



## **Western Regional Recruitment & Retention Project**

### **SMARRT Manual [Strategies Matrix Approach to Recruitment and Retention Techniques]**

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Meredith Silverstein

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The SMARRT manual provides the best thinking on recruitment and retention at one point of time. We acknowledge and look forward to the continual evolution of strategies to address these very important issues so that the best workers are recruited, selected, trained, and most importantly, retained.

*--Charmaine R. Brittain  
Denver, Colorado  
October, 2006*

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## INTRODUCTION

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Research and information on recruitment, selection, training, and retention strategies and approaches constitute a large body of knowledge and literature in the field of human resources. A comprehensive literature review to identify these interdisciplinary strategies and approaches as applied to the field of child welfare was a cornerstone in the construction of the Western Regional Recruitment and Retention Project (WRRRP), and helped identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, as well as gaps in knowledge and practice.

This literature review was undertaken in recognition of the wealth of knowledge on recruitment, selection, training, and retention strategies that exist, some of which have been applied to the child welfare profession, although many more have not. Information collected in this review was intentionally interdisciplinary and drew from a wide range of professions to provide fresh, innovative thinking to the challenge of recruitment and retention in child welfare.

The SMARRT Manual (Strategies Matrix Approach to Recruitment and Retention Techniques) is a tool to enhance capacity for more effective child welfare recruitment, selection, training, and retention practice, ultimately improving outcomes for children and families. The manual includes research-based findings, as well as a wide range of experiential information and practical “how-to” information from published literature and internet sites. The purpose of the SMARRT Manual is to give child welfare professionals practical, hands-on tools and information, new ideas, and sufficient background information on complex topics to ask informed questions, know where to turn for additional resources, and begin the process of implementing these strategies in their own agencies.

The SMARRT Manual is organized into four domains: recruitment, selection, training, and retention. Within each domain, conditions or factors that affect that domain are presented along with strategies for addressing that condition. The information is presented as a solution-focused guide so that agencies and organizations can begin addressing the issues that may inhibit recruitment, selection, training, and retention. The manual can be used in its entirety or by checking the table of contents for the particular condition affecting the agency and then going to that place in the manual to review the strategies that could impact that condition.

Individually, recruitment, selection, training, and retention strategies are not particularly effective, but combined they can significantly impact workforce issues. They are threads in the rope that attach and then sustain the connections between individuals and agencies.

The strategies presented in this manual have differing levels of empirical bases. Some are founded on rigorous academic research and are highly likely to be viable within the child welfare field. Other strategies come from research projects that are descriptive in nature rather than outcome oriented. Another category of strategies includes those that are based upon real-life experiences or opinions and have not been tested in any kind of methodical fashion. To alert you to the degree of research associated with each strategy, we have devised an icon system. Look for the following icons as a guide to help make informed decisions about whether to employ a particular strategy.



“Anecdotal” = general or experiential knowledge, not research based.



“Descriptive” = Based on descriptive research findings, some evidence for strategy.



“Experimental” = Strategy is based on experimental research design.

We hope this manual will help you select and implement the most appropriate strategies for the unique conditions and needs of your organization so that the best people are recruited, selected, trained, and retained for your child welfare agency.

### ***Building and Developing Your Own Recruitment & Retention Plan***

The Western Regional Recruitment & Retention Project (WRRRP) implemented a carefully planned approach to addressing recruitment and retention issues at our pilot sites in Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona. This approach consisted of the following steps that can also be applied to other agencies:

1. Convene a local advisory committee for the project.
2. Conduct an organizational assessment using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
3. Compile a report detailing findings.
4. Present findings to local committee and balance of agency in draft form to solicit feedback.
5. Finalize report.
6. Develop a strategic plan with specific strategies based upon findings from the organizational assessment (note, the SMARRT Manual informs this step).
7. Implement the plan.
8. Continuously monitor and adapt the plan.

This method worked effectively for our project sites, but any approach used should be customized to the individual agency to maximize the potential for achieving outcomes.

## RECRUITMENT

<u>Condition/Factor</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Location</u>
Lack of Information on Trends	Review Hiring Trends Quarterly	Page 12
	Review Local Demographic Information	Page 12
	Evaluate Recruitment Efforts	Page 12
Lack of Qualified Applicants	Develop Service Learning Programs to Plant Seeds for Future Employees	Page 13
	Create a Hiring Pool to Ensure Ongoing Resources	Page 14
	Provide Incentives to Employees to Attract Applicants	Page 14
	Use Job Fairs	Page 15
	Use Job Web sites	Page 16
	Form Strong and Consistent Partnerships with Schools of Social Work	Page 16
	Use Media Appeals	Page 18
	Provide Incentives for Social Work Education	Page 20
	Use Pre-Fill Positions	Page 21
Need to Increase Diversity of Applicant Pool	Create and Implement Diversity Initiative	Page 21
	Recruit in Local Cultural Communities	Page 21
Unclear or Unrealistic Understanding of Job	Convey Realistic Job Expectations	Page 23

## SELECTION

<u>Condition/Factor</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Location</u>
Complex, Cumbersome Hiring Processes	Move Recruiting and Hiring from Central Office to Local Office	Page 26
Identifying Candidates with Most Potential for High Job Performance	Use a Standardized, Structured Hiring Interview Protocol	Page 26
Lag Time Between Position Vacancy and Fill	Select Professionally Trained Social Workers	Page 30
	Create Pre-Fill Positions	Page 31
	Create Floater Positions	Page 31
Person/Job Fit	Simplify Approval Process for Hiring	Page 32
	Align Values Between Person and Organization	Page 33
	Use a Standardized, Structured Hiring Interview Protocol	Page 34
	Perform a Job Analysis	Page 34
	Use Effective Applications	Page 36
	Choose and Evaluate Selection Tools	Page 37
	Create a Clearly Written Job Description	Page 38
Realistic Job Expectations	Use Simulations or Role-Plays in the Interview Process	Page 39
	Use Pre-Employment Tests	Page 41
	Use Realistic “Job Previews”	Page 43

## TRAINING

<u>Condition/Factor</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Location</u>
Confidence Regarding Knowledge and Skills	Use “Remedial,” Additional, or Advanced Training on Topics Identified by Individual Training Needs Assessment	Page 45
Difficulty in Attending Training Due to Distance, Caseload, Personal or Family Issues	Use Distance Learning or Flexible Learning Opportunities	Page 45
Mentoring Programs	Develop a Mentoring Program to Build Career Success and Satisfaction	Page 46
On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Increase or Improve Staff Orientation	Page 49
Organizational (Administrative or Supervisory) Support for Participation in Training	Institute Higher Expectations for Training Attendance, Participation, and Transfer of Learning	Page 50
	Fully Support Employee Training	Page 51
	Provide Tuition Assistance and Stipends	Page 53
Transfer of Training Experience to Job	Implement a Transfer of Learning Program	Page 54

## RETENTION

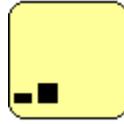
<u>Condition/Factor</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Location</u>
Administrative Support for Job Duties	Increase Support Staff	Page 58
	Assess the Impact of Policies on Workers	Page 58
Community Support	Improve Public Image	Page 59
Compensation Issues	Implement Pay-for-Performance	Page 60
	Use a Pay Tier System for Higher Education Levels	Page 62
	Consistently Review and Adjust Salaries	Page 62
	Increase Soft Benefits	Page 62
Consistent Reward and Recognition	Value, Reward, and Recognize Workers	Page 66
Emotional Exhaustion/Burnout	Allow Job Rotation	Page 71
	Use a Multi-Faceted Approach to Address Staff Burnout	Page 71
	Improve Supervision to Counteract Burnout	Page 73
Feeling of Being Unsafe on the Job	Make Supervisors Responsible for Ensuring a Safe Environment	Page 73
Job Satisfaction (General)	Provide Access to New Technology	Page 75
	Create More Flexible Benefits	Page 75
	Conduct Exit Interviews	Page 76
	Designate a Special Project Team Responsible for Ensuring Employee Satisfaction	Page 79
	Conduct “Stay” Interviews	Page 81
	Hire Experienced Professionals with Rural Practice Experience	Page 84
Organizational Culture	Ensure Cohesion and Consistency Between Administration and Supervisors	Page 88
	Improve Communication	Page 89
	Build Trust	Page 89
	Create a Learning Organization Culture	Page 91
Promotional Opportunities and Career Development	Implement Career Ladder and Leadership Development Programs	Page 92

## RETENTION

<u>Condition/Factor</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Location</u>
	Emphasize Professionalization of Social Work Career	Page 99
Supervision (Competence)	Teach Supervisors How to Effectively Coach Their Workers	Page 99
	Focus Resources on the Support and Development of Supervisors	Page 99
	Help Supervisors Support New Caseworkers Through the Two to Three Year Transition	Page 104
	Develop a Long-Term Plan to Strengthen the Role of the Supervisor	Page 105
Supervision (Support)	Address Secondary Trauma	Page 107
	Increase or Improve Supervisor Training	Page 108
Support Diversity in the Workplace	Design and Implement a Diversity Initiative	Page 118
Workload Stress	Improve Use of Technology (e.g., laptops, wireless technology, cell phones)	Page 119
	Maintain Minimum Staffing Levels	Page 119
	Use Legislative Support to Secure Funding for More Positions	Page 120
	Conduct a Workload Study Every Five Years	Page 120
	Follow CWLA Caseload Standards	Page 121
	Increase Support Staff	Page 122
	Assess the Impact of Policies on Workers	Page 122
	Streamline Paperwork	Page 125
	Implement Programs Designed to Reduce Workload Stress	Page 127
	Implement a Program for Caseworker Sabbaticals for Independent Study After Two Years on the Job	Page 128
Implement an MSW Internship Program to Help Alleviate Heavy Caseloads	Page 128	

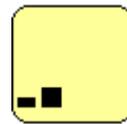
## DOMAIN: RECRUITMENT

### ***Condition: Lack of Information on Trends***



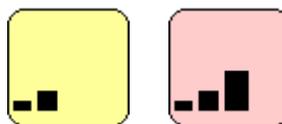
#### **Strategy: Review Hiring Trends Quarterly**

Those in the child welfare field can take advantage of many sources of information on recruitment and retention rates and trends for all job positions. Business journals such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, and *U.S. News and World Report* track hiring as well as general economic trends, and make their findings available both in paper and online. Web sites that serve the human resources profession are also good resources and provide valuable information even to those outside the human resources field. These include the Society of Human Resource Managers at <http://www.shrm.org> and the American Society of Employers at <http://wwwaseonline.org>. While both of these sites require membership, there is still a sizable amount of material available for free on each of them. Organizations specific to the field of child welfare and social services, such as the American Public Human Services Association (<http://www.aphsa.org>) and the Anne E. Casey Foundation (<http://www.aecf.org>), also provide helpful information on child welfare hiring trends.



#### **Strategy: Review Local Demographics Information**

While a number of fee-for-service companies can provide demographic information for your region, the U.S. Census Bureau provides a wealth of free information on a wide variety of demographic trends. Of particular interest is the American Community Survey, which recently replaced the U.S. Census Bureau's long form and is available at <http://www.census.gov/acs>. The site is easy to use with plenty of drop-down menus, for example, click on "Data Profiles" to search demographic, social, economic, and housing data for over 800 geographical areas.



#### **Strategy: Evaluate Recruitment Efforts**

To determine the success of recruitment practices, or to design new ones, an agency should take the time to evaluate its efforts. Employees may anecdotally or intuitively think they "know how to fix recruitment," but in a workplace where the safety and well-being of children is at stake, hiring decisions should not be based on such subjective information. Rather, employers should empirically review and evaluate recruitment strategies and successes.

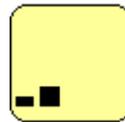
Graef et al. (in press) suggest the following methods to determine the success of recruitment strategies and tactics:

- Ascertain yield ratios – the number of applicants divided by the number of new hires – to compare how useful different recruitment sources (e.g., newspaper, university partnerships, internet, employee referrals, etc.) actually proved to be.
- Collect time-lapse data – the amount of time it took new hires to actually start work from the date of the first position advertisement, including the time it took to complete each step of the recruitment and hiring process. Examine this data to pinpoint specific areas for improvement.
- Assess the costs of particular recruitment techniques in relation to the success of the outcomes they produce.
- Gather information about applicant reactions to different recruitment methods. For example, after viewing a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) video, candidates completed a postage-paid postcard which asked them for their reactions to the piece, how or whether the RJP influenced their decision to remain in the applicant pool, and whether the RJP increased what they knew about certain aspects of the job. If the RJP is accessible on line, a pop-up window can direct viewers to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party site to collect information on how the RJP influenced the decision to continue or not with the hiring process.
- Track the job performance and turnover rates for those recruited through different approaches, to determine the relative value of each strategy.

Source:

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

## **Condition: Lack of Qualified Applicants**

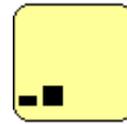


### **Strategy: Develop Service Learning Programs to Plant Seeds for Future Employees**

“Service learning” refers to any program that integrates community service into an educational curriculum, although the exact the definition of the term varies across fields and programs (see National Center for Education Statistics, “Service-Learning and Community Service in K-12 Public Schools, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999043.pdf>). Those individuals best suited to enter into public service and particularly child welfare can be identified and trained by working on these programs in conjunction with schools. Service learning is based on the assumption that people have an inherent need to help and to be of service, and taps into and nourishes that character trait.

This model has caught on particularly in health care through programs such as the National Health Service Corps (see <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>). These programs include student loan forgiveness in exchange for service, and the assurance of hire upon graduation.

There is a wealth of resources regarding service learning programs. For information on how to develop them in a community or take advantage of already established programs, contact the National Service Learning Clearinghouse by visiting [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org) or calling 1-866-245-SERV (1-866-245-7378). The National Service Learning Clearinghouse is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a division of USA Freedom Corps.



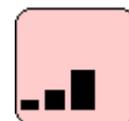
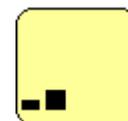
### **Strategy: Create a Hiring Pool to Ensure Ongoing Resources**

The Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA), the state social service agency for child welfare, adult services, and public assistance, created a new system for recruitment, hiring, training, and placement in 2000. FIA was given authority to hire and train child welfare workers prior to an announced opening. In doing so, FIA created a pool of talent waiting in the wings for positions to open up. Although there were initially concerns at the local level over the state having sole responsibility for hiring practices, these concerns were mitigated by the state partnering with local agencies and having local agencies play a key role in the interview process. FIA managed recruitment, background checks, and other paperwork that was previously left to the local agencies to absorb, which had created additional barriers to quickly rehiring to fill vacant positions. Vacancies that once took four months to fill are now filled in two weeks, and caseloads are manageable because vacancies are filled before the bulk of a caseload needs to be redistributed to existing staff.

To successfully enact this strategy, the full support of a state’s child welfare system as a whole is needed, as are the resources to develop and manage a talent pool. Outcomes of this approach, while promising anecdotally, have not been evaluated and to do so, more information is needed about the employment and compensation agreements with both individuals entering into and individuals already within the pool. It is important to note that although this strategy may help fill open jobs quickly, it does not address the underlying cause of rapid turnover (Stanfield, 2004).

Some agencies call these positions ‘fill-ahead’ positions. New staff enter the agency without a designated position, are trained in all aspects of the agency, and then move into a position as soon as one becomes available.

Source:  
Stanfield, R. (2004). Just-in-time hiring. *Advocasey*, 6(1), 18-25.



### **Strategy: Provide Incentives to Employees to Attract Applicants**

#### ***Lessons from the field of Information Technology:***

Embracing the philosophy that “no one is more successful at hiring people for a specific job than the very people that do that job within the organization” (DeMers, 2002), government agencies

struggling to recruit skilled workers in the Information Technology (IT) field have benefited from a variety of employee incentive programs, including referral bonuses of \$2,000 and new company cars. While government agencies are typically less financially flexible than private agencies, and often do not have the funds for high-end bonuses and incentives, financial incentive programs can and do exist. One example is the State of Kansas' Information Technology Premium Pay program. A lump sum of \$500 is paid to existing state employees who are able to successfully recruit IT employees into approved, difficult-to-fill jobs.

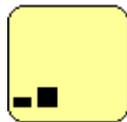
There is evidence to suggest that non-financial or “soft” incentives can be just as powerful as money and perhaps even more so. These incentives require little or no additional resources from the agency and can be implemented quickly. They include:

- Increased in-service training
  - Increased educational opportunities
  - Increased/improved supervisory training
  - Increased/improved orientation
  - Increased worker safety
  - Flex time and/or changes in office hours
  - Employee recognition/appreciation
- (Cyphers, 2001).

Sources:

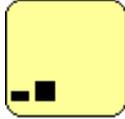
Cyphers, G. (2001) *Report from the child welfare workforce survey: State and county data and findings*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.

DeMers, A. (2002). Solutions and strategies for IT recruitment and retention: A manager's guide. *Public Personnel Management, 31*(1), 27-40.



### **Strategy: Use Job Fairs**

Job fairs and campus “career days” provide an opportunity to reach a number of potential applicants with the added benefit of personal contact, and are also an excellent way to establish or build your agency’s relationship with local universities and colleges while recruiting entry level workers. Be sure to bring plenty of printed materials about your agency, and the business cards of key contact staff. Get creative and liven up your booth with videos, such as on-site informational interviews with current child welfare staff. Fun activities such as a raffle will allow you to collect names of interested parties while drawing attention to your booth.



### **Strategy: Use Job Web sites**

The late 1990s internet boom brought dozens, if not hundreds, of job Web sites to the employment marketplace. Since then, some general employment sites such as [Monster.com](http://www.monster.com) and [Careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com) have emerged as the industry giants, but field-specific internet sites such as <http://www.iHireSocialServices.com> and <http://www.socialservice.com> have grown in popularity as well. As might be expected, internet job sites tend to be most popular with younger job seekers; however, the medium is gaining in popularity across all age categories (Meskauskas, 2003). There are several advantages to using job Web sites. Postings reach a large number of people who can access this information twenty-four hours a day. A newspaper ad will often only run for one day or a short amount of time and has become increasingly costly, whereas Monster.com charges \$365 for a job posting that will stay online for up to sixty days, and also decreases the price for additional postings and offers filters to screen out unqualified applicants. Even cheaper postings can be had on field-specific sites: <http://www.iHireSocialServices.com> charges \$149 for sixty days and <http://www.socialservice.com> charges \$55 for thirty days, and offers discounts for multiple postings. When using job Web sites, potential applicants can learn more about your agency when a link to your Web site is offered or in-depth information about your agency's benefits, training opportunities, and culture is provided. This level of detail cannot be conveyed in a traditional newspaper listing. Employers also have the opportunity to scan job sites for the resumes of potential applicants, thus reducing recruiting costs.

Washington State Department of Personnel recently took the job Web site model a step further and developed the Internet Application System (Inet App), which permits applicants to submit online applications and provides online screening, testing, scoring, notification, eligibility list placement, and referral for interview. Inet App provides hiring managers with pools of qualified, screened applicants nearly instantaneously. While this was a multi-year effort that involved personnel at nearly every level, the technology exists to streamline the screening and hiring processes. To see the model, visit <http://hr.dop.wa.gov/statejobs/default.htm> (Bingham, Llg & Davidson, 2002).

Job Web sites provide a relatively inexpensive avenue for quickly reaching a large number of potential applicants and this recruitment method will only continue to grow. However, little is known about the downsides of internet advertising. It is advisable to talk to colleagues about their experiences with posting on job Web sites, and ask them to discuss both successes and downsides.

#### Sources:

- Bingham, B., Davidson, N. & Ilg, S. (2002). Great candidates fast: On-line job application and electronic processing: Washington State's new internet application system. *Public Personnel Management*, 31(1), 53-64.
- Meskauskas, J. (2003). The potential of online job boards. *IMediaConnection*. Retrieved from <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/2013.asp>.



### **Strategy: Form Strong and Consistent Partnerships with Schools of Social Work**

There are a variety of ways to form strong and consistent partnerships with schools of social work to help increase recruitment and selection opportunities. Some examples include:

- Presence at job fairs and career days.
- Providing field placement supervisors to universities and colleges.
- Providing field placements for students.
- Collaboration with universities for program evaluation research.

In a 2004 ASPHSA survey of forty-two state child welfare agencies, increased personal contact with potential candidates to encourage them to apply ranked as the most effective recruitment strategy out of five, including Web site job posting, attending job fairs, university – agency training partnerships and continuing education for staff. A personal connection with strong candidates early in their education is extremely powerful.

#### ***Success Stories: Denver and Kentucky***

Denver County Department of Human Services (DDHS) created a Student Unit with BSW and MSW student interns from Metropolitan State College and the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. Between five and twelve interns were placed in various child protection, youth services, adoption, foster care, resource, and administrative units within the department each year. The program was instituted to support employees who wanted to further their education, as well as to recruit new workers who already had an academic year of pre-employment orientation and training as interns. Most of the interns also receive Title IV-E stipends that require a minimum of one year of post-graduate employment in child welfare as repayment. Over 90% of the interns have been offered and accepted employment with DDHS upon graduation and their five-year retention rate far exceeds that of other employees. Although each student received supervision within the specific unit in which they were placed, the Student Unit supervisor also offered weekly in-service training and support, recruited DDHS supervisors for the interns, and interviewed prospective interns to select those the agency might be most interested in hiring upon their graduation. The program has been successful in recruiting new workers, providing nine months of pre-employment training and screening for potential new hires, and creating a pool of trained workers to advance into supervisory positions.

The Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children entered into a partnership with eight public universities to develop the Public Child Welfare Certification program. The program was created in response to two issues: the state's continual struggle to find and keep effective child welfare workers and the fact that, although the universities were very good at graduating social work students with a generalist background, there was a need for graduates specifically trained to enter public child welfare arenas and hit the ground running. The certification program, supported by Title IV E funds, provides tuition reimbursement and stipends for eligible BSW candidates in exchange for a two-year employment commitment to a public child welfare agency. In addition, students complete the cabinet's core competency training prior to graduation to help ensure their readiness for work in the agency.

The collaboration was made successful by agency partners that recognized a common problem—namely, too few BSW graduates willing to move into public child welfare agencies—and shared a common vision to resolve it. It was also made successful due to its incorporation of the following three elements of an overarching program designed to improve the functioning of Kentucky’s state government:

- Create a culture that values the employee.
- Create a learning organization based on mission, vision and outcomes.
- Implement true learning transfer and reinforcement.

These three elements related directly to the issue of recruitment and retention in child welfare and set the framework for the collaboration. The goal of recreating government agencies as learning organizations opened the door for closer work with universities. With a shared value for learning, the barriers between agencies and universities began to fall away. Lesson learned: successful collaborations can be formed on the basis of stated and shared goals.

The proponents of the Public Child Welfare Certification program formed an interdisciplinary team composed of agency, university, and state cabinet members who met once a month for a year to flesh out the details and logistics of the program. The participating universities and state trainers were able to quickly agree on common syllabi, tests, and texts for the program, and, while this may have surprised some of those outside the system, it came as no shock to the collaborators. The universities involved provided training support, development, and delivery to the cabinet for many years (Fox, Miller & Barbee, 2003).

Cyphers (2001) found that out of thirty-one states that practiced early and aggressive recruitment at schools of social work, twenty-eight found the practice “somewhat effective” and four found it “highly effective.” However, other research suggests that incentives formed through partnerships do not have the desired impact on retention once a service requirement is completed.

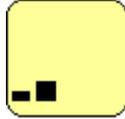
One study of child welfare workers in California suggests that “Title IV-E funded educational and financial incentives have increased the numbers of graduate social workers who seek employment in public child welfare, but these incentives are not sufficient for retaining professional social workers in public child welfare agencies beyond their employment payback period” (Dickinson & Perry, 2002). Burnout was cited most frequently as the reason for leaving the field.

