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REPORT  
OF  
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A WORK STANDARDS ANALYSIS  
IN  
DEPENDENCY INTAKE AND INVESTIGATIONS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### DEPENDENCY INTAKE AND INVESTIGATIONS

The attached report is responsive to the Probation management's concern over establishing equitable work standards for the Department. This work standards analysis is the first conducted by the Evaluation Unit, and was implemented by combining officer's time reporting with a case tracking process which established average task levels. This process permitted the Unit to combine the two sets of data so that an average time per case (by type) could be established.

In classical work studies conducted in the industrial setting, some form of leveling is routinely done in order to adjust the average time to an optimum time per task or process. This can be done by pace rating or by statistical manipulation of the data. In this analysis, leveling was done by observation of actual work and by allocating non-productive activities to fall outside the computed process times. In some instances, observation and logical inference combined to suggest that a reduced time be used to establish the included task time. Nevertheless, no effort was made to intentionally de-value the reported averages. Evaluation Unit staff observations were that the Dependency section was exceptionally cooperative with the project, even though they were already working at what would appear to be maximum capacity.

As a result of the work standards analysis, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted:

1. That a point system be utilized to give credit for work, with one point equivalent to two hours, so that for regular cases (not the Paper Referral cases) one point be credited for each Non-Emergency case assigned, with two points added for filing a petition; for Emergency cases, three points are credited at assignment and four points added for filing a petition.
2. That staffing entitlement for the section be based on the Unit point reporting system.
3. That the Paper Referral specialty be maintained, and that workload be set at the level of assignments established in this report.
4. That a Dependency Procedures and Resources Manual be developed.
5. That the Staff Development section develop additional appropriate training for the Dependency section.

6. That a full-time clerk be assigned to the Dependency section.

Although not related to the Dependency function per se, it is also suggested by the Evaluation Unit that the evaluators continue to refine the work standards which have been developed during this project, by on-going monitoring, and that a Staff Utilization Reporting system be developed for management purposes.

Documentation of the contents of this report is available in the Evaluation Unit.

## INTRODUCTION

In April of 1977, the Program Evaluation Unit of the Probation Department commenced a work standards analysis of the Dependency Intake and Investigations section. The principal objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the time which is required to perform intake and investigation cases, including significant variations in kinds of cases.
- Determine the variations in statistical reports regarding the section functions.
- Evaluate response time on paper referrals.
- Determine staff training needs.
- Evaluate the role and functions of the supervisors in the section.

This report, then, is different than the usual client-centered impact evaluation report. The intent of the Evaluation Unit has been to determine the work values of different kinds of Dependency cases, so that appropriate and efficient workload standards could be developed. Identifying opportunities for greater efficiency in operations have also been sought.

## METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Unit has interviewed each member of the Dependency section, plus administering a questionnaire to former Dependency staff. We have observed staff during their work, determined the component tasks and sequences in each work function, and conducted a time/task analysis. (The work standards recommendations are based on the latter.) Contacts were made with other counties regarding their work standards and procedures. (During the time this study was being conducted, the results of an independent study were released by U.C.L.A., but their report did not include work standards information.)

It should be pointed out that the present study is the first conducted by this Unit. As a consequence, there are no comparable work standards which have been developed for other sections of the Juvenile Division, and, therefore, no equivalents can be drawn.

## RESULTS

General Observations: The Dependency Section works under a state of constant pressure, engendered by the nature of their client's problems. The line staff must be continually alert to the potential for harm or death to the children whose circumstances they are investigating. Almost without exception, staff and former staff believe that training is an on-going necessity, especially for medical and psychological signs of abuse and molestation, and for information on available community resources.

A part of the feeling of pressure in the section is due to the demands on the supervisors to be ever-present at their desks to answer their phones. Since telephone inquiries, referrals, and medical permissions are extremely frequent, it is very unusual for an officer and supervisor to hold an un-interrupted conversation.

