children. Mr. O would leave them alone and go searching for Mrs. O. In not finding her, he would become intoxicated while searching for her at local liquor establishments.

The O family had been previously reported to the protective agency on similar complaints and resulted previously in five children being temporarily committed to the State Department on a continuance basis. This action resulted in temporary improvement in home conditions, and the five children were returned to the parents in excellent physical condition.

For one year there had been no further complaints against the parents and the temporary removal of the children seemed to serve as a corrective experience.

Later, however, conditions became progressively worse and the intemperance, non-support and physical neglect of the children became more pronounced.

Investigation of the more recent complaint showed the younger children to be extremely malnourished, and

the older children developed pre-delinquent tendencies. The older children were taboo in the family shopping district, and reports indicated that local merchants allowed the children to beg and take food in sympathy for the family plight. The children of school age were beyond control and the community was losing patience.

With the increased absences of Mr. and Mrs. O from the home, and the children left alone at night, a second court neglect complaint was initiated by the agency.

The two year old girl weighed only fifteen pounds and the other children were malnourished to a lesser proportion.

Efforts were made by the school and visiting nurses to bring the children up to standard, but cooperation on the part of the parents was lacking as each blamed the other.

The neglect court complaint was before the court for one month at the conclusion of study during which time there had been three advanced appearances, all necessitated by the children being left alone at night. A complaint of non-support had also issued against Mr. O for which he was placed on probation.

Responsibility in court was focused on numerous authorities who visited the home on a weekly basis.

On the third court continuance the father was found guilty of neglect and received a suspended sentence to the House of Correction. The youngest child was temporarily committed to the State Department as neglected.

This decision was to act as a corrective experience to the parents. The neglect complaint against the remaining nine children was further continued without finding which is the present situation.

Mr. and Mrs. O have been unable to accept case work help on the court or pre-court level, because of their limited intelligence, and because of their excessive drinking on weekends in particular.

The authority of the court has resulted in some improvement as

the parents are supervised, at least weekly, by the probation officer, court chaplain or worker in the protective agency.

Commitment of one of the children to the State Department for temporary foster care has benefited the nine children remaining at home, because the parents are conforming somewhat under the weight of authority.

Although casework with the parents is ineffective, the court control has resulted in partial protection for the children. This is in spite of the parents' negative attitude, and occasional pathological behavior.

#### CASE NO. XVI

The P family consisted of Mrs. P and her four minor children ages five years to one month. The marriage had been a forced one and at the time of the agency's entry into the case, Mr. P was in the service. There had been a voluntary separation prior to his re-enlistment.

The P family had been known to the agency for three years prior to the neglect court complaint because of reports that Mrs. P was entertaining men in her home in another branch of the district. Because Mrs. P denied the original allegations and there had been insufficient visible evidence for neglect court action, the case had been closed because Mrs. P was unwilling to accept casework help and denied in total the earlier complaints.

The recent complaint was received from the police who found Mrs. P entertaining in her apartment in another city. A raid by the police department resulted in Mrs. P being arrested for lewdness. (see Case No. XIII)

On this complaint she was found guilty and given a suspended sentence to the Women's Reformatory and probation. Because of the extreme physical and moral neglect of the children, a neglect court complaint was simultaneously issued by the protective worker.

Mrs. P continued to refuse casework help or to see her behavior in terms of her parental neglect.

The neglect case was before the juvenile session of

court for ten months, at the conclusion of study, during which time there had been five appearances without finding.

Mrs. P did, however, place two of her children voluntarily through court motivation. The remaining two children are living with her in a two-room apartment.

In this case, the attitude of Mrs. P was one of denial and indifference prior to and after the initiating of court action by the agency. She is voluntarily separated from Mr. P and takes the defiant attitude that it is nobody's business if she wants to bring boy friends into the home. She is of tested superior intelligence.

Mrs. P had been known to the agency for a long period of time, and was not accepting of casework help. Continued immoral behavior on her part led to the complaint of neglect which was issued simultaneously with a complaint by the police for lewdness. In court Mrs. P was found guilty on the morals charge and given a suspended jail sentence and probation. The complaint of neglect has been continued regularly without a finding. Thus, Mrs. P has been unable to see the reality of her behavior as it affects her children. A casework relationship with Mrs. P is not established in the court process because of her extreme defensiveness and denial of the reality of the neglect.