Sources:

Cyphers, G. (2001) *Report from the child welfare workforce survey: State and county data and findings*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.

Dickinson, N. S., & Perry, R. S. (2002). Factors influencing the retention of specially educated public child welfare workers. *Journal of Health & Social Policy*, 15(3/4), 89-103.

Fox, S., Miller, V., & Barbee, A. (2003). Finding and keeping child welfare workers: Effective use of training and professional development. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 7(1/2), 67-81.



### **Strategy: Use Media Appeals**

Just as the media can portray child welfare services in a negative light, the right strategy and relationship with the media can lead them to portray your agency as an exciting place to work by boosting the image of an agency, spotlighting its success stories, and championing its staff. Creating a positive ongoing relationship with the media can play a significant role in recruitment by creating additional positive exposure beyond the typical job advertisements of local public access channels. Below are some suggested guidelines to help build this relationship.

Begin by paying attention to what is considered newsworthy in your local media. Scan the paper and local television news with an eye and ear towards what types of stories they pick up and how they are presented.

#### ***Make a Plan:***

A media strategy doesn't have to be elaborate or complicated, but it should state why you want media coverage, what audiences you want to reach, and what you want those audiences to know about your agency. If you want to reach potential child welfare employees, target the media that reaches out to this group. Campus and professional association newsletters as well as community and local nonprofit publications may be good matches. In addition, op-ed and letters to the editor pages in larger papers may provide a broader avenue for getting the message out about your agency.

#### ***Make a List:***

You will need to know how to enact your strategy and who in the media can help you get your message out. Make a media list that includes types of media (television, newspapers, periodical publications, internet sites, etc.), names of contacts, phone, fax and email information, deadlines, broadcast times, and any other information that may help. Be sure to consider that certain reporters cover certain areas, such as health and welfare. Determine which reporter it would be most appropriate to contact in regards to your story and make a note of this in your list. While this may seem like a daunting task, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Ask other agencies, your local association of nonprofit organizations, and colleagues if they have any lists or information they can share with you. Any personal contacts and networking you have access to can work in your favor (American Water Works Association, n.d.).

#### ***Make the Pitch:***

One of the most common ways to do this is to send an email, and then simply pick up the phone and call. Most reporters don't mind taking a telephone call, but remember that they are usually working under tight deadlines, and be respectful of their time by getting to the "newsworthiness" of your story quickly. Practice your pitch before you call so you know you can get to the essence of your message quickly and effectively. Prior to your call, fax or email the reporter one or two pages of background material on your agency and your story. For example, for a story about your agency's job fair and open house, here's one possible pitch:

Every day, child welfare workers make a difference in the lives of children and right now, we have opportunities for people to help make this difference. This year, our agency (mention outstanding accomplishments) and next year we want to do even better. Our agency is hosting a job fair and open house to reach out to the community to show how we as a community can work together to ensure a safer, healthier world for children and their families. Right now we're accepting applications for the position of (job title) and our open house will be held on (date) at (time and location). I've already emailed/faxed you some background information on this event. Would you like any additional information?

If you are contacting more than one media outlet, you may want to consider writing a press release. Template and sample press releases are widely available; for examples, visit <http://www.press-release-writing.com> and <http://www.prweb.com/pressreleasetips.php>. It is not enough to simply fax your press release—you don't want yours to get lost in the shuffle. Make a phone call or send an email to let the reporter know you've sent a press release, and include in your message a short "sound bite" that captures the main point of your story. Always provide your contact information.

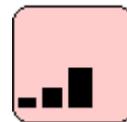
### ***Follow Up:***

If you see your story in the paper, or have the opportunity to be interviewed by a local television personality, don't forget to follow up with a phone call or email. Let them know you appreciated their time and interest. Be sure to add this information to your media list for future reference (Salzman, n.d.).

#### Sources:

American Water Works Association. (n.d.). *How to develop a section public information program*. Retrieved from [www.awwa.org/sections/how\\_to/Guides/Howto\\_publicinfo.pdf](http://www.awwa.org/sections/how_to/Guides/Howto_publicinfo.pdf).

Salzman, J. (n.d.). *Let the world know: Make your cause news: A Beginner's Guide to Getting Media Coverage*. Retrieved from [www.causecommunications.com/diy/getnewscoverage.html](http://www.causecommunications.com/diy/getnewscoverage.html).



### **Strategy: Provide Incentives for Social Work Education**

Much has been written about various incentives offered to individuals in exchange for pursuing a formal social work education. Some states now offer educational financial support for child welfare workers to pursue BSW, MSW, or related degrees (Cyphers, 2001); some research shows that individuals with a degree in social work tend to both arrive better prepared and stay in the field longer than those who do not (Whitaker, Reich, Reid, Williams, & Woodside, 2004). For example, service-learning models may create some incentives for social work education, as do some loan forgiveness programs.

There are a variety of incentives that do not necessarily require a repayment of service. These may seem less daunting to students and thus make social work education more attractive and accessible. Employers may offer release time and tuition subsidies to employees who want to continue their education, and assist these employees in finding schools of social work that offer

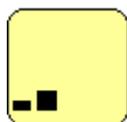
flexible class schedules. The result may be a worker who stays with the agency all along, or returns to the agency once their education is complete (Pasztor et al., 2002).

Sources:

Cyphers, G. (2001) *Report from the child welfare workforce survey: State and county data and findings*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.

Pasztor, E. M., Saint-Germain, M., & DeCrescenzo, T. (2002). *Demand for Social Workers in California*. Retrieved from California State University, Center for California Studies Web site: [http://www.csus.edu/calst/government\\_affairs/faculty\\_fellows\\_program.html](http://www.csus.edu/calst/government_affairs/faculty_fellows_program.html).

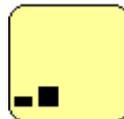
Whitaker, T., Reich, S., Reid, L. B., Williams, M., & Woodside, C. (2004). If you're right for the job, it's the best job in the world. *NASW Memberlink*. Retrieved June 14, 2004 from <http://www.socialworkers.org/>.



**Strategy: Use Pre-Fill Positions**

See *Domain*: Recruitment; *Condition*: Lack of Qualified Applicants; *Strategy*: Create a Hiring Pool to Ensure Ongoing Resources.

***Condition: Need to Increase Diversity of Applicant Pool***



**Strategy: Create and Implement a Diversity Initiative**

“Tomorrow’s challenge is not in the creation of diverse environments. These will evolve naturally from demographic changes. Tomorrow’s challenge is anticipating, understanding, and managing the needs and issues that emerge from such environments.”

— American Institute on Managing Diversity

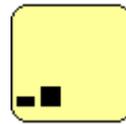
No one definition of diversity fits all organizations; each organization needs to decide for itself how to define diversity, and why to define it in that way. Keep in mind that diversity in the workplace can involve more than race, gender and ethnicity. Martha Fields notes that diversity is about recognizing differences and honoring those differences, and differences can be far ranging, from religion and sexual orientation to work style and educational background. In general, categories that are included in an organization’s definition of diversity should be broad enough to capitalize on people’s strengths and talents to catalyze long-term change.

It is important to point out that diversity, or an organization’s diversity plan, is not the same thing as affirmative action. As the Society for Human Resource Management points out, “Affirmative action, valuing diversity and managing diversity are separate points on the continuum of interventions designed to stimulate the inclusion of people from different backgrounds in an organization.”

One tactic to consider as part of an overall diversity initiative is to specifically recruit from nontraditional groups such as older baby boomers who may be approaching retirement (Graef et al., in press). These individuals, who often have a variety of life and work experiences, may be enticed by the opportunity for flex-time or part-time work, job sharing, social rewards and health benefits offered by a child welfare system. This method may be transferred to other specific populations by considering the unique characteristics interests of each group and tailoring job offerings accordingly (Graef et al., in press).

Source:

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.



### **Strategy: Recruit in Local Cultural Communities**

Active recruitment in local cultural groups and communities can take various forms and involve many separate steps and strategies. To recruit effectively from these communities, the Multicultural Advantage (n.d.) offers the following suggestions:

- Emphasize competence-based credentials rather than past experience.
- Encourage the placement of interns and co-op students who are members of diverse groups.
- Establish formal relationships with schools that have diversity in their student bodies. This measure will ensure that you are always cultivating talent for your future talent pool.
- Make sure that all levels of management have received diversity training; without it, they may not be in a position to give a fair evaluation during the hiring process.
- Cultivate organization partnerships with groups that cater to the needs and interests of minority candidates (e.g. people of color, women, the disabled, etc.).
- When using an interview panel, make sure that it is culturally diverse to minimize potential bias.
- Be sure that the qualifications established for a given position are really ones needed to do the job and are not ones based on historical assumptions.
- Understand your own beliefs and attitudes about the positions that you are filling and the populations that you are targeting. Be aware of how this could affect both the way you write job descriptions, as well as how you screen and interview.
- Incorporate nontraditional networking channels to produce a diverse applicant pool. A strong diverse, informal network is a critical part of any successful diversity recruitment effort.
- Encourage senior people of color, women, and people with disabilities in your organization to assist in providing names of possible recruits.

Theiderman (n.d.) recommends the following recruitment and retention strategies<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with author's permission. Sondra Thiederman can be contacted at: [STPhD@Thiederman.com](mailto:STPhD@Thiederman.com) or visit her web site at [www.Thiederman.com](http://www.Thiederman.com)

- Examine the demographics of your organization and determine your staffing needs.
- Develop written materials that visually reflect the diversity that you wish to attain.
- Develop a diversity statement, set formal goals, and design formal strategies.
- Include articles on diversity in your publications and presentations.
- Ensure that speakers and authors are diverse themselves and are aware of and respectful to diverse participants, readers, and audiences.
- Design initiatives for potential members from all backgrounds and that reflect various backgrounds.
- Reward the diversity efforts of each business unit/department.
- Recruit in minority communities and at predominantly minority-attended colleges and universities.
- Share your diversity recruitment and retention achievements with other organizations in the same line of business.

Recruiting sources include the following:

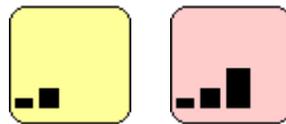
- Professional organizations with diverse members
- Adult education classes
- Parent advisory groups
- Community social service agencies
- Local houses of worship and religious centers
- Ethnic studies and associations on college campuses
- Civic groups
- Government job training initiatives
- Refugee resettlement agencies
- Employee referrals
- Elementary school outreach
- On-the-job training initiatives
- Advertisements in publications whose emphasis is diversity

Sources:

Multicultural Advantage (n.d.). Cultural recruiting. Retrieved June 2004 from [www.tmaonline.com](http://www.tmaonline.com).

Thiederman, S. (n.d.) Capturing the rainbow: Key strategies for building a diverse membership” Retrieved from [http://www.thiederman.com/articles\\_detail.php?id=62](http://www.thiederman.com/articles_detail.php?id=62) .

## **Condition: Unclear or Unrealistic Understanding of Job**



### **Strategy: Convey Realistic Job Expectations**

Beginning during the recruitment process, effort should be made to ensure that potential applicants have a clear understanding of what the job entails. A lack of realistic job expectations (RJE) contributes to employee dissatisfaction and turn over, and this is especially true in the fields of child welfare and child protection when prospective caseworker’s assumptions about the field and the work often collide with the daily realities of the work. To avoid this dissonance, it is

critical that potential applicants are made as fully aware as possible about the scope of the work, its challenges as well as its rewards.

Conveying RJE should thus be integral to each phase of the recruitment and selection process. There are myriad opportunities to convey this information: for example, on job announcements, Web sites, applications, and during interviews and role-plays or job simulations. Research indicates that inclusion of an RJE strategy can be effective in helping an applicant make a more informed decision regarding job choice and, moreover, can result in more accurate self-assessment of an applicant's ability to do a job, particularly when the job consists of difficult tasks (Gardner, Foos & Hesketh, 1995). The goal of conveying RJE is to "vaccinate" potential applicants with accurate information about both the positive and negative aspects of the job. Then, if prospective employees decide the job is not a good fit, they may self-select out of the hiring process during an early stage, and eliminate the possibility of being hired and then leaving their posts after a short time (Graef et al., in press). It is, of course, critical that candidates understand why you are conveying this information—to help them make a decision about whether this is the right job for them.

When developing an RJE strategy, agencies should first determine the most important factors to be addressed so that all messages conveyed are on target. The key is to keep the message *realistic*. You don't want to sell someone on something you and your agency cannot deliver, but the message should not be all one of "doom and gloom" either. Child welfare can be a wonderfully rewarding, deeply meaningful career for the right people. Candidates, whether they join your agency or not, will appreciate your candor and willingness to openly discuss what can sometimes be difficult issues. In the long term, this can only reflect positively on the agency and the field as a whole. RJE can be provided using written materials, videotapes, meetings with prospective or newly-hired staff, internships, job site tours, and job shadowing (Graef et al., in press). The following elaborates on a few methods that are particularly useful during the recruitment state. For information on methods to use during the selection stage, see *Domain: Selection: Condition: Realistic Job Expectations; Strategy: Use Realistic Job Previews*.

#### ***Brochures/Printed Materials:***

Develop a brochure that explains the pros and cons of the work. This need not be a professionally produced, glossy tri-fold brochure. Even a simple one-page sheet entitled "The Whole Picture" or "What Our People Say" that includes quotes from current staff highlighting the successes and challenges that they regularly encounter will serve the purpose quite well. This publication can serve multiple purposes and be distributed in a variety of outlets from job fairs to schools and colleges. Highlight the unique aspects of your agency as well as the field in general to get the most mileage out of your publication. Another unique approach to this method is to put together a scrapbook of your staff's experiences. Include photos when appropriate, letters, awards, and any other items that round-out the picture of your agency and the work you do.

#### ***Videos:***

Videos are among one of the most common RJE methods, and are often professionally produced. As videos are portable and show actual people engaged in real-life situations, they are very effective in conveying RJE at recruitment venues such as job fairs. Developing a video may require a considerable investment on the part of your agency to research and secure a

professional videographer, script developer, editor, secure consents, et cetera; however, the return on your investment can be considerable given the costs associated with lack of RJE. Many video production companies exist to serve this purpose. Research them carefully and ask for references. Alternatively, staff can put together a “home video” about your agency. When using this method, it is still advisable to have a script and obtain consents. A good script will ensure that the message you want to send is accurate and consistent with your other materials.

As an example of the process involved in creating a video, here are the steps that the University of Nebraska Center for Children, Families and the Law used to create a “Realistic Job Preview” (RJP) video:

- Identify a group of subject-matter experts (SME) to develop content and be interviewed or act in the video.
- Create a list of positive, negative, and neutral critical incidents, or significant events, that occur on the job.
- Present these critical incidents in a survey format, and rate each on the likelihood and frequency of the event.
- Analyze the most frequent positive, negative, and neutral incidents, and then group these under larger headings such as handling the stress of the work.
- Film and edit using a local educational television production unit. Include in video footage actual staff discussing a balanced sample of the incidents that frequently occur on the job. Guide staff in their comments, but do not use a script.
- Pilot test the video with advanced social work students. It was found that watching the video resulted in significant increases in job knowledge, and those initially interested in the job became more interested while those initially disinterested became even less so (Graef et al., in press).

Many agencies centralize the hiring process through the agency website. The video can be uploaded onto the website, then made a mandatory part of the application process. Candidates must click on the video and view before continuing with the application submission. This also allows for the opportunity of collecting impact information through a brief survey at the video’s conclusion.

Sources:

- Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It’s all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.
- Gardner, D., Foos, M. H., & Hesketh, B. (1995). Realistic job previews: Information processing and the accuracy of self-assessment. *Australian Psychologist*, 30(1), 64-70.

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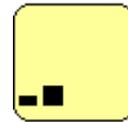
## DOMAIN: SELECTION

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Appropriate selection of candidates for hire is the foundation of an effective retention program. Choosing the right candidate for the job can help your agency ensure a productive environment and successful staff while avoiding the loss of time, money, and resources that inevitably follows a bad hiring decision. There are a variety of tools and strategies available to help guide and inform this sometimes difficult process, but going with your “gut” and keeping in touch with your instincts is also an important part of the process.

### ***Condition: Complex, Cumbersome Hiring Processes***



#### **Strategy: Move Recruiting and Hiring from Central Office to Local Office**

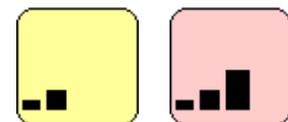
Some states have found that the hiring process is best done from the local level rather than through a central office. A centralized hiring system may be out of touch with the needs at the local office and thus jeopardize a positive person-job fit. Local office staff can provide a more realistic picture of work-life at that office and know the personalities that will integrate more easily at the team level.

South Carolina has applied this strategy to great success. In the mid-1990s, South Carolina’s Office of Human Resources reduced the number of state job titles from 2,500 to 452. It collapsed fifty narrow pay grades into ten broad salary bands. This allowed local managers the flexibility they needed to reassign workers and adjust compensation according to changes in responsibility and job performance. The state also initiated a performance-based salary increase system. Importantly, local offices were also given the room they needed to make hiring decisions on their own without being hampered by civil service tests and a complex application process (Mendel, 2004). This strategy holds particular promise in rural communities, where resources are needed but the ability to manage them effectively at the local level is key to success.

Source:

Mendel, D. (2004). Who’s taking care in Greenville? *Advocasey*, 6(1), 4-15.

### ***Condition: Identifying Candidates with Most Potential for High Job Performance***



#### **Strategy: Use a Standardized, Structured Hiring Interview Protocol**

Although the interview is a commonly accepted, oftentimes very helpful tool for the selection of candidates, the interview process can be marred by both low validity and reliability. In other words, it is often difficult to determine whether what is supposed to be measured is actually being measured, and whether the measurement is appropriately standardized (Graef et al., in

press). Additional research in all areas of interviewing methods is needed. One meta-analysis of the literature pointed out that only twenty of one hundred and six articles on the validity and reliability of interviews reported any quantitative data (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt & Maurer, 1994).

Use of consistent and structured questions based on the core competencies of the job will help increase the validity and reliability of the interview (McDaniel et al., 1994). Standardization is supported in both the psychological literature and by EEO requirements (Bernotavicz & Locke, 2000). Generally speaking, there are four overarching types of interviews: unstructured, situational, behavior description, and comprehensive structured.

### ***Unstructured Interview:***

This type asks different questions of each candidate and for this reason, has the lowest reliability and validity. The interviewer may select questions spontaneously from a list or just “off the cuff.” Candidates may be asked different questions making a fair comparison of qualifications and fit unlikely. Unstructured interviews are not typically recommended for any kind of organized approach to selection (Graef et al., in press).

### ***Situational Interview<sup>2</sup>:***

In this method, candidates are interviewed about what actions they would take in various job-related situations. Here is an example of a situation-based question, including the presentation of a scenario and questions as to how the applicant would react:

You are a manager and one of your staff has just told you that he thinks another worker is acting inappropriately with a child.

- What should you do?
  - What additional information should you obtain?
  - How many options do you have?
- (Smith, 2001)

Situation based interviews also segue well into job simulations or role-plays.

### ***Behavior Description Interview:***

Candidates are asked what actions they have taken in prior job situations that are similar to situations they may encounter on the job. The theory here is that past behavior best indicates future behavior. Examples of behavior-based questions include:

- Describe an incident where you went over and beyond the call of duty.
  - Tell me about the time you reached out for additional responsibility.
  - Tell me about the largest project you worked on
- (Smith, 2001).

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<sup>2</sup> Situational and behavioral interview questions reprinted with author’s permission

***Comprehensive Structured Interview (Graef et al., in press):***

This interview format includes elements of both the Situational and Behavior Description interview formats. Each candidate is asked the same structured questions, including questions regarding their job knowledge, whether they meet the job requirements, and how they would handle job related situations. Questions regarding job knowledge are a way to assess candidates' current level of knowledge related to relevant implicit dimensions of job performance, in other words, their "tacit knowledge" or "practical intelligence" related to the specific job position. These questions also allow the interviewers to gauge how accurately the candidate understands the challenges and requirements of the position for which they are applying. (HR Guide to the Internet: Personnel Selection: Methods: Interviews. <http://www.hr-guide.com/data/G311.htm>.)

Comprehensive structured interview questions are developed through the identification of critical job competencies. Competencies are attitudes, skills, and personal or professional characteristics essential to the successful performance of a given position. There are a variety of fee-for-service tools that can help determine an agency's critical job competencies (see <http://www.competencymap.org> and <http://www.itgcompetencymodels.com>). However, most staff already have a wealth of knowledge of the core competencies of an effective child welfare worker. Designing questions that get at the heart of these competencies is the key to developing comprehensive structured interview questions.

Be sure that questions don't stray outside the bounds of what is appropriate and legal. Generally speaking, federal law governs most of the guidelines as to what and what not to ask. State laws may come into play as well. Candidates are not allowed to be eliminated who are unable to demonstrate competencies that will be taught in mandated new worker training programs, nor will you probably want to do so: most human service agencies are hoping to recruit a more diverse workforce, and as a result, care should be taken to not screen out applicants who have the potential to be excellent workers with proper training. If there is any question about appropriate questions, check with the human resources office. Another excellent resource is the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), which can be contacted at (800) 283-SHRM or <http://www.shrm.org>.

The grid below covers some commonly addressed topics in interviews and provides some guidelines on what is generally acceptable and what is not. When in doubt as to whether a question is out of bounds, check with the above resources.

<i>Appropriate and Inappropriate Interview Questions</i>	
<i>A candidate should answer these questions, which focus on the job and candidate's specific qualifications for it.</i>	<i>A candidate need not answer these questions, which delve into his personal life.</i>
Where have you worked before?	Are you married?
What duties have you performed at past jobs?	With whom do you live?
What are your short and long-range career goals?	If married, are you expecting to have children soon?
Why are you interested in this organization?	What does your spouse do?
Tell me about yourself.	Were your parents born in this country?
What education have you completed? (If a certain level is required for the job)	How old are you? (But you may be asked if you are legally old enough to work.)
How did you learn about this job?	Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?
Who are the people prepared to write or give references for you?	Where do you bank?
What is your social security number?	How many children do you have?
What special qualifications do you have for this job?	Have you ever been arrested? (But you may be asked to provide information on criminal convictions.)
Do you have any questions about the job or organization?	What kinds of day care arrangements have you made for your children?
What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?	What memberships do you hold in social, religious, and community groups?

(American Humane Association, 2004.)<sup>3</sup>

### ***An Example from Nebraska:***

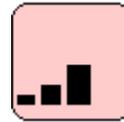
The University of Nebraska's Center on Children, Family and the Law created a standardized, structured hiring interview for child protection workers in one state agency. This protocol includes a combination of both the behavior description and situational question formats, and begins with a job analysis to identify the most critical knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for success in the position. A small subset of the knowledge, skills and abilities that can be appropriately assessed in an interview is selected, and a pool of behavior description and situational interview questions for each knowledge, skill, or ability item is developed by subject-matter experts. A draft of the interview is pilot tested and revised, and interview teams are trained to conduct the interviews. At the interview, candidates are allowed candidates to review the interview questions while supervised for fifteen minutes before their interview begins. Interviewees are permitted to take the written copy of the interview questions with them into the actual interview, so that they have both a visual and auditory presentation of the questions.

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted with author's permission.

Applicant responses to the interview questions are scored through behavioral rating forms that provide detailed indicators of acceptable, marginal, unacceptable, and “red flag” responses (Graef et al., in press).

