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Guide to

Social Health Association of Central Indiana

Records, 1919-1993

Mss 50

Social Health Association of Central Indiana Records, 1919-1993
Mss 50
2.4 c.f (6 document boxes)

ABSTRACT

The Social Health Association of Central Indiana began as the Anti-Syphilis League of Indiana in 1938. Its purpose was to eradicate venereal diseases, particularly syphilis and gonorrhea, and the conditions which contributed to its proliferation. In 1939, the name was changed to the Indiana Social Hygiene Association. In 1943, their mission included the eradication of venereal diseases; the battle against prostitution and sexual delinquency; the promotion of sex education and appropriate sexual behavior; and the support of family and marriage relations. As the organization's focus evolved, it underwent a name change to the Social Health Association of Indianapolis and Marion County, and in the 1960s, became more involved in sex education, developing materials for elementary and secondary schools and education professionals. In 1976, the name changed to the Social Health Association of Central Indiana as it began to develop programs for areas outside of Marion County.

The collection consist of board of directors and some committee minutes, financial records, correspondence and news clippings, educational program materials, sex education plans for Pike Township, scrapbooks, photographs, and audio materials including class instruction, advertisements and radio broadcasts.

ACCESS

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ACQUISITION

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HISTORICAL NOTE

The Social Health Association of Central Indiana began as the Anti-Syphilis League of Indiana, an organization created by Lydia Woollen Ritchey and Nell Herrington of Indianapolis, who responded to the American Social Health Association's call for community education. Both women were active in local women's organizations, first by assisting infected women to get to the City Hospital Clinics and, then more broadly, in educating the public about venereal disease. While they were able to attract board members from fairly prominent places around Indiana, the name and subject matter hindered the organization's ability to raise funds. Thus, in 1939, the organization changed its name to the Indiana Social Hygiene Association (ISHA).

In effect, the ISHA served as a coordinator between education professionals, political and legal authorities, and the medical professionals. In this way, it could accomplish its mission which included: the eradication of venereal diseases through educating the public about the subject and about appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior; ridding society of prostitution and vice, which contributed to the proliferation of sexually-transmitted diseases; and controlling the spread of the diseases with up-to-date medical knowledge.

In 1942, the ISHA again changed its name because of its difficulty in raising funds—this time community foundations such as the Indianapolis Foundation and the Indianapolis Community Fund questioned the state-wide focus of the organization. Thus, the name was changed to the Indianapolis Social Hygiene Association. With the funding it received from the Indianapolis Community Fund, the Indianapolis Social Health Association was firmly established as a formal social agency. Between 1943 and 1960, almost the entire funding for the organization came from the Indianapolis Community Fund.

In 1943, the organization hired Roberta West Nicholson as executive director and began to operate out of the Indianapolis Public Health. Under Nicholson's leadership for the next seventeen years, the Indianapolis Social Hygiene Association's educational efforts continued. In 1944, the Indianapolis Social Hygiene Association purchased the Public Health Center, which treated individuals with venereal disease. Its mission was further defined as battling "commercialized" prostitution, which was considered a criminal activity and sex delinquency (minors involved in sexual activity), promoting sound knowledge of sex and high standards of conduct in matters of sex, and working towards protecting and improving the institution of marriage and the family. Indianapolis Social Hygiene Association's board members during this time period represented the medical profession, business and government, and the social service sector. The organization coordinated the efforts of each of these groups to achieve its goals.

By 1945, however, with the introduction of penicillin to treat venereal disease, the numbers of cases declined and the organization began to focus on education. Also between 1946 and 1954, some members of the organization believed that the battle against venereal disease had to be taken state-wide and they established the Indiana Social Hygiene Association, with the support of the Indiana Tuberculosis Association (ITA). With a three-year grant and office space from the ITA, the Indiana Social Hygiene Association established six regional offices around the state. This state-wide organization was dissolved in 1954 after the death of Murray Auerbach, director of the ITA, and because of the decline in venereal disease rates and low public support for the issue. By

1947, the Indianapolis Social Hygiene Association was targeting health-care and education professionals, as well as the general public (particularly parents), with workshops.

Two years later, the demand for education was so intense that Nicholson, the only staff person with the organization, established a training course to prepare others to lead such workshops. The organization's firm belief in the importance of family life education led to the introduction of 'Family Living' classes at several high schools to target youth directly. The organization also moved into the lower grades with the 1949 showing of a new sex education film to sixth-eighth grade students. During this time period, the organization adapted to society and community changes by shifting its primary goal to strengthening family life, focusing on education for successful marriages and responsible parenthood. While the fight against venereal disease did not end, they sought to help community agencies working to hold families together and emphasized a "wholesome community life." The Public Health Center was closed in 1953 and a number of agencies established to combat venereal disease were discontinued or disbanded. By the end of the 1950s, as the Indianapolis Department of Public Health began to report a steady increase in venereal disease among young people, ISHA continued its outreach educational programs, targeting the young at earlier ages and in a more consistent manner. Sex education, however, particularly with children and in the school system, generated much controversy.