However, Mrs. P has been motivated to place two of her children voluntarily through the authority of the court. Thus, there is a temporary degree of protection for the children based on the court control of Mrs. P through probation on the morals charge.

In reading this group of cases we realize again that all of these parents were unwilling or unable to accept or use casework help on a per-

sonal basis of understanding and change, either prior to or during the time they were before the court on a complaint of neglect.

In all eleven cases, the parents were so much involved in the totality of their family troubles that their attitudes toward the court officials, the protective caseworker and other authorities were in terms of hostility, defensiveness, projection, denial or passivity, rather than in terms of acceptance and understanding of their problems.

All eleven neglect situations were chronic as they had been known to the protective agency for a long period of time prior to neglect court action. The parents had not accepted casework help prior to the court complaint with the exception of slight motivation based on the use of authority by the agency worker.

The court neglect complaint was initiated by the agency in order that these parents might see the reality of their neglect at a higher level of authority, and how their children were suffering as a result thereof. Perhaps this was expecting too much, because in all eleven cases the parents carried over the same negative attitudes throughout the court process. No casework relationship per se resulted in any of these cases.

Therefore, the writer concludes that in all eleven of these chronic neglect court cases, there was no casework process effected in terms of applying voluntary casework principles in the relationship with the parents.

In spite of this, there were only two cases in which there were findings of neglect in court.

Such findings might have faced the parents with the seriousness of their failure to properly care for their children, and serve the purpose of releasing their guilt in order to pave the way for a possible casework relationship through a letting down of their defenses.

Also, if other criminal complaints against the parents had been tied in with a guilty finding against them on the neglect complaint, the total court experience might have resulted in a casework tool from that point forward.

Actually these particular parents were unwilling or unable to accept or use casework help, at any level, but the children in ten of the eleven cases were partially protected through court authority.

The court did give protection to the children in these cases through the use of authority by motivating all but two of the parents to conform to better standards and provide better care for their children for a while. This was accomplished by close supervision, and through requested changes.

These cases show that casework was ineffective with these particular parents, but that environmental manipulation through the authority of the court did serve a useful purpose when the court exerted its influence.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis is the study of sixteen neglect court cases initiated by the M.S.P.C.C. in the F Branch for the three years covering January 1, 1949 to December 31, 1951. These were the cases which consisted of the parents and their children that were placed on continuance by the court following the initial court hearing.

This group of neglect court cases was selected because the families had been before the court for an unreasonable length of time without disposition or with disposition prolonged while the parents and children returned to the court on numerous continuances.

Since it is a modern protective casework technique that the neglect court experience can be used as a constructive casework tool to further the casework process on a higher level of authority, the writer wondered, were the parents able to use this court experience in a constructive, purposeful and meaningful way, in order to better meet the needs of their children?

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect the court experience had on these parents and their children, if any, and whether or not the parents as a result thereof were better able to meet the needs of their children themselves. If not, were these children protected?

#### Factors Involved in the Court and Family Situations.

At this point the writer feels it would be well to present statis-

tically and to analyze some of the specific factors involved in these sixteen family situations at the time prior and during which these parents and children were before the court on a complaint of neglect. First let us examine the type of marital structure in these families.

(See Table Nos. I and II on next page.)

TABLE NO. I  
MARITAL STRUCTURE OF THE HOME

Kind of Home	Number
Parents together (making satisfactory adjustment)	0
Parents together (making unsatisfactory adjustment)	5
Broken Homes	
Legally separated or divorced	8
Father died	1
Father deserted	1
Mother deserted	1
Total	<u>16</u>

In a glance at Table I, we see that in none of the sixteen neglect situations were the parents living together in a satisfactory marital adjustment. This immediately places the children at a disadvantage in that a happy home life is conducive to their future security. Proper parental identifications were lacking to achieve this desired objective because of the marital structure in all sixteen homes.

TABLE NO. II  
DOMINANT FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE NEGLECT COURT CASES

Factor	Number of Families
Physical neglect	16
Inadequate supervision	16
Psychological neglect	14
Divorce or separation	11
Moral neglect	11
Chronic drinker	5
Illegitimacy	5
Forced marriage	3

It is interesting to consider the elements of neglect involved in these family situations. In Table II we can see that there was not one isolated factor in these cases that affected the children, but many.

In all sixteen cases the children were suffering from physical neglect and inadequate home supervision. In fourteen of the cases one or more of the children were psychologically neglected, having reacted to their parents through some sort of pathological or abnormal behavior.