Sources:

- American Humane Association. (2004). *Appropriate and inappropriate interview questions*. Internal document.
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- McDaniel, M. A., Whetzel, D. L., Schmidt, F. L., Maurer, S. D. (1994). The validity of employment interviews: A comprehensive review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 599-616.
- Smith, G. P. (n.d.). *Improve your interviewing techniques*. Business know-how. Retrieved from <http://www.businessknowhow.com/manage/impinterv.htm>.



### **Strategy: Select Professionally Trained Social Workers**

When faced with two candidates for one position who both interviewed exceptionally well and expressed a sincere passion for and commitment to child welfare work, whom should be chosen? Some research suggests that the candidate with the educational credentials in social work should be hired. Child welfare workers with degrees in social work have higher job performance and lower turnover rates (Whitaker, Reich, Reid, Williams, & Woodside, 2004). Compared to their colleagues in child welfare, professionally trained social workers:

- Stay in the field longer, and have a greater interest in doing so
- Feel safer making home visits alone
- Have higher salaries
- Spend less time on paperwork
- Have enough opportunities for training
- Are satisfied with their supervisors
- Actually recommend to other social workers that they enter child welfare as a field of practice.

Therefore, selecting qualified candidates with degrees in social work can be highly beneficial to the agency. Once the decision to do so has been made, a child welfare agency should set benchmark goals for both percentages of workers hired with such education, and the total staff with such education. Specify social work as one of the required or desired qualifications listed in an open position announcement. If individuals from a variety of backgrounds apply for such an open position, screen candidates with degrees in social work first.

Developing relationships with departments of social work at local colleges and universities (perhaps through Federal Title IV-E funding or other collaborations) provides agencies with direct access to students via internships, class projects, presentations to classes by agency staff, networking with faculty, and the like. Once the connection to students and faculty is made, this built-in channel increases the likelihood of social workers applying to and being chosen for child

welfare positions. Child welfare agencies may also partner with institutions of higher education and other entities in order to offer opportunities and incentives for their non-social work employees to return to school and earn social work degrees.

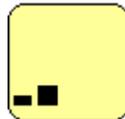
Focusing recruitment on other groups and organizations for social workers will also aid selecting a greater number of employees with BSW or MSW degrees. These groups include:

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and local chapters of NASW
- Other national associations likely to include social workers such as the:
  - Child Welfare League of America
  - American Public Human Services Association
  - American Humane Association
- Other relevant specialty social work practice areas with professional associations such as:
  - Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
  - Child welfare
  - Health
  - Mental health
  - Poverty and social justice
  - Private practice
  - School social work.

Source:

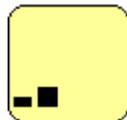
Whitaker, T., Reich, S., Reid, L. B., Williams, M., & Woodside, C. (2004). If you're right for the job, it's the best job in the world. *NASW Memberlink*. Retrieved June 14, 2004 from <http://www.socialworkers.org/>.

### ***Condition: Lag Time Between Position Vacancy and Fill***



#### **Strategy: Create Pre-Fill Positions**

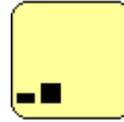
See *Domain: Recruitment*; *Condition: Lack of Qualified Applicants*; *Strategy: Create a Hiring Pool to Ensure Ongoing Resources*.



#### **Strategy: Create Floater Positions**

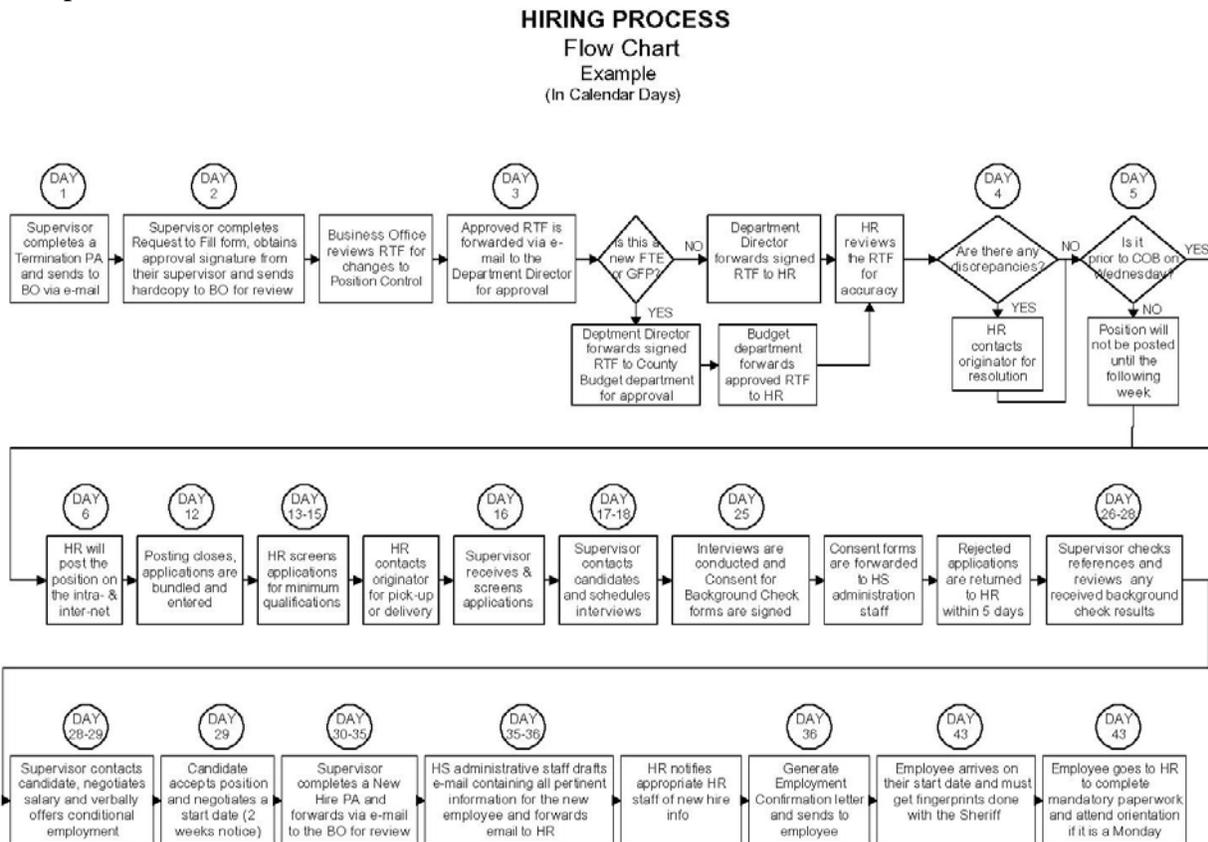
“Floaters” are staff who are capable of performing a wide variety of job functions and who move into whatever position or area needs additional human resources. This is a popular concept in health care where floater nurses are assigned to units with the greatest demand. This position requires someone with great flexibility and a wide range of skills. Floaters may be part-time or on-call as needed. If the agency is exploring the possibility of on-call floaters, be sure to recruit for a number of floater positions to ensure that a floater is always available. Floaters can fill in for staff while they are on vacation, have flex time, or are in training, and thus alleviate some of the concerns that staff may have about managing their own workload to take advantage of such

benefits. By hiring floaters, a pool of staff will be developed that is ready to be hired when vacancies occur and floater staff would be a logical first stop for any recruitment efforts since they already know the agency and are known by them.



**Strategy: Simplify Approval Process for Hiring**

In order to understand the hiring process so that it can be simplified, first create a flow chart mapping all of the steps in the hiring process and the time it takes to complete each step. It should also include key decision points, and the people or offices involved in each step. See the example below for such a schematic.



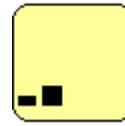
**Western Regional Recruitment & Retention Project, 2005**

Once the hiring process is mapped, strategies for simplifying the process can be determined by noting lag times, gaps, and redundancies.

Source:

Western Regional Recruitment & Retention Project. (2005). *Hiring process flow chart*. Internal document.

## **Condition: Person/Job Fit**



### **Strategy: Align Values between Person and Organization**

It is critical that the agency's staff be clear about the agency's missions, goals, values, and exactly what it expects from new hires. According to Anderson (1998), there are three components of ideal fit between an employee and a given job position. The components are:

- Company Fit, involving congruent values, beliefs, commitment, and vision.
- Skills Fit, involving appropriate skills and practical experience.
- Job Fit, involving suitable cognitive ability, personality, and interests.

Ideally, these three areas overlap, with 80% of job performance related to Company and Job Fit and only 20% related to Skills Fit. However, Company Fit and Job Fit cannot be trained or managed, which presents a challenge for effective employee selection.

While it is usually assumed that an agency's mission statement is sufficient to convey the purpose and values of the agency, there are a host of other values about child welfare and the agency that a prospective employee may assume. When these assumed values don't square with the true values of the agency, effective selection and retention may suffer. All too often child welfare hiring managers hear from employees who chose to leave the field that the job was not what they expected. To avoid getting to this point, a thorough exploration of a prospective employee's values—and an analysis of how they jibe with the agency's values—is crucial.

Most people enter the field of child welfare because they value children and families, but the way this value is put into practice varies among agencies and individuals. It cannot be assumed that simply because an individual has experience working with children and families—or states a seemingly sincere desire to do so—their values are a good fit with those of the agency.

Before assessing for congruency between the agency's values and a candidate's values, it is important to reconcile your current staff's values with those of the agency to avoid any confusion. The issue of divergent agency and employee values is not necessarily unique to the employee selection process. It is critical that current staff be aware of and share the agency's mission, values, and goals. If the agency and its current staff do not share the same perception of these key areas, it will be difficult to convey them to potential employees. Moreover, potentially outstanding employees may notice a lack of cohesion among the staff with regard to mission, goals, and values and decide to look elsewhere.

At the beginning of the hiring process, all hiring committee members may have their ideal candidates in mind, and it should not be assumed that everyone is in agreement about the attributes, values, and qualifications of the optimal candidate. It is important that everyone involved in the hiring and selection process be on the same page. Here is one approach to facilitate this process:

- 1) Ask members of the hiring committee and others who will interact with the new hire to privately write down the ideal attributes of the new hire.

- 2) Meet with all relevant staff to discuss the difference between various preferred attributes.
  - 3) Create a list of all submitted attributes on poster paper or white board.
  - 4) Provide each meeting participant with five colored adhesive dots and ask them to place a dot by their top five attributes.
  - 5) Review and discuss the items on the list with the most dots, and create a list of the attributes with the highest priority.
  - 6) Once the list is finalized, stick to it when evaluating candidates.
- (Adapted from Harvard Management Mentor, 2004)

After current staff agree on the values and attributes to select for, the screening process can begin. Evidence of values and commitment to mission can often be determined in the interview process. The challenge is to ask probing, carefully worded questions and to listen closely for both explicit and implicit responses that illustrate an individual’s values. Although it can be difficult to judge sincerity in an interview, consider switching up some standard questions. For example, instead of asking, “Why do you want this job?” consider asking, “If you were to join our agency, what would it take to pull you away a year from now?” If the candidate answers with “bigger salary” knowing the limitations of your agency’s financial compensation, child welfare may not be her top priority (Kennedy, 2001).

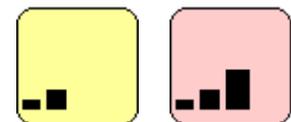
Sources:

Anderson, D. N. (1998). *Aligned values + good job fit = optimum performance*. National Productivity Review, 17(4), 23.

Kennedy, J. (2001, March). Behavior-based interviewing: Does it still work? *HR Bulletin*, 5(5). Retrieved from <http://www.interviewedge.com/articles/art81.htm>

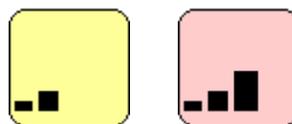
*Retaining valued employees: Core concepts*. (2004). Harvard Management Update: Harvard ManageMentor.

**Strategy: Use a Standardized, Structured Hiring Interview Protocol**



See *Domain*: Selection; *Condition*: Identifying Candidates with Most Potential for High Job Performance; *Strategy*: Use a Standardized, Structured Hiring Interview Protocol.

**Strategy: Perform a Job Analysis**



Any recruitment or selection strategy should begin with a thorough job analysis, to break the position down and identify specific tasks typically undertaken, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for acceptable performance (Graef et al., in press). Although it may seem intuitive that one cannot, for instance, develop a “Realistic Job Preview” or relevant simulations for an interview without first understanding the specifics of a position, this is often overlooked because of the additional time it requires. If a job analysis is not performed, those responsible for recruitment and selection are, in effect, throwing darts while blindfolded.

### **What is a job analysis? (Potter & Graef, 2003) <sup>4</sup>**

A job analysis is a systematic process for dissecting a job into its component parts to create a foundation for personnel practices. A structured job analysis will inform recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisal, job design, career development and planning, compensation, and job classification and most importantly, satisfy legal requirements having to do with hiring, transfer, promotion, demotion, termination, and compensation.

When concluded, the job analysis will produce:

- List of tasks that are performed on the job
- List of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform the work

A comprehensive job analysis requires a rigorous and structured approach. First, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who are people with up-to-date job knowledge and experience such as job incumbents, supervisors, or trainers. A SME will help achieve accuracy and improve acceptance of future products resulting from the job analysis. Second, the SMEs generate the tasks associated with the job to break down broad job behaviors or duties into discrete units of work.

For example:

- Complete designated department intake worksheet.
- Make referrals to community services.
- Inform parents of rights and responsibilities during involvement with agency.
- Enter case information into child welfare information system.
- Develop a safety plan.
- Testify in court proceedings.
- Document family assessment process.
- Develop written case plan.
- Confirm visitation plan with parents, child, and foster parents.
- Report violations of foster care licensing regulations to appropriate staff.
- Write closing summary for case file.

The third step is to identify the most important tasks by rating each task on selected indicators such as:

- Importance
- Frequency
- Difficulty to Learn
- Time Spent
- Consequence of Error

A statistical analyses will reveal which tasks are most essential to successful job performance. The fourth step is to identify the human attributes needed to successfully perform each task, commonly known as knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- Knowledge: information needed to perform
- Skill: proficiency needed to perform
- Ability: enduring attributes needed to perform

For example:

- Knowledge of indicators of abuse/neglect

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<sup>4</sup> Reprinted with author's permission.

- Skill in recognizing abuse/neglect
- Knowledge of procedures for out-of-home placement
- Skill in basic keyboarding
- Knowledge of age-appropriate methods of child discipline
- Knowledge of the format of a structured interview
- Skill in eliciting sensitive information during an interview
- Skill in determining when additional information is needed for decisions

The fifth step links tasks and KSAs by asking the SMEs decide for each core task whether or not each KSA is essential for job performance. In the sixth step, the relative importance of each task is determined through statistical analysis. During the seventh step, the task dimensions are created. Individual tasks are clustered into logical groups, for example:

- Arranging Services
- Composing Reports
- Interviewing
- Resolving Conflict
- Documenting

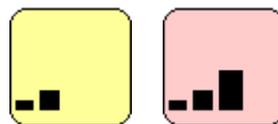
Finally and in a similar fashion, cluster KSA into logical groupings. For example:

- Communication
- Decision Making/Problem Solving
- Interpersonal
- Time Management
- Computer Fundamentals

These eight steps lead to a comprehensive job analysis that informs many aspects of recruitment and selection.

Source:

Potter, M., & Graef, M. (2003, September). *Building a solid foundation for successful hiring, training, and performance management*. Workshop presentation at the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the National Staff Development and Training Association, Anaheim, CA.



### **Strategy: Use Effective Applications**

The job application should be directly tied to the job analysis and job description for a given specific position, and should be designed to elicit information about the job’s most critical competencies. Require all candidates to completely fill out the application at the agency, and do not allow applicants to simply write “see resume” instead of completing a question. (Arthur, 2001). In addition to the usual questions, such as those asking for name, contact information, and job history, effective applications will also contain the following (Graef et al., in press):

- Questions providing indications of whether or not applicants meet minimum position qualifications, based on the job analysis.
- Questions asking for task-specific descriptions of the candidate’s job training and past work experience in order to gather information about educational, work, and life

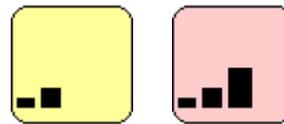
experiences that may have bearing on potential to perform the job. For example, candidates for child protection positions could describe situations in which they explained procedures, policies, decisions, or concepts to individuals or families. Those who meet scoring guidelines could move ahead to the next step in the selection process. Those who choose not to complete this short form may opt out of the process at this point, which may be a helpful screening tool in and of itself.

- No non-job-related questions, including those concerning the applicant's membership in a protected group, or those that are otherwise illegal or inadvisable (see chart page 28).

Sources:

Arthur, D. (2001). *The employee recruitment and retention handbook*. New York: Amacom.

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.



### **Strategy: Choose and Evaluate Selection Tools**

It is critical to choose tools wisely and to evaluate those tools in terms of their usefulness and the outcomes achieved. The most important feature of any selection tool is its relationship to job-related competencies (Berman et al., 2001).

Tools used in selecting child welfare employees can be created by agencies or purchased from other sources. Off-the-shelf tools can be less expensive, and appropriate tools can be chosen by referring to respected sources such as the most recent *Buros Institute of Mental Measurements Yearbook*, the *Educational Resource Information Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation*, *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, the *American Psychological Association*, and specific test publishers. Self-created tools are typically developed when commercially available tests do not exist for the competencies an agency would like to test. Because they are customized for a specific agency, self-created tools can be as effective or more so than purchased tests when they are created by experienced and knowledgeable test developers and subject matter experts. When using either off-the-shelf or self-created tools, keep in mind the following.

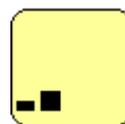
- Check all tools for validity to ensure that the conclusions and inferences drawn from results are appropriate and meaningful, as well as to protect underrepresented populations from adverse impact. Validity consists of three dimensions:
  - Content validity:
    - ✓ Select or develop a tool based on how it aligns with a thorough job analysis.
    - ✓ Ensure that the content of the test matches the content of the job.
  - Criterion validity:
    - ✓ Establish a statistical relationship between the tool and certain job-related criteria in order to forecast job-related behavior. For example, applicants' scores for a structured interview could correlate with turnover.

- ✓ To examine a tool's criterion validity, begin with a thorough job analysis, give the tool to a large number of people, gather data regarding the specific criterion or criteria to predict, and then determine the statistical relationship between the two.
- Construct validity:
  - ✓ Document a relationship between certain traits and characteristics (e.g., intelligence, integrity, creativity) and job performance.
  - ✓ Examine the characteristics of successful hires and determine whether applicants possess these traits, to predict job performance.
- Decide how to implement the tool. Where is the line dividing good scores from poor scores?
  - Consider the:
    - ✓ Size of the applicant pool
    - ✓ Number of job openings
    - ✓ Job performance standards
    - ✓ Tool's ability to predict certain behaviors
    - ✓ Costs
    - ✓ Law
- Remember that assessing tools' validity requires specific training and expertise; ask for help from professionals experienced in this area.
- Examine all chosen tools to confirm that none violate legal requirements.
- Keep records of all who applied and were accepted, and which tools were used during their selection processes, to determine the selection rate of the full applicant group as well as special subgroups of individuals (Berman et al., 2001; Graef et al., in press).

Sources:

Berman, E., Bowman, J., West, J., & Van Wart, M. (2001). *Human resource management in public service*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.



### **Strategy: Create a Clearly Written Job Description**

The road to successful child welfare hiring begins with crafting a clearly written job description (Harvard Business Essentials, 2002) based on a thorough job analysis (see page 34). Before writing the job description, be sure to identify the following items for each unique position—one size does not fit all:

- The knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job duties
  - Education and experience required
  - Any personal characteristics essential to task completion
  - Key features of the organization's culture
  - The managerial style to be employed by this position's supervisor, and how this will build an effective working relationship
- (Graef et al., in press; Harvard Business Essentials, 2002).

Write a clear, results-oriented job description based on this information that accurately and realistically describes the position. The job description should include the following:

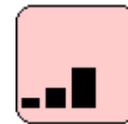
- Job title, specific unit, and agency name
- Job tasks, responsibilities, and objectives
- Background and personal characteristics required
- Compensation, hours and location
- Individual(s) responsible for hiring and supervision.

It is critical to comply with all legal mandates regarding equal opportunity employment, so having the job description reviewed and approved by a human resource department would be a wise final step.

Sources:

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

*Harvard Business Essentials: Hiring and keeping the best people*. (2002). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.



### **Strategy: Use Simulations or Role-plays in the Interview Process**

An interview provides an opportunity for face-to-face contact with the applicant, which allows for a reading of body language and an assessment of speaking skills, demeanor, and personal interaction. Yet the interview process does have its drawbacks. Often, an interview does not provide a complete picture of the candidate's skills and abilities. It can be a highly subjective process, especially if it is not standardized, as questions may shift to reflect the interviewer's perceptions of the candidate. For example, if the interviewer immediately likes the candidate, he may tend to ask easier questions. Moreover, the interview presents candidates on their best behavior in an artificial environment, which gives them little opportunity to accurately present their on-the-job skills. Too often, the interview is used as a "screening out" tool rather than selection tool (Cohen & Gump, 1984).

The use of simulations or role-plays can fill in the gaps left by the interview process. A candidate's performance during these exercises is typically assessed either against a standard created by subject-matter experts, or the interviewer's personal knowledge of the performance levels that differentiate between successful and unsuccessful employees (Graef et al., in press). Role-plays and simulations also provide an opportunity to give candidates, especially those new to the field of child welfare, a clear picture of exactly what the job entails. In addition, these techniques can replace less productive questioning and avoid the scheduling challenges and staff time loss of trying to bring staff and the candidate back for a second visit. Three empirically-supported methods include role plays, in-basket tests, and situational judgment tests (Graef et al., in press).

### ***Role-Plays***

Ideally, the role-plays could be included in the interview. Two or three role-plays of about ten minutes each should be used, although one well constructed simulation may be adequate and is preferable to several unstructured, disorganized simulations.

To help ensure a structured, productive role-play the following steps are recommended:

- Use clear, consistent, performance-based criteria. Develop a checklist that rates performance against commonly accepted standards of optimal behavior and interactions. Include ratings for both verbal and non-verbal behaviors.
- Write down the situation or scenario and give the candidate time to “get into character.”
- Give the candidate clear instructions and “rules of the game” so that they know what to expect and what is expected of them. Allow them to ask questions for clarification but be careful not to coach the candidate.
- Make the role play as realistic as possible. Try adapting a situation that has actually occurred. Use a vacant office or other available space to “set the stage” for the simulation.
- Coach the interviewers to keep roles consistent. One interviewer should consistently play the part of the client, fellow employee, or other person the candidate will interact with as a part of the simulation. Another interviewer should be responsible for directing the simulation and ensuring that timeframes and boundaries are adhered to.
- Conclude the role-play in a positive way. Debrief the candidate and ask them what they felt went well—and what they could have done differently (Smith, n.d.).

In general, the role-play should be used as only part of the overall selection process. A poor or positive role-play demonstration should be part of the evaluation, not a replacement for all other selection strategies.

### ***In-Basket Tests***

In-basket tests consist of a simulation of the contents of a typical “in-basket” for the desired position. Applicants respond to the various materials as they see fit (e.g., writing a memo or describing the actions they would take and why) while independent spectators evaluate and score their responses. Materials in an in-basket test could include memos, phone messages, and requests for action (Graef et al., in press).

### ***Situational Judgment Tests***

These tests simulate the actual decision-making situations that candidates may encounter in the sought-after position, in order to measure the applicants’ judgment and decision-making skills. Candidates respond to a hypothetical scenario (offered in writing, video, or on the computer) and either choose what they believe to be the correct solution from a list, or rate a number of possible solutions according to which is most effective. These scenarios, as well as all hypothetical responses, should be developed according to the results of a job analysis. Applicants’ answers should be scored in comparison to responses endorsed by high-performing job experts.