One of the reasons for the high volume of telephone business is that all of the law enforcement agencies, welfare agencies, and schools have the phone numbers of the two Dependency supervisors; likewise, except for evenings and weekends, all requests for medical permissions come in on these two lines.

Due to the volume and pressure, the organization of the statistics and assignments is continually problematic, and the supervisors, in particular, suffer from inadequate time to properly train, consult with, and supervise the Intake and Investigations staff. The general condition of disorder of the supervisor's work space reflects the non-sequential and frequently interrupted state of their work processes.

Work Standards: At the outset, we have made the assumption that during a year (with 2,080 paid hours per employee), an officer is present an average of 148 hours per month, due to the legitimate subtraction of 96 hours for holidays, 120 hours for vacation, and 80 hours for sick leave. In addition, 17% of the time present must be subtracted for other factors (derived from industrial setting standards) which are not productive, nor included in process times. These include personal time (bathroom and breaks), fatigue (recovering from stress and physical work), delay (waiting for work to begin), and training. The remaining time available for work processes is 1,481 hours in a year, or an average of 123 hours per month. The actual time recorded for such non-productive time by the Dependency I&I staff was 17.1% of available time, and, therefore, quite representative of the appropriate process times remaining.

Different computations (although related) should be used to determine staffing entitlement for the section as opposed to officer workloads. Staffing figures need to be based on the number of referrals the section can process, on the assumption

that the filing:referral ratio is relatively constant. Officer workload standards, on the other hand, are based on the maximum number of cases one officer can be expected to handle if that officer is present full-time.

For assignment purposes, the factors which are most associated with time distinctions are whether cases are classified as Emergency or Non-Emergency, and whether or not a petition is filed. 96.9% of the Non-Emergency cases which were tracked by the Unit resulted in no petition being filed, with an average process time of 2.43 hours. Alternatively, only 35.3% of the Emergency cases were not filed, and these occupied 5.71 hours to process, on an average. If a filing occurred on an Emergency case, the total average process time was 13.89 hours. It should be stressed that one of the findings of the case tracking/task time study was that the distinction of jurisdictional types was not a time-related factor, nor was the referral origin. In other words, neglect-abuse-molest cases did not have significantly different time values, nor did categories such as Hillcrest as opposed to Hospital emergencies. OTI cases, however, should be distinguished within that category, since home evaluations and residence verifications require significantly less time to process than a transfer of jurisdiction into the County of San Diego; the latter should be counted as Emergency filing cases.

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER ONE:

That, with the exception of the Paper Referral cases, referrals be assigned on the basis of 13.55 Emergency cases per officer per month (when present full-time), resulting in a staffing entitlement of one officer per 11.6 referrals on an annual average basis.

For ease of reporting, the workload equivalents (except for Paper Referrals) devolve to the following point system:

	Non-Emergency	Emergency
No File	1	3
File	2	4

Consequently, upon assignment of a Non-Emergency case, the officer is given one credit for that case; if a filing occurs, an additional two points are credited. For Emergency cases, three points are credited at assignment, with four points added if a filing occurs. Due to the average absence rate,

the unit (or section) workload becomes 62 points per regular officer per month, but one officer who is present full-time can be assigned 72 points. It should be stressed that these are maximums. For ease of assignment, an officer can be considered to be working at capacity if receiving assignments which average 17 points per full work week. (Please see Tables 1 and 2.)

It must be stated that the process times and work values reflected in this system are only possible due to the availability of the two C.E.T.A. workers in the units; these staff members perform necessary ancillary functions which would otherwise be done by line officers, and would then need to be added to the process times ascribed to the Probation Officers.

Using the workload system recommended above essentially ignores sibling cases and counts families as a unit. The rationale for this approach is that, using the sample we tracked, 12.16% of the cases had one sibling and only 4.05% had two. Much of the work in sibling cases is duplicative, and therefore no additional credit is recommended.

