



New York State Archives

**New York State Board of Charities Examinations of
Dependents in County and City Institutions A1987**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	The examination forms in this series constitute part of an effort to compile statistics regarding the causes of dependency on public charities. Forms document the personal and family history of each dependent, as well as past history of dependency, existing causes of dependency, and future prospects for self-sufficiency. In addition each form includes: name; age; birthplace; marital status; if temperate; occupation; family background; and general remarks on health, behavior, and habits.
Creator:	New York (State). State Board of Charities
Title:	Examinations of dependents in county and city institutions
Quantity:	6 cubic feet
Quantity:	82 volumes
Inclusive Date:	1874-1875
Bulk Date:	bulk 1874
Series:	A1987

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Arrangement

This series is arranged alphabetically by county or city; examination forms within each volume are numbered in the order that examinations were conducted. Family members in the same institution were examined consecutively whenever possible.

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Administrative History

The State Legislature, by virtue of a concurrent resolution passed in May of 1873, directed the Board of State Commissioners of Public Charities to investigate the causes of crime, pauperism, and insanity in New York. Acknowledging a "vast increase of crime and pauperism

in this State" and the need to supply taxpayers with "statistics in concise form which shall show the various influences that are producing these effects," the legislature empowered the board to "examine the records of all public institutions and institute inquiries." The resolution further directed the board to submit a report of its findings to the next legislature. Shortly after the resolution was passed, the Board of State Commissioners of Public Charities was renamed the State Board of Charities (Laws of 1873, Chapter 571).

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Scope and Content Note

The forms in this series were used by the State Board of Charities and its local committees and agents to record information obtained during examinations of dependents in county and city institutions throughout the state. Forms document the personal and family history of dependents, as well as their past history of dependency, existing causes of dependency, and future prospects for self-sufficiency.

While the bulk of the examinations documented in this series were conducted at county poorhouses and city almshouses, examinations were also conducted at a number of mental health institutions: Kings County Alms House Lunatic Asylum; Monroe County Lunatic Asylum; New York City Lunatic Asylum at Blackwell's Island; New York City Asylum for the Insane at Wards Island; Idiot Asylum at Randall's Island; Oneida County Poor House Insane Asylum Department; and Onondaga County Poor House Department for the Insane. The series also contains records of examinations conducted at the Epileptic and Paralytic Hospitals at Blackwell's Island and the Children's Hospital at Randall's Island.

Standard forms are divided into several sections. The first section contains personal information including name; sex; age; social condition (marital status); color; birthplace, and whether born in a poorhouse or other public institution; length of time in U.S., length of time in New York, and port where landed (if foreign born); birthplace of father and whether born in a poorhouse or other public institution; and birthplace of mother and whether born in a poorhouse or other public institution.

The second section documents past history of dependency and includes age at which person first became dependent on public charity; first mode of public aid; if first aided outside of institutions, length of time that aid was continued; age at which person first became an inmate of a poorhouse and duration of residence; history of residence in additional poorhouses and total length of time spent in such institutions; history of commitment to or residence in insane asylums, blind asylums, idiot asylums, deaf and dumb asylums, or refuges; and history of criminal convictions and commitment to correctional institutions.

The third section addresses personal and family history of the dependent, including legitimacy or illegitimacy of birth; whether consanguinity exists in parents; ability to read and write; history of "fair school" education; habits of idleness and thrift and saving; level of alcohol consumption; parents' level of alcohol consumption; history of moral and religious training; youthful habits

of vagrancy or idleness; occupational and residential history prior to current dependency; occupation of father or husband; family history of pauperism, insanity, idiocy, inebriation, and criminality; and number and condition of children (if dependent is a parent).

The final section of the forms addresses existing causes of dependency: childhood homelessness due to death or pauperism of parent(s); adult homelessness due to death of or abandonment by husband; old age or destitution; permanent or temporary disabling disease; crippling physical condition or deformity; loss or impairment of senses, faculties, or bodily powers; insanity, epilepsy, idiocy, or paralysis; general feebleness of mind or body; impairment or degeneration of bodily powers or mental faculties due to inebriation; and mental or moral perversion, or morbid and debasing conditions of mind. This section concludes with an assessment of the dependent's future prospects for self-sufficiency, including ability to support self with or without supervision; manner of spending time while in current institution; chief causes of and possible remedies for current state of dependency; likelihood of recovery from present causes of dependency; and existence of relatives capable of providing financial support.

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Related Information

Related Material

Record series A1978, New York State Board of Charities Census of Inmates in Almshouses and Poorhouses, contains similar data compiled using slightly less detailed forms during the period 1875-1921.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this series.

Alternate Formats AvailableAlternate Formats Available

Microform is available at the New York State Archives through interlibrary loan.

Access Terms

- Social service
- Mentally ill--Treatment
- Mentally ill--Care
- Epilepsy--Hospitals
- Almshouses
- Psychiatric hospitals
- New York (State)
- Public welfare