

programs for the handicapped

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THE FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM*.

A PROGRESS REPORT - 1969

This issue of Programs for the Handicapped is devoted to a review of progress made in the Foster Grandparent Program in Fiscal Year 1969. (July 1, 1968 - June 30, 1969).



FOSTER GRANDPARENT LENDS AN EAR TO HER
RETARDED FOSTER DAUGHTER.

* A full description of the Foster Grandparent Program is contained in Mental Retardation Activities of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, January 1969. Available for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402, price \$1.00.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Secretary's Committee on Mental Retardation
Patricia Reilly Hitt, Assistant Secretary for Community and Field Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

Until recently, the Foster Grandparent Program had been administered jointly by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Administration on Aging, and the Office of Economic Opportunity. On September 17, 1969, President Nixon signed the 1969 Amendments to the Older Americans Act. These amendments provided for a complete transfer of the Foster Grandparent Program to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Administration on Aging.

In the four years the Foster Grandparent Program has been in operation it has fully demonstrated the viability of a new and meaningful role for older persons. The 1969 Amendments to the Older Americans Act provides this program with its first identifiable legislative base. There will not, however, be additional funds for new projects in Fiscal Year 1970. (July 1969-June 1970)

From the initial twenty-one projects authorized in August 1965, the program has expanded to a total of sixty-eight projects currently operating in forty States and Puerto Rico. Under the program over 4,000 persons sixty years of age or older, both men and women, serve children in over 180 settings four hours a day, five days a week. On any one day over 8,000 children, through this program, receive the care and attention of a concerned adult. At present, 2,721 of the foster grandparents, over half of the total, are working with 5,442 retarded children in 75 different settings.



FOSTER GRANDPARENT GIVES A HELPING HAND TO HIS FOSTER SON.

The Foster Grandparent Program is an older persons program. The purpose of the program when it was established was to explore, evaluate, and demonstrate the feasibility and the potential benefits of utilizing the services of employing older persons for the enrichment of the social environment of institutionalized infants and young children. Four years' experience with the program has produced abundant evidence of the feasibility of utilizing older persons in meaningful activities and of the beneficial effects on the children of the personal care and attention of an interested adult. They have that precious commodity, time, which is so necessary in working with retarded children, and the love and patience to help them learn the social skills used in everyday living.

Administrative staff of institutions for the mentally retarded report that the children show improvement in self-care skills and motor skills. In one institution a child who had to be kept in restraints responded to the attention and love of a foster grandmother who patiently sat with him and talked to him for two hours a day for a period of months. Eventually he was able to go with her on walks on the grounds of the institution. In another institution a young spastic girl had been unable to feed herself. After close observation by her foster grandmother it was determined that with the use of a special type of spoon she might be able to feed herself. The spoon was made for her, and she is now eating all her meals on her own. The administrative staff report also that the positive results which the foster grandparents have with the children have in many instances served to raise the morale of the institution staff. The foster grandparents seem to serve as a catalyst.



FOSTER GRANDPARENT SHARES A FOSTER SON'S FASCINATION WITH TURNING A WHEEL.

Benefits to the foster grandparents have included, most importantly, an enhanced self-esteem and a sense of purpose in living; improved health or at least a greater feeling of well-being; and increased security from the added income. Although the income is a major factor since the foster grandparents are selected from persons whose incomes are below the poverty index, they consider as equally important the new meaning their lives have because of their association with these deprived/handicapped children. Comments such as the following are heard from foster grandparents at projects throughout the United States: "I have something to look forward to." "I have a reason to get up in the morning." "It's good to be needed again." It is interesting, and significant, that the primary reason for leaving the program is health of the individual or his spouse. The attendance records of the grandparents are as good as, and sometimes better than, that of the regular employees.

One of the distinguishing features of the Foster Grandparent program is the services to the grandparents in addition to the pay they receive. Counselling on personal matters, information regarding benefits available through Medicare, Social Security, Legal Services, and community and other Federal programs, assistance with preparation of income tax returns, and information regarding voter registration are some of the services provided through the project staff. An ancillary benefit to the foster grandparents which many of them consider of major importance is the opportunity to be with other persons of their generation. Many of these older persons consider this aspect of the program second in importance only to the meaningfulness of helping "their children."

There have been quite a few evaluations of individual Foster Grandparent projects within the past two years. All of them conclude that, based on the project studied, the program is a viable one which has great potential for further expansion and growth. The report of the findings of a two-year study of the program at the Denton State School, Denton, Texas, conducted by Dr. Hiram J. Friedsam and Mr. H. R. Dick, North Texas State University, concludes:

"No matter how fleeting the contact or how limited the carry-over, the program does enrich the lives of the children it touches, and anyone who is familiar with institutions for retarded children will not judge this to be a minor success."

Additional information on the Foster Grandparent Program may be obtained from the Administration on Aging, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D. C. 20201.

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
SERVING THE MENTALLY RETARDED
(Number of Persons Being Served Daily)

STATE	NUMBER OF RETARDED CHILDREN SERVED	NUMBER OF FOSTER GRANDPARENTS
Arkansas	200	100
California	96	48
Connecticut	380	190
Delaware	74	37
Florida	186	93
Hawaii	76	38
Illinois	360	180
Indiana	44	22
Iowa	166	83
Kansas	80	40
Kentucky	142	71
Louisiana	180	90
Massachusetts	138	69
Michigan	100	50
Minnesota	240	120
Missouri	110	55
Montana	60	30
Nevada	72	36
New Hampshire	68	34
New Jersey	362	181
New Mexico	150	75
North Carolina	76	38
North Dakota	60	30
Ohio	18	9
Oklahoma	52	26
Oregon	76	38
Pennsylvania	438	219
South Carolina	122	61
Tennessee	28	14
Texas	366	183
Utah	62	31
Vermont	76	38
Washington	344	172
West Virginia	212	106
Wisconsin	228	114
TOTAL.....	5,442	2,721