

Collection #
M 0983
BV 3652-3692
OMB 0120

CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF INDIANAPOLIS RECORDS, 1855-1997

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

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December 2009

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 21 manuscript boxes, 1 oversized manuscript box, 42 bound volumes, 1 box of black and white images, 3 boxes of color photographs

COLLECTION DATES: 1855-2000

PROVENANCE: The Children's Bureau of Indianapolis, May 1976; October 2005; January 2006

RESTRICTIONS: All case records less than seventy-five years old are closed to researchers. Case records and other materials regarding individuals who obtained service from the Children's Bureau which are at least seventy-five years old are open to scholarly and genealogical research, pursuant to the regulations of the Indiana Historical Society Library.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: "For the Children's Sake: a history of the Children's Bureau of Indianapolis" HV885.I55 F67 2000; Annual Reports of Indianapolis Benevolent Society and Charity Organization Society, HV99 I42 I4; The Family Service Association of Indianapolis Records, 1879-1971 M 0102

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1976.0503; 2006.0012; 2006.0136

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Children's Bureau was originally formed under a charter in 1850 as the Widows' and Orphans' Asylum, and the organization officially began operations in 1851. The organization was run by the all-women Board of Managers and an advisory board of men, all of whom were prominent figures or of prominent families in the community at the time. Initially, the city of Indianapolis was divided into districts by the organization, and one woman on the Visitor Committee would be responsible for surveying the needs of the destitute in her district in addition to collecting donations from affluent citizens in the area. In addition, the organization provided funds to private homes that would board orphans or destitute women and children. Later, in 1855, enough funds were raised and an orphanage was erected at 14th and Capitol Streets, which allowed the organization to board orphans until the children were indentured or adopted by private families.

In 1875, the organization was incorporated for the first time as the Indianapolis Orphans' Asylum. Although the official title of the organization had changed, the mission and services provided by the organization did not. The Orphan's Asylum continued to board children, even taking in children that were charges of Marion and other Indiana counties, and sought out apprenticeships, indentures, or adoptions for the children in their care. However, the number of children under the Asylum's care was ever increasing. Therefore, to provide for larger numbers, the original orphanage expanded on three different occasions from 1869 to 1903, when the organization erected four new buildings at 4107 E. Washington Street. However, although the Orphan's Asylum was providing for many children as best they could, they were many times overwhelmed and most of those involved with or employed by the organization were not professionally trained.

The relative absence of a more professionalized system, in addition to Progressive Era concerns with mental health, hygiene, and juvenile delinquency, brought the Orphan's Asylum to partner with other benevolent and child welfare organizations and government agencies to address these issues. Most notably, the Orphan Asylum's relationship with the Indianapolis Foundation and the Child Welfare League of America resulted in an increasingly professionalized organization that incorporated social work methods for social services. By 1930, the Orphan's Asylum employed professional social workers and also a child psychiatrist, all of whom provided guidance and education to the rest of the staff and the Board of Managers.

The increasingly professional environment of the organization in addition to financial woes because of the Depression, led, in 1934 to a merger between the Orphan Asylum and the Family Welfare Society to form the Children's Bureau of the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum. It was during the Depression Era also that the fundraising arm of the Children's Bureau was established in 1932, the volunteer driven Auxiliary. The Auxiliary serves to provide recreational events or extracurricular activities for the children and publishes a newsletter for foster parents called the *Reflector*, in addition to raising the funds to provide these extras.

The ideological shift from focusing on caring for children in an institutional setting to caring for children through social work and case managed care, aided by the 1935 Aid to Dependent Children provision in the Social Security Act also spelled the end for the orphanage that was run by the Children's Bureau. In 1941, the orphanage officially shut its doors, and the organizational headquarters was moved to the English Foundation Building in 1953.

The Children's Bureau now began to focus strictly on adoptions, foster care, aiding unwed mothers, in addition to expanding their services to include (eventually) three group homes. The number of children up for adoption or foster care increased dramatically in the 1960s, with the largest amount of children, 153, being placed for adoption in 1970. However, after that peak in 1970, the numbers began to steadily decrease as more single mothers were keeping their children, and contraceptive methods were used more frequently. In order to respond to changing needs (i.e. more children needing foster care or temporary care), the Children's Bureau opened up the Garrard House in 1960, a girls home, the Mallon House, a boys home in 1969, and a year later in 1970, the Evans House, a home for unwed mothers, opened.