Whereas the process time figures indicate that the section is and has been under-staffed, the recommended system of correction is based on particular factors remaining constant; should these factors change, new entitlement figures would have to be computed. Therefore, a parenthetic recommendation is that the Evaluation Unit maintain a consultive role with the section in order to refine and monitor the workload reporting system.

Statistical Reporting: A comparison of the official statistical reports prepared by the departmental Research Analyst with the monthly reports submitted by the units showed large discrepancies in the volumes of work reported. Close examination proved that the discrepancies are due entirely to the difference in counting procedures. For example, on the official monthly reports, only those cases that have been statistically opened during that month are counted as referrals. The units, on the other hand, report all cases assigned during the month irrespective of whether or not they have been statistically opened. Since cases are frequently not opened in the same month in which they are received, it can be expected that the two sets of figures would never agree.

A similar situation exists with respect to the reporting of petition filings. It is not infrequent that both 300(a) and 300(d) allegations will appear in the same petition. In the official reports, the two allegations would be counted as two petitions filed even though they appear on the same petition. Additionally, when a 300(d) petition is amended to a 300(a), it is again counted twice. Transfers of jurisdiction from other counties are also counted as petitions



even though the petition was actually filed in another county. In contrast, the units report only the number of petitions actually filed. Petitions with more than one allegation are only counted once, amended petitions are not counted again, and transfers of jurisdiction are not counted at all. Again, the two reporting systems will always be discrepant with the official figures being somewhat inflated.

It is not being suggested that the two reporting systems be made to co-incide because each serves a different purpose.

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER TWO:

That staffing entitlement be based on the unit reporting system (revised to reflect the new yardstick factors) because it is a more accurate reflection of the true section workload.

Paper Referral Response Time: At the time this evaluation was started, the Dependency I&I section had just begun a process of assigning three officers to handle only the paper referrals. The reasoning behind this decision was primarily due to the perceived lag time between receiving the referral and responding via the first contact. Due to the pressure of the Emergency cases, mostly those with definite time limits, the paper referrals were always left by officers to those slack periods when other work could not be done. As a consequence, each officer had a backlog of such Non-Emergency cases, some of which had been received several weeks before a contact was made.

During the time of the case tracking process implemented by the Evaluation Unit, 90 paper referrals were received which could have response time determined. Due to the small numbers of some case categories, no significance was attached to jurisdictional variations (e.g., abuse as opposed to neglect, etc.). The overall statistics, however, support a recommendation that the Paper Referral specialty be maintained, both for greater community service in speeding response time and to provide both relief from court pressure and a relatively protected training situation.

The range of response times was from one to twenty-eight days. The average response time, however, was 6.38 days, with 60% of the referrals having a response time of five days or less.

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER THREE:

That the Paper Referral specialty be maintained, with four officers assigned to that function at current section activity and staffing levels; to each handle a maximum of 59 referrals per month, which should be the yearly equivalent of a unit workload average of 50.72 cases per month.

Staff Training: Both current and former staff agree that on-going training is important to doing their job with the greatest degree of protection to the clientele. Some officers made very specific suggestions and comments regarding both the content and format of the training. The following comments are, therefore, a distillation of staff reactions.

Staff generally believe that an officer new to Dependency should have had previous Juvenile Field Services experience, but additionally should be given some protected training time prior to handling cases. (With the possibility of personal liability legal suits, officers may be feeling this lack of prior training very acutely.) Whereas on-the-job training is felt to be the most pertinent to process learning, officers also believe that some didactic training is essential. The nature of the training, both for new officers and those who are highly experienced, tends to fall into discrete categories. The general preference is for brief training sessions.

Officers see a need for induction and enhancement training in the following categories: 1) Procedural training, to include report writing, interviewing techniques, investigation techniques, caseload management and family counseling; 2) Resource training, to include capsule information on community and public agencies, referral processes, inter-agency coordination and community relations, and elementary school curricula; 3) Medical/Psychological information, to include medical terminology, the plausibility of childhood injuries from other than abusive situations, the effects of abuse, neglect, and molestation on the development of the child, and general child development; 4) Legal information on current decisions, precedents, changes, and the rights of minors and parents; and 5) Self-Defense, perceived as necessary due to frequent contact with hostile persons in potentially explosive situations.

