

Child Welfare and Protection -- Services for children, especially children suffering from parental neglect or those deprived of normal home life were among the earliest welfare programmes in Canada and child welfare continues to enjoy broad support both from public bodies and voluntary associations. Child welfare agencies, which are to be found covering nearly all Canadian communities, increasingly emphasize family casework designed to strengthen the family's capacity to care for its children, thereby preventing the emotional stress involved in the separation of the child from his own home. Where placement is essential, children may be made wards of child welfare agencies either temporarily, pending the improvement of home conditions, or permanently where a return to the home is not envisaged. Action to transfer the guardianship of children from a parent to an agency is, in general, taken only on the authority of a Court of Law.

Services are also offered to parents of children born out of wedlock. The unmarried mother is assisted in the social and legal problems involved in her confinement, in planning for her child and in utilizing available resources if her decision is to retain and raise the child herself. When the decision is to place the child, adoption is the plan normally made. Over 10,000 adoptions are completed in Canada annually.

Children in the care of agencies who are not placed for adoption are usually cared for in foster homes. A long-term trend away from custodial care in institutions continues, though specialized institutions are increasingly being developed to care for children, such as those with emotional disturbances, whose problems cannot be met adequately in the normal foster home. Rapid expansion is occurring in community services for the retarded child. A growing number of Canadian centres have classes which offer training of the child without his removal to an institution.

Child welfare services are provided under provincial legislation and all provinces have some central authority, usually a division of child welfare within departments of welfare, responsible for direction of child welfare programmes. Except in Quebec, the programme may be administered by the provincial authority itself or may be delegated to local children's aid societies, which are voluntary agencies with local boards of directors supervised and assisted financially by the province. Services are operated provincially in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and to a large extent in Alberta, where there is also some delegation of authority to the municipalities. In Ontario and New Brunswick services are administered by a network of children's aid societies covering the entire province; in British Columbia,