

History and Mission

Mission

The mission of Family Service is to preserve and strengthen families in times of crisis, change, and growth through counseling, education, and support.

Vision

A community of healthy, loving, and capable families.

History

Founded on Thanksgiving Day in 1835 to help new arrivals to the Indianapolis area with material needs such as food, clothing and shelter, we have evolved and changed with the community in order to best meet the needs of central Indiana families. Today, as central Indiana's oldest not-for-profit social service agency, we remain dedicated to preserving and strengthening families through professional help that families can afford.

Below is a detailed history of our organization: 1835 Formed on Thanksgiving Day, Family Service was originally known as the Indianapolis Benevolent Society

- mission was "to search out (Indianapolis's) destitute families and afford them prompt relief." Indiana Democrat, November 30, 1836, p. 4
- philanthropy was almost entirely in the form of charity, defined as "food and shelter, dedicated to caring for the destitute and needy."

1844 Indianapolis Benevolent Society added to its mission, beginning to help people find employment "to assist such as may desire it in procuring employment" in response to a November 30, 1844 Indiana Democrat editorial that stated "(t)he desire to live on other men's earnings, is the vein from which almost all individual sufferings spring." mid 1840s Indianapolis Benevolent Society redefines the "poor" - those "wholly capable of work" as deserving and the "unworthy who were able-bodied and lazy" as paupers.

1849 Widows' and Orphans Friends Society was established to help the town's poorer women.

1849 Widows' and Orphans' Asylum was established to provide relief grants for widows and boarding-home care for orphaned children.

1855 Widows' and Orphans Friends Society formed a joint committee with the Indianapolis Benevolent Society to raise funds to build a new facility to house the ten children the Society cared for. It was built the same year.

1860s During the Civil War, Indianapolis Benevolent Society devoted itself to caring for the wives, mothers and children of the soldiers who were left behind.

- the organization built the Home for Friendless Women "for the aid and improvement of abandoned women."

1867 After the Civil War, city council appropriated \$1,000 for an addition to the Widows' and Orphans Friends Society children's home, which increased its capacity to 75 children.

1875 Widows' and Orphans' Asylum took over the old Butler University site; Indiana General Assembly changed the institution's name to the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum.

1879 Indianapolis Benevolent Society president established "a citizens' association of business men and charitable societies for the purpose of the united effort in dealing with the problems of poor relief," the Charity Organization Society.

1880 Indianapolis Benevolent Society turned its administrative and investigative functions over to the Charity Organization Society, which formed:

- Society of Friendly Visitors whose members regularly visited families
- Dime Savings and Loan organized in 1887 to encourage thrift among the poor.
- Summer Mission for Sick Children was started in 1889 to send sickly infants and new mothers to summer hospitals on the outskirts of the city.
- Fairview Settlement was started in 1907 to provide housing for widows and children.
- Social Service Exchange allowed all Indianapolis charities to share their case records. In 1941 became part of the Council of Social Agencies.
- Legal Aid Bureau was started in 1912 to provide free legal assistance to the poor. Later became the independent Legal Aid Society.

1880-1923 Indianapolis Benevolent Society and Charity Organization Society maintained separate identities but functioned as two arms of the same organization with the same executive director and board of directors.

Charity Organization Society investigated cases to identify those worthy of aid, and referring deserving cases to the appropriate charity.

- Indianapolis Benevolent Society provided assistance to those people approved by the Charity Organization Society

1905 Charity Organization Society formed the Children's Aid Association (known today as Children's Bureau) to provide advice for raising children, find temporary homes for children whose parents were unable to support them, and to distribute milk and medical care to needy children.

1907 Mother's Aid Society started to provide free homes for widows with children

1922 Charity Organization Society, Indianapolis Benevolent Society, Children's Aid Association and Mother's Aid Society recognized much of their work was duplicative and agreed to merge into a new organization, the Family Welfare Society, which would address problems of the family.

- one division, Service and Relief Division, was responsible for providing counseling and financial assistance to needy families

- Children's Bureau was responsible for orphans and children in need of public assistance.

1934 Children's Bureau was transferred to the Indianapolis Orphan's Asylum. Family Welfare Society ceased to be a relief agency, increasingly emphasized its counseling services.

1945 Family Welfare Society changed its name to Family Service Association of Indianapolis.

1965 Hancock County branch of Family Service opened

1980 Boone County branch opened

1981 Hamilton County branch office opened

1983 Morgan County branch office opened

1993 Family Service Association of Indianapolis changed its name to Family Service Association of Central Indiana

2003 Family Service Association of Central Indiana becomes Family Service of Central Indiana

Share

|