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Report Progress in Placing Negro Babies

New York—More than 500 homeless Negro babies who had been kept in the well-baby wards of city hospitals have been placed in foster and adoptive homes through a pilot program of a Manhattan adoption agency.

The five-year program was launched two and a half years ago by Spence-Chapin Adoption Service to solve two major problems plaguing adoption agencies throughout the country. The basic one was to find homes for Negro children born out of wedlock or abandoned by their parents. Largely because of economic conditions in Negro communities, it has always been hard to find such homes. The other problem is the acute shortage of trained social workers to investigate applicant homes and follow through with supervision.

It was in a second area that the pilot program adopted a new approach with gratifying success. The approach is a work-studies arrangement for college graduates who work for the agency four days a week and attend the

Fordham University School of Social Work on the fifth day. The agency's staff, augmented in this way, was able to place 80 babies in adoptive homes and 470 in foster homes during the past two and a half years, Helen Montgomery, executive director, said at a press conference yesterday in the agency's headquarters. Previously, between 20 and 25 Negro children had been placed a year by Spence-Chapin.

They have been other efforts by other agencies to place Negro children in adoptive homes. One such program instituted by the Louise Wise Services of New York, attempted to have white couples adopt Negro children, but the program resulted in only one such adoption in its first year.

Miss Montgomery, reviewing the Spence-Chapin program yesterday, estimated that half the homes in which the agencies had placed Negro babies were in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The majority of babies were placed in

Negro homes, a few of the homes were racially mixed.

The program was launched because "we and other agencies were appalled by the fact that there were literally hundreds of babies in the well-baby wards of hospitals," said Mrs. Marguerite Cullman, a member of the Spence-Chapin board of directors. "Not only was it costing the city an average of \$30 a day, but there was no one to pick up the babies and play with them. They were beginning to develop skin diseases and other problems caused by emotional disturbance. Psychologists felt that delinquency and other problems later in life could be traced to infant neglect—not physical neglect, but the lack of a mother's cooling and picking up the baby."

The plan was also designed to attract students coming out of college who either cannot afford the two years of graduate studies required for a master's degree in social work or else are not sufficiently sure of their vocations to invest that much time.