The following is an example of the process undertaken by subject-matter experts to create a written situational test that assesses the necessary entry-level knowledge and skills for child protection<sup>5</sup>.

- Identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that best fit with situational testing.
- Create situations and responses, and rate the effectiveness of each option.
- Ensure that these items don't require job-specific knowledge that the typical applicant would not possess.
- Select twenty final situations, with an average of seven solutions each.
- Have applicants rate each possible response on a scale from one to four from "extremely effective" to "potentially harmful."

Here is an example of one scenario used in a situational judgment test:

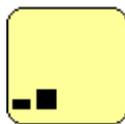
You work at a large agency. You personally have observed a coworker repeatedly rifling through papers and files in other workers' offices after those workers have gone home for the day. These papers and files have no relevance to this worker's job responsibilities. You have knowledge that this person has used this information for personal gain. Please rate how effective each response would be in stopping this worker's behavior.

- \_\_\_ Report to your supervisor that this person is breaching confidentiality.
  - \_\_\_ Don't say anything about what you have observed; you shouldn't interfere with the situation.
  - \_\_\_ Ask the agency to increase office security after regular business hours.
  - \_\_\_ Wait and confront the worker the next time you observe him rifling through other workers' files.
  - \_\_\_ Tell others that you're concerned about breaches in the office and that they should take action to secure their files.
  - \_\_\_ Set up a time to speak with this worker; give him the opportunity to explain what was happening.
- (Graef & Potter, 2002)

Sources:

- Cohen, S. & Gump, H. F. (1984, December). Using simulations to improve selection decisions. *Training and Development Journal*, 85-88.
- Graef, M. I., & Potter, M. E. (2002). Alternative solutions to the child protective services staffing crisis: Innovations from industrial/organizational psychology. *Protecting Children*, 17(3).
- Smith, G. P. (n.d.). *Improve your interviewing techniques*. *Business know-how*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessknowhow.com/manage/impinterv.htm> .

### **Strategy: Use Pre-Employment Tests**



Pre-employment tests are typically used to screen out—not select—candidates. Care should be taken to avoid eliminating applicants who do not have competencies and skills that will be trained in mandated new-worker training. Not only may such action be illegal, it could

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<sup>5</sup> Reprinted with permission from the American Humane Association.

needlessly reduce the applicant pool. There are a wide range of pre-employment tests including tests for job aptitude, personality, psychological make-up, and skills. State and federal laws govern what type of tests are appropriate, but these laws are vague and open to interpretation. In general, skills based tests are least prone to legal trouble if they test skills necessary for the performance of the job that will not be trained to all new workers (*Testing job applicants, n.d.*).

Psychological testing may seem like an attractive option to help determine whether a candidate has the psychological make up for a successful career in child welfare; however, reviews of psychological testing for selection of human services staff have shown that tests are not effective in selecting out inappropriate candidates, such as abusive staff (Kiraly, 2001). Moreover, legal issues associated with such tests may make them more trouble than they are worth.

Three other major types of tests that are relevant to the selection of child welfare employees are intelligence or cognitive ability tests, critical thinking tests, and personality inventories (Graef et al., in press). Cognitive abilities tests are effective predictors of job performance particularly for highly complex positions, and measure such things as reading comprehension, vocabulary, math, and verbal aptitude. When using these tests, beware of disproportionately screening out members of minority groups.

Critical thinking skills tests are particularly important in child welfare work, and measure the candidate's ability for rational and objective thinking, making difficult decisions based on accurate information gathering, sorting relevant from irrelevant information, deciding whether inferences drawn from data are true or false, and determining whether certain conclusions necessarily follow from the information supplied (Graef et al., in press).

Personality tests examine someone's motivation or willingness to do the job. Older methods measuring psychopathology should not be used; however, newer types of measures designed specifically for the workplace to examine normal personality are valid predictors of job outcomes such as performance and retention. Personality tests measure such characteristics as stress tolerance, adaptability, dependability, attention to detail, initiative, sociability, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Tests of honesty and integrity have been found to be excellent predictors of counterproductive behaviors and overall job performance (Graef et al., in press).

In the field of child welfare, testing requirements vary from state to state. In some states, such as Pennsylvania, caseworkers employed by a government agency are required to take and pass a civil service test, which is sometimes a prerequisite to further review of a candidate's qualifications. In others states, such as Maryland, no test is required (Graef et al., in press).

Like any other selection tool, tests should be an accurate measure of a candidate's knowledge and skills. They should be standardized and scored on a valid and reliable ratings scale (Graef et al., in press)..

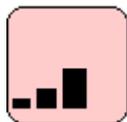
Sources:

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (in press). Recruitment and selection of child welfare staff. In F. Alwon, K. Greenhill, A. Reitz, & B. Schmitt (Eds.), *It's all about retention: Workforce strategies in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Kiraly, M. (2001). Choose with care: A recruitment guide for organizations working with children. *Child & Youth Services*, 23(1/2), 81-121.

*Testing job applicants*. (n.d.). Retrieved from Nolo Web site: <http://www.nolo.com/article.cfm/ObjectID/8671B547-F9BD-4405-964D7DD2F5573019/catID/A353C662-F63B-4FB9-8CCC3B667D1711AE/111/259/231/ART/>

## **Condition: Realistic Job Expectations**



### **Strategy: Use Realistic Job Previews**

See *Domain*: Recruitment; *Condition*: Unclear, Unrealistic Understanding of Job; *Strategy*: Convey Realistic Job Expectations.

Beginning during the recruitment process, effort should be made to ensure that potential applicants have a clear understanding of what the job entails. Clearly, some candidates will require more of this information than others. A seasoned child protection caseworker will already be on firm ground with respect to expectations although here, too, assumptions on the part of the hiring team should be explored and challenged through open and honest dialogue. An assessment of a candidate's knowledge and acceptance of job expectations and inclusion of this assessment is an important part of the selection process. Choosing a candidate with a firm grasp on the work will probably have a better outcome than selection of a candidate who expresses some naïveté about the job.

An agency may want to consider calculating the real costs of turnover over a one year period, in order to support the decision to designate time and resources to the creation of realistic job expectations (RJE) materials and practices. This analysis should also include the administrative costs relating to separation, replacement, and training of new hires (Graef et al., in press).

Regardless of the specific type of RJE method, agencies should first determine the most important factors to be addressed so that all messages conveyed are on target. Considering when to use these methods is also a critical decision; RJE tactics should be included as early in the selection process as possible, and will have little impact if used after a candidate has been offered a position (Graef et al., in press). It is critical that candidates understand why this information is being conveyed – to help them make a decision about whether this is the right job for them. It should occur prior to the extension of a job offer so as to allow the candidate the opportunity to withdraw their application thereby saving everyone time and resources (O'Neil, Lawson, Hewitt, & Sauer, 2001).

For information about conveying RJE using printed materials and videos, see *Domain*: Recruitment; *Condition*: Unclear or Unrealistic Understanding of Job; *Strategy*: Convey Realistic Job Expectations. During the selection process, staff meetings are an important way to convey RJE. Let candidates talk to current staff so that they can hear first hand the ups and downs of the field. This will also make staff feel valued and engaged as others truly want to hear what they have to say. Candidates should be provided with a list of suggested questions and the opportunity to meet with staff in private. Ideally, this process should take place before an interview and

provide an opportunity for the candidate to gracefully opt out of the interview if they chose not to move forward (O’Neill et al., 2001).

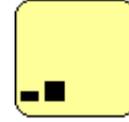
Develop a structured observation sessions for candidates. Allow them to observe current staff in their day-to-day work. This should not be an informal process but should have set criteria: candidates should be given a checklist of actions and events to watch for so that they know what they should be looking for. Staff and clients should be asked if they want to participate in this process. Allow the observation to take place in the setting where the candidate might work and allow for a debriefing period after the session (O’Neill et al., 2001).

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## DOMAIN: TRAINING

### **Condition: Confidence Regarding Knowledge and Skills**

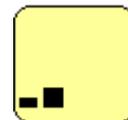


**Strategy: Use “Remedial,” Additional, or Advanced Training on**

#### **Topics Identified through Individual Training Needs Assessment**

Staff will feel more confident if they have been fully trained and have the opportunity to practice classroom content on the job. All new staff should go to a standardized core training but also bring differing levels of competence and experience to their job. Periodic assessments of individual training needs can evaluate the worker’s perceived level of mastery over knowledge and skills related to the job as well as the importance of those items to the job. The Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) was conceptualized, developed, and implemented in multiple states and Canada by the Institute for Human Services in Columbus, Ohio (for more information, go to: <http://www.ihs-trainet.com/>). The ITNA is just one part of a formal competency-based training system that at its core is driven by the agency’s mission and goals. The competencies for a particular job are driven by a thorough task analysis of the job to answer the question, “What are the knowledge and skills necessary for a job?”. Assuring staff ability is done through structured and ongoing performance evaluation of the competencies, or the knowledge and skills necessary for the job. Completion of the Individual Training Needs Assessment assesses whether staff have the ability to do their jobs, it answers the question, “CAN he or she do this job?” The other side of the equation is, “DID he or she do this job?” A formal performance evaluation compares performance against indicators. A performance appraisal is only a fair method when workers have been trained in the knowledge and skills necessary for the job and have reached a proficient level. Before a performance evaluation is conducted, the supervisor must be able to evaluate whether the worker has achieved proficiency through training and proficiency can be evaluated through the Individual Training Needs Assessment.

### **Condition: Difficulty in Attending Training Due to Distance, Caseload, and Personal or Family Issues**



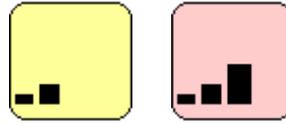
**Strategy: Use Distance Learning or Flexible Learning Opportunities**

The structure of a traditional training curriculum may not work for an agency struggling with workload issues. Alternative learning methods such as videoconferencing and online training can eliminate distance and travel barriers to participating in training.

It is, in part, the responsibility of the supervisor to manage barriers to training consisting of caseload and personal or family issues. Interns or floaters can be used to help maintain and monitor case progress while a worker is in training. In addition, a supervisor should take care to

protect a caseworker's caseload and ensure that no new cases are added while the worker is in training.

## **Condition: Mentoring Programs**



### **Strategy: Develop a Mentoring Program to Build Career Success and Satisfaction**

Mentoring has a significant effect on both career satisfaction and success (Collins, 1994). To implement a mentoring program, follow these steps:

#### ***1. Articulate the agency's goals for a mentoring program***

Determine what needs to be achieved. Is the goal to improve organizational or individual performance, or both; to improve retention of mentors or protégés, or both; to improve morale? Establish a plan to evaluate the mentoring program that examines whether initial programmatic goals are accomplished, the evidence of the growth and development of both mentors and protégés, and feedback from mentors and protégés about the structure, content, and value of their personal experiences as program participants (Sherman et al., 2000).

#### ***2. Structure the program to meet the unique needs of an agency or a division***

Determine who will have mentors. It can be all employees, or just certain subgroups that stand to receive the most benefit, such as those newly hired, those new to the profession, those who need to improve their performance, or those who show leadership potential.

Consider using creative incentives, offering group mentoring, and holding mentoring online.

Determine the structure of mentoring sessions, including how often mentoring pairs will meet, how long sessions will last, the length of time the mentor and protégé will work together, and where sessions will take place. Or decide to let the mentoring teams structure their sessions themselves.

Determine what types of mentoring activities teams will do together. These can be derived from the needs of the overall program, the needs of the individual protégé (as defined by the protégé or a supervisor), the particular skills of the mentor, or all three. Activities should develop the relationship between mentor and protégé, allow them to learn about each other as people (not just co-workers), and allow trust and mutual respect to grow from true sharing. Activities can include observations and conferences regarding both protégé and mentor skills and abilities, creating a developmental portfolio, keeping a journal, sharing resources, and working together on research projects (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002; Harvard Business Essentials, 2002; Sherman et al., 2000).

#### ***3. Identify possible mentors***

Mentors should be effective role models who set high standards, can be available to their protégés, and can create experiences for their protégés that help them grow both through success and by facing challenges that push them to the next level. Mentors should also have nurturing and encouraging attitudes, be able to empathize with employees in unique situations, and share

their real selves openly and honestly with their protégés. Mentors should have strong bonds to the organization and live by the organization's values, yet be able to teach protégés about the realities of their workplace, including both the positive and the negative aspects.

Mentors can be selected through a formal process, involving the submission of letters of recommendation, resume, and statement of personal interest. Or a more informal process can be used: prospective mentors can volunteer or be recommended. An initial meeting should take place with all mentors to discuss the goals and structure of the program, how to mentor, and the ways that they will be supported in their role (Harvard Business Essentials, 2002; Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002; Sherman et al., 2000).

#### **4. *Select protégés***

As in the selection of mentors, either a formal or an informal process can be used. Supervisors can recommend new staff, supervisors can recommend experienced staff, or individuals can self-select through an application or needs assessment (Harvard Business Review, 2001; Sherman et al., 2000).

#### **5. *Match mentoring teams***

Careful matching of mentors and protégés is extremely important; the chemistry between these two people determines the success or failure of the mentoring program. Matches can be made by considering applications from mentors and protégés, and considering criteria such as the similarity of current or past positions, location, the goals of the protégé, similar philosophies of work in child welfare, and mentor availability. A less formal process could also be used, such as a simple self-selection, through which protégés choose their mentors by asking themselves:

- Do I feel that the potential mentor is successful?
- Would his or her behavior work for me?
- Is his or her persona appealing to me, and do I want to be like him or her?

When matching mentoring pairs, also consider the following: how matches will be changed if needed or desired, and new matches made, with little cost to either mentor or protégé; whether one mentor will focus on a single protégé or a group brought together by a common feature; and whether supervisors may mentor their supervisees, which may enhance the oversight relationship, but can also present challenges for the protégé, in that it will be hard to be completely open and honest about difficulties if he or she feels that performance may be judged by such disclosure (Harvard Business Review, 2001; Sherman et al., 2000).

#### **6. *Require initial training, ongoing professional development and support for mentors***

Professional development and support for mentors could take the form of meetings, or structured or open online conversations. Newsletters and a pairing of newer with more experienced mentors could also help. Training should include an introduction to mentoring and supervisory skills, and instruction in adult learning theory, communication, reflective practice, modeling, diversity, observation, conferencing, the change process and self-assessment skills (Sherman et al., 2000).

Some examples of successful mentoring practices include the following<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> Reprinted with permission from the Mentoring Group.

- Lockheed-Martin Missiles & Fire Control uses innovative joint-training activities to prepare mentors and protégés. Pairs do various trust-building exercises, including one with blindfolds in which mentors as a group guide the protégés in solving a problem.
- The Technical University of Berlin and the European Academy for Women in Politics and Economics has an innovative program called Preparing Women to Lead. Qualified university graduates take part in internships in different countries. For three months, the women are paired with female mentors who teach them about their fields, management styles, organizational structures, processes of decision-making, and the day-to-day requirements of management.
- Hewlett-Packard's Roseville, California, facility has a program that includes approximately one hundred pairs at any one time. Mentors and protégés each attend separate half-day training workshops that use written guides, videotapes, and skill practice. Pairs write and sign partnership contracts, which are not collected.
- The U.S. Army-Air Force Exchange Service has implemented mentoring groups. For six months, three mentors and six to eight protégés meet together every two weeks. Protégés focus on career development, including learning the intricacies of how the organization works. Confidentiality is strictly enforced.
- The Canadian Centre for Management Development has an innovative leadership program for developing Public Service senior executives. Participants gain from a multi-faceted approach to training, involving mentors, executive advisors, personal coaches, small learning groups, and varied job experiences.
- Brown University's Mentoring Program for Managers features a "3-D" model: active involvement of mentors, protégés, and the protégés' immediate supervisors. All three groups receive training and materials, and attend "mentoring touch points," facilitated meetings held midway through and near the end of their six-month partnerships. The touch points include candid exchanges in separate meetings of the three groups about what's working and what could be improved. This is followed by a session in which all findings are shared and the groups determine how they can help each other succeed. Although relationships between mentors and protégés remain confidential, supervisors learn how to support these relationships and how to use mentoring with all of their employees.
- The State of Michigan Unemployment Agency has a formal program to train managers at all levels of the agency. Because of the geographical distance between many mentors and protégés, pairs schedule numerous phone meetings and always meet before or after the agency's customer service meetings, which occur quarterly. Several pairs claim their best interactions are while playing eighteen holes of golf! In addition, all pairs get together periodically to compare notes and attend a workshop facilitated by an invited speaker (Phillips-Jones, n.d.).

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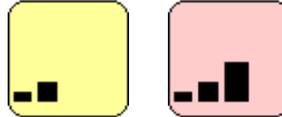
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## **Condition: On-the-Job Training (OJT)**



### **Strategy: Increase or Improve Staff Orientation**

Of critical importance in the training of new employees is their initial orientation to the agency and their specific job tasks. Cyphers (2001) reports that child welfare staff emphasized that a group of “soft” strategies, including increasing or improving the employee orientation, would be even more important than a salary raise when considering whether to remain in their positions. Three years later, state administrators reported that increased or improved orientation or pre-service training was one of the top three most successful strategies to retain child welfare workers (Cyphers, 2005).

Managers have tremendous power to impact the work environment by providing stronger mentoring and support for new employees, and initiating opportunities for professional sharing and learning; in essence, using the orientation time to build the agency’s desired culture.

New employees may be oriented using group methods such as pre-service training clusters, or individually by being paired with experienced colleagues as “buddies” who can help them informally learn the ropes (Graef et al., 2004). Any orientation program should actively and specifically train newcomers to expect and deal with the stressors that come with work in child welfare (Bernotavicz, n.d.). This could include training in how to bridge the gap between expectations and reality, and training in self-management, in which new employees are purposefully guided to create their own initiatives in order to lower uncertainty, and give them a sense of control that will reduce adaptation stress and anxiety (Graef et al., 2004).

The state of Wyoming has established a more formalized and standardized process, which uses a specific set of orientation activities for all new child protection workers that includes the following sections: Welcome to the Agency, Child Protection History, Child Protection and Social Work Values, The Agency and the Community: Taking the “Grand Tour,” File Audit, Legality, and Shadowing Experiences. Each section includes a rationale for its inclusion, goals and objectives, and a detailed list and description of the activities including specific tasks and timelines. For example, Section A, Activity 1, “Welcome to the Agency,” involves completing an eight-item checklist, including the following.

- Take a brief tour of the building, locate your office, and receive formal introductions to your office and/or unit mates, support staff, and other agency personnel.
- Review the agency’s table of organization with your supervisor. Identify who performs what functions in the agency. Identify those staff members with whom you are likely to have frequent contact and where their offices are located.

- Schedule your supervisory conferences with your supervisor. Determine how and when your supervisor will help you complete your orientation and initial training activities during the first six months of your employment (Wyoming DFS, n.d.).

An orientation process such as this helps to ensure that all employees receive the informational, cultural, personal, and job-specific orientation needed to increase their competence as well as the likelihood that they will remain in their positions.

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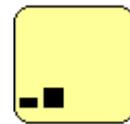
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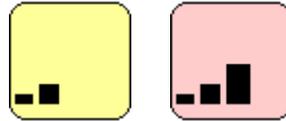
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## **Condition: Organizational (Administrative or Supervisory) Support for Participation in Training**



### **Strategy: Institute Higher Expectations for Training Attendance, Participation, and Transfer of Learning**

Increased or improved in-service was ranked first among fourteen strategies to prevent turnover by forty-two state child welfare agencies for the 2004 ASPHSA survey. Clearly, agency support for training at all levels can help manage preventable turnover. However, training is not always seen as a priority for staff by management because of heavy caseloads, immediate crises, and other competing priorities. In fact, it may even be perceived as a luxury; a respite from normal day-to-day activity, and even a necessary but inconvenient requirement of state policy. Such an attitude undermines the potential for training to transfer to on-the job performance and marginalizes the training experience outside normal performance expectations. When management adopts a proactive and positive stance towards training, staff are likely to assimilate this attitude towards training as well. Through policy and example, management should convey the attitude that training is a priority, staff are expected to fully engage and participate during training, and then transfer their learning to on the job performance.



### **Strategy: Fully Support Employee Training**

One of the top five most effective strategies for recruiting, hiring, and retaining case-carrying child welfare workers is emphasizing continuing education and training (pre-service, in-service, and supervisory). Similarly, the top three strategies most effectively used to retain these workers were increased and improved in-service training, educational opportunities (e.g., MSW programs), and pre-service/orientation training (Cyphers, 2005). According to Berman et al., (2001), both training for the current job and development of new knowledge, skills and abilities to improve future performance and increase potential are important.

The problem is that, all too often, the training offered or required doesn't meet workers' needs, or they don't have time to participate in classes because of the growing workload while they're out of the office (Bernotavicz, n.d.; United States General Accounting Office, 2003). One study of child welfare staff found 62% of respondents reporting that mandatory training wasn't helpful and half reporting that they were more stressed after attending training because they were now set back in their work. Moreover, half of supervisors said workers aren't expected to share what they've learned either with supervisors or colleagues (Kleinpeter et al., 2003).

Supervisors have a great deal of influence regarding how workers view training as well as the quantity and quality of learning workers are able to take away from training. When supervisors focus on compliance with administrative procedures rather than teaching and supporting their staff, little incentive exists for workers to develop skills. Families will benefit when agencies provide more supportive supervision and manageable caseloads (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). When employees feel their supervisors are more supportive, their commitment to the supervisor and the agency increases, resulting in greater employee retention (Smith, 2005). In the following paragraphs, a wide variety of methods that child welfare supervisors can use to support staff participating in useful training are discussed.

Before training, supervisors should create personal development plans with each employee, including learning and professional growth objectives that will be a part of performance reviews. Move beyond rigid bureaucratic structures that ignore the real needs of workers, and have the staff themselves decide what new training is required. Include collaborative decision-making in selecting training. When developing training plans, focus on improving individuals' strengths as well as their weaknesses. Identify core competencies for the organization, and link training to these. Determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required to address present or future tasks and the extent to which employees have these knowledge, skills, and abilities. If upgrading is necessary, what is the most cost-effective way to ensure adequate knowledge, skills and abilities, in the present and in the future? Consider the roles employees and supervisors should play in efforts to improve knowledge, skills, and abilities, and how training and development outcomes can be evaluated to improve these efforts.

During training, do not compete for employees' time; rather, allow them to focus on the training. Offer clear approval for time away to attend trainings. Cover the positions of staff attending training with floater professionals. Don't call workers out of training to handle ongoing caseload

activities. Tell staff members not to carry their pagers while in training. Provide one training opportunity at a time so staff members do not have multiple conflicting training demands.

After training, supervisors should create regular methods, such as a sharing library, for employees to share what they learned in training with supervisors and colleagues. Encourage employees to use the library by offering coverage during its use. Measure how many hours each employee spends in training each year, have each track how they're applying the training, and share this information. Another good way to keep training and learning a priority is to start each meeting by asking, "What new things have we learned recently?"

Generally encourage education by using rewards and incentives. One option is to offer paid or unpaid educational leave for all staff to pursue a degree, preferably an MSW for caseworkers. Some ways to accommodate this include providing staff coverage for those pursuing an MSW, creating an exchange for employees' commitment to stay with the agency, establishing options for internships, adjusting work schedules or caseloads or both, offering partial or full-time leave with the option of voluntary cost saving to continue health insurance benefits, and altering performance expectations accordingly. Youth Villages in Tennessee covers tuition for up to two classes per semester toward a bachelor's or master's degree, and North Carolina's Child Care WAGES project offers salary supplements for child care staff who take college courses or earn relevant credentials.