In order to assist in the training of new staff, and as a reminder for experienced staff, it is likely that some written procedural information would be very useful.

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER FOUR:

That a Procedures and Resources Manual be developed for Dependency I&I.

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER FIVE:

That the Staff Development section continue to develop additional appropriate training for the Dependency I&I Staff, with priorities established by Departmental management after staff input.

Supervisor Functions: The Dependency supervisors are both relatively new to their assignment; the turnover among supervisors in that section seems unusually high, with seven different

supervisors having been assigned to the unit during the last three years. (Three were assigned for six or less months.) This phenomenal turnover has affected the morale, general organization, and efficiency of the operation, since there has been essentially no written procedural instruction on which the supervisors could rely for guidance. Also, the supervisors do not have the time available for staff which would permit adequate training of new staff, even if the supervisors were fully experienced in the Dependency functions.

Also, the demands on the supervisors' time to provide primarily clerical services to the public and routine clerical work for the units have created a situation in which the functions of staff supervision, case consultation, and professional leadership must be fitted into the remaining time, almost as an adjunct. A large portion of this situation is correctible by providing on-site clerical support to the section. This would require that a phone be installed in an office close by the Supervisor's office, so that the clerk will be able to handle all routine clerical matters for the units. In support of this contention is the observation that the supervisors' combined average time for phone use is 40%, with 24.8% of their time devoted to essentially clerical work. The officers in the units now, plus the former staff and previous supervisors, universally complain that the supervisors have insufficient time for supervisory functions.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER SIX:

That a full-time clerk be assigned to the Dependency section to handle the section clerical functions and routine telephone coverage.

## CONCLUSION

The work standards evaluation of the Dependency section has essentially been a demonstration project in a receptive environment. The Dependency staff have been routinely cordial and cooperative, even with the additional work which was requested of them in completing this assignment. The process itself can be repeated in other work sections of the Department, probably with greater ease now that this initial effort has been concluded. If it is considered desirable, the additional management tool of Utilization Reporting can be implemented as each section has work standards developed.

TABLE 1

PROCESS TIMES AND VOLUMES BY  
POINT SYSTEM CRITERIA

	NON-EMERGENCY N=97	EMERGENCY N=51
NO FILE N=112	Time=2.43 hours  63.5% N=94	Time=5.71 hours  12.2% N=18
FILE N=36	Time=6.38 hours  2% N=3	Time=13.89 hours  22.3% N=33
	Filed=3.1% of Non-Emergency	Filed=64.7% of Emergency

**TABLE 2**  
**PERCENTAGES OF AVAILABLE TIME**  
**BY CATEGORY**

	%Total	SubTotal	Total
<b>I. TASK TIME</b>			
<b>A. INTERVIEWS, COUNSELING &amp; CONFERENCES</b>			
1. Parents & Minors	13.0		
2. Professionals	17.1		
3. Supervisors	3.5		
4. Others	4.4	38.0*	
<b>B. PAPERWORK</b>			
1. Read Case Materials	4.0		
2. Fill Out Forms	6.2		
3. Dictation	11.7		
4. Maintain Case File	7.1	29.0	
<b>C. CLIENT ASSISTANCE</b> (Transportation & Appointment Arrangements)		2.8	
<b>D. TRAVEL TIME</b>		12.7	
<b>E. COURT APPEARANCE</b>		.4	82.9
<b>II. NON-TASK TIME</b>			
<b>A. PERSONAL</b>		4.9	
<b>B. WAITING</b>		3.3	
<b>C. TRAINING</b>		2.6	
<b>D. ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS</b>		6.3	17.1
<b>GRANDTOTAL</b>			<b>100%</b>

\*Face-To-Face=21.3%  
Telephone =16.7%

**END**