

MASS. HIS10.2:Y89



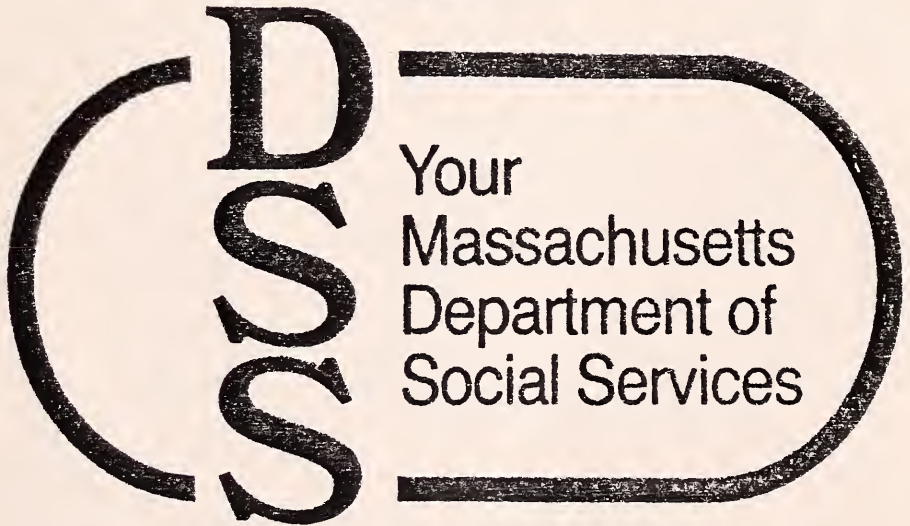
312066 0282 3760 3



GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

SEP 16 1985

University of Massachusetts
Depository Copy



Your
Massachusetts
Department of
Social Services

Marie A. Matava, Commissioner

1983

Massachusetts Department of Social Services
150 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114

WHAT IS DSS?

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) was created by the Legislature in 1978 to provide services to children, families and disabled adults living in Massachusetts. We began operating on July 1, 1980 with the goal of delivering those services in a responsive and responsible way. This pamphlet describes the services we offer.

By legislative mandate, we are community-based in organization and structure. This means that one of our offices is close to your home.

Each Area Office works in the community together with a Citizen Area Board made up of local residents or people who work in the community. The Board helps the Area Director determine community needs and advises on program, budget and other local matters.

If you are interested in being on or working with the Area Board in your community, please let your Area Director know. We need your help and welcome your participation.

OUR FIRST PRIORITY

Our first priority at DSS is to support and strengthen family life. We understand, though, that "family life" and "families" have been changing. As a result we are changing our services to meet new needs.

At the heart of our service delivery system are 1500 well-trained social workers. These professionals work closely and confidentially with consumers in the development of service plans that prepare for the delivery of social services in order to preserve and strengthen family life and maintain disabled adults at their highest level of functioning.

Whatever the family composition, our goal is to protect it. DSS wants to see children develop into healthy, capable, self-supporting adults. We seek first to help families, however they are defined, remain or become stable, stay together and strong. If this is not possible, we work hard to find homes for children who cannot remain in their own homes, either temporarily or permanently.

At the same time, like most of our consumers, we are aware that the economic realities of the eighties have imposed restraints on the number and kinds of services we are able to deliver. With diminishing resources, we will have to work even harder to find and use community services for the support of family life.

PERMANENCY PLANNING — FAMILY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Maxine, a lively, fourteen-year-old redhead with braids and braces, has spent her last five years in three foster homes. Now she has to leave the third home because her foster family is moving out of state. "If I can't go back to my 'real' family, I would like to be adopted. I want to feel I belong to somebody," Maxine says, "and that they belong to me."

The Department of Social Services believes that every child needs a permanent home. In the past, children who could not remain with their own families had several options. They could be placed in foster care, which was, theoretically, short-term care for children in need of substitute families. Or, if they were legally free, they were available for adoption. Children like Maxine, whose parents could not care for her but were reluctant to place her for adoption, might spend their entire childhood in foster care.