Another reward option would be to allow sabbaticals of four weeks for independent study on a topic of the worker's choice in child welfare or a related field. When doing so, follow the same documentation procedures as social worker licensing. A pay-back agreement to work for the agency for a certain period of time after the sabbatical could be added to the agreement.

Other rewards and incentives include rewarding employees for reporting what they've learned through reading or participating in training, reimbursing expenses for conference attendance, providing administrative leave and coverage of work while at the conference, maintaining a pool of funds for ongoing education of staff, linking increased compensation to increased training by giving bonuses to those who take the time to improve themselves, and applying for waivers that allow equal agency reimbursement for training of public and private agency staff.

Here are some general suggestions for effective employee training:

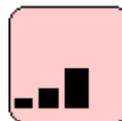
- Eliminate trainings that are no longer needed.
- Provide "just-in-time" training so employees will be immediately able to use new skills.
- Offer nontraditional training like mentoring, job sharing, and leadership development. For example, new hires who aren't participants in the IV-E preparation could be protégés of tenured employees selected for superior performance, to observe and practice new skills for their first three months.
- Promote job shadowing where staff "spend a day in the life" of other staff to become familiar with other positions. Supply coverage while the worker is away.
- Create increased training options for experienced caseworkers, including attendance at out-of-state conferences.

- Hold workshops to help caseworkers successfully move through the two or three year transition period, possibly including reflective practice, stress and burnout prevention, and reunions of their pre-service groups.
- Establish “lunch and learn” groups where employees meet on a regular basis to share information about various professional topics over an extended lunch. Ensure that coverage is available during this time, or adjust office schedules accordingly.
- Offer the opportunity to learn about and use technology, including internet access for professional articles and education opportunities.
- Make sure administrators and supervisors show support by attending training programs themselves and doing the same kinds of sharing as other employees.
- Have administrators and supervisors teach classes to other employees.
- Allow younger staff to train older staff, and vice versa.

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## **Condition: Training Preparation/Education for Work**



### **Strategy: Provide Tuition Assistance and Stipends**

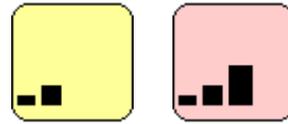
In their analysis of a successful social work tuition assistance program in Kentucky, Fox, Miller, & Barbee (2003) found that this program supported the pursuit of social work education degrees in return for a guarantee of service for one to two years (such as Title IV-E training funds). While encouraging, the research on whether social work educational incentive programs improve retention rates is not yet definitive (Dickinson & Perry, 2002). This research suggests that hiring professionally trained social workers alone will not protect against high turnover rates. According to the 2004 ASPSHA survey, university-agency training partnerships and stipend programs ranked fifth in effectiveness in recruiting and hiring practices. Ranked second most effective was emphasizing continuing education and training opportunities in the agency, which suggests that continuing education for current staff should take a higher priority.

Source:

Dickinson, N. S., & Perry, R. S. (2002). Factors influencing the retention of specially educated public child welfare workers. *Journal of Health & Social Policy*, 15(3/4), 89-103.

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## **Condition: Transfer of Training Experience to Job**



### **Strategy: Implement a Transfer of Learning Program**

The way that training is integrated into an agency's overall culture and strategy is a distinguishing factor between high-performing organizations and others (Bailey, 1998). Although training is often used to improve both child welfare practice and outcomes for children and families, when only 10-13% of learning transfers back to the work setting, neither of these results is likely. This equates to a loss of \$.87 - \$.90 of every dollar agencies spend on training (Curry et al., 2005).

The top factors influencing the transfer of learning are:

- Trainer adult learning and transfer strategies
- Training relevance and applicability to the job
- Supervisory support for training and application
- Top management and organizational support for training and application
- Application plan
- Participant perceived learning
- Participant motivation to attend training
- Participant prior experience with training and application
- Co-worker support for training and application
- Congruence between training and organization
- Pre-training preparation.

(Curry et al., 2005)

To create a transfer of learning program, begin by linking training to the agency's overall mission, goals, and strategy. Help employees see how their training and improved performance through applying the new learning leads to the agency's fulfillment of its strategy. For every important value an agency espouses, there should be training opportunities linked to performance objectives for each individual, including personal qualities necessary for success (Bailey, 1998).

Help make transfer of learning more likely by offering regular training in areas staff say are most relevant to their work (Johnson, 2004). As workers try to use their new skills, actual performance may decrease for a short period of time so it is critical to support them during this period with supervisory coaching. (Curry et al., 1994). Here are some examples of appropriate supervisory support:

- Kentucky uses senior workers as field-training specialists to help mentor new staff.

- Arkansas matches university staff with new caseworkers to act as mentors, and each worker has weekly personal sessions with a mentor for a year.
- Oklahoma involves mentors in a structured five-week program to promote learning transfer for new workers.
- California also uses mentoring, and evaluates it with a non-equivalent control group design that compares outcomes for two different mentoring models and a control group.
- Ohio has trainers provide “after the training” mentoring and coaching for workers involved in Skill-Building Certificate Programs, and also has a Skill Building and Transfer of Learning Lab where trainers can strengthen their ability to facilitate application of learning.
- Pennsylvania uses transfer-of-learning specialists to promote application of knowledge and skill after training, using a ten-step curriculum package (Curry et al., 2005).

The following table, adapted from Curry & Caplan (1991) and Curry, Caplan, & Knuppel (1994), describes concrete activities trainees, trainers, co-workers, and supervisors can do before, during, and after training to help ensure the application of new learning<sup>7</sup>.

<b>Things Trainees, Trainers, Co-Workers &amp; Supervisors Can Do To Help Transfer Training Back To The Job</b>			
	<b>BEFORE</b>	<b>DURING</b>	<b>AFTER</b>
<b>Trainees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with supervisors to plan coverage of cases/unit while in training.</li> <li>• Identify cases to keep in mind.</li> <li>• Begin to formulate objectives for action plan.</li> <li>• Foster mind-set of getting involved in the learning and transfer process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify barriers and facilitative forces for application.</li> <li>• Ask, “How can I apply this to my caseload?”</li> <li>• Identify key individuals who can have an impact on barriers and facilitators.</li> <li>• Make a commitment with co-trainees to support each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a timely meeting with supervisor to discuss importance and application.</li> <li>• Share information with co-workers.</li> <li>• Follow through with action plan.</li> <li>• Place visual reminders where easily seen.</li> </ul>
<b>Trainers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a multi-measure needs assessment.</li> <li>• Provide information (e.g., objectives and outline of training) to administrators, supervisors, and trainees.</li> <li>• Make transfer a priority in all phases of the training cycle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set the stage for focusing on transfer.</li> <li>• Learn retention strategies (identical elements, general principles, stimulus variability, conditions of practice).</li> <li>• Focus on adult learning principles and trainee learning styles.</li> <li>• Implement action plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer reminders of commitment to action plan.</li> <li>• Use “booster shot” training sessions.</li> <li>• Evaluate transfer.</li> </ul>
<b>Co-Workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve teams in the needs assessment process.</li> <li>• Have teams identify the impact of training on specific cases.</li> <li>• Encourage active involvement in the learning and transfer process as a group norm.</li> <li>• Identify how training relates to team goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit together to reinforce learning and application behavior of other team members.</li> <li>• Review team members’ action plans.</li> <li>• Make plans to reinforce teammates’ action plans.</li> <li>• Develop a team action plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review training content and application in team meetings.</li> <li>• Remind team members of action plans.</li> <li>• Provide team recognition for transfer.</li> <li>• Integrate training team plans and decisions.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Adapted with permission from author and Temple University.

<p><b>Supervisors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be involved in the planning and development of training.</li> <li>• Stress the importance of self-development from the start of employment. Encourage development of self-monitoring skills.</li> <li>• Convey training and application as a priority. Help workers see the need for training (connection to improved performance, self-development, agency mission and goals) as well as both learning and doing.</li> <li>• Decide when there is a need for training, and only send learners with an identified training need, so that they're the right learners at the right training at the right time.</li> <li>• Conduct a pre-training conference with the trainee, and discuss workshop expectations.</li> <li>• Assess prior learning experiences, and identify what helped or hindered learning and application.</li> <li>• Clarify goals, roles, and interpersonal expectations. Consider developing a learning contract or action plan.</li> <li>• Help workers identify cases and situations relevant to an upcoming training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that there are no distractions and cover for the trainee if necessary.</li> <li>• Convey that training is a priority.</li> <li>• Discuss training and application with worker between sessions, if multiple-day training.</li> <li>• Attend training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers to application of new skills.</li> <li>• Provide worker opportunity to try out new skills, and reinforce usage.</li> <li>• Observe the use of new skills and provide performance feedback or coaching.</li> <li>• Provide support during the time when results are reduced because of new skills.</li> <li>• Meet with supervisee within a week to review key points in training and action plan. In this supervisory conference, use questions to help the worker integrate learning, plan for application, promote greater depth in processing, attach new learning to previous learning and future application, use labels and general rules as well as identify exceptions, and see underlying principles of child welfare work. Ask the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What were the three most important learning points?</li> <li>○ How is this learning similar to what you already know?</li> <li>○ How is it different?</li> <li>○ What cases and situations does it apply to? Why?</li> <li>○ What ideas do you have for application?</li> <li>○ When should this not be used?</li> <li>○ How can you adapt the ideas to fit a new situation?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have worker present learning at a team meeting.</li> <li>• Encourage other team members to think of possible applications.</li> <li>• Provide continuous then intermittent reinforcement.</li> <li>• Help worker plan for using retrieval cues.</li> <li>• Encourage the worker to do memory work and reflect on interaction with clients.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor the learning and application process.</li> </ul>
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Sources:

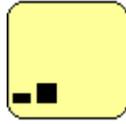
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## DOMAIN: RETENTION

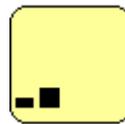
### **Condition: Administrative Support for Job Duties**



#### **Strategy: Increase Support Staff**

Increasing support staff to assist caseworkers with paperwork and administrative duties will free up time available to caseworkers. Typically, staff spend at least one-third, sometimes more than half of their time on documentation activities. Some of these documentation activities are redundant or simplistic such as data entry. Various staff configurations have been used to help alleviate the administrative tasks of caseworkers to free them for more client contact time. Presumably, more time interacting with clients results in stronger job satisfaction.

A centralized support staff unit can manage many of these activities. Workers submit administrative tasks to the unit who then complete the activity. For example, support staff can schedule appointments, file paperwork, enter data, and arrange for staffings. Another approach is to assign a support staff person to a unit and this person is responsible for the unit's support tasks and activities. This person's time may be divvied up by rotating days to each team member, e.g., on Mondays, Sarah supports Tammy, on Tuesday, she supports Michael and so on. Designated support staff helps to alleviate the administrative burden for staff so that they can spend more time with clients and thus be less stressed and more satisfied and in turn, more likely to stay with the agency.



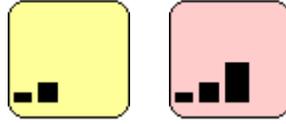
#### **Strategy: Assess the Impact of Policies on Workers**

One of the top complaints from workers in child welfare is about policies that are established and maintained without adequate thought given to the impact of those policies on frontline employees. No administrator writes policy with the explicit intent of increasing workload or paperwork, but these types of unintended consequences can raise workers' stress levels and decrease satisfaction until retention is less likely.

Before a new policy is written (and even when reviewing existing policies), convene a short-term work group composed of staff from all levels that will review the proposed or existing policy to ensure that care of children, families, *and* employees are all furthered. Consider whether the idea need not be made into policy itself, but could be added to another pre-existing system or structure. Or perhaps the idea will actually impact workers in a positive way, or involves benefits for clients that are so critical as to outweigh impact on workers.

It is important that the results of these work groups are openly communicated to all employees. The review and decision-making process should be fully explained to establish trust in the process, the individuals involved, and the final outcome.

## **Condition: Community Support**



### **Strategy: Improve Public Image**

Unfortunately, it is rare for the public at large to form favorable opinions of child welfare systems. The media's frequent misinformation, one-sided perspectives, and tendency to focus on the sensational can often create problems for agencies, including a reduced pool of qualified applicants.

Organizations are not powerless to improve their image in the eyes of the public. To do so, create a strategic communications plan that includes situational assessment, goals, tactics, timelines, work assignments, and evaluation of the plan's impact. Have communications student interns create this plan, or secure a communications firm to work pro bono. The plan should establish organizational structures and identify champions who can promote public child welfare as service work that is a viable and respectable career choice (Ellett, 2002).

Here are some elements that such a plan might include:

- Articulate specific negative ideas that the public has about child-welfare workers, and tailor communications to address these. Make sure to address the high-level qualifications of child welfare workers.
- Identify different target audiences, and individual messages and desired outcomes and actions for each. Create brochures or other publications with messages specific to these different target audiences.
- Distribute paper or online newsletters, or both, that consistently carry the agency's most important messages.
- Select and train a Speakers' Bureau to systematically present to faith and community groups. Aggressively and strategically market the Speakers' Bureau so engagements are consistently taking place.
- Develop positive working relationships with local media (television, radio, newspaper) during non-crisis times. Pitch stories with unique news hooks that help the reporters and announcers meet their own needs, and that connect to other current stories. Create a regular timeline of communication with the media about successes and positive child welfare achievements.
- Become known by the media as ready local experts who may be consulted regarding any issues related to child welfare. Become known for giving high quality information, being professional, and responding quickly to media inquiries.
- Offer rewards for employees to alert agency communications staff to great stories concerning children, families, and workers that should be pitched to the media.
- Work with the media and the legal system to create a campaign that extols the virtues of the profession (Cyphers, 2001). For example, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation sponsored a recruitment campaign with the message, "Some people are lucky enough to love their work. Make your work more than a paycheck. We offer some of the

best benefits around, plus appreciation like you've never had before" (Howard & Gould, 2000).

- Get specific about competitor's jobs and attractive labor market alternatives, and tailor marketing to these areas to show why social work is a better choice (Cyphers, 2001).
- Train and strategically place child welfare employees on public and nonprofit boards and commissions, and publicize their contributions.
- Join local associations of nonprofits and other human service groups to network and establish positive relationships (Helfgott, 1991; Pasztor et al., 2002).

In the end, having a stable, committed, competent staff, and making sure that their powerful stories are told will go a long way towards improving the public image of child welfare workers (Helfgott, 1991).

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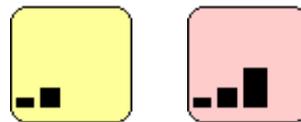
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## **Condition: Compensation Issues**



### **Strategy: Implement Pay-for-Performance**

Pay-for-performance is a compensation strategy in which monetary rewards in addition to base salary are given for performing up to and exceeding expectations, rather than given as a simple yearly cost-of-living increase. In his 2001 survey of the nation's child welfare workforce, Cyphers found that raising salaries to include pay-for-performance (PFP) and other incentives is *the most important action* a child welfare agency can take to successfully recruit and retain qualified workers. According to Howard Risher of the Center for Human Resources at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, public agencies that adopt PFP policies can achieve 30-40% increases in productivity (Wellborn, 2004).

The Education Committee of the States, in its 2001 review of five states' PFP plans for their educational systems, recommends that developers consider the following questions, which are readily transferable to public child welfare settings:

- What kinds of activities or behaviors is the PFP plan intended to promote?
- How significant a percentage of the total salary will be performance-based pay?

- Will the evaluation of performance be based on client and case results, demonstration of professional skills and knowledge, achievement of other set targets, or a combination?
- What mechanisms and opportunities for feedback and remediation will be in place?
- What role can state policymakers play in fostering and supporting pay-for-performance systems?
- Will performance pay be awarded to individual staff, groups of staff, or an entire team, division, or office?

The agency’s goals will determine the answer to the question of whether rewards will be given to individuals or groups, or both. The following table describes when individual and group incentives will be successes and failures, according to Fox Lawson and Associates (1998) <sup>8</sup>.

	<b>Succeed When</b>	<b>Fail When</b>
<b>Individual Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear performance measures are identified.</li> <li>• Evaluators receive frequent high-quality training.</li> <li>• Rewards are worthwhile and guaranteed.</li> <li>• Communication is excellent.</li> <li>• Top performance is distinguished from regular performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers cannot or will not distinguish between levels of performance.</li> <li>• The agency doesn’t fund the program.</li> <li>• Measurement systems are ill-defined.</li> <li>• Monetary value is low in relation to the energy expended (i.e., 3% or less of base pay).</li> </ul>
<b>Group Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency culture supports teamwork.</li> <li>• Good baseline measures are available.</li> <li>• Trust is established.</li> <li>• All employees have the opportunity to be included.</li> <li>• Rewards are separate from regular salary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management does not support the initiative.</li> <li>• An overly complex formula is used.</li> <li>• Distrust exists.</li> <li>• Administrative or legislative interference takes place.</li> <li>• Baseline data is lacking.</li> <li>• Communication is poor.</li> </ul>

In 1998, Ohio’s largest human services agency changed to a pay-for-performance system, in which the union had a direct voice in articulating performance standards, or work objectives, for all frontline positions in the agency. These work objectives determine 80% of an employee’s salary adjustment, while the remaining 20% is dictated by professional standards and personal objectives. Managers and most workers report satisfaction with this ground-breaking agreement’s results. Some areas of dissatisfaction include a reported lack of consistency, occasional unfairness, too much paperwork, and insignificant pay increases (Wellborn, 2004).

South Carolina’s Office of Human Resources has realigned fifty narrow pay grades into ten broader salary categories, which increased the range of salaries under each particular job title. These adjustments allowed managers greater flexibility to adjust workers’ compensation to align with their job performance. Workers and their supervisions can use an “Employee Performance Management System” to jointly create measurable goals, the achievement of which partially determine the workers’ salary increase. Skilled supervisors and workers reported being happier with this system (Mendel, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Reprinted with author’s permission.

Carson City, Nevada, uses a PFP system for its internal auditor. This system uses performance indicators that are “SMART:” Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Time-framed. The internal auditor is responsible for notifying supervisors of the potential impact of uncontrollable variables. The maximum financial reward possible is 15% of salary, and each item in the PFP plan is weighted and designated a percentage of that total reward.

Sources:

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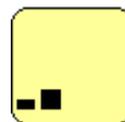
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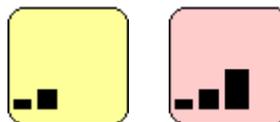
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### **Strategy: Use a Pay Tier System for Higher Education Levels**

Staff receive additional compensation based upon their degree level. Staff with a master’s degree, preferably in social work, receive higher pay than those without such a degree. Oftentimes, these programs are also accompanied with tuition reimbursement incentives or other such programs to encourage staff to obtain advanced degrees.



### **Strategy: Consistently Review and Adjust Salaries**

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003), jobs in the social service sector are among the five worst paying professional positions, and the sector pays workers less than any other sector hiring similarly qualified people for comparable jobs. The higher a worker goes up the career ladder, the greater this discrepancy becomes. “Competitive pay is essential for attracting and retaining personnel,” reports Graef et al. (2004). In Cyphers et al., (2004) state child welfare administrators reported that the top four of the six most severe problems encountered in the hiring and recruitment of workers were (1) perceived imbalance of job demands and compensation; (2) lack of competitive salaries for comparable positions; (3) other attractive labor market options for those seeking employment; and (4) budget constraints other than hiring freezes or restrictions.

Employees will always state that a higher salary will help them stay in their positions. But, if salaries are to be meaningfully increased in a way that affects retention, wages must be raised five to eight percent (Withers, 2001).

It is imperative that child welfare agencies institute a system to review salaries in comparison with job levels, work tasks, education and experience required and possessed by individuals, other public child welfare departments with similar demographics, comparable local private human service organizations, and other benchmarks. This system could be part of a special project team responsible for ensuring employee satisfaction (see page 79), which could include a salary subcommittee. This group should work with administrators to include recommended salary increases in the budgets for future years.

This salary subcommittee should be composed of staff from a variety of levels and types of positions. It should make an initial plan and timeline, including the individuals responsible for the completion of each task, to structure its work. The plan should include:

- How often the group will meet both initially and later on in the process.
- What the group's authority and decision making powers will be regarding recommendations for salary levels and adjustments.
- How this body will obtain budgetary information regarding salary dollars available.
- If increases are recommended that require additional funds for implementation, whether this subcommittee will be responsible for securing those funds or another body will carry that responsibility. A situation in which the committee issues recommendations that cannot be acted upon due to lack of money must be avoided.
- How this body's work will connect with other staff reward and recognition programs currently underway.
- What kinds of compensation arrangements will be explored (simple yearly cost-of-living increases, pay-for-performance or merit pay, longevity bonuses, knowledge-based pay systems, etc.).
- When the first review should be done.
- Whether all or just selected staff categories will be reviewed.
- How confidentiality regarding individuals' incomes will be protected.
- How the work of this subcommittee will be shared with the agency as a whole.
- The means by which other staff may communicate with the group, including process input and response to the group's findings.
- The degree to which supervisors will have flexibility regarding salary increases within a certain range, given the subcommittee's recommendations.
- How frequently subsequent reviews should take place (Cyphers, 2001; Graef & Potter, 2004).

Berman et al. (2001) recommend that a salary survey consist of the following steps: (1) identifying key or benchmark jobs, avoiding vague job categories; (2) selecting organizations that are truly comparable; (3) collecting data, first determining how data will be collected (mail, phone, interviews) and from where (governmental agencies, professional associations [e.g., CWLA Salary Study], consulting firms, Web sites [e.g., International Personnel Management Association, <http://www.ipma-hr.org>]).

The Texas Library System is an example of a group that completed a salary survey of all its local offices. First, a Salary Compensation Task Force (SCTF) was established, and chairpersons with significant compensation review experience were appointed. Then, SCTF members were trained to collect data and evaluate job positions. Letters were sent to the directors of all public and

academic libraries in the state, requesting the following specific information and indicating where and by what date the data should be sent:

- Current job descriptions for each position
- Current job descriptions for comparable positions in other agencies under the same organizational jurisdiction
- Minimum and maximum pay for each position and all comparable positions in the other agencies
- Population of the legal service area
- Most recent classification and salary plan
- Salary administration policies and procedures

The data was received and analyzed. First, the SCTF converted all salary information to annual salaries based on a 2,080 hours per standard work year. Job positions working less than forty hours per week were converted to an annual salary by determining an hourly rate based on total hours worked per year and multiplying the hourly rate by 2,080. All the job positions were entered into a spreadsheet, which displayed the job positions by organization, position title, salary, evaluation, and comparable score. SCTF members reviewed and organized each job position by essential skills and evaluations into identified job categories, and reviewed each job category to ensure that each position was placed in the appropriate job category. Each position was evaluated using ten compensable factors, and a score was assigned to each position based on its requirements. The factors were used to compare positions from the libraries and the other comparable entities in their political jurisdictions, and each compensable factor was assigned a value, which were added to determine a compensable score. If two positions were comparable, they were given a similar compensable score. The ten factors were:

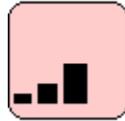
- 1) Scope of duties
- 2) Educational requirements
- 3) Previous related experience
- 4) Problem solving, creativity and freedom to act, and decision-making
- 5) Consequence of errors
- 6) Contracts required
- 7) Physical working conditions
- 8) Sensory/mental requirements
- 9) Environmental working conditions
- 10) Responsibility for directing and instructing others.

