

How Much Was Spent On Board Care for Deficients

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Recent reports from Minnesota county welfare boards show that about a quarter of a million dollars was spent during the past biennium in providing boarding home care for persons who should be in an institution for the mentally deficient. The Division of Public Institutions requested the figures for use in the biennial report of the period from July 1, 1948, to July 1, 1950. The figures will shortly be reported there, but through the medium of MINNESOTA WELFARE this special report is given as an expression of appreciation to the boards for their cooperation.

The mentally deficient needing institutional care always create many problems of adjustment in the community, and the staffs of county welfare boards spend long hours trying to make plans for persons for whom the only really satisfactory plan is institutional placement. The cost in emotional and physical strain to families caring for these children or adults cannot be measured, but dollar expenditures can be at least partly shown and are important. When a home situation becomes impossible, wards for whom institutional space is not available are sometimes placed in boarding homes as a "temporary" substitute for institutional placement. The purpose for the figures on the cost of boarding home care was to show that lack of institutional space is costly, by indicating how much individuals and counties—that is tax units—spend for substitute care.

The exact cost when there was an odd number of days was roughly figured since this is not a statistical report and it seemed the amount of time necessary for absolute accuracy would not be justified. The figures given are therefore approximate but very revealing as to certain financial costs incurred because of lack of adequate institutional space.

The number of counties included in tabulation of amounts spent is 53. Particularization of counties is shown as follows:

Number responding to questionnaire 53
Number with no board paid 31
Number where only families paid 5
Number where county did not pay total board for anyone, but where in each case the family and the county divided the cost 5
Number in which all board for at least one person was paid by the county (tax unit) 42
Of this number, families also paid total board for at least one person in 17 counties and board on an individual was divided between family and tax unit in 10 other counties.

In the table below the number of counties included in the figure is 50. Numbers boarded, length of time and amount spent are as follows:

	No. Boarded	Total Months Boarded	Amount Paid by Relatives	Amount Paid from Tax	Amount Paid from Other Sources
Rural counties	113	1,483	\$21,795	\$56,690	\$78,485
St. Louis	38	466	7,360	18,217	25,577
Ramsey	68	732	11,807	73,081	84,888
Hennepin	43	650*	27,357	8,964	36,321

Totals 262 3,331 \$68,419 \$156,952 \$225,271
*140 months are counted for 7 children placed in private day school for 10 months each year.

The cost of care per month ranged from \$23 to \$240. This \$240 was for custodial care in Ancker hospital, St. Paul, during 1949-50. In some other counties a child needing only good custodial care has occasionally been cared for on a long time basis in a hospital with the cost ranging up to \$225 per month. In Ramsey county however, the hospital was used in this way for a total of 252 months and cared for 33 persons, 8 of whom were also in boarding homes for awhile. During the months of 1948 however, the cost of this care was only \$180 a month.

Out of a possible 24 months for the total biennium, the average length of time for boarding each person was 12½ months. Many, however, had been boarded for some time prior to July, 1948, and many are still being boarded. Using the total for Ramsey county, including the 252 months of hospital

the average board paid per month in state was slightly over \$67. Omitting months of hospital care, the average is approximately \$54 a month. A number of parents kept their children in schools or boarding homes at a monthly rate of \$75 or more, but tax units also paid at this rate for a total of 34 children, exclusive of those kept in hospitals. Of this number 2 were in Hennepin, 2 from Ramsey, 8 from St. Louis, and 22 from rural counties.

Although the basic figures do not include commitments for any person not under guardianship to the Director of Public Institutions, the Hennepin County Welfare board listed 38 children committed as dependent but who are now considered mentally deficient. Since these children are now recognized as mentally deficient it is assumed the commitments as dependent children have not been changed in order that the welfare board may be in a position to make adequate plans for them. This is because funds for caring for dependent children are expended by the Hennepin County Welfare board, not the city or township. Indeed, nearly a third of the funds come from state taxes. It is assumed that most if not all of this group would be committed as mentally deficient if there were any hope of early institutional placements. For that reason figures on the boarding cost of these 38 children are given. They were boarded for a total of 867 months, an average of 23 months each—far higher than the county average or total average of those committed as mentally deficient. The amount paid ranged from about \$41.50 per month to \$186 per month. The total paid was approximately \$54,904 for the two-year period. This was an average of about \$63.50 per month, an amount higher than for the children committed as mentally deficient in that county or than the average for the state, excluding hospital care in Ramsey county.

It is probable that this same method of making certain of funds for boarding care has been used in an occasional case in other township counties but if so, such instances are not shown in this report. However, since this further illustrates the need for institutional care, the total figure of expenditures by tax

units for mentally deficient children in Hennepin county might be of interest. This would be \$63,868 instead of \$8,964. If this figure were also used in the total spent for out-of-home care because of lack of institutional space for mentally deficient persons, the amount would be \$280,275!

These are startling figures but even so give only a partial idea of the work done by the welfare boards in trying to help families work out their problems. Those counties who have recognized the need to expend funds to lessen the strains in the home have without doubt prevented future physical and emotional problems.

Some counties sent other figures which are not included in the totals given. These were for items such as:

Keeping a person in the community because that was the best place for him.

General relief given on the same basis that anyone not under guardianship would receive relief.

Hospital care because of illness and not because of permanent incapacity connected with mental deficiency.

Vacations from the institutions planned in boarding homes.

Clothing and incidental expenses including those for persons in boarding homes.

Boarding care for less than two weeks.

Amounts paid for boarding a child prior to commitment as mentally deficient.

Such expenditures show that fine casework was being done, but the same amounts would probably be expended regardless of the adequacy of institutional space.

Planning for the mentally deficient who should be in the institutions and helping the families to cope with the problems present many difficulties. The county welfare boards are doing far more than can be shown in this report, but the Division of Public Institutions appreciates their help in making this compilation possible. The expenditure of approximately a quarter of a million dollars within two years for this one specific purpose will prove startling news to many people.