However, although the numbers of children available for adoption was decreasing, the number of children who still needed homes were increasingly minority children, specifically African American, or children who were older or had disabilities, backgrounds of abuse, or medical problems. In response, the Children's Bureau launched the Homes for Black Children program in 1978, in addition to working with the press to feature one of the children in a segment or column called "Thursday's Child" or "Sunday's Child". In the 1980s, the Children's Bureau also added counseling services and the operation of the Delaware Youth Center, the Crisis Shelter, Runaway Shelter, and Project Safe Place, all of which were residential, temporary care centers.

Due to the expansion of programs and services provided by the Children's Bureau, in the 1990s, the organization established its own foundation, the Children's Bureau Foundation, Inc. to manage and protect its assets. Additionally, in 1992, the Children's Bureau merged with the Family Support Center, which allowed the organization to provide even more services for children in Indianapolis, including the Adolescent Development and Primary Treatment Shelter (ADAPTS) and the Home, Education, and Respite Team (HEART) programs.

The Children's Bureau celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2001, and continues run over 20 distinct programs to serve, protect, and advocate for children.

Sources:

Materials in the collection; <http://www.childrens-bureau.org/corp/history>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains agendas, minutes, correspondence, financial registers and documents, records of children who were indentured, fostered or adopted through the Indianapolis Orphan's Asylum/Children's Bureau, records relating to group homes, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, publications, and a variety of photographs.

This collection is divided into groupings that account for the different functions of the organization. Series 1 (1851–1998), Administrative, contains documents related to the legal authority of the Children's Bureau, in addition to minutes and agendas from the Corporation and the Governing Board, along with a manual for Board members and the Children's Bureau Annual Report. This series also contains papers from Gertrude Taggart, a longtime member of the Governing Board. Series 2 (1907–1989), Committees, contains the minutes, correspondence, and reports from the various committees. Series 3 (1860–1985), Finances, contains donor lists, account books, financial statements, tax information, and payroll.

Series 4 (1871–1992), Services, contain records that speak to the services provided by the Indianapolis Orphan's Asylum/Children's Bureau have provided for children and families, such as indentures (in the earlier days), foster care, group homes, and adoptions. Series 5 (1925–1975), Child Welfare League of America, contains correspondence and studies that speak to the Children Bureau's accreditation and affiliation with CWLA. Series 6 (1891–1998), Publications and Publicity, contains scrapbooks (photocopies and originals), newspaper clippings, brochures, and newsletters, mainly regarding the activities of the Children's Bureau Auxiliary and also Homes for Black Children.

Series 7 (ca. 1960–1980), Children's Bureau Photographs, contain scans of old images from the Orphan's Asylum, in addition to miscellaneous photos from the Auxiliary, Homes for Black Children, the staff, and the children. Series 8 (ca. 1980–2000), Children's Bureau Color Photographs, document groundbreaking and construction on the group homes, events held by Homes for Black Children and FAME, and Project Safe Place. Also included are many miscellaneous photos of children and families that have been served by the Children's Bureau.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Administrative

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Children's Bureau Histories	Box 1 , Folder 1
Act of Incorporation, 1851	Box 1 , Folder 2
Act of Incorporation, 1867	Box 1, Folder 3
Constitution and By-laws, 1898	Box 1, Folder 4
Constitution and By-laws, 1930	Box 1, Folder 5
Articles of Reorganization, 1961	Box 1, Folder 6
Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation, 1965	Box 1, Folder 7
Articles of Incorporation, 1972	Box 1, Folder 8
Amended Articles of Incorporation, 1986	Box 1, Folder 9
Correspondence re: Articles of Incorporation, 1987	Box 1, Folder 10
Merger Agreement, 1991	Box 1, Folder 11
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1967	Box 1, Folder 12
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1969	Box 1, Folder 13
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1970	Box 1, Folder 14
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1971	Box 1, Folder 15
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1973	Box 1, Folder 16
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1974	Box 1, Folder 17
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1975	Box 1, Folder 18
Annual Meeting of the Corporation, 1976	Box 1, Folder 19
Officers, Managers, and Advisory Committee, 1867–1905	BV 3652