SCTF members reported their findings to the SCTF co-chairs for assessment. Each job position, regardless of its actual job title, fell into a specific job level within a specific job category, and job category titles were assigned to positions within all organizations that accomplish similar tasks and have similar compensable factor values (Adams & Totten, 2004).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003) suggests the following approaches to assist with salary review and increase: instituting broadband civil service titles; instituting pay differentials for on-call work, longevity, or merit; connecting increased compensation to increased training; and allowing administration to have the flexibility to hire and keep only the best staff.

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**Strategy: Increase Soft Benefits**

If an increase in wages is not possible, organizations can increase soft benefits such as:

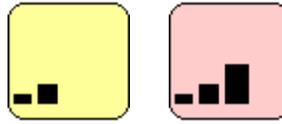
- Dependent-care leave
- Child-care subsidies
- Elder-care programs
- Counseling and referral
- Flexible working hours
- Increased in-service training
- Educational opportunities
- Casual dress
- Recognition and rewards for longevity
- Promoting professional growth.

Increasing training and professional development promotes retention both through the content of the trainings (such as stress reduction) and through the respite from day-to-day stressful conditions that training provides. It is important to note that these tactics must be approached in conjunction with an analysis of workload. Staff may be reluctant to use soft benefits such as flex time if they know that their workloads are at risk of increasing while they are off (Bernotavicz, n.d.).

Source:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:  
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## **Condition: Consistent Reward and Recognition**



### **Strategy: Value, Reward, and Recognize Workers**

Studies have shown that child welfare workers feeling undervalued is one of the top one to five most problematic issues that leads to turnover (Cyphers, 2001; Smith, 2001; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). In her naturalistic study of public child welfare workers, Reagh (1994) found that, among a sample of workers who were currently employed in the field for five years or more, workers expressed a strong need to feel valued, rewarded, and appreciated. Money was cited as an important component of recognition, but was not the *only* method of recognition. It's not about money; it's about feeling genuinely and individually noticed, recognized, and appreciated for achievement (Arthur, 2001). Intangible incentives such as job rotation and programs that capitalize on the workers' specialized knowledge are very important (Graef et al., 2002).

According to Don Jacobson of GovLeaders.org, a 2002 OPM survey found that only 30% of respondents (who were all government employees) agreed with the statement "Our organization's awards program provides me with the incentive to do my best." Howard and Gould (2000) point out that that it is critical for management to recognize workers' efforts since clients often cannot or do not.

When considering how best to reward employees, remember that tossing out perks may make employees happy at the moment, but it will not make them stay. Rewards should not be expected, or an automatic part of a yearly package. Remember that a reward program must change over time to remain fresh and real. Reward and recognition programs should be tailored to individuals' needs, differences, and personalities. A reward or perk will lose impact unless it is personally meaningful to a unique individual. There are many very simple ways to acknowledge that employees are valued—for instance, make sure to notice them as you pass by and greet them by name. If you are with others, smile, shake hands, and introduce the employee, which will make him feel respected and honored. Trust workers to get the job done, to handle important tasks and responsibilities in their own way, as long as it meets final objectives.

Create opportunities for staff at all levels to make suggestions that will be seriously considered and addressed. Listen to staff's needs and wants, do everything to respond to them, and be honest about those that cannot be addressed. Respond to these requests quickly, or if necessary, immediately acknowledge the issue and set a time to return to it. Pay attention when workers seem to need extra support, either because of personal or professional challenges. Ask them how to be most helpful, provide whatever is possible, and help them access other resources for the areas with which assistance cannot be provided (Kaye and Jordan-Evans, 2002; Bernotavicz, n.d.; Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999; Nelson, 1994; Smith, 2001; Withers, 2001).

One of the best ways to provide consistent reward and recognition is to set up an employee work group charged with designing, executing, and overseeing such a program. For further information on this method, please see page 79. Designate a special project team responsible for ensuring employee satisfaction. Before consciously trying to improve employee recognition, it is

critical to follow the tenets described in this strategy so that all rewards achieve their intended purpose and are not inadvertently counterproductive.

Agencies can offer informal, spontaneous awards that flow from personalized, instant recognition from employees' own managers. Studies show that although this technique has the *highest motivational impact*, it is used *less than any other* (Nelson, 1994). Praise should be spontaneous, specific, purposeful, and in writing.

The list below gives a wide variety of formal and informal methods for recognizing and rewarding employees. Formal rewards require more structure and sometimes more money, recur more often than informal types, and may use concrete or tangible items to express appreciation.

Some examples of formal rewards are:

- Multi-level reward programs and point systems
  - Contests
  - Field trips to special events
  - Educational opportunities for additional training or professional development
  - Opportunities for personal growth and self-development
  - Opportunities for advancement, responsibility, and visibility
  - Celebration of employee and organizational anniversaries
  - Health and fitness benefits
  - Travel
  - Paid vacations to special locations
  - Annual award ceremonies
  - Employee-of-the-month selection
  - Performance-based awards
  - Service-based rewards, especially for longevity
  - Achievement awards
  - Financial awards
  - Nomination for an industry award
  - Payment of professional association dues
  - Opportunities to serve as a temporary intern in another agency position to learn those duties
  - Opportunities to move up or over on a career ladder
  - Opportunities to serve as a mentor to other workers
  - Opportunities to present to other staff on important issues
- (Formal rewards from Nelson, 1994; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003; Cyphers, 2001; Cyphers, et al., 2004; Graef et al., 2002; Smith, 2001; Arthur, 2001; Bernotavicz, n.d.)

Informal rewards include:

- Public recognition and social rewards
- Time off
- Flexible work schedules

- Cash or cash substitutes
  - Merchandise
  - Apparel
  - Food
  - Recognition items such as trophies and plaques
  - Fun and celebrations
  - Outstanding employee awards
  - Awards for productivity and quality of work
  - Employee suggestion awards
  - Customer service awards
  - Group or team awards
  - Awards for attendance and safety
  - Washing an employee's car in the parking lot during lunch
  - Naming a continuing recognition award after an outstanding employee
  - Articulating specific processes for staff to meaningfully participate in management decision-making, where all are collectively held accountable
  - Personally congratulating employees who do well
  - Holding morale-building meetings to celebrate successes
  - An award that employees pass one-by-one to their peers to honor special contributions
  - Buying lunch for a team that's successfully completed a special project
  - Rewards for employees who live well-balanced lifestyles, assuming that these individuals perform at a high level in all aspects of their lives
  - Verbal praise
  - Time off
  - Letters of appreciation
  - Shirts, mugs, key chains, and other items imprinted with the agency's logo
  - Certificates and plaques
  - Ceremonial coins
  - Pizza and ice cream parties
  - Tickets to sports events
  - Access to decision makers
  - Picnics and outings
  - Parking spaces
  - Special meals as a group
  - Surprise celebrations
  - Handwritten notes
  - Movie tickets
  - Peer recognition
  - Toys
  - Small monetary gifts (\$50-\$100)
- (Informal rewards from Nelson, 1994; Arthur, 2001; Comeau-Kirschner and Wah, 1999; Cyphers, 2001; Graef et al., 2002; Withers, 200; Smith, 2001; Kaye and Jordan-Evans, 2002)

For more suggestions, see *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* (Nelson, 1994). Nelson recommends that for every four informal rewards given to an individual, there be a more formal acknowledgement. Likewise, for every four formal recognitions that an individual receives, an even more formal method should be used. Please also consult Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2002) for countless concrete, usable methods for effectively recognizing employees for their contributions. Arthur (2001) offers the following comprehensive checklist of non-compensation and nonbenefits incentives and perks, which can help the agency determine which best fit its unique situation<sup>9</sup>:

Incentive or Perk	Agency Currently Offers	Agency Would Never Consider Offering	Agency Would Consider Offering
Adoption assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Airline tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air travel, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alternative work schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bringing kids to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bringing parents to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car financing at below-market prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car maintenance allowance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car service to and from work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car washed and waxed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Casual attire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cell phones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleaning services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing allowance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Club memberships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Company car	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Company-supported childcare center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Company-supported eldercare center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concierge services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customized surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dependent-care flex spending account	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dry cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eldercare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial planning, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flying lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food shopping services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gift certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guaranteed severance packages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home maintenance services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home security systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housekeeping services, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted with permission from Amacom.

Incentive or Perk	Agency Currently Offers	Agency Would Never Consider Offering	Agency Would Consider Offering
Lactation program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laptops/home computers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makeovers, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manicures, pedicures, and facials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile dental vans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nap time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One-day vacations to wherever the employee wants to go	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On-site massages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal loans at below-market lending rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pet insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pets at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepaid legal services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roadside assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-defense training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tax services, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tickets to sporting and cultural events, free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation reimbursement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuition reimbursement (full or partial) for employees and children of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tutoring of an employee's child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of employees in commercials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sources:

Arthur, D. (2001). *The employee recruitment and retention handbook*. New York: Amacom.

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site: <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.html>.

Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003). *The unsolved challenge of system reform: The condition of the frontline human services workforce*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

Comeau-Kirschner, C., & Wah, L. (1999). Holistic management. *Management Review*, 88(11), 26-32.

Cyphers, G. (2001) *Report from the child welfare workforce survey: State and county data and findings*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.

Cyphers, G., Light, A., Gertz, L., MaGowan, N., Vandergrift, K., & Plummer, M. (2005). *Report from the 2004 child welfare workforce survey: State agency findings*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.

Graef, M. I., Potter, M. E., & Rohde, T. L. (2002). *Why do they stay? Research-based implications for practice*. Retrieved from Child Welfare League of America Web site: <http://www.cwla.org/programs/trieschman/2002fbwrecap.htm>.

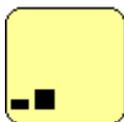
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## **Condition: Emotional Exhaustion/Burnout**

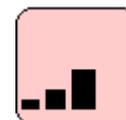


### **Strategy: Allow Job Rotation**

Job rotation allows staff the opportunity to work in other areas of the agency. It is an excellent strategy to cross-train staff and to build inter-agency collaboration; however, it is not an effective cure for burnout. Entrepreneur.com argues that burnout results from a lack of positive reinforcement. Therefore, taking someone out of one job and placing them in another will alleviate a problem for a while, until the novelty of the new job wears off and the issues surrounding lack of positive reinforcement emerge again (Daniels, 2001). Job rotation can be an effective strategy, but only as one approach among several in a comprehensive program to attack burnout.

Source:

Daniels, A. (2001). Is job rotation a motivator or a punishment? When employees are burned out, will giving them a change of scenery help? *Entrepreneur.com*. Retrieved from (<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,288243,00.html> ).



### **Strategy: Use a Multi-Faceted Approach to Address Staff Burnout**

Victor Vieth, in his article “When Days are Gray: Avoiding Burnout as Child Abuse Professionals,” gives the following advice about how to deal with burnout.

“It is not enough to recognize the reality of burnout among child abuse professionals, we must be proactive in combating it.” Toward this end, consider the following suggestions<sup>10</sup>.

**First, be well trained.** If, for example, the job involves speaking to children, make sure workers have a thorough grounding in child development, memory and suggestibility research, and linguistics. Adequate training will produce stronger cases and fewer opportunities for defense attorneys, the public, and others to hurl rocks in the agency’s direction. Training also allows the agency to take a breather, reflect, and then develop the best practices. Training energizes child abuse professionals and gives us important contacts that can assist in the handling of difficult cases.

<sup>10</sup> Reprinted with permission from the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse.

Supervisors should make sure the budget allows for adequate training opportunities not only as a means of delivering quality service to the community, but as a means of assuring the emotional well-being of the keepers of the children.

**Second, support the members of the multi-disciplinary team.** Make a concerted effort to get together on regularly scheduled social outings as a means of unwinding and offering each other support. If the jurisdiction does not have a multi-disciplinary team, this is one more reason to start one.

**Third, praise one another often and in public.** Press releases announcing a child abuse conviction should include public praise for the investigators and prosecutors handling the case. In addition, send personal thank you notes to all the workers involved in the case. Rather than a form letter, take the time to understand why the work of the child protection professional made a difference and commend the work accordingly. It can be as simple as writing “your interrogation of the suspect was extremely helpful in convincing the jury how unbelievable the defendant’s story was.” In the same vein, prosecutor organizations, bar associations and other groups should give awards or other recognition to those who do the job of child protection and who excel.

**Fourth, keep a file of thank you letters received from victims and colleagues over the years.** When days are gray and defeatism starts to set in, take a look at the file and remind yourself that sometimes you do make a difference. I know a prosecutor who keeps a collage in his office of the artwork child abuse victims sent to him over the years as a means of expressing their gratitude.

**Fifth, consider the option of periodically leaving the work of child abuse.** Choosing to handle drug or other cases for a time may allow you to get rejuvenated and come back to the child abuse unit with renewed energy. In some cases, it may not be necessary to leave the work of child abuse altogether but simply to handle a different aspect of it. For example, handling civil as opposed to criminal child protection cases may be sufficient.

If you take a respite from your traditional duties, do not come back until you are ready. Well-meaning colleagues who miss you may encourage you to come back or may repeatedly contact you for advice on difficult cases. Make it clear that you are making a temporary, but clear break from child protection work and that you will return when you are emotionally able to do so.

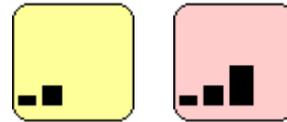
**Sixth, find a unique approach to motivation.** Recognize that the nature of our work puts us in the middle of broken homes overflowing with emotion and that we will inevitably be verbally abused, even by the victims we are trying to protect. To put this in perspective, remember you are not alone. Remember the words of Earl Warren, “everything I did in my life that was worthwhile, I caught hell for.” Better yet, have these words matted, framed and hung in your office.

**Seventh, never lose heart.** As child abuse professionals, we know our lot in life is different from the lot of others. Other people may read, see, and hear the ugliness of the world but, by and large, they do so from behind the security of their newspapers, radios and television sets. We, on the other hand, experience the ugliness of the world up close and personal. We actually hear the

quivering voice of a child who speaks to us about abuse. We actually see the disfigured face of a woman beaten solely because doing so made somebody feel strong.

Source:

Veith, V. (2001). *When days are gray: Avoiding burnout as child abuse professionals*. Retrieved from [http://www.ndaa-apri.org/publications/newsletters/update\\_volume\\_14\\_number\\_4\\_2001.html](http://www.ndaa-apri.org/publications/newsletters/update_volume_14_number_4_2001.html)



### **Strategy: Improve Supervision to Counteract Burnout**

Supervisors have a crucial role in the prevention of staff burnout, but in order to be effective, they themselves must not be burnt out. Supervisors should be able to recognize the symptoms of burnout, evaluate their own and their workers' reactions to burnout, analyze the causes of burnout, and assume responsibility to intervene and change the situation for the better.

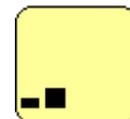
Zischka and Fox (1983) recommend that supervisors do the following to counteract burnout and while suggested over twenty years ago, they are just as relevant in today's environment:

- Offer staff the opportunity to participate in decision-making.
- Train staff on techniques for participatory management.
- Meaningfully recognize efforts of staff.
- Support and strengthen a strong peer network and group cohesiveness.
- Encourage staff and management to work together.
- Help staff develop realistic coping strategies.
- Develop career-planning strategies.
- Evaluate workers' strengths before evaluating weaknesses.
- Promote special interests of staff.
- Arrange for assignment changes.
- Create a learning environment.

Source:

Zischka, P. C. & Fox, R. (1983). Burnout and the catalytic role of the supervisor. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 1(2), 43-52.

### ***Condition: Feeling of Being Unsafe on the Job***



### **Strategy: Make Supervisors Responsible for Ensuring a Safe Environment**

Feeling unsafe in one's work environment and especially perceiving a risk of physical harm can significantly increase a worker's stress, contribute to burnout, and ultimately factor into an employee's decision to leave an agency (Kreisher, 2002).

Workplace violence has been addressed in some states by the inclusion of health and safety language in employment contracts, which makes supervisors responsible for ensuring a safe working environment (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees). Still, without a comprehensive plan to address the issue, this tactic only puts additional responsibility on supervisors without providing the infrastructure to allow them to meet their contractual obligations.

Recent media accounts of worker deaths have prompted additional discussion about the topic. In Johnson County, Kansas, the 2004 murder of a social worker while on a home visit challenged the county to address the issue. Kentucky will face the same challenge after a social worker was murdered in parent's home while bringing a child for a visit (2006). As part of an approach that includes training and the development of an ad hoc safety committee, the county is testing communications technology that combines cell phones with a one button "walkie-talkie" direct connect service. Microchip technology embedded in the device will allow others to locate the worker in case of emergency as long as the device is on (Miller, n.d.).

According to Dr. Christina Newhill, an associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh who has studied client violence in social work, the issue often goes unaddressed because incidents are seldom reported. In her book *Client Violence in Social Work Practice: Prevention, Intervention and Research*, Newhill details how counties and other mental health agencies can develop safety policies and conduct training. Below is a list of strategies that counties can use to develop a plan to address the problem of client violence toward human services workers.

- Acknowledge client violence toward human services workers as a real and legitimate practice concern.
- Commit to an agreement that everyone deserves a safe workplace.
- Offer high quality in-service safety training addressing risk assessment and risk management strategies for office and field settings.
- Establish specific policies to help and support victimized workers.
- Implement specific safety precautions in the office and field.
- Employ a "violent incident reporting form" to track the prevalence of violence in each agency.
- Employ a risk management approach to home visiting and outreach.
- Establish cooperative safety protocols with other organizations with which you work.
- Affirm to all staff that it is okay to ask for help.
- Appoint a safety committee composed of all stakeholders from line workers to management and develop an agency safety policy and implementation plan.
- Give a clear consistent message to clients that using violence to solve problems is not acceptable and help clients learn non-violent strategies to resolve their problems. (Newhill, 2003, as cited in Miller, n.d.)

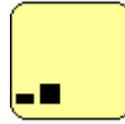
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Miller, D. (n.d.). Murder of social worker prompts new safety measures. *County News Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.naco.org/CountyNewsTemplate.cfm?template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14357>.

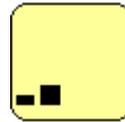
Newhill, C. E. (2003). *Client violence in social work practice: Prevention, intervention, and research*. New York: Guilford Press.

## **Condition: Job Satisfaction (General)**



### **Strategy: Provide Access to New Technology**

See *Domain: Retention*; *Condition: Child Welfare Stress*; *Strategy: Improve Use of Technology* (e.g., laptops, wireless technology, cell phones).



### **Strategy: Create More Flexible Benefits**

Develop programs that offer traditional benefits and also creative benefits based upon employees' needs and wants. Comeau-Kirschner and Wah (1999) catalogued several companies' approaches to developing these programs. The approaches start with intensive questioning of employees' needs and wants through one-on-one discussions as well as more formal surveys. Comeau-Kirschner and Wah recommend against adopting generic rewards programs; rather, programs should be customized to individual employees and the work environment.

Here are some creative ideas for flexible benefits:

- Holi-conferencing – employees can have “virtual” family reunions during the holidays
- Free on-site massages
- Privacy rooms for nursing mothers
- Reimbursement of health-club memberships
- Granny Gratitude Day – employees take the day off with an allowance to spend time with grandparents
- On-site recreation and fitness center or stipend to pay for a membership
- Wellness program with psychological, nutritional, and social aspects
- Workshops that focus on work-life balance and career paths.

Other strategies include helping employees build self-awareness. This means helping employees become aware of what they are thinking, feeling, and doing to live in alignment with their goals, values, and actions.

Source:

Comeau-Kirschner, C., & Wah, L. (1999). Holistic management. *Management Review*, 88(11), 26-32.



## **Strategy: Conduct Exit Interviews**

Cyphers (2003) points out that exit interviews provide an opportunity to gain valuable insight about employees' experiences with the agency. By conducting exit interviews and interviewing caseworkers, agencies can determine what training, support, or other strategic activities might assist with retention. While a wide array of questions can be included in an exit interview, the most common elicit employees' thought and feelings about<sup>11</sup>:

- The reason the employee is leaving
- Recruitment, hiring, and orientation process
- Compensation and benefits
- Training, staff development, and career advancement opportunities
- Caseload and workload issues
- Quality of supervision received
- Culture of the agency
- Ideas for improving the agency

In addition to the standard set of questions agencies have regarding compensation, benefits, and working conditions, some possible questions are:

- What did you enjoy most about working with us?
- What frustrations did you feel in your position? Why?
- What will you miss most about working here?
- What could we do to make your replacement's tenure with us more satisfying?
- What are the three (or more) most important changes you would recommend for your department/this organization to make it better?
- Would you recommend our agency to friends or relatives looking for a job? Why or why not?
- To what extent did supervision:
  - Provide recognition on the job?
  - Develop cooperation and teamwork?
  - Encourage and listen to suggestions?
  - Resolve complaints and problems?
  - Follow policies and practices?
  - Meet your needs for coaching and mentoring?
  - Provide helpful feedback and performance evaluations?

Cyphers (2003) also offers steps to follow in order to conduct effective exit interviews:

- 1. "Make sure all your employees understand that exit interviews are a key part of the agency's continuous improvement."***

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<sup>11</sup> Reprinted with permission from the American Public Human Services Association.

- Exit interviews should be viewed by everyone in the agency as another stage in the life-cycle of employment, rather than as a “dirty phrase” or sign of failure.
- Convey to everyone how valuable exit interviews can be for providing critical information about potential improvements your agency can make.
- Enlist the assistance of managers and employees in improving the exit interview process, while also communicating that their feedback is valued at any time during their tenure.

## **2. Conduct “face-to-face” interviews.**

- Avoid the temptation of sending the departing employee a form to complete or referring them to an online “interview.” Response rates will be much higher with personal interviews.
- Face-to-face exit interviews are much more respectful of the departing employee, and provide opportunities: (1) to probe or explore certain questions and perspectives more deeply; (2) to observe the departing employee’s non-verbal cues; and (3) to more personally thank the person, wish him/her well, and maintain ongoing rapport.
- The interview should follow a standard format, but also should allow ample flexibility for follow-up, probes, and discussion of other issues identified by the employee.
- If possible, schedule an interview for the employee’s last day of employment, ideally as part of administrative process of finalizing benefit information, turning in keys, etc.

## **3. Have a skillful, nonbiased third party conduct the interview.**

- The employee’s direct supervisor or manager should *not* conduct the exit interview.
- Select an individual—preferably from the human resources/personnel department—who can provide a nonbiased perspective and who will not unnecessarily intimidate or influence the departing employee’s responses. The person selected should set a relaxed and open tone that is conducive to candor and also be skillful in probing sensitive issues if appropriate.
- If the agency does not have a human resources professional, the agency deputy/assistant director, or even executive director, could conduct exit interviews. This would signal how important it is to get the views of employees who are leaving in order to continuously improve the agency.

## **4. Actively listen without judging.**

- The interviewer should actively listen to maximize the last opportunity to learn from the departing employee’s viewpoints, ideas, and opinions.
- Avoid the natural temptation to defend the agency, its managers, and its culture if the employee is very negative or critical.
- It goes without saying that the departing employee must absolutely know that he/she will not be harmed or retaliated against, regardless of what is shared.
- Perception is reality and use this opportunity to try to learn about the employee’s perceptions of his/her tenure with your agency. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Take notes, which conveys your serious interest, but don’t neglect maintaining eye contact frequently and positively using your nonverbal cues.

**5. Find out why the employee is leaving.**

- This is one of the most important pieces of information, particularly as it might guide the agency in improving employee retention.
- Many exit interviews only scratch the surface about attrition and often fail to differentiate between factors that make the new job attractive and factors that prompted the employee to consider leaving the agency. It is essential that the interviewer carefully and persuasively coax the employee to share the real reason she/he is leaving. Sometimes these are called the “dissatisfiers.”
- It is also important to try to differentiate between reasons for leaving that are *preventable* as opposed to those that are *non-preventable*. Although each agency can define these terms in unique ways, APHSA considers retirement, death, marriage, parenting, a return to school or military service, or a spousal job move as non-preventable reasons. All other reasons for leaving a job are defined as preventable, and represent those conditions and issues an agency can influence and change. Identifying any preventable reasons for leaving the agency could be the most important goal of many exit interviews.

