



Commonwealth Fund, Program for the Prevention of Delinquency records, SG 1, Series 29

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rockefeller Archive Center
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Biographical/Historical note

The Commonwealth Fund was established in 1918 with an endowment of \$10 million from Mrs. Stephen V. Harkness for "benevolent, religious, educational and like purposes." The early grants supported a variety of programs while generally promoting welfare, especially child welfare. Several grants were made in the field of medical research, but the Board of Directors decided in 1920 that this field was already sufficiently supported by other philanthropic organizations.

Despite this decision, by the mid-1920s the chief interest of the Fund had become public health, including mental hygiene, community health, rural hospitals, medical research, and medical education. Other grant areas included war relief, educational and legal research, child welfare, and international medical fellowships.

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Scope and Contents note

The Commonwealth Fund officially adopted its "Program for the Prevention of Delinquency" on November 9, 1921. The program consisted of four divisions: Division I, The New York School of Social Work; Division II, The National Committee for Mental Hygiene-Division of the Prevention of Delinquency; Division III, The National Committee on Visiting Teachers-Public Education Association of New York; and Division IV, The Joint Committee on Methods of Preventing Delinquency (JCMPD).

The New York School of Social Work established in 1919 a Department of Mental Hygiene, whose didactic objective was to give the school's students a better insight into human nature and conduct in health and disease. In order to give students opportunities for the actual study and management of problems in human maladjustment, in close affiliation with professional psychiatrists, the school maintained a Bureau of Children's Guidance in conjunction with the Neurological Department of Vanderbilt Clinic. The school also granted fellowships to qualified students and professionals to attend classes and seminars in child guidance. Most of the surviving records consist of financial statements and correspondence relating to budgets, and the Annual Reports from the Bureau of Children's Guidance (1922-1927). Division I of the Delinquency Program was created on December 1, 1921 and began operations on February 1, 1922. Division I formally ceased operations on July 30, 1927.

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene was founded in 1909 and incorporated in 1916. Through funding by the Commonwealth Fund, the Committee's Division on the Prevention of Delinquency held Child Guidance Clinics in several cities, most notably Norfolk, Virginia; Dallas, Texas; and St. Louis, Missouri. The National Committee also sponsored a fellowship program. All the documents concern budgetary matters.

Division III of the Commonwealth Fund's program, The National Committee of Visiting Teachers maintained a series of clinics for visiting teachers, held grading demonstrations throughout the United States and furnished visiting teachers to many school districts. The work funded by the Commonwealth Fund was directed through the auspices of the Public Education Association of The City of New York, which was founded in 1895 and incorporated in 1899. After the Delinquency program ended, the Visiting Teachers Program continued under the general guidelines of the mental hygiene program. Demonstrations were maintained and contact and supervision of the permanent work established under the demonstrations was provided. Assistance and advice regarding visiting teaching problems and programs was given to cities requesting the same. The Commonwealth Fund granted money to the Visiting Teachers until June 30, 1930. The records are all of a financial nature and reflect the Committee's activities both as a component of the Delinquency Program and as an independent body. The National Committee on Visiting Teachers disbanded on June 30, 1931.

The Joint Committee on Methods of Preventing Delinquency (JCMPD) was incorporated on February 22, 1922 under the laws of the State of New York, and served as a coordinating agent for the Juvenile Delinquency Program and its member groups. The publication and dissemination of information and literature on juvenile delinquency and child guidance was a primary function of the JCMPD. The name of the Committee is misleading since the majority of its work entailed the directing of a program of mental health, child guidance clinics, visiting teachers, and the training of individuals for competency in child guidance. The Committee's documents include minutes of the organization, both before and

after the incorporation of the Committee, which transcribe the decisions of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and the corporation as a whole. Financial records and the Committee's newsletter are also found in this collection. After the dissolution of its charter in 1927, many of the Committee's members formed the nucleus of the Commonwealth Fund's new Division of Publications, a not too unlikely move given the Committee's prior active participation in this area.

Individuals associated with the Commonwealth Fund's Program for the Prevention of Delinquency include Barbara S. Quin, Bernard Glueck, Howard W. Nudd, Barry C. Smith, Porter R. Lee, Graham R. Taylor, Julia C. Lathrop, Frankwood E. Williams, Henry C. Morrison, Thomas W. Salmon, Mildred C. Scoville and Ralph P. Truitt.

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File Plan note

Former Classification: IX; IV 4B 4;

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

- Mental health
- Medicine -- Scholarships, fellowships, etc.
- Medical education
- Legal research
- Medicine, Rural
- Medical research
- Public health
- New York (State)
- United States
- Public welfare
- War relief
- Law
- Legal issues
- Education, Rural
- Hygiene
- Child psychology
- Child welfare
- New York (N.Y.)
- Child mental health

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