Board of Managers Minutes, 1885–1917	BV 3653
Board of Managers Minutes, 1917–22	BV 3654
Board of Managers Minutes, 1922–27	BV 3655
Board of Managers Minutes, 1933–37	BV 3656
Board of Managers Minutes, 1957-58	Box 1, Folder 20
Board of Managers Minutes, 1958-59	Box 1, Folder 21
Board of Managers Minutes, 1959-60	Box 1, Folder 22
Board of Managers Minutes, 1960-61	Box 1, Folder 23
Board of Managers Minutes, 1961-62	Box 1, Folder 24
Board of Managers Minutes, 1962-63	Box 1, Folder 25
Board of Managers Minutes, 1963-64	Box 1, Folder 26
Board of Managers Minutes, 1964-65	Box 2, Folder 1
Board of Managers Minutes, 1965-66	Box 2, Folder 2
Board of Managers Minutes, 1966-67	Box 2, Folder 3
Board of Managers Minutes, 1967-68	Box 2, Folder 4
Board of Managers Minutes, 1968-69	Box 2, Folder 5
Board of Managers Minutes, 1969-70	Box 2, Folder 6
Board of Managers Minutes, 1970-71	Box 2, Folder 7
Manual: Organizational History & Board of Managers, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 8
Manual: Financial Support, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 9
Manual: Job Descriptions, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 10
Manual: Personnel Practices, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 11
Manual: Social Service Exchange Policy, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 12
Manual: Policies and Procedures, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 13

Manual: Medical & Dental Care, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 14
Manual: Psychological & Psychiatric Services, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 15
Manual: Office Routine, Forms, and Reports, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 16
Manual: Transportation Policy, ca. 1950	Box 2, Folder 17
Manual: Policies on Foster Parents & Allowances, ca. 1950s	Box 2, Folder 18
Manual for Board Members, ca. 1970s	Box 2, Folder 19
Misc. Board of Managers Correspondence	Box 2, Folder 20
Gertrude Taggart Papers	Box 2, Folder 21
Annual Report, 1905	Box 3, Folder 1
Annual Report, 1916	Box 3, Folder 2
Annual Report, 1920	Box 3, Folder 3
Annual Report, 1943–45	Box 3, Folder 4
Annual Report, 1961	Box 3, Folder 5
Annual Report, 1962	Box 3, Folder 6
Annual Report, 1963	Box 3, Folder 7
Annual Report, 1964	Box 3, Folder 8
Annual Report, 1965	Box 3, Folder 9
Annual Report, 1966	Box 3, Folder 10
Annual Report, 1985	Box 3, Folder 11
Annual Report, 1986	Box 3, Folder 12
Annual Report, 1987	Box 3, Folder 13
Annual Report, 1988	Box 3, Folder 14
Annual Report, 1989	Box 3, Folder 15

Annual Report, 1990	Box 3, Folder 16
Annual Report, 1991	Box 3, Folder 17
Annual Report, 1992	Box 3, Folder 18
Annual Report, 1993	Box 3, Folder 19
Annual Report, 1994	Box 3, Folder 20
Annual Report, 1995	Box 3, Folder 21
Annual Report, 1996	Box 3, Folder 22
Annual Report, 1997	Box 3, Folder 23
Annual Report, 1998	Box 3, Folder 24
Inter-Agency Memos, 1979–87	Box 3, Folder 25
Strategic Plan, 1994–98	Box 3, Folder 26

Series 2: Committees

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Auxiliary Fundraisers, 1959–95	Box 3, Folder 27
Auxiliary Board Speech , 1960–73	Box 3, Folder 28
General Auxiliary Minutes, 1970–71	Box 3, Folder 29
Auxiliary Executive Board Minutes, 1970–71	Box 3, Folder 30
Auxiliary Committee Reports, 1970–71	Box 3, Folder 31
Auxiliary Executive Board Minutes, 1972–73	Box 3, Folder 32
Auxiliary Board Committee Reports, 1972–73	Box 3, Folder 33
General Auxiliary Minutes, 1973–74	Box 3, Folder 34
Auxiliary Executive Board Minutes, 1973–74	Box 3, Folder 35
Auxiliary Committee Reports, 1973–74	Box 3, Folder 36
General Auxiliary Minutes, 1974–75	Box 4, Folder 1