The 1960s began with the resignation of Nicholson, the selection of Elizabeth Noland Jackson as her replacement, and a name change to the Indianapolis Social Health Association (SHA); by 1962 it was known as the Social Health Association of Indianapolis and Marion County. Elizabeth Jackson, who was trained as a sex education teacher, and the SHA began to develop a systematic approach to sex education for the public as well as the school system. In 1965, Pike Township with the SHA consulting, established a formal sex education plan for children beginning in the first grade. By 1969, SHA was embroiled in the controversy and litigation that followed. In 1970, however, the four Pike Township parents, who began the litigation dropped the lawsuit at the suggestion of Judge John E. Sedwick, who was presiding over the case. Since the school system revised the sex education plan each year, Judge Sedwick explained that he would be ruling on a plan (1969 plan) that no longer existed. The suit was dismissed.

The focus of SHA continued to be sex education as a way to promote stable family life in the 1970s through the 1990s. Jackson resigned in 1974, and as the organization developed programs that went beyond Marion County, the name was changed, in 1976, to the Social Health Association of Central Indiana to reflect its expansion. Between the 1970s and 1990s, Mary Hall Bond, Linda Weiland, and Nancy Haskell served as executive directors. The rise in teen-age pregnancies and the rising publicity about herpes and AIDS served to clarify SHA's focus and concentration on providing sex education within Central Indiana.

REFERENCES

Young, Noraleen A., "To Protect and Improve the Institution of Marriage and the Family," The Social Health Association of Central Indiana, Fifty Years of Continuous Service," (SHA, 1993).

RELATED MATERIALS

Oral Histories of Roberta West Nicholson and Helen Daniels located in the Manuscript Section, Indian Division, Indiana State Library; Social Health Association of Central Indiana.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of the papers of the Social Hygiene Association of Central Indiana from 1919-1993. There are few records before 1938 and after 1975. The bulk of the collection consists of administrative records and clippings from the 1940s - 1990s. The collection does not contain any patient information from the Public Health Center nor any personal papers of the directors.

The Board Of Directors Records, 1939-1983, contains mainly of an incomplete set of board minutes from 1939-1956. The level of detail also varies within the board minutes. There are only rough copies of minutes between 1943 and May 1945. The SHA's constitution and by-laws of 1948 and a 1983 revised edition can also be found in this series. The Annual Reports, 1946, 1954, 1956-1959, 1962-1966, 1968-1969, 1971, 1973-1975, while incomplete, gives a good summary of the activities and accomplishments of the organization.

Administrative Records, 1944-1991, contains correspondence from 1944-1951, 1958, and 1969-1985. Lectures, lecture notes, and articles written by Roberta Nicholson, Elizabeth Jackson and George W. Bowman can also be found in these records. More information about Nicholson, Jackson, and Mary Hall Bond (executive director, 1974-1986) can be found in the news clippings. The administrative records also contains histories of the association, along with a copy of the Noraleen Young's published history of the organization. Some correspondence and the financial records are included but are quite sporadic in documenting the activities of the organization. The scrapbooks and the newspaper clippings will give more information about their programming.

The Pike Township Records, 1967-1970, contains the materials used in the development of the sex education plan for use in the Pike Township schools. These records include surveys, completed plans for 1967-1970, and papers and correspondence from the parent advisory committee between 1967-1969. These records also includes the litigation from the lawsuit filed by several Pike Township parents. There are also numerous news clippings about the sex education programs in Pike Township and similar controversies in other states in News Clippings (1960s & 1970s), and in the Scrapbook Records.

The Program Records contains educational materials that were distributed to conference/workshop participants for several years, as well as materials used in specific workshops. Many of these files, 1969-1985, deal with aiding schools in creating sex education programs or aiding parents in discussing the topic with their children. This includes sample programs and brochures, program lists for several years, sex education packets that were used in programs, video and written material sold or loaned by the SHA, samples of student

questionnaires, and a "Do-It-Yourself At Home" Sex Education Flash Cards set. In addition, there are specific educational materials used in workshops held at Butler University, Indiana University, and IUPUI, more general materials used in participants' packets for other workshops, and a few materials from older workshops. Workshop materials were designed for the needs of the participants and included materials prepared for children, parents, and education professionals.

The Publications Records includes two copies of the *Social Health News*, a newsletter published by the American Health Association; the copies are from 1957 and 1967.

The News Clippings Records give an excellent chronology of the issues and work of the organization. There is a short article on Lydia Woollen (Ritchey) in the 1940s folder, as well as clippings detailing attempts to fight prostitution. The 1950s clippings contains four of a five- part "Betty Logan Special" series entitled "Let's Be Practical About Sex Education," indicating the need for sex education in the school system. The 1960s folder chronicles the controversy over sex education mainly in Indiana, but also nation-wide and illustrates what a few other states were doing in terms of sex education. The 1970s clippings show the shift towards teen pregnancies and the promotion of family life, and the continuing school sex education controversy. The 1980s and 1990s folders are sparser; the 1980s folder contains a long article on Roberta West Nicholson and Mary Hall Bond.

The Scrapbooks Records consists of the contents from scrapbooks from 1964, ca. 1960s, and 1971. The assembler of these scrapbooks is unknown. There is one large scrapbook titled "National Publicity, Sex Education Controversy, 1967-1970-1971-1972." It was compiled by the Social Health Association of Indianapolis and Marion County and contains clippings from national newspapers.

The Photographs Records contains photographs of events and individuals including Mrs. Roberta Nicholson, Mrs. Elizabeth N. Jackson, and Dr. George Bowman.

The Audio Materials Records contains 27 reel-to-reel tapes consisting of advertisements, radio broadcasts and class instruction.

SERIES LIST

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