

## **United Community Services Central Files**

**Papers, 1891-1972  
(Predominantly, 1920's-1960's)**

**98.5 linear feet**

Accession Number 420

The United Community Services Central Files were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs by United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit in April of 1982 and were opened for research in June of 1990. Additional records were placed in the Archives by UCS in July of 1987 and July of 1992 and were opened for research in March of 1993.

United Community Services and its predecessors, Associated Charities of Detroit, Detroit Community Union, and the Council of Social Agencies of Metropolitan Detroit, were federations of public and private agencies providing social welfare and health care services to needy Detroiters as well as planning organizations engaged in research into the causes of social problems and their solutions.

Although little information is available about the origin of the Central Files, it appears that the newly- formed Council of Social Agencies of Metropolitan Detroit (CSA) established the system in the 1930s. Records were apparently divided by subject area, the material in Part I of this collection comprising what were termed the agency files and in Part 2, the divisional files.

Ideally, each CSA department's files dealing with a particular agency or organization were to be sent to the Central Files, where the information could be universally and efficiently retrieved for agency investigations, budget reviews, program evaluations and the like.

In practice, however, only a part of the agency material ever found its way to the Central Files, the rest of it remaining sequestered in individual departmental offices. Consequently, even though the Central Files provide a rich source of documentation on the social pathology of and delivery of social welfare services in Detroit, they are not comprehensive and should be used in conjunction with the divisional files found in Part 2 of the Central Files collection.

The records in Part 2, created primarily from the 1930s through the 1950s, contain the files of the major planning divisions of UCS and its predecessor organizations -- child and family welfare, health care, group work and recreation, and district and community councils -- which were composed of representatives of Detroit's public and private human service agencies or community service organizations and UCS staff members. A series of general subject and administrative files similar to those in Part 1 and a few suburban councils files are also included.

The Central Files system was abandoned in the late 1950s or early 1960s as antiquated and inefficient.

The United Community Services Central Files provide insight into the social history of metropolitan Detroit during much of the twentieth century, its cultural and racial diversity and tension, and the disruption brought on by economic instability, population shifts, and war. They particularly reflect the attempts of social workers, health care professionals, civic and religious leaders, and ordinary citizens to understand and alleviate the social dislocation caused by poverty.

The district and community councils files provide rare documentation of social and economic conditions in Detroit's neighborhoods during the Depression, World War II, and postwar eras. Additional files relating to the district and community councils may be found in the United Community Services Collection, the Federation of Community Councils Collection, and the Lewis B. Larkin Collection, which is housed in the University Archives.

**NO NAMES APPEARING IN CASE FILES MAY BE CITED. RESEARCHERS USING THE UNITED COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTRAL FILES COLLECTION ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN A RESTRICTED USE STATEMENT.**

**Important subjects covered in the collection are:**

African Americans in Detroit  
Aging  
Child/Family Welfare Services  
City Planning  
Community Organizing  
Day Care  
Depression/WW II in Detroit  
Federated Fund Raising  
Health Care  
Housing  
Immigrants in Detroit  
Juvenile Delinquency/Gangs  
Neighborhoods in Detroit  
Philanthropy  
Public/Private Welfare Programs  
Race Relations in Detroit  
Racial Discrimination in Social Services  
Recreational Programs  
Religion and Social Welfare Programs  
Settlement Houses/Community Centers  
Social Dislocation/Poverty in Detroit  
Social Welfare  
Social Work Profession  
Veterans' Services and War Relief  
Youth Organizations and Activities

**Among the important correspondents are:**

Richard S. Bachman  
Florence C. Cassidy  
James Couzens  
John Dancy  
Percival Dodge  
Richard F. Huegli  
Eleonore L. Hutzell  
Fred R. Johnson  
Walter C. Laidlaw  
Robert O. Loosley  
Robert H. MacRae  
Tracy W. McGregor  
Irene E. Murphy  
William J. Norton  
Paul T. Rankin  
Claire M. Sanders  
George Schermer  
Hollis Vick

An Index to subjects and correspondents in Part 1 will be found on p. 43 and in Part 2, on p. 80.

**Contents****197 manuscript boxes****Part 1****Series I, Agencies - Members, 1891-1972, Boxes 1-70: (p. 6)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes, and published material relating to the member agencies of United Community Services and its predecessor organizations, both financially- and non-financially-participating.

**Series II, Agencies - Non-Members, 1914-1965, Boxes 70-93: (p. 21)**

Correspondence, reports, and published material relating to social service agencies and information and referral organizations, national and local, which were not members of UCS.