This coupled with the unstable marital situation, above mentioned; and with the children subjected to visible immoral behavior on the part of a parent in eleven cases, chronic alcoholism in five cases and other lesser factors, leads the children to further insecurity and a lack of positive identifications conducive to their future growth.

It also points out that these parents are so involved

in the totality of their negative relationships that they could be too confused to accept casework help in an understanding, purposeful and meaningful way, except through motivation by the authority of the court in demanding environmental changes or they must face the consequences which could mean the removal of their children.

( See Table No. III next page, The Neglect Court Picture)

TABLE NO. III  
SIXTEEN CASES - THE NEGLECT COURT PICTURE  
(January 1, 1949 to December 31, 1951)

Case No.	No. of chn.	Time known to agency prior ct.comp.	Time bef.ct. on negl.comp.	Other ct. comps.ag. pts.	No. of ct. continuances.	Disposition of Negl. Comp.	Chn protected.	Not.	
1	5	0 months.	(Acute)	12 months	N.S.	4	Dismissed N.F.	5	
2	1	0 "	(Acute)	15 "	Lewd.	3	Dismissed N.F.	1	
3	2	0 "	(Acute)	15 "	Lewd.	3	Continued N.F.	2	
4	3	0 "	(Acute)	12 "	Dk.	7	Dismissed N.F.	3	
5	2	0 "	(Acute)	6 "	Incest.	3	Continued N.F.	2	
6	3	11 "	"	12 "	"	4	Dismissed N.F.	3	
7	6	36 "	"	17 "	Dk.	9	Continued N.F.	6	
8	2	36 "	"	8 "	N.S.	5	Filed. N.F.	2	
9	6	24 "	"	10 "	"	6	Dismissed N.F.	0	
10	1	36 "	"	36 "	Dk.	13	Continued N.F.	1	
11	4	2 "	"	24 "	N.S.	7	Continued N.F.	4	
12	3	16 "	"	13 "	Dk.	4	Finding 4th cont.	3	
13	2	24 "	"	10 "	Lewd.	5	Continued N.F.	2	
14	3	20 "	"	9 "	A&B&N.S.	4	Continued N.F.	3	
15	10	3 "	"	1 "	Dk.&N.S.	3	Cont.Find. 1 ch.	10	
16	3	36 "	"	10 "	Lewd.	5	Continued N.F.	3	
<b>Totals</b>									
16	56 chn.	244	"	210	"	85		50	6

ct. - court  
chn.- children  
Lewd.-lewdness

Abbreviations

comp. - complaint  
Dk. - drunk  
pts. - parents

N.S. - Non-Support  
A&B. - Assault &  
Battery

In Table III we see some interesting elements centered around the neglect court situation.

In all sixteen families a complaint of neglect was initiated in court against one or more parents and in behalf of all fifty-six children as neglected. These cases were before the court for an average of thirteen months during which time there was an average of five continuances. In only two cases were the children found to be neglected and placed by the court in another environment (Nos. XII and XIV) and in Case XIV only one of ten children was removed because of acute malnutrition while the family remains on continuance before the court. This action by the court resulted in the parents improving their home environment somewhat.

In fourteen of the sixteen cases, sixteen criminal complaints were initiated by the police against a parent simultaneously with the neglect court complaint by the agency.

In five cases the court found a parent guilty of drunkenness, of non-support in five cases, of being a lewd person in four cases, of assault and battery in one and probable cause on a complaint of incest in one. In all cases the parents were placed on probation as a result of the guilty finding which was a controlling factor in getting these parents to better meet the needs of their children.

It is interesting to note that in Case IX which was the only case in which the children were offered no protection through court control or authority, there was no additional criminal complaint against the mother although it was certain that she had been cohabitating with numer-

ous men in the home while the father was away.

The presentation of these neglect court cases initiated by the agency has been arranged in groups, because of the difference leading up to the neglect court complaints which had a realistic effect on the casework process and on the protection of the children involved.

Group I presents cases which represents a reality pressure type of acute neglect situation in which the agency had to bring the neglect court action immediately, and without offering the parents an opportunity to change through a casework process prior to bringing the court complaint of neglect. This was necessary because of community pressure over the traumatic situation involved as detected by an emergency investigation by the police, the worker, or both; and which concerned additional serious criminal behavior on the part of the parent which was severely detrimental to the children at the moment. In all cases, immediate emergency plans, of a temporary nature, had to be made for some or all of the children with the protective process beginning at the authoritative level of the court.