Auxiliary Executive Board Minutes, 1974–75	Box 4, Folder 2
Auxiliary Committee Reports, 1974–75	Box 4, Folder 3
General Auxiliary Minutes, 1975–76	Box 4, Folder 4
Auxiliary Executive Board Minutes, 1975–76	Box 4, Folder 5
Auxiliary Committee Reports, 1975–76	Box 4, Folder 6
Misc. Auxiliary Correspondence, 1919–48	Box 4, Folder 7
Auxiliary Yearbooks, 1964–67	Box 4, Folder 8
Auxiliary Yearbooks, 1968–72	Box 4, Folder 9
Auxiliary Yearbooks, 1972–75	Box 4, Folder 10
Adoption Committee, 1967	Box 4, Folder 11
Case Committee Meeting Agendas, 1929–31	Box 4, Folder 12
Case Committee Meeting Agendas, 1932–34	Box 4, Folder 13
Case Committee Meeting Agendas, 1935–37	Box 4, Folder 14
Case Committee Meeting Agendas, 1938–40	Box 4, Folder 15
Case Committee Meeting Agenda, 1941–44	Box 4, Folder 16
Case Committee Minutes, 1931–32	Box 4, Folder 17
Case Committee Minutes, 1933–35	Box 4, Folder 18
Case Committee Minutes, 1940–44	Box 4, Folder 19
Executive Committee Hearing, 1911	Box 4, Folder 20
Finance Committee Report, 1907	Box 4, Folder 21
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1944–56	Box 4, Folder 22
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1971	Box 4, Folder 23
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1972	Box 4, Folder 24
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1973	Box 4, Folder 25

Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1974	Box 5, Folder 1
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1975	Box 5, Folder 2
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1976	Box 5, Folder 3
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1977	Box 5, Folder 4
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1978	Box 5, Folder 5
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1979	Box 5, Folder 6
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1980	Box 5, Folder 7
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1981	Box 5, Folder 8
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1982	Box 5, Folder 9
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1983	Box 5, Folder 10
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1984	Box 5, Folder 11
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1986	Box 5, Folder 12
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1987	Box 5, Folder 13
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1988	Box 5, Folder 14
Finance Committee, Agendas & Minutes, 1989	Box 5, Folder 15
Nominating Committee Minutes, 1959–66	Box 5, Folder 16
Personnel Committee Correspondence & Minutes, 1939–53	Box 5, Folder 17
Personnel Committee, Correspondence & Minutes, 1963–66	Box 6, Folder 1
Public Relations Committee Minutes, 1954–55	Box 6, Folder 2
Recognition Committee Correspondence, 1967–73	Box 6, Folder 3
Screening Committee Cases, 1950	Box 6, Folder 4
Screening Committee Minutes, 1948	Box 6, Folder 5
Screening Committee Minutes, 1949	Box 6, Folder 6

Screening Committee Minutes, 1950	Box 6, Folder 7
Screening Committee Minutes, 1951	Box 6, Folder 8
Social Committee Policy, ca. 1959	Box 6, Folder 9
Committee on Special Projects, 1952–58	Box 6, Folder 10
Committee on Special Projects, 1959–61	Box 6, Folder 11
Committee on Special Projects, 1963–65	Box 6, Folder 12
Committee on Special Projects, 1966–67	Box 6, Folder 13
Committee on Special Projects, 1968–69	Box 6, Folder 14
Committee on Special Projects, 1970–71	Box 6, Folder 15
Committee on Special Projects, 1972–73	Box 7, Folder 1
Committee on Special Projects, 1974–75	Box 7, Folder 2
Committee on Special Projects, 1976–77	Box 7, Folder 3
United Christmas Advisory Committee, 1958–59	Box 7, Folder 4
United Christmas Advisory Committee, 1959–60	Box 7, Folder 5

Series 3: Finances

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Accounts and Amounts Paid, 1860–80	BV 3657
Accounts and Amounts Paid, 1906–18	BV 3658
Accounts and Amounts Paid, 1918–24	BV 3659
Accounts and Amounts Paid, 1924–43	BV 3660
Donations and Bequeaths, 1855–1915	Box 7, Folder 6
Donations and Bequeaths, 1855–63	BV 3661
Donations and Bequeaths, 1886–1907	BV 3662
Donations and Bequeaths, 1897–1913	BV 3663