**Series III, Subject Files, 1915-1969, Boxes 94-114: (p. 31)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes, and published material on topics and organizations of interest to professional social workers, some of it generated by committees constituted to investigate problems associated with these subjects.

**Series IV, Administrative Files, 1917-1965, Boxes 114-124: (p. 37)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes, and other material relating to the organization and administration of UCS and its predecessor organizations, including those with fund-raising responsibilities.

**Series V, Speakers Bureau, 1922-1947, Boxes 125-128: (p. 40)**

Correspondence, radio scripts, and campaign material relating to the work of the Speakers' Bureau, a division of the fund-raising arm of UCS whose purpose was to educate potential donors about the benefits of UCS and its member agencies.

**Series VI, Chests and Councils - Other Cities, 1919-1960, Boxes 128-130: (p. 41)**

Correspondence and reports relating to the relationship between UCS executives and their counterparts in community chests and councils of social agencies in other cities.

**Part 2****Series VII, General Files, 1907-1962, Boxes 131-156: (p. 62)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes and published material relating to the administration of United Community Services and its predecessor organizations and to the research interests and programs of its functional divisions.

**Series VIII, Child Welfare, 1925-1957, Boxes 157-161: (p. 68)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the Child Welfare Division of UCS.

**Series IX, Family Welfare, 1934-1954, Boxes 162-164: (p. 70)**

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the Family Welfare Division of UCS.

**Series X, Group Work and Recreation**, 1935-1961, Boxes 164-171: (p. 71)

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the Group Work and Recreation Division of UCS.

**Series XI, Health**, 1925-1958, Boxes 171-175: (p. 73)

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the Health Division of UCS.

**Series XII, District and Community Councils**, 1931-1954, Boxes 176-195: (p. 75)

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the District and Community Councils Division of UCS.

**Series XIII, Suburban Councils**, 1930-1959, Boxes 196-197: (p. 79)

Correspondence, reports, minutes and other material relating to the work of the Suburban Councils Division of UCS.

**Part 1**

**Series I**  
**Agencies - Members, 1891-1972**  
**Boxes 1-70**

Correspondence, minutes, reports, publicity, financial records, studies, service statistics, and promotional literature used in the admissions, budget review and program evaluation processes undergone by United Community Services member agencies serving the family and child welfare, recreational, and health care needs of Detroiters. Not all members received financial support from the Detroit Community Fund or its successors. Agencies represented include settlements and community centers, child placement and counseling agencies, outpatient clinics, agencies assisting the physically and mentally disabled and the aged, and those providing information and referral services. Also included are the files of the Associated Charities of Detroit, the city's first non-sectarian federation of social agencies. Files are arranged alphabetically by agency, UCS membership lists preceding all others.

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Correspondence, reports, minutes, research studies, social surveys, budget data, and campaign material relating to the administration of United Community Services, including departments other than the major functional divisions, social welfare planning in Detroit and the social work profession. Of particular interest are the files relating to Community Chests and Councils director Bradley Buell's 1934 study of Detroit's social service needs; a 1934 to 1959 run of the UCS newsletter; and the files of several Wayne County Council of Defense committees, documenting activities on the homefront during World War II. The Salvation Army files were mistakenly stored with these rather than the agency records. Files are arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.

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Correspondence, reports, membership lists, minutes, newsletters, annual reports, clippings, flyers and social surveys related to the work of the district and community councils, which were originally set up during the Depression to expedite the distribution of relief, but continued to operate into the 1950s, even though the names and boundaries of the districts changed over the life of the councils. The files illuminate the problems of Detroit's neighborhoods — poverty, housing, public health, juvenile delinquency, dysfunctional families, urban renewal — as well as grassroots efforts to solve them during a period of tremendous growth and change in the city. Several districts conducted surveys to assess the social needs and quality of services in their areas, which provide information about the racial, religious, ethnic, gender and generational composition of Detroit's neighborhoods. The Davison and Western Area Projects files provide detailed information on these communities, both low- income, racially-mixed areas, including area worker interviews with local gang members. Both the Alfred and Northern districts were home to sizable African-American populations. Files are arranged alphabetically by subject and then chronologically, the central administrative files (The Central Committee of District Councils, called the Federation of Community Councils after 1948, coordinated the work of the councils and provided a link between them and the CSA board) preceding all others.

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Miscellaneous correspondence, reports, minutes, annual reports, program descriptions, and clippings from the Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County branches of United Community Services. The files are incomplete in area, subject and chronology and should be used in combination with the UCS Suburban Councils Collection. Of particular interest, however, are the files of the Dearborn (Salina) Girls Club, organized on Dearborn's southeast side. Files are arranged alphabetically by region.

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