

The Children's Charter

From The Public Assistance Worker

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Special Needs of Children

Provisions for the care and protection of children have been generally accepted as a community responsibility for two fairly obvious reasons. First, from the purely physical point of view children are naturally dependent upon others for care and sustenance. Second, because the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow, it is to the interest of society that they shall have such opportunity for physical, mental, and moral development as will fit them to become useful members of the community. Institutions for the care of orphans or half-orphans were among the first evidence in this country of a community acceptance of social responsibility. As early as the middle of the last century (19th) some state governments made provision from public funds for children whose parents were unable or incompetent to care for them properly. Societies for the protection of neglected children were organized in the 1870's.

The calling of the first White House Conference by President Roosevelt in 1909 gave recognition that adequate standards for the care of children were definitely of concern to the state. This Conference stressed the values to the child of care and nurture in his own home. A second White House Conference, in 1919, reaffirmed the principles set forth in 1909; and a third, in 1930, promulgated the Children's Charter which emphasized still further those factors shown by experience to be essential to a child's preparation for useful adult life.

The Children's Charter

- I. For every child spiritual and moral training to help him to stand firm under the pressure of life
- II. For every child understanding and the guarding of his personality as his most precious right
- III. For every child a home and that love and security which a home provides; and for that child who must receive foster care, the nearest substitute for his own home
- IV. For every child full preparation for his birth, his mother receiving prenatal, natal, and post-natal care; and the establishment of such protective measures as will make child-bearing safer

- V. For every child health protection from birth through adolescence, including: periodical health examinations and, where needed, care of specialists and hospital treatment; regular dental examinations and care of the teeth; protective and preventive measures against communicable diseases; the insuring of pure food, pure milk, and pure water
- VI. For every child from birth through adolescence, promotion of health, including health instruction and health program, wholesome physical and mental recreation, with teachers and leaders adequately trained
- VII. For every child a dwelling place safe, sanitary, and wholesome, with reasonable provisions for privacy; free from conditions which tend to thwart his development; and a home environment harmonious and enriching
- VIII. For every child a school which is safe from hazards, sanitary, properly equipped, lighted, and ventilated. For younger children nursery schools and kindergartens to supplement home care
- IX. For every child a community which recognizes and plans for his needs, protects him against physical dangers, moral hazards, and disease; provides him with safe and wholesome places for play and recreation; and makes provision for his cultural and social needs
- X. For every child an education which, through the discovery and development of his individual abilities, prepares him for life; and through training and vocational guidance prepares him for a living which will yield him the maximum of satisfaction
- XI. For every child such teaching and training as will prepare him for successful parenthood, home-making, and the rights of citizenship; and, for parents, supplementary training to fit them to deal wisely with the problems of parenthood
- XII. For every child education for safety and protection against accidents to which modern conditions subject him – those to which he is directly exposed and those which, through loss or maiming of his parents, affect him indirectly
- XIII. For every child who is blind, deaf, crippled, or otherwise physically handicapped, and for the child who is mentally handicapped, such measures as will early discover and diagnose his handicap, provide care and treatment, and so train him that he may become an asset to society rather than a liability. Expenses of these services should be borne publicly where they cannot be privately met
- XIV. For every child who is in conflict with society the right to be dealt with intelligently as society's charge, not society's outcast; with the home, the school, the church, the court and the institution when needed, shaped to return him whenever possible to the normal stream of life
- XV. For every child the right to grow up in a family with an adequate standard of living and the security of a stable income was the surest safeguard against social handicaps

- XVI. For every child protection against labor that stunts growth, either physical or mental, that limits education, that deprives children of the right of comradeship, of play and of joy
- XVII. For every rural child as satisfactory schooling and health services as for the city child, and an extension to rural families of social, recreational, and cultural facilities
- XVIII. To supplement the home and the school in the training of youth, and to return to them those interests of which modern life tends to cheat children, every stimulation and encouragement should be given to the extension and development of the voluntary youth organizations
- XIX. To make everywhere available these minimum protections of the health and welfare of children, there should be a district, county, or community organization for health, education, and welfare, with full-time officials, coordinating with a state-wide program which will be responsive to a nation-wide service of general information, statistics, and scientific research. This should include:
 - (a) Trained, full-time public health officials, with public health nurses, sanitary inspection, and laboratory workers
 - (b) Available hospital beds
 - (c) Full-time public welfare service for the relief, aid, and guidance of children in special need due to poverty, misfortune, or behavior difficulties, and for the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or moral hazard

For every child these rights, regardless of race, or color, or situation, wherever he may live under the protection of the American flag.