Donations and Bequeaths, 1904–18	BV 3664
Donations and Bequeaths, 1907–09	BV 3665
Financial Register, 1866–1925	BV 3666
Financial Register, 1909–22	BV 3667–Flat
Financial Register, 1922–43	BV 3668
Financial Register, 1924	BV 3669
Financial Reports, 1895–1915	Box 7, Folder 7
Financial Reports, 1916–29	Box 7, Folder 8
Financial Reports, 1924–43	BV 3670
Treasurer’s Day Book, 1880–92	BV 3671
Treasurer’s Day Book, 1886–1909	BV 3672–Flat
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1973	Box 7, Folder 9
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1974	Box 7, Folder 10
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1975	Box 7, Folder 11
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1976	Box 7, Folder 12
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1977	Box 7, Folder 13
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1978	Box 7, Folder 14
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1979	Box 7, Folder 15
Children’s Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1980	Box 7, Folder 16

Children's Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1981	Box 8, Folder 1
Children's Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1982	Box 8, Folder 2
Children's Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1983	Box 8, Folder 3
Children's Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1984	Box 8, Folder 4
Children's Bureau Monthly Financial Statements, 1985	Box 8, Folder 5
Correspondence re: United Fund, 1970-75	Box 8, Folder 6
Correspondence re: United Fund, 1980-81	Box 8, Folder 7
Correspondence re: United Fund, 1981-82	Box 8, Folder 8
Correspondence re: United Fund, 1983-85	Box 8, Folder 9
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1973	Box 8, Folder 10
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1974	Box 8, Folder 11
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1975	Box 8, Folder 12
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1976	Box 8, Folder 13
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1977	Box 8, Folder 14
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1978	Box 9, Folder 1
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1979	Box 9, Folder 2
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1980	Box 9, Folder 3
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1981	Box 9, Folder 4
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1982	Box 9, Folder 5
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1983	Box 9, Folder 6
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1984	Box 9, Folder 7
United Fund Monthly Financial Report, 1985	Box 9, Folder 8

Time Sheets, 1979	Box 10, Folder 1
Indiana University Work Study Materials, 1978–84	Box 10, Folder 2
Work Study Time Sheets, 1976–77	Box 10, Folder 3
Work Study Time Sheets, 1981–82	Box 10, Folder 4
Work Study Payroll, 1975	Box 10, Folder 5
Work Study Payroll, 1976	Box 10, Folder 6
Work Study Payroll, 1977	Box 10, Folder 7
Work Study Payroll, 1978	Box 10, Folder 8
Work Study Payroll, 1979	Box 10, Folder 9
Work Study Payroll, 1980	Box 10, Folder 10
Work Study Payroll, 1981	Box 10, Folder 11
Work Study Payroll, 1982–83	Box 10, Folder 12
Tax Forms, 1976	Box 11, Folder 1
Tax Forms, 1977	Box 11, Folder 2
Tax Forms, 1978	Box 11, Folder 3
Tax Forms, 1979	Box 11, Folder 4
Tax Forms, 1980	Box 11, Folder 5
Tax Forms, 1981	Box 11, Folder 6
Tax Forms, 1982	Box 11, Folder 7
Tax Forms, 1983	Box 11, Folder 8
Tax Forms, 1984	Box 11, Folder 9

Series 4: Services

CONTENTS

Agency Analysis, 1947

CONTAINER

Box 12, Folder 1

Marion Co. Child Welfare Study, 1947	Box 12, Folder 2
Staff Time Study, 1963	Box 12, Folder 3
Caseworker Contact Information, 1970–73	Box 12, Folder 4
Staff Memos, 1970–73	Box 12, Folder 5
Foster Parent Information, 1969–75	Box 12, Folder 6
Clerical/Processing Procedures, 1970–73	Box 12, Folder 7
Clerical/Processing Procedures, ca. 1988	Box 12, Folder 8
Dept. of Public Welfare Procedures, 1968–73	Box 12, Folder 9
CHAMPUS, 1981–87	Box 12, Folder 10
Monthly Population Reports, 1960 (Folder 1 of 2)	Box 12, Folder 11
Monthly Population Reports, 1960 (Folder 2 of 2)	Box 12, Folder 12
Children’s Bureau Population Statistics, 1983	Box 12, Folder 13
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, 1983	Box 12, Folder 14
Children’s Bureau Population Statistics, 1984	Box 12, Folder 15
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, 1984	Box 13, Folder 1
Children’s Bureau Population Statistics, 1985	Box 13, Folder 2
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, 1985	Box 13, Folder 3
Children’s Bureau Populations Statistics, 1986	Box 13, Folder 4
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, 1986	Box 13, Folder 5
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, January-July 1988	Box 13, Folder 6
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, August-December 1988	Box 13, Folder 7
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, January-June, 1989	Box 13, Folder 8
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, July-December, 1989	Box 13, Folder 9
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, January-June, 1990	Box 13, Folder 10

Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, July-December, 1990	Box 13, Folder 11
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, July-December, 1991	Box 13, Folder 12
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, January-June, 1992	Box 14, Folder 1
Foster/Adoptive Homes Report, July-December, 1992	Box 14, Folder 2
Record of Infants, 1884-97	BV 3673
Record of Infants, 1908-15	BV 3674
Record of Infants, 1915-18	BV 3675
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1871-81	BV 3676
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1877-82	BV 3677
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1879-84	BV 3678
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1881-89	BV 3679
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1885-88	BV 3680
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1885-89	BV 3681
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1892-1903	BV 3682
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1895-1912	BV 3683-Flat
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1907-22	BV 3684-Flat
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1908-21	BV 3685
Record of Children Admitted to IOA, 1913-34	BV 3686-Flat
Record of Indentures, 1875-85	BV 3687
Record of Indentures, 1870-76	BV 3688
Record of Orphan Asylum Adoptions, 1885-1904	BV 3689
Record of Orphan Asylum Adoptions, 1904-1919	BV 3689-A
Adoptive & Boarding Cases, 1982-88	BV 3690
Transfer Service Cases, 1982-88	BV 3691

Transfer Service Cases, 1989–1992	BV 3692
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Akin–Berry	Box 14, Folder 3
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Bellingsly–Brooks	Box 14, Folder 4
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Brown–Clouse	Box 14, Folder 5
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Coil–Dailey	Box 14, Folder 6
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Davis–Edwards	Box 14, Folder 7
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Elder–Foster	Box 14, Folder 8
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Fowler–Gholson	Box 14, Folder 9
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Gibson–Grayson	Box 14, Folder 10
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Greger–Ham	Box 14, Folder 11
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Hamilton–Hendricks	Box 14, Folder 12
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Henton–Huffman	Box 14, Folder 13
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Hug–Justice	Box 14, Folder 14
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Karr–Lowe	Box 14, Folder 15
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Lucas–McTarsney	Box 15, Folder 1
Children’s Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Meade–Myles	Box 15, Folder 2

Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Neeb-Platt	Box 15, Folder 3
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Plummer-Roberston	Box 15, Folder 4
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Robinson-Shaw	Box 15, Folder 5
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Shawver-Spencer	Box 15, Folder 6
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Stacy-Sutton	Box 15, Folder 7
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Tausey-Thomas	Box 15, Folder 8
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Thorndike-Utley	Box 15, Folder 9
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Villar-Ward	Box 15, Folder 10
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Wardell-Wilson	Box 15, Folder 11
Children's Records, Private and Marion Co. Wards, Wirth-York	Box 15, Folder 12
Completed Change of Status Forms, 1989-90	Box 15, Folder 13
Adoption Applications, 1989-90	Box 15, Folder 14
Services Application Form, 1989-90	Box 15, Folder 15
Adoption Legislation, n.d.	Box 16, Folder 1
Black Children Adoption Statistics/Surveys, 1968-75	Box 16, Folder 2
Correspondence re: Eakins Family Adoption, 1959	Box 16, Folder 3
Correspondence re: Placement of Negro Children, 1954-62	Box 16, Folder 4
Adoption Approval Letters, Anderson-Burton	Box 16, Folder 5

Adoption Approval Letters, Carney–Dukate	Box 16, Folder 6
Adoption Approval Letters, Ewigleben–Gymerah	Box 16, Folder 7
Adoption Approval Letters, Hamilton–Johnson	Box 16, Folder 8
Adoption Approval Letters, Kavanagh–Luttrell	Box 16, Folder 9
Adoption Approval Letters, Martin–Nugent	Box 16, Folder 10
Adoption Approval Letters, Olsen–Price	Box 16, Folder 11
Adoption Approval Letters, Ratliff–Sutton	Box 16, Folder 12
Adoption Approval Letters, Teskey–Youngblood	Box 16, Folder 13
Indiana Association of Residential Childcare Agencies, 1941–94	Box 16, Folder 14
Indianapolis Orphan’s Asylum Land Surveys, 1907–17	Box 16, Folder 15
Correspondence re: Group Home Program, 1973–75	Box 16, Folder 16
General Group Home Procedures, 1976–78	Box 16, Folder 17
Group Home Inventories, 1970–71	Box 16, Folder 18
Correspondence re: Evans House, 1969–70	Box 16, Folder 19
Correspondence re: Evans House, 1970–71	Box 16, Folder 20
Correspondence re: Evans House, 1973–81	Box 16, Folder 21
Garrard House Architectural Plans, 1974	Box 16, Folder 22
Mallon House, 1969–71	Box 16, Folder 23