It was concluded from this group of cases that a casework relationship was not effected by the court experience. The opportunity for using the court as a tool in the casework process with the parents was diluted because there were no findings against the parents for neglecting their children, and they were unable to see their pathological behavior with understanding as to the effect that it was having on these children. Instead findings were made against these parents in other simultaneous complaints such as lewdness, drunkenness, incest, non-support, etc. If

guilty findings were made on both complaints and tied in with the effect on the children the guilt feelings of these parents could possibly have been released and might have opened the door to a casework process of helping these parents to help themselves. The children in these cases were given partial protection by the authority of the court through motivation of the parents by environmental manipulation to make temporary plans for the children when necessary. There was no casework in terms of personality change in the parents, but there was supervision and motivation on the court level which served to protect the children.

Group II presents cases labeled as chronic neglect situations, which had been known to the protective agency for varying lengths of time prior to the bringing of the neglect court action. This action was taken because the parents were unwilling and unable to accept and use the services of the agency and the children remained seriously neglected. The parents were defensive, hostile or passive and unwilling to change. At the court level, these attitudes continued throughout the court process. In only two of the cases were the parents found guilty of neglect and in only two were children (3) removed from their parents and placed in foster home care by the court. As in Group I, the parents did not see the reality of their failure as it was affecting their children and the experience was not meaningful to them in terms of their own understanding. The children were given some degree of protection by the authority and motivation of the court and the parents conformed to this authority. However, in all cases there were no basic changes in the parents themselves in terms of their understanding themselves and becoming better parents.


Thus we conclude that in all sixteen cases, the court experience did not further the casework process by helping the parents to help themselves and see their behavior as it affected the children in a constructive, meaningful and purposeful way. In no case was a casework relationship established with these parents either before or during the court process. There was some degree of motivation on parents' part effected by the authority of the court which resulted in temporary and partial protection for forty-six of the children in fourteen cases, and which also motivated parents to make temporary adjustments in improving the standards for their children. Permanent protection was given four children in Cases XII and XIV. In only one case (IX) was there no apparent change in the environmental situation of the six children resulting in a lack of protection even after the court dismissed the complaint of neglect. The writer realizes that the above conclusions are tentative and limited because of the small amount of material presented herein, and because of the relative newness and limited knowledge about the protective casework process at this time.

The writer recommends that in the court process it would be beneficial to the client and children if definite time limits were set for the parents to conform, together with reasonable goals to achieve, in order to help them up the difficult road toward maturity in parent-hood. In failing to attain these goals within a reasonable time, a finding against the parents and in behalf of the children as neglected would help the parents to face reality and be a starting point toward a possible casework relationship. It is further recommended that, if this fails, the children

have a constitutional right to be placed in a normal and healthy environment with an opportunity to make some positive identifications.

Although the results of this study are discouraging it is indicated that further study could result in a more positive set of casework principles geared to the constructive use of the authority of the court in neglect court cases. Voluntary casework principles were not effective with these particular parents at the court level, but the authority of the court and the protective agency did serve to provide their children with temporary protection even though they remained with their parents. Therefore, a combination of the voluntary casework principles with the legal principles involved in neglect court action could result in a more reasonable approach to working with these parents on an authoritative casework basis; sometimes referred to as aggressive casework. It is indicated that through a mutual cooperation of all those involved in child protective work and a pooling of their legal and social work knowledge, some basis principles applied to working with these troubled parents and their children might result in better achievement of the desired results; namely, the protection and security of the children.

Approved:

  
Richard K. Conant  
Dean

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**APPENDIX**

## SCHEDULE

## I Situation Leading to the Neglect Court Complaint.

Family Composition.

Description of the Home Environment.

The Initial Complaint to the Agency.

Reliability of the Witnesses or Complainants.

Factors Involved.

## II Time Element.

Length of Time Family Known to Agency.

Attitude of Parents.

Use Parents Made of Agency Services.

Opportunities for Change.

Effect of Neglect on the Children.

Agency's Need to Act Authoritatively.

## III The Neglect Court Process.

Attitude of the Parents Following Court Action.

Other criminal complaints, if any.

Attitude of the Court Toward the Parents.

Parents Use of the Neglect Court Process.

Length of Time Family Was Before the Court.

Situation at the Conclusion of Study in Terms of the Protection of Children.