**6. Appropriately share the feedback—we all need to own our own data.**

- There is a lack of consensus in the human resources field about what information to share with whom after an exit interview. Some experts advocate for maintaining total anonymity/confidentiality with no specific feedback to supervisors and managers, while other experts believe sharing feedback is very important.
  - A middle ground is to keep the actual exit interview notes confidential, but have the interviewer personally meet with the departing employee’s supervisor and manager to discuss what can be learned from the general feedback.
  - Some of the information will be positive and some will be negative. Impress on the manager and supervisor the importance of objectively and non-defensively considering the feedback and the value that the employee’s perspectives can have for improving the agency.
- Whichever policy chosen, it is important that *everyone* in the agency clearly know how exit interview findings will be shared and used.

**7. Compile and analyze the information received.**

- Develop a method for compiling the individual interview information into aggregate data that can be used to identify areas and issues that should be further investigated or possible trends that may be leading to or contributing to staff turnover.
- Depending on the size of the agency and the number of staff that leave, aggregate data should be compiled and analyzed at least semi-annually. Larger agencies might want to do this quarterly, if not monthly.

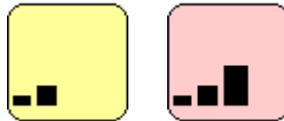
**8. Put the exit interview data to work, but don’t jump to conclusions.**

- Negative feedback from even a single exit interview has the potential to “stir things up.” While feedback from one or two interviews could point to a critical issue that needs to be addressed immediately (e.g., breakdown of supervision, ethical concerns), the aggregate data from a number of interviews indicating trends and commonalities should be the primary focus.

- Trends may occur organizationally (e.g., inadequate compensation and stressful work), or may be clustered among employees who reported to a specific supervisor/manager, or who held a certain type of position (e.g., child protective services worker).
- Aggregate exit interview data should be carefully combined with agency turnover statistics and other sources of data (e.g., staff focus groups and satisfaction surveys) to gain a full-bodied and well-balanced set of recommendations for agency improvement.”

Source:

Cyphers, G. (2003). *Workforce data collection field guide for human service agencies*. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.



**Strategy: Designate a Special Project Team Responsible for Ensuring Employee Satisfaction**

One solution to the problem of ensuring employee satisfaction is to establish a highly-placed team or workgroup with the responsibility *and authority* to design and implement a plan to make sure that child welfare workers are happy in their jobs (Bernotavicz, n.d.; Howard & Gould, 2000; Smith, 2001). This team should be composed of staff from all levels within the organization—for example, a child welfare office in Wyoming recruited staff from throughout the agency to increase satisfaction, and named themselves the “Happy Campers” group. The May Institute, a human services organization in Massachusetts, has also used such a team to make strategic plans for employee happiness (Howard & Gould, 2000).

The Division of Children, Youth, & Families in Jefferson County, Colorado assembled a diverse work group to develop a comprehensive and tailored menu of meaningful reward and recognition strategies such as public announcements, cards, and awards. The plan included the process for and the cost of each strategy.

The following steps can help establish this type of workgroup (Howard & Gould, 2000; Nelson, 1994; Smith, 2001):

1. Gather information (through surveys, focus groups, individual interviews) about the workers themselves.
  - What do they value?
  - What do they need to be more satisfied with their work?
  - What would make them want to stay at the agency longer?
  - What things about the job are they most dissatisfied with?

Analyze the data to choose priority areas for developing strategies, tactics, and policies (if necessary) for change. Methods used to improve employee satisfaction should be meaningful to the individual employee receiving the benefit, and matched to the specific achievement. They should be timely, ongoing, and changeable over time as the situation

changes. They should also be highly public, diverse, multi-leveled, consistent, fair, and structured to hold leaders accountable for effectively recognizing employees.

2. Examine the agency to determine where its apparent values do and do not match workers' values. Again, explore the data to pinpoint where the greatest gaps exist, and to see where there may be a disconnect between the agency's supposed values and strategic direction and what employees actually experience through agency policies and practices.
3. Create goals with timelines, objectives, activities, and identify the lead persons responsible for each task's completion. Identify the specific goals of this project: Do you want to reward top performers? To help increase employee satisfaction and happiness? To increase retention? To publicly recognize those who have achieved? Include both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, according to what employees have said is most important to them. For example, include ways for employees to express and strengthen their commitment to child welfare, the children and families with whom they work, their own value base that guides them to this work, and their own personal satisfaction and pride, rather than only including recognition and rewards given by supervisors and the agency. Also, consider including peer-given rewards as part of the program.

Create genuine ways for non-members to communicate with the team on a regular basis, both to help set an initial course and to revise the program during its implementation. For example, the May Institute has a Staff Input Committee, which gives employee representatives from throughout the organization the chance to express their thoughts and make requests. In addition, "issue-specific" focus groups are held, to allow management increased personal contact with employees in order to determine what is most critical to their happiness (Howard & Gould, 2000). Be clear about how this input will and will not be used; nothing could be worse than giving employees the impression that they have more influence over decision-making than is actually the case.

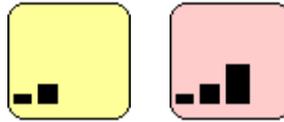
Ensure continuous evaluation and monitoring of the project, and make sure that it can adapt as different needs arise.

4. Begin to create this new culture for employee happiness by having supervisors and managers express positive attitudes and assume that the staff produces valuable work. Think about changing the organizational structure, moving away from a hierarchical model of simple accountability and supervisory responsibility to a more team-based system, in which managers act as facilitators of the employees' work and happiness rather than judges or evaluators.
5. Publicize the team and its work to emphasize the importance the agency places on the satisfaction of its employees and to make clear that the agency's commitment to this end is a serious one that will not disappear when the initial momentum for the project wanes.

Sources:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:  
<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.html>.

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- Nelson, B. (1994). *1001 Ways to Reward Employees*. New York: Workman Publishing Company, Inc.
- Smith, G. P. (2001). *Here today, here tomorrow: Transforming your workforce from high-turnover to high-retention*. Chicago: Dearborn Trade Publishing.



### **Strategy: Conduct “Stay” Interviews**

Why wait until employees are leaving the agency to take the time to sit down with them and listen to their reasons for going in a standard exit interview? At that point, it is too late to remedy any of the problems. Instead, consider interviewing child welfare staff who *stay* in their jobs to learn what keeps them there (Rycraft, 1994; A new retention strategy, 2001). By using stay interviews, an agency can operate from a strengths perspective, and enhance those elements that workers say are most important to them in remaining in their positions.

Before instituting a “stay interview” system, create regular methods by which the interview data will be examined and applied to change things for the better. Consider the following questions:

- Will the comments be shared anonymously with all staff, or will a select group review the data?
- How will responses be communicated to individual departments?
- Will supervisors be held responsible for applying what is learned?
- How often will interviews be held, and who will conduct them?

Articulate to employees how the information will be used, and what decision making channels will be used to implement their suggestions. Do not ask staff for their opinions and recommendations if the agency is unable or unwilling to act on them, and at the same time, be honest that all information shared may not result in a change.

The interviews should consist of both open-ended and closed questions, so that employees have the opportunity to express their unique opinions as well as select from the issues the literature points to as being most critical in child welfare workers staying in their jobs. These issues include:

- Sense of mission or personal commitment to the work
- How well they fit in their particular job positions, and the possibilities available for growth and promotion within the agency
- Good supervision that is consultative rather than instructive or monitoring, and attends to and cares about workers as individuals
- Sense of personal and professional investment in child welfare, the connection between work and the individual’s personal identity, and the congruence between their goals, values, mission, and vision and the organization’s
- Altruism and a sense of calling
- Epiphany experiences
- Personal accomplishment, including the wish to make quiet contributions, the feeling of making a difference, and the need to be needed

- Co-worker relationships and support
- Ability to accept incremental changes
- Maturity
- Intellectual stimulation and opportunities to creatively learn and grow
- Commitment to continuing, because of not being able to afford to leave, being invested in a retirement plan, etc.
- Fair tangible benefits and financial rewards
- Fair intangible benefits, including opportunities for professional development
- Sufficient family time
- Ability to maintain a reasonable life and have a manageable workload
- Length of time on the job (workers who have been in place for more than two years are more likely to stay for a significant period of time)
- Prior experience with child welfare work
- Degree in social work
- Management support of and commitment to workers  
(Cyphers, 2004; Rycraft 1994; Reagh 1994; Graef et al., 2002; Bednar, 2003; Bernotavicz, n.d.).

Examples of possible questions include:

***General:***

- What about your job makes you jump out of bed in the morning?
- What makes you hit the snooze button?
- If you were to win the lottery and resign, what would you miss the most?
- What would be the one thing that, if it changed in your current role, would make you consider moving on?
- If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you would change about this department?
- If you had to go back to a position in your past and stay for an extended period of time, which one would it be and why?  
(Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002)

***Child Welfare Resilience<sup>12</sup>:***

- Why did you choose to work in child welfare?
- What are the reasons you stay in your current position?
- What is it about you and the way you do your job that keeps you motivated?
- Please describe any significant experiences in your child welfare career that have kept you involved in the field.  
(Eaton, Anderson, & Whalen, 2005)

***Supervision and Mentoring:***

- Describe a time when you mentored or coached someone.

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<sup>12</sup> Reprinted with permission from Michigan State University School of Social Work, Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (90CT0113).

- Describe any mentoring or coaching you have personally experienced.
- Describe the best supervisor you have ever had in your child welfare experience.
- What supervisory approach or style helps you do your best work?
- In your opinion, what are the three most important qualities supervisors need to possess to maintain positive motivation?  
(Eaton, et al., 2005)

***Agency Qualities:***

- What most attracted you to work in your current agency?
- Describe the experiences you have with your agency that reinforce your sense that this is a good place to work.
- Please give some concrete examples of how your agency supports you.
- Please explain the role that your work group plays in how well you feel supported in your work.  
(Eaton, et al., 2005)

***Retention of Others:***

- In your opinion, what are the primary reasons that employees leave your agency?
- What might improve retention of staff in your agency?  
(Eaton, et al., 2005)

***Individual Experiences of the Agency:***

- Do you feel emotionally and physically safe at work?
- What are your job's top stressors?
- Do you feel you are able to maintain a balance between your work and personal life?
- Do you experience a sense of connection and belonging at work?  
(Eaton, et al., 2005)

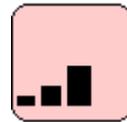
***Child Welfare Training Recommendations:***

- Describe those courses or educational experiences that best prepared you for your work in child welfare.
- What would you have liked to have more of in your formal educational experience to better prepare you for your work in child welfare?
- Tell me about the most helpful training you have received.
- What type of child welfare training would you like to see more of and why?
- In your opinion, what curriculum content is absolutely necessary to improve supervisors' and program managers' recruitment and retention of child welfare staff?
- In your opinion, what is the best way to deliver this training?  
(Eaton et al., 2005)

Sources:

- Bednar, S. G. (2003). Elements of satisfying organizational climates in child welfare agencies [electronic version]. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 84(1), 7- 12.
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### **Strategy: Hire Experienced Professionals with Rural Practice Experience**

Rural areas present unique challenges for child welfare workers. These include:

- Few staff in an office
  - Lack of qualified staff
  - Limited resources (financial and otherwise)
  - Lack of mental health professionals and other types of care
  - Work overload
  - Limited professional development
  - Difficulties with the larger organization
  - Isolation
  - Lower incomes
  - Lack of opportunities for advancement
  - Visibility in the community
  - Geographic distances
- (Conway et al., 2002; Sundet & Cowger, 1990; Tate, 1993).

In order to hire successful rural staff who will be satisfied in their positions, screen for the following characteristics:

- Prior experience in child welfare
  - Significant professional and educational training
  - True understanding about what practice in a rural area will truly be like. This includes people who were raised or have worked previously in a rural area, have had coursework about rural practice, or have done a field practicum in a rural area.
  - Connection to that specific rural community (e.g., family)
  - Ability to generalize and have a wide breadth of duties
  - Desire for personal and professional involvement in the community beyond what is typical in an urban setting
- (Conway et al., 2002; Tate, 1993).

Rural child welfare offices should offer salaries and benefits that are commensurate with those of other similar agencies in the geographic area, offer annual increases, and those tied to a step or performance system as well. The more varied the funding sources for a rural office, the greater the stability and increased likelihood of being able to offer fair salaries and desirable benefits (Tate, 1993).

Instituting career ladders and opportunities for promotion, advancement, increased professional stature, and benefits within the rural office will also result in more successful hiring and retention of child welfare staff. For smaller offices with few advanced positions, special benefits tailored to the individual may be of greater interest, such as specialized training or clinical supervision (Sundet & Cowger, 1990; Tate, 1993).

Agencies should use face-to-face realistic job previews, custom tailored to the particular job and setting, in order to clearly convey to candidates what the job entails and ensure that their visions of the work are as accurate as possible. Rural agencies should be counseled against deprofessionalizing their positions, even given tight budgets, as research clearly shows that the more educated the employee the lower the turnover rate (Tate, 1993).

To attract and retain valuable rural employees, agencies should also be sure to offer ongoing professional development and training opportunities that meet the unique needs of the office, the region, and the specific individuals involved (Sundet & Cowger, 1990). Agencies should eliminate the barriers to staff participating in training by paying the costs of travel to the training site and covering the office while employees are away.

Sources:

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## ***Organizational Culture***

### **Strategy: Implement a Mission-driven Practice Model**



A well-developed practice model drives all aspects of practice, coherently pulling together various aspects of agency life to achieve commonly-defined outcomes for the agency and its clients. It is more than just a way of doing business or a set of values that guide how services are delivered. Certainly, it is all those things, but it is so much more powerful than just a set of values of beliefs or a statement put forth by management. Practice models, if developed and adopted in an integrative manner, embody the agency's mission and values and its tenets drive

every facet of practice and management. Adherence to the practice model becomes the mantra of all agency meeting, interactions, and initiatives. Practices models are not imposed, rather they develop and evolve with full stakeholder involvement from all levels within and outside the agency and they fundamentally change the way the agency does business. Practice models are mission-driven and based upon the values relevant to that agency, either locally or statewide and provide a blueprint for interacting with clients and conducting agency business. When a practice model is fully embraced, the fundamental question regarding any business practice or client interaction is “how does this support the agency’s practice model?” An effective practice model coalesces disparate components of agency practice to more fully achieve agency outcomes. A fully functioning practice model<sup>13</sup>:

- Promotes professionalism and helps shape how tasks and relationships are perceived
  - Defines relationship to children and families
  - Defines relationship to partners
  - Creates an organizational focal point
  - Provides a basis for consistency of response across the organization
- (Delavan, 2006)

It is no small feat to really adopt a practice model as it requires a paradigm shift for an agency and unfortunately, it is far too easy for an agency to pay lip service and put on a good front about a practice model; careful inspection can discern only tacit and scattered adoption across agency levels. For example, an agency may say that they are family-centered, but these values are not embodied in their written communication and contracts with foster parents as these documents indicate a punitive and highly suspicious partnerships by stating the consequences of failure to comply in the first paragraph of the agency agreement. A real commitment to family-centered practice would use family-friendly language and treat the family as a partner.

At this time, no template for developing a practice model exists as by their nature, they are highly customized to the agency and because their adoption nationwide is still in its infancy. But efforts are being made to address this deficit at the federal level. We can also learn from states that have developed such comprehensive models and emulate their processes. Both Utah and Kentucky have developed comprehensive practice models that drive every characteristic of practice and agency life.

Utah’s practice model provides:

- A set of principles that inspire commitment
  - A belief about families
  - A consistent set of standards that everyone in the organization can follow
  - A set of processes that define the work
  - An ongoing application and definition of the model
- (Delavan, 2006)

They suggest asking the following questions to drive the development of the model:

- What outcomes are desired for children and families?
- How would you like families to perceive the services they receive?

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<sup>13</sup> Reprinted with author’s permission.

- How would you like partners to perceive your work?
  - What do you want everyone in your organization to share?
  - What are your organizations goals and values?
  - What processes are always in place, regardless of the task?
- (Delavan, 2006)

Utah's practice model is driven by seven practice principles:

1. Protection
  2. Permanence
  3. Development
  4. Cultural Responsiveness
  5. Partnership
  6. Organizational Competence
  7. Professional Competence.
- (Delavan, 2006)

Utah's practice model is a five step process: engaging, assessing, planning, and intervening. They describe their practice model as:

- Strengths Based – Families make changes based on the strengths they have used in the past and those that they can enhance in the present.
  - Family Centered – the family is the center of the child's world and the focus of change.
  - Solution Focused – Families find their own solutions through the support of their system of care.
- (Delavan, 2006)

These principles inform a cyclical process model of skill-based practice to share with children and families. The skill components of this cyclical model are teaming, assessing, planning, intervening, and engaging. These core skills inform every aspect of practice from initial training to evaluation.

Kentucky has also developed a comprehensive practice model that reflects a commitment to work in partnership with families and their resource network and provides a conceptual reasoning to guide this practice. They call their model Solution Based Casework (SBC) and it embodies concepts from family development theory, solution-focused therapy, and relapse prevention theory (cognitive behavior) (Christensen & Antle, 2006).

Kentucky's Solution Based Casework (SBC) anchors itself around three basic tenets:

1. Problems are defined within their specific developmental context, i.e. the everyday family life tasks that have become challenging,
  2. Outcomes are kept relevant and measurable by focusing the casework partnership on those everyday family life challenges, and
  3. Collaborative teams are utilized and facilitated to keep safety, well-being, and permanency solutions in focus.
- (Christensen & Antle, 2006)

Their model acknowledges and normalizes the challenges of family life that may lead to maltreatment. The focus of casework then becomes oriented on the identified risk areas to the exclusion of other tangential issues that may arise in the course of casework. Solution Based Casework then helps the family *team* to organize, prioritize and document the steps that will help family achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. Family Team meetings engage the larger family network to support and encourage the family to achieve their goals (Christensen & Antle, 2006).

Kentucky has been able to evaluate the effectiveness of this model using a control group design and found it to be effective for engaging clients in the child welfare system and promoting key outcomes. Namely, they found:

- Increased engagement in the casework process (e.g., complete service activities, keep appointments)
- Increased worker efforts on behalf of clients (e.g., meetings with collaterals)
- Perception of more client strengths by the worker
- Less out-of-home placement
- Improved involvement of the case plan by clients
- Increased achievement of client case goals
- Improved achievement of organizational goals of safety, permanency, well-being (Christensen & Antle, 2006).

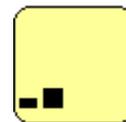
Adoption and integration of a comprehensive practice model can lead to more coherent and purposeful practice that is fully-aligned with the agency mission thus improving staff morale and commitment.

Sources:

Delavan, M. (2006.). *Utah's practice model*. PowerPoint presentation at the Child Welfare Training System Symposium, August 22, 2006. Denver, CO.

Christensen, D. & Antle, B. (2006). *Engaging child welfare families: A solution-based approach to child welfare practice*. University of Louisville, KY: Center for Family Resource Development.

### **Strategy: Ensure Cohesion and Consistency between Administration and Supervisors**



The first step towards cohesion and consistency in an organization is to ensure that there is a common vision and mission to serve as a context for the work that is done. Ideally, the vision and mission should be developed with leadership and staff and regularly articulated. A process should be put in place for continual review of whether decisions, programs, activities are supporting and furthering the vision and mission.

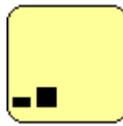
Administrators and supervisors need ample opportunity for regular discussion, communication, and feedback regarding implementation of policy and practice. They should work jointly to

define expectations and accountability. They must genuinely believe and act in accordance with organization’s mission and vision, and in order to do so, must take the time to review policies, practices, systems, and structures for consistency (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998).

Supervisors should not assume that all is well simply because they have not heard anything to the contrary. Regularly check-in with staff using brief surveys, written feedback, or discussion at unit meetings to provide opportunities to identify any confusion or inconsistency in message, policy, or practice.

Source:

Ryan, K. D., & Oestreich, D. K. (1998). *Driving fear out of the workplace: Creating the high-trust, high-performance organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



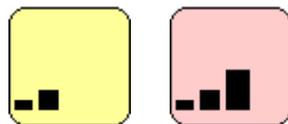
### **Strategy: Improve Communication**

Quality, consistent communication is the foundation on which positive organizational culture is built. Information within an organization should be free flowing, multi-directional, and delivered in multiple ways.

Organizations can consider using a short-term, multi-level work group to build a comprehensive communication plan that includes:

- Philosophy of communication
- Qualities of communication
- Who is communicating
- What is being communicated
- Existing methods of communication
- Other available methods of communication
- Feedback loops for communication.

The organization must support the development and implementation of this type of plan and expect that everyone hold each other accountable for delivering and receiving positive and negative information in a productive way. Much can be learned about an organization by observing how and when “bad news” is communicated.



### **Strategy: Build Trust**

All agencies should work towards being high-trust organizations. According to Bednar (2003), “high levels of trust result in significantly higher job satisfaction.” Trust can be developed and supported within an organization by providing clarity in vision and mission by establishing positive group norms for communication and problem-resolution.

Ryan and Oestreich (1998) describe how a cycle of mistrust and fear can develop quickly in a culture. This fear is often the result of negative assumptions by management and employees and the resulting self-protective behaviors, which create or perpetuate a cycle of mistrust. Ryan and Oestreich suggest that problems arise when organizational “secrets” or “undiscussable” issues or concerns are never overtly addressed.

An organizational development specialist can aid in developing strategies to address this type of situation by assisting management and staff to create a safe environment where issues can be raised and strategies to address them developed. An organizational development specialist might face unique challenges working in a public, somewhat closed government system, but their work in the agency can prove to be invaluable.

Dubrow, Wocher, and Austin (2001) identify these steps to be followed when doing organizational development work:

1. Entry: A problem is discovered and the need for change becomes apparent. Someone in the agency looks for an individual (the change agent) who is capable of examining the problem and facilitating change.
2. Start-up: The change agent works with staff to identify issues surrounding the problem and gain commitment from staff to participate in the change effort.
3. Assessment and Feedback: The change agent gathers information about the problem and provides feedback to those with a stake in the change process.
4. Action Planning: The change agent works with decision-makers and stakeholders to develop an action plan to correct the problem.
5. Intervention: The action plan is implemented and the change process is carried out.
6. Evaluation: Along with the change agent, the decision makers and stakeholders assess the progress of the change effort.
7. Adoption: Members of the agency accept ownership of the change, which is implemented throughout the agency or work unit.
8. Separation: The change agent is no longer needed because the change result has been incorporated into the agency. Agency leadership and staff assume the responsibility for ensuring that improvements continue.

Clarity in decision making is another element that impacts the overall trust within an organization. Time is well spent identifying and clarifying with managers and staff a “decision making continuum” that delineates who will be involved in making decisions. One model suggests the following structure:

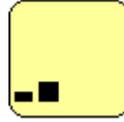
1	Leader Alone
2	Limited Input
3	Conscious Input
4	Group Consensus
5	Delegation to Group

Using this approach, leadership, managers and staff are encouraged to participate in decision-making processes, but with clear roles and expectations (Ryan and Oestreich, 1998).

Sources:

DuBrow, A., Woche, D. M., & Austin, M. J. (2001). Introducing organizational development (OD) practices into a county human service agency. *Administration in Social Work*, 25(4), 63-84.