Series 5: Child Welfare League of America

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Child Welfare League History	Box 17, Folder 1
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1925–28	Box 17, Folder 2
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1929	Box 17, Folder 3

Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1930	Box 17, Folder 4
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1931–32	Box 17, Folder 5
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1933	Box 17, Folder 6
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1934	Box 17, Folder 7
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1935–36	Box 17, Folder 8
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1942	Box 17, Folder 9
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1943	Box 17, Folder 10
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1944	Box 17, Folder 11
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1945	Box 17, Folder 12
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1946	Box 17, Folder 13
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1947	Box 17, Folder 14
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1956–62	Box 17, Folder 15
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League, 1964–65	Box 17, Folder 16
Child Welfare League Study on Functions and Programs, 1964	Box 18, Folder 1
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Study, 1961–62	Box 18, Folder 2
Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Materials, 1961 (Folder 1 of 4)	Box 18, Folder 3
Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Materials, 1961 (Folder 2 of 4)	Box 18, Folder 4
Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Materials, 1961 (Folder 3 of 4)	Box 18, Folder 5
Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Materials, 1961 (Folder 4 of 4)	Box 18, Folder 6
Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Self-Study, 1961	Box 18, Folder 7

Child Welfare League Reaccreditation Report, 1962	Box 18, Folder 8
Child Welfare League Accreditation, 1964–65	Box 18, Folder 9
Child Welfare League Accreditation, 1966–67	Box 18, Folder 10
Child Welfare League Accreditation, 1968–69	Box 18, Folder 11
Child Welfare League Accreditation, 1976–78	Box 18, Folder 12
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League Affiliation, 1970–72	Box 18, Folder 13
Correspondence re: Child Welfare League Affiliation, 1973–75	Box 18, Folder 14
Child Welfare League Adoption Study, 1964–65	Box 18, Folder 15
Child Welfare League Adoption Study, 1974–75	Box 18, Folder 16

Series 6: Publications and Publicity

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
IOA Scrapbook, 1891–1918	Box 19, Folder 1
Board-A-Child Campaign Publicity, 1943–47	Box 19, Folder 2
State of Indiana Proclamations, 1970–90	Box 19, Folder 3
Misc. Publicity, ca. 1960s	Box 19, Folder 4
Children’s Bureau Scrapbook, 1960–67 (Folder 1 of 3)	Box 19, Folder 5
Children’s Bureau Scrapbook, 1960–67 (Folder 2 of 3)	Box 19, Folder 6
Children’s Bureau Scrapbook, 1960–67 (Folder 3 of 3)	Box 19, Folder 7
Indianapolis Star Adoption Series, 1966–67	Box 19, Folder 8
Audrey Oliver Publicity and Response, 1967 (Folder 1 of 2)	Box 19, Folder 9
Audrey Oliver Publicity and Response, 1967 (Folder 2 of 2)	Box 19, Folder 10

Children's Bureau Scrapbook, 1967-70 (Folder 1 of 2)	Box 19, Folder 11
Children's Bureau Scrapbook, 1967-70 (Folder 2 of 2)	Box 19, Folder 12
Children's Bureau Scrapbook, 1969-87	Box 19, Folder 13
Children's Bureau Scrapbook, 1973-79	Box 20, Folder 1
Saturday's & Sunday's Children Scrapbook, 1982-83	Box 20, Folder 2
Easter Flower Sale Clippings, 1913-18	Box 20, Folder 3
Auxiliary Board Scrapbook, 1950-60	Box 20, Folder 4
Auxiliary Board Scrapbook, 1959-95	Box 20, Folder 5
Auxiliary Board Scrapbook, 1960-70	Box 20, Folder 6
Auxiliary Board Scrapbook, 1961-71	Box 20, Folder 7
Auxiliary Board Scrapbook, 1979-98	Box 20, Folder 8
Black Adoption Committee Scrapbook, ca. 1970s	OMB 0120, Box 1
"Things You Should Know About Your Pregnancy"	Box 20, Folder 9
"A Manual for Foster Parents"	Box 20, Folder 10
"A Silhouette of Service", ca. 1950s	Box 20, Folder 11
"A Shadow Lifts When...", ca. 1950s	Box 20, Folder 12
"The Reflector", 1953	Box 20, Folder 13
"A Guide to Foster Care", 1965	Box 20, Folder 14
Celebrity Cookbook, 1986	Box 20, Folder 15
"News from the Children's Bureau", 1996	Box 20, Folder 16
Misc. Brochures	Box 20, Folder 17
"Communicator", 1985	Box 20, Folder 18
"Communicator", 1986	Box 20, Folder 19
"Communicator", 1987	Box 20, Folder 20

“Communicator”, 1988–89	Box 20, Folder 21
“Communicator”, 1990–91	Box 20, Folder 22
Children’s Bureau Scrapbook, 1990–97	Box 21

Series 7: Children’s Bureau Photographs

CONTENTS

Orphan’s Asylum Newspaper Photos, n.d.

Photo with Evan Bayh, n.d.

Garrard House, n.d.

Misc. Children’s Photos, n.d.

Orphan’s Asylum East Washington St. Home

Auxiliary Christmas Party, ca. 1960s

Foster Parents Annual Dinner Meeting, 1965

Auxiliary 25th Anniversary Celebration, 1967

Mrs. C. Morgan Everson, Mrs. Robert G. Bruce, Mrs. Thomas R. Skidmore, 1973

Children’s Bureau Staff Reviewing a Map, September 24, 1973

Homes For Black Children- Valjean Dickinson, Robert Johnson, and Regina Williams, 1981

CONTAINER

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 3

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 4

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 5

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 6

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 7

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 8

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 9

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 10

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 11

Series 8: Children’s Bureau Color Photographs

CONTENTS

Easter Celebration, n.d. (Folder 1 of 2)

Easter Celebration, n.d. (Folder 2 of 2)

Goal Seekers, n.d. (Folder 1 of 2)

CONTAINER

Color Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

Color Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Color Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 3

Goal Seekers, n.d. (Folder 2 of 2)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 4
Halloween Celebration, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 5
Lou Rawls Parade of Stars, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 6
Retreat, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 7
HBC "Rise Above the Ordinary" Retreat, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 8
HBC "Unity" Program, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9
Project Safe Place Event, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 10
Project Safe Place, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 11
Tennis Tournament, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 12
Misc. HBC Events, n.d. (Folder 1 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 13
Misc. HBC Events, n.d. (Folder 2 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 14
Misc. HBC Events, n.d. (Folder 3 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 15
Misc. HBC Events, n.d. (Folder 4 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 16
Misc. HBC Events, n.d. (Folder 5 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 17
Misc. Family Photos, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 1
Misc. Children's Photos, n.d. (Folder 1 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 2
Misc. Children's Photos, n.d. (Folder 2 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 3
Misc. Children's Photos, n.d. (Folder 3 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 4
Misc. Children's Photos, n.d. (Folder 4 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 5
Misc. Children's Photos, n.d. (Folder 5 of 5)	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 6
Evans House, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 7
Morris House, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 8

Halloween Celebration, 1984	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 1
HBC Sixth Anniversary Celebration, 1985	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 2
1 st Annual I.O.C.O.C. Luncheon, 1986	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 3
HBC Perm-A-Thon, 1986	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 4
1 st Annual HBC Dinner, 1986	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 5
HBC Annual Celebration, 1986	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 6
2 nd Annual HBC Dinner, 1987	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 7
HBC Retreat, 1988	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 8
Easter Egg Hunt, 1992	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 9
HBC Christmas, 1992	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 10
HBC Teen Retreat, 1992 (Folder 1 of 2)	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 11
HBC Teen Retreat, 1992 (Folder 2 of 2)	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 12
HBC Teen Retreat, 1993	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 13
Easter Egg Hunt, 1994	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 14
FAME Stand for Children, 1996	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 15
FAME Nutrition Class, 1997	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 16
HBC Christmas, 1997	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 17
Governor O'Bannon Signing SEA 425, 1998	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 18
"Children, Our Best Investment" Event, 2000	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 19
McIntosh Visit to Family Support Center, 2000	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 20

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1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
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2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0983).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.