Today there are some 8500 children in the Department's care. Our new goal of Permanency Planning would provide a permanent home for each of these children. Depending on the child's situation, he or she might be placed in foster care for a limited time, or remain at home while the family receives a variety of services. As a general rule, no child will be allowed to remain in placement for more than 18 months. If neither of these plans is suitable, the Department will look for potential adoptive parents while we do the legal work to free the child for adoption.

This year the Department has undertaken a major recruitment campaign to locate families who have love and space to share. If you are interested in being a family resource for any of these children, through adop-

tion, foster care, emergency shelter, or respite care, please be in touch with your Area Office and let them know that you and your home are available.

For certain children with special needs, the agency can provide adoption subsidies. We also support and encourage single-parent adoptions by both fathers and mothers.

DAY CARE

“With two kids, no husband, and no skills, I thought I was through at 22. But now I feel like a real success story. DSS helped me to get my kids in day care so I could finish high school and get a job. And now I’m even off AFDC. My kids are in a real warm friendly place. They’re even learning to read. And it makes me feel good to know that I’m contributing to their care. It gives me a certain pride and dignity I didn’t feel before. I feel independent, like a grownup for the first time.”

Recognizing that women with children under six are the fastest growing segment of the work force, the Department of Social Services provides publicly subsidized day care to nurture healthy development of children while preserving, promoting and strengthening the self-support and independence of families.

The Department’s new sliding fee-scale policy allows families to pay an increasing share of the fees as their incomes rise. This encourages some parents to use day care to find jobs. Current and former AFDC parents can utilize this service to assist them in their efforts to enter the job market and become self-supporting. Use of the sliding fee-scale has also allowed us to expand our day care to serve 1500 additional children. Day care is also available in cases where children have been neglected or abused or are in danger of being neglected or abused, and to families where either the parent or child has a disability or special need.

The Department’s goal is to provide day care which is both a successful work incentive program and a successful child care alternative.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES — SERVICES TO WOMEN IN TRANSITION

“My husband has been beating me for years, and one night, I decided I just couldn’t take it any longer. A friend told me about a place I could go with my kids — at least until I could get myself together. I don’t know what will happen with me and my husband, but I see other women there who are working things out. And at least I’ve taken the first step.”

The Department’s services to Women-in-Transition comprise an array of voluntary, emergency and supportive services to women and minor children at risk of physical violence from someone in their household. These services include room and board for up to six (6) weeks, crisis intervention by telephone and in person, help in getting legal assistance, counseling and child care, as well as longer-term services which may include vocational assessment and training, job search, and help finding permanent housing.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES — SERVICES TO CHILDREN

DSS now assumes all protective services for children. If you suspect a child has been abused or neglected, you should notify the Area Office nearest you.

All reports are screened by a social worker and supervisor. Calls which are considered emergencies are investigated by a social worker within 24 hours. An investigation is completed on all reports within seven (7) days.

If the child in question is considered neglected or abused, their family will receive services. The child is removed and placed in substitute care only if services fail and placement is considered necessary. In cases where the child is not considered neglected or abused but there is evidence of family stress or disorganization, services are offered on a voluntary basis.

OTHER SERVICES BY CONTRACT WITH PRIVATE AGENCIES

Camps, whether day or residential, offer both recreation and education for children with various emotional or social needs. *

Counseling is provided to parents, children and adolescents and aims at strengthening the family.

Family Planning programs provide information, education and counseling to help individuals and couples plan, space and limit births.

Homemaker Services provide support, assistance and training to families and individuals through homemaker agencies.

Information and Referral Services are offered in a wide range of areas including shelter and emergency assistance.

Legal Services assist consumers in resolving legal problems and protecting their rights. *

Parent Aides are paid or volunteer staff who provide supportive counseling for parents who need or wish to improve parenting skills.

Substitute Care provides 24-hour-a-day placement or in-home care to individuals or families.

Respite Care is temporary support care for children and disabled adults in specialized family settings.

** May not be available in every area office.*

For more information please call: