

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN CARE REGULATION

2018

After the American civil war, many immigrants brought whole families to America. Communicable diseases, poor nutrition, poor living conditions, and lack of public health programs resulted in the death of many parents. One outcome of this tragedy was homeless children left desperate for food and shelter. These children were reported as roaming large eastern cities terrorizing citizens. Law enforcement officials, child advocates and courts became overwhelmed dealing with what was then defined as child “delinquency” and “criminal behavior” (NARA, 2000).

Neglect and abuse of children became commonplace in the mid and late nineteenth century resulting in efforts by clergy from several religious denominations to find suitable and caring homes for “orphaned” children. It soon became clear that this effort alone would not assure safe and nurturing child care and the public safety (NARA, 2000).

According to research, the first child care licensing laws came into being in the late 1800s as governmental rules for boarding homes for orphans. Such boarding homes were inspected to determine if they were “safe” and would not mistreat children. The first child care license was issued in Pennsylvania in 1885 and applied only to children under the age of three (NARA, 2000).

The 20th century brought about continued changes in human care licensing as several states adopted residential care licensing laws and governmental regulatory agencies were developed at the federal and state level. (NARA, 2000)

In 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt convened the first White House Conference on Child Welfare (NARA, 2000). Norris Class who was a national and international authority on the history and philosophy of social welfare, with special expertise in regulatory policy and licensing of child care facilities stated “The first goal of the White House Conference...was to prevent children from being removed from their homes for economic reasons alone. But if social reason required placement, the conference went on record as advocating foster home rather than institutional care, and proper child care licensing” (Class, 1990 and NARA, 2000).

Ten years later the second White House Conference was convened by President Woodrow Wilson and focused on developing standards/rules on caring for children. Standards/rules are intended to promote the health and safety of children and

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partnership between child care licensing and home/center providers in observations of vulnerable children or adults being served. One year later The Child Welfare League of America evolved as an advocate for high standards regarding children being cared for in out-of-home settings.

The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 provided a great stimulus and policies strengthening child welfare services, including licensing. In an article written by Norris Class and Gertrude Binder titled “Foster Care Licensing in Public Welfare” states that foster care licensing is the oldest of state welfare department duties and that the purpose is to set up rules under which children will be provided protection against risks they cannot themselves evaluate or deal with adequately.

References

Class, N. E., & Binder, G. (1961). Foster Care Licensing in Public Welfare. Children, 8, 28-31.

National Association for Regulatory Administration. (2000). *NARA Licensing Curriculum*. St. Paul, MN: NARA.

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