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### **Strategy: Create a Learning Organization Culture**

A culture is defined as a group of individuals who share common values, beliefs, worldviews, customs, and rituals. Any organization, be it a for-profit corporation or a nonprofit child welfare agency, has a culture that is shared among its staff.

Fox, Miller, and Barbee (2003) in their description of Kentucky's collaboration between state and university partners to create the Public Child Welfare Certification Program, mention that the program's leadership recognized the need to change the culture of the state's child welfare agency in order to improve its performance and enhance its recruitment and retention strategies. This was accomplished through the creation of a culture that recognized the agency as a "learning organization" and allowed staff to embrace and integrate this culture into its everyday work. A learning organization was created by the agency's partnership with a university that brought to the table its values and traditions of open inquiry and critical thinking.

Is a partnership with an institution of higher learning necessary to create a learning organization? No. A learning organization is an organization in which all people, both individually and collectively, are continuously increasing their ability to create outcomes that they care about. In this sense, a learning organization is best thought of as a vision or goal and really has nothing to do with an academic setting (<http://world.std.com>).

The Society of Organizational Learning (<http://www.solonline.org/>), an excellent resource on the creation and meaning of a learning organization, cites the following as their guiding principles. These principles perhaps best define a learning organization:

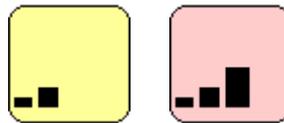
- Drive to Learn – All human beings are born with an innate, lifelong desire and ability to learn, which should be enhanced by all organizations.
- Learning is Social – People learn best from and with one another, and participation in learning communities is vital to their effectiveness, well-being, and happiness in any work setting.
- Learning Communities – The capacities and accomplishments of organizations are inseparable from, and dependent on, the capacities of the learning communities that they foster.
- Aligning with Nature – It is essential that organizations evolve to be in greater harmony with human nature and with the natural world.
- Core Learning Capabilities – Organizations must develop individual and collective capabilities to understand complex, interdependent issues; engage in reflective, generative conversation; and nurture personal and shared aspirations.

- Cross-Organizational Collaboration – Learning communities that connect multiple organizations can significantly enhance their capacity for profound individual and organizational change.  
(Society for Organizational Learning, n.d.)

Source:

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## **Condition: Promotional Opportunities and Career Development**



### **Strategy: Implement Career Ladder and Leadership Development Programs**

A perceived lack of promotional and career advancement opportunities is one of the top reasons why workers leave child welfare agencies (Bernotavicz, n.d.; Cyphers et al., 2004; Graef et al., 2002). Workers and supervisors are much more likely to *stay* in their jobs if sufficient opportunities exist to grow and learn personally and professionally (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003; Cyphers et al., 2004; Graef et al., 2002).

Career development helps employees advance beyond the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies required for the job they’re currently doing. The ultimate goal is to increase the organization’s efficiency by increasing employees’ capacity to perform well in their jobs. Employees analyze their own abilities and interests, so that the agency can match their needs for growth with the needs of the organization. Career development can take place in formal or informal settings, and may address both “hard” and “soft” skills (Gilley, 1997).

Old systems and structures, with bureaucratic decision-makers at the top and frontline workers below, do not align well with the values of helping professions, including self-determination, non-judgment, and individualization. Treating employees as if they were passive people who dislike work and training, have little ambition, and need to be controlled or directed is contrary to the heart of child welfare practice, even if this treatment is unintentional (Zischka & Fox, 1983). Career and leadership development programs need to come from a supervisory stance that encourages workers to embrace personal empowerment, self-efficacy, accountability, and control over their own futures.

Help employees create their own career ladders. Use an individual profile to pinpoint the kind of skills each would benefit from developing. Meet with staff and present a variety of training choices, and listen to their ideas about how and where to gain the desired learning. Tell people that the agency wants them to be able to gain new skills even if promotions or pay raises can’t be guaranteed. Talk about their own desired career paths. Explain what they need to accomplish, and listen to their hopes and dreams (Smith, 2001).

The following are some concrete ways to help employees develop their careers and leadership abilities. They are arranged in four categories: opportunities, rewards, sharing, and structures.

### ***Opportunities***

- Post career advancement opportunities.
- Hire from within. Northwest Youth Services in Bellingham, Washington, implemented a number of strategies to reduce turnover, including greater internal promotion.
- Provide career counseling.
- Develop career resource centers.
- Plan and implement career development workshops, making sure that experiences are both broad and deep to help employees gain marketable skills.
- Encourage managers to identify future leaders. Give those people the tools to develop career goals and identify how the agency can help attain them.
- Teach people the six dimensions of leadership:
  - Mission (vision, beliefs, strategy)
  - People (valued, trusted, networked)
  - Resources (image, alliances, funding)
  - Practices (repeatable, sensible, aligned)
  - Outcomes (meaningful, timely, cost-effective)
  - Culture (safe, caring, productive, learning).

### ***Rewards***

- Establish flexible pay scales and career tracks that reward effectiveness and experience.
- Promote based on performance.
- Use performance appraisals that are tied to career development goals and include incentives.
- Offer career opportunities to workers who stay.
- Link increased compensation to increased training.
- Provide merit raises without promotion to new title.
- Make it easy for workers to attend trainings and read professional literature, and reward them for doing so.
- Follow the example of Youth Villages in Tennessee, which allows new workers to apply for a modest promotion and 10-15% pay increase after just six months on the job.

### ***Sharing***

- Create formal job rotation opportunities.
- Cross-train employees so that all employees understand each others' roles and responsibilities.
- Develop opportunities for professional sharing and learning among employees.
- Establish formal mentoring programs increase talented employees' connections to the agency, and increase the odds that those people will stay.
- Train managers as career counselors.

## *Structures*

- Create mid-career structures to support continued job satisfaction, work morale, seniority, and professional commitment.
- Redesign organizational and career structures to offer more opportunities for differentiated staffing, credentialing, and promotional opportunities.
- Monitor career development programs to ensure that the workforce as a whole is represented by those chosen for training, conferences, and special projects.
- Establish acceleration pools to provide a constant supply of high-potential candidates for any upper-level positions that open up. Select employees for these pools based on job performance, competency development, and job-experience growth. Focus on skill and knowledge development through special trainings with an emphasis on application, and use mentors and coaches to provide ongoing feedback. Evaluate pool members on how well they apply what they've learned.
- Make career paths less vertical, and allow more lateral moves to build on workers' skills and self-development so they don't move "up and out." Provide training in transferable skills such as performance management, team leadership, and project management, and pay for performance of these skills. Facilitate continuous change that is intertwined with agency priorities, and allow employees to grow professionally, maintain their employability, and pursue self-development. Define growth using competency levels, such as the employee's ability to follow directions or make independent contributions.
- Delineate succession plans based on planning and forecasting human resources.
- Collapse narrow job classifications into wider job categories to include a greater range of pay options.
- Because leaders need the competency areas described by the following document, create development programs and career ladders around them.

(Suggestions taken from Arthur, 2001; Bailey, 1998; Bernotavicz, n.d.; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003; Gilley, 1997; Graef et al., 2002; Hart & McKenna, 1998; Johnson, 2004; Nelson, 2004; Smith, 2001)

The following instrument evaluates the leadership competencies of supervisors and managers and can be used as part of a supervisor development program<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Reprinted with permission from Michigan State University School of Social Work, Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (90CT0113).

## Leadership Competencies for Staff Retention – Assessment Tool

A) **Complete the assessment.** Read each statement and score yourself on the extent/frequency to which you do each of these behaviors. Use the following rating scale:

**1 = Almost Never      2 = Sometimes      3 = Frequently      4 = Always**

<b>Role Modeling:</b> I practice what I preach. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
1. I am respected as being a person of integrity.	
2. My behaviors are consistent with the organization’s value, beliefs, and principles.	
3. I am trustworthy. Promises made by leadership are promises kept.	
4. I value staff and treat them with respect.	
5. I care deeply about the families and children being served.	
<b>Total Score for Role Modeling:</b>	

<b>Mission, Vision, &amp; Direction:</b> I work to inspire commitment to the organization’s vision, mission, beliefs, and outcomes, and assure processes are aligned with mission and beliefs. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
6. The organization has a current and meaningful mission and strategic plan, which is consistently being communicated to staff.	
7. I take responsibility for maintaining alignment between the strategic plan and the objectives of my administrative or service unit.	
8. There is a set of guiding principles that are reinforced throughout the organization.	
9. There is alignment of the guiding principles with the agency’s practice, as evidenced through the actions taken and decisions made by leaders, supervisors, and staff.	
<b>Total Score for Mission, Vision, &amp; Direction:</b>	

<b>Resource Development:</b> I work to assure that the agency has sufficient community support and funding to achieve its mission. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
10. I take responsibility for developing the necessary resources to carry out the agency’s mission and support staff in meeting outcomes.	
11. I take into account current trends and changes to keep the agency relevant to the needs of families and children needing to be served and contractor requirements.	
12. The agency has a positive, credible reputation in the community.	
13. I am proactive in cultivating and maintaining positive relationships with contractors and other funders.	
<b>Total Score for Resource Development:</b>	

1 = Almost Never

2 = Sometimes

3 = Frequently

4 = Always

<b>Effective Retention Policies:</b> I work to ensure that agency policies and processes are aligned with agency mission and beliefs. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
14. Personnel policies are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness in retaining staff.	
15. Salaries and benefits are competitive for the geographic area, type of agency, and position.	
16. Workloads are equitably distributed and fair.	
17. Personnel processes are relevant and appropriate to the work being performed.	
18. I encourage wellness and work to create a less stressful workplace.	
19. I encourage flexibility in the staff's work schedules and location.	
20. The employee performance review process is strengths-based and encourages personal and professional development.	
<b>Total Score for Effective Retention Policies:</b>	

<b>Staff Selection:</b> I work to ensure that each position in my organization is filled by the right person. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
21. The agency has a good reputation and an ongoing recruiting process to attract qualified and diverse staff to efficiently fill its vacant positions.	
22. If asked, supervisors would agree that there is an effective, consistent, and repeatable process for selecting and putting the right people—not just “hiring warm bodies”—to fill jobs.	
23. Job descriptions describe the results expected and the critical personal attributes and competencies needed for successful performance.	
24. Special care is given to promote and/or select people to the position of supervisor who have the capacity to develop and retain effective staff.	
25. Leaders hire supervisors who are committed to achieving timely and quality outcomes, consistent with the agency's strategy and beliefs.	
<b>Total Score for Staff Selection:</b>	

1 = Almost Never

2 = Sometimes

3 = Frequently

4 = Always

<b>Commitment to Staff Support &amp; Development:</b> I work to encourage the personal and professional development of everyone in the agency. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
26. I exemplify and support lifelong learning and personal growth and development of everyone in the organization.	
27. Supervisors are valued as essential to staff development and retention.	
28. There are effective staff and supervisory orientations and ongoing training programs that support the people side as well as the technical requirements of the work.	
29. Supervisors are committed to the agency's mission and beliefs, and this is reflected in their decision-making and day-to-day work with staff.	
30. Supervisors are expected to support the personal and professional development of their staff.	
31. Supervisors are engaged in establishing and improving policy, procedures, and processes.	
32. Supervisors have adequate support from leaders to manage their unit's workload and meet timely outcomes.	
<b>Total Score for Commitment to Staff Support &amp; Development:</b>	

<b>Culture &amp; Environment:</b> I work to cultivate and share an environment and/or culture where people love to work. If asked, staff would say:	<i>Score</i>
33. I insist on physical and emotional safety in the workplace.	
34. I support fun in the workplace.	
35. I work to develop and engage a diverse workforce at all levels of the agency.	
36. I care deeply about staff and their families and encourage balance between work and personal life.	
37. I facilitate open, honest, and frequent communication between staff and management.	
38. I encourage staff for their commitment and work on behalf of families and children.	
39. I give staff freedom to work in their own creative ways.	
40. I acknowledge and manage conflict as it occurs.	
<b>Total Score for Culture &amp; Environment:</b>	

**B) Summarize your scores.**

1. Circle the number on the chart shown below that best approximates how you scored in each category.

	<b>Role Modeling</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Personnel Policies</b>	<b>Staff Selection</b>	<b>Staff Support</b>	<b>Culture</b>
<b>Always</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Frequently</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

2. Now draw a line through each of the seven circles, connecting them on the chart. How do your scores compare? Are they in balance, or are some higher and some lower?
3. Look over your assessment scores and decide if there are any items that you would like to change. Circle those that you think are most important and want/need to change.

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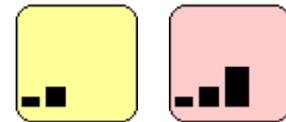
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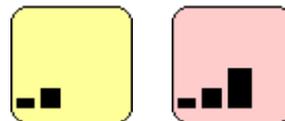
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**Strategy: Emphasize Professionalization of Social Work Career**

See *Domain: Recruitment*; *Condition: Lack of Qualified Applicants*; and also *Domain: Selection*; *Condition: Identifying Candidates with Most Potential for High Job Performance*; *Strategy: Select Professionally Trained Social Workers*.

***Condition: Supervision (Competence)***



**Strategy: Teach Supervisors How to Effectively Coach Their Workers**

One of the most exciting emerging supervision practices is coaching. Coaching is a powerful tool for encouraging positive and lasting personal change, and ensuring better-than-average odds for success. In this model, the coach isn’t the expert or the leader with all the answers, but instead is a committed partner and team member who helps others discover the answers themselves.

Coaching sessions are usually scheduled over a period of three months to one year, and are tailored specifically to meet an individual's particular needs (Eggers & Clark, 2000). Coaching will work well with staff whose personal needs and style fit well with this approach.

Successful coaching programs are based on the notion that people are basically good, healthy and rational. Coaches do not view their supervisees as broken and in need of repair; instead, coaches provide a supportive, judgment-free environment that motivates people to explore their options and find the answers within themselves, an environment in which people experience and receive unconditional positive regard. Trust is critical to the process and can be built quickly, establishing a base from which employees can launch successful exploration, ownership, action, and positive change. The relationship between the coach and supervisee is the key to creating quick and successful change.

Successful coaches:

- Act as mirrors, helping the person see themselves and the issues more clearly.
- Are inner-congruent, knowing themselves and how they project to others.
- Are authentic—they tell the truth even when it might be less than pleasant.
- Don't let their egos become involved. The supervisee is in charge of the session, with coach as facilitator.
- Are empathic, having the ability to put themselves in another's shoes.
- Effectively communicate their empathic understanding to the supervisee.
- Remain detached from the supervisee's world, as an objective observer (Eggers & Clark, 2000).

Coaching can be one-on-one, through units or groups, or through facilitated workshops designed to enhance the performance of specific teams. Coaching is in some ways similar to mentoring, as both types of relationships can facilitate career development. Those who have been mentored or coached have significantly greater career satisfaction than those who have not, and those who have been both a mentor and a protégé have the highest levels of career success and satisfaction. Coaching is very useful in career planning, and if it includes self-assessment, the creation of personal goals, and the tracking of progress towards those goals with an action plan, it will successfully encourage workers to stay with the agency rather than look for a job elsewhere.

New York City undertook a three-year demonstration project with child welfare supervisors, teaching them a clinical consultation model that was designed to help them serve as educators, mentors, and coaches for casework staff. The project trained supervisors to coach, mentor, and involve casework staff in good decision-making practices; convene and facilitate service planning case conferences with permanency and child well-being as the focus; improve how supervision helps develop child-centered culturally relevant safety plans; and involve caseworkers in developing individualized, family-focused, and culturally relevant permanency plans for children and their families.

Youth Villages, in Tennessee, requires new workers to create a weekly development plan together with their supervisors, establishing goals and objectives for that week. They meet weekly one-on-one with supervisors to help them stay on track according to their plan (Collins, 1994; Deloitte Career Connections, n.d.; Johnson, 2004; Strand & Badger, 2005).

Coaching activities often include a typical progression over the course of sessions. Initially, the problems supervisees raise aren't their real problems. As the relationship between coach and supervisee develops, the real issues begin to emerge. The coach accelerates the individual's ability to identify these issues through targeted, empathic questioning and reflecting the answers, which helps the supervisee sharpen his or her focus. Supervisees begin to develop objectivity and openness, allowing them to work through what was previously fraught with emotion. With the coach's support, they can identify and feel the root causes of the issue(s), develop a deeper sense of personal accountability, and become willing to take meaningful action. This brings relief and a sense that solutions are possible, although the coach's work isn't yet completed, as the supervisee's problems have not been solved. The coach must continue to encourage the supervisee to stick with this path until the end. Supervisees then identify their options for change and start implementing them. As new skills develop, new behaviors become the norm and closure occurs (Eggers & Clark, 2000).

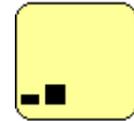
Client's Role *		Coach's Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting issues</li> <li>• Developing vulnerability/openness</li> <li>• Awareness of real issues</li> <li>• Identification brings responsibility</li> <li>• Developing a global strategic platform</li> <li>• Responsibility creates complete ownership</li> <li>• Experimentation through independent action</li> <li>• Issue resolution and closure</li> <li>• Behavior change</li> <li>• Readiness to explore deeper issues</li> <li>• Repeat the process</li> <li>• Transformational change</li> <li>• Relationship completion</li> </ul>	<p><b>First Meeting</b></p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Drilling Down Time</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Dance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Getting to know each other</li> <li>○ Building trust, honesty, openness</li> <li>○ Staying objective and detached</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establish Direction/Playing Off Their Agenda               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drawing out by asking for clarity</li> <li>○ Empathetic questioning and reflecting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bending the Mirror               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asking the right questions to sharpen focus</li> <li>○ Identifying the forces at play</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developing Linkages Between Sessions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promoting action through commitment</li> <li>○ Creating continuity and the expectation of achievement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support Courageous Action               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Challenging not threatening</li> <li>○ Illustrating through storytelling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Celebrate Successes and Pushing Deeper               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Risking losing the client to keep the client*</li> <li>○ Holding the client accountable*</li> <li>○ Acting as an egoless "thought partner"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\* In this instance "client" refers to the supervisee. (Eggers & Clark, 2000)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> One time permission to reproduce granted by Ivey Management Services on November 3, 2006.

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### **Strategy: Focus Resources on the Support and Development of Supervisors**

Good supervision focuses on support and consultation rather than strict direction and monitoring. Thus, selection and training of supervisors should focus on those supervisors who could provide good support and consultation. Agencies may also benefit from improving the organizational support of supervisors, as well as increasing supervisors' involvement in decision making (CWLA, 2002).

Development of supervisors should occur through an organized training approach. One model uses the framework developed by Alfred Kadushin and first presented in 1976 and is just as useful and relevant today as it was 30 years ago. He presents an ideal picture of social work supervision in order to compare the reality of practice so that strengths can be celebrated and adjustments made when appropriate. Supervision consists of Administrative, Educational, and Supportive Supervision. Each area is distinct in terms of the goals and the issues that may arise, yet they certainly overlap and interlock with each other.

For administrative supervision, the primary goal is to ensure adherence to agency policy and procedure. The primary issue or problem to be addressed in administrative supervision is the lack of adherence to agency policy and procedure. For educational supervision, the primary goal is to increase knowledge and skill with the main problem to address being lack of knowledge and/or skill resulting in poor or inadequate performance. Within the supportive supervision domain the primary goal is to improve morale and job satisfaction as the primary issue is the lack thereof and the impact on the work.

Administrative supervision is responsible for organizing the work place, the work environment, and managing the human resources function within the unit. Most importantly, the supervisor's role is to communicate the vision and mission, operationalize them, and continuously monitor whether the vision and mission are achieved. Supervisors help to paint the big picture so that workers' understand their role in the agency.

Within Administrative Supervision, tasks include:

- Recruiting and selecting staff

- Operationalizing the vision
- Orienting workers
- Assigning and planning work
- Monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating work
- Communicating with staff and upper management
- Advocating with community and other areas of the agency
- Managing change

According to Kadushin (2002), Educational Supervision is about teaching the worker what he or she needs to know to do the job and helping him or her to integrate it. Educational supervision teaches workers the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to have in order to their jobs. Each of the types of supervision draws strength from the other—when workers have learned their jobs effectively and feel supported, they perform more autonomously and effectively in their jobs.

The goal of Educational Supervision is to ensure case practice by staff is consistent and based on best practice standards. We want a homogeneous approach to casework so that all workers approach casework in the same way, make consistent decisions, and apply similar interventions thus achieving the agency’s goals. Because good casework is based upon research and best practice approaches, when workers approach each case in a similar fashion, grounded in similar values, and with a uniform perspective then desired outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

- The activities or tasks associated with the educational aspect of supervision:
  - Orienting new employees
  - Teaching workers about the job
  - Facilitating learning
  - Helping workers develop professionally
  - Evaluating casework for strengths and needs
  - Helping workers solve problems
  - Facilitating professional growth and development.

Methods for conducting these teaching tasks:

- One-on-one coaching with the worker
- Structured supervision time
- Providing information on professional development opportunities
- Mentoring staff
- Training a class or encouraging or arranging for staff to attend training
- “Doorway” consultation, e.g., those informal times that they answer questions and provide case specific guidance.

In supportive supervision, the final component of supervision is brought in; that of being a team leader, the person who acts as head cheerleader and “stress manager” for the unit. The supervisor’s role is to help ensure that staff are managing the challenges of the job and the resulting stress so that they find satisfaction with their job and remain motivated and committed to achieving positive outcomes with their clients.

In order to perform, workers must have clarity about the task and know what is expected of them in their position. They must also have the ability to do the job. But a worker can be clear about the task and have the knowledge and skill, but not be motivated to perform the duties of that position. So, through supportive supervision, the goal is to support each worker in finding the motivation that provides each of us the emotional energy to keep coming to work and inspires commitment to the agency and the field.

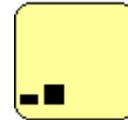
During supportive supervision, the supervisor provides:

- Reassurance
- Encouragement
- Recognition for achievement
- Expressions of confidence
- Approval
- Attentive listening
- Stress and tension management strategies for the individual and unit as a whole.

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**Strategy: Help Supervisors Support New Caseworkers Through the Two to Three Year Transition**

Workers typically experience a crisis of commitment around two to three years into their employment, and often ask themselves whether they should stay or go. Supervisors can help facilitate smooth passage through this transition with proper training and a plan for their workers (Bernatovicz, n.d.). One way to do this is to analyze each worker’s situation with the following chart:

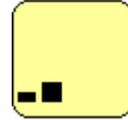
<i>Unit Member</i>	<i>Time on Job</i>	<i>Attitudes about Work</i>	<i>Impact of Attitude on Work and Environment</i>	<i>Retention Concerns</i>

Such an effort will help to pinpoint concerns and develop appropriate intervention plans based upon the strengths and needs of the worker.

Source:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.html>.



### **Strategy: Develop a Long-Term Plan to Strengthen the Role of the Supervisor**

The plan should include components for promotion, orientation, and training for new supervisors, mentoring, and peer support.

One way to continuously assess supervisors' training needs is through an individual training needs assessment. The Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) was conceptualized, developed, and implemented in multiple states and Canada by the Institute for Human Services in Columbus, Ohio. The ITNA is just one part of a formal competency-based training system that at its core is driven by the agency's mission and goals. Find out more about their system by going to their Web site: <http://www.ihs-trainet.com/>.

ITNAs have been developed for caseworkers and supervisors. Conducting periodic assessments of the supervisor's knowledge and skills and then providing supplemental training embodies the qualities of a learning organization for continuous improvement. The ITNA will highlight areas needing improvement and designate the degree of importance to the supervisor's job. The Institute for Human Services (2003) categorizes competencies into three areas; Core, Specialized Training, and Related Skills training and recommend the following topical areas