



Foundation for Child Development records

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Summary Information

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Biographical / Historical

The Foundation for Child Development had its origins in the Guild for the Crippled Children of the Poor of New York City (the Guild), an organization whose mission was to "care for the physical, social, domestic, educational, economic, and spiritual conditions of these unfortunates." It became the Association for the Aid of Crippled Children (AACC) in 1908, when it was established in New York City as a voluntary agency that sought to teach and aid disabled children who were victims of polio.

In the early twentieth century, physically disabled children were often homebound with no access to formal education. Mabel Irving Jones, a concerned citizen and advocate for these youngsters, provided the impetus behind the creation and eventual incorporation of an agency operating under the auspices of the New York City Children's Aid Society. By 1904 nearly 120 disabled school-aged children were attending school outside of the home; in 1906, Public School 104 of the New York City Board of Education operated the first public school class for crippled children. The Guild sought to treat those children neglected by hospitals and clinics and the "hundreds of chronic cases of crippled children whom these charities do not and cannot reach." The Guild cooperated with churches and other social services organizations including St. John's Guild, the Henrietta Industrial School, and the Hartley House Settlement, to teach children outside of the home, provide a luncheon meal, and return them to their

homes. The Guild's second Annual Report in 1898 indicated that this is the "first systematic effort ever made in New York City to give the crippled children out of institutions a helpful education."

Separated from the Children's Aid Society in 1908, the AACC was supported entirely by contributions and employed a staff of ten, led by trained nurses. In addition to providing transportation to school and health clinics and braces and other therapeutic devices, the AACC also established physical rehabilitation facilities. By 1940, over 30,000 children had benefited from these services, including children with cerebral palsy and other disorders of fetal and neonatal origin.

The organization's early focus on the needs of a stranded school-aged population firmly defined its legacy. In later years, similar enterprises supported direct-care and research to benefit adult rehabilitation. The AACC joined with New York University-Bellevue Hospital to establish the Children's Division of the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, today known as the Rusk Institute. During World War II, their pioneering work helped to rehabilitate injured soldiers.

In 1944, the AACC received an \$11 million bequest from the Estate of Milo M. Belding, a silk manufacturer and banker whose donation honored his spouse, Annie K. Belding, a devoted volunteer and association board member for over twenty years. This bequest allowed the AACC to become a grant-making organization. Although the organization continued to provide direct services to children, in 1950 the Visiting Nurse Service of New York assumed this aspect of the agency's services. Also during this period, the Association expanded its purview to include within its programs the developmentally disabled, the emotionally disturbed, and children with genetically based disorders, including circulatory and metabolic disorders. In 1962, it formed the Committee on Belding Scholars, with the specific goal of encouraging research on problems that "lie between, or are germane to, both the biological and social sciences."

In 1972 the Association changed its name to the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) to reflect its role as a grant-making organization and in particular its evolved focus on child development. Included within its mission were goals of preventing child poverty and promoting the economic stability of families. The Foundation developed several new program areas; appointed Staff Scientists, enabling specialists in child development to pursue research while simultaneously contributing to the Foundation's mission; and, most particularly, awarded grants in areas that linked research to policy, program, and leadership development. During the mid-1970s grants focused upon methods that would transfer knowledge from scholarly endeavor to government policy-makers. The George Washington University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of California at Los Angeles benefited from this support. In 1976 the Foundation published the pioneering report on *The State of the Child: New York City*, by Trude Lash and Heidi Sigal. Revised regularly, the report examined the indicators that reveal changes in the conditions of children's lives. In 1977, the Foundation released the preliminary findings of the National Survey of Children, directed by Nicholas Zill. This report compiled nationwide findings of interview responses from more than 2,200 pre-teens, from the ages of 7-11, and more than 1,700 of their parents' responses. These ground-breaking survey results spoke of the attitudes, fears, and social temper of a generation.

In early 1972, Dr. Mary Jo Kline from the Columbia University Oral History Research Office conducted oral history interviews with eleven council members about the Foundation's development after World War II. The original intent was to undertake a complete history of the organization by combining

portions of the interviews with information from the Foundation's archives, but this project was never completed.

By 1980, the Foundation's annual assets were approximately \$30 million; annual grant expenditures were in the vicinity of \$2 million. Around this time, the Foundation shifted focus to include examination of the causes of debilitating physical conditions and funded projects focused upon research, demonstration, and education. The formation in 1979 of Child Trends, Inc., which aimed "to improve the quality, scope and use of statistical information concerning children," reflected the FCD's expanded goals.

The Foundation for Child Development is a national private philanthropy dedicated to the principle that all families should have the social and material resources to raise their children to be healthy, educated, and productive members of their communities. The Foundation seeks to understand children, particularly the disadvantaged, and to promote their well-being. They believe that families, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government at all levels share complementary responsibilities in the critical task of raising new generations.

The Foundation sponsors basic and policy-relevant research about the factors that promote the optimal development of children and adolescents; policy analysis, advocacy, services, and public education to enhance the discussion and adoption of social policies that support families in their important child-raising responsibilities; and leadership development activities linked to the programmatic focus of the Foundation. The Foundation believes that by integrating these approaches, it will strengthen its effectiveness in achieving its mission.

This broad statement further demonstrates the Foundation's special interest in accommodating working families with children, who are struggling to meet their basic needs. Three themes mark Foundation support in the late twentieth century: linking research on children and families to form relevant programs and activities; isolating new approaches to devising social strategies for children and families; and increasing availability and access to early education programs and health care for children.

The Foundation hoped to compensate for the reduction in government-supported programs for children at risk by focusing more closely upon programs which would have a direct impact upon both children and families, with its research and action in this direction geared toward influencing public policy.

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Scope and Contents

The scope and breadth of the available materials document all aspects of Foundation activities, including a limited selection of microfilm documentation from its predecessor association the Guild for Crippled Children.

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Arrangement

Arranged in three collections each comprised of multiple series designated primarily by record type. The collections and associated series are representative solely of when the materials were processed by RAC, and do not imply an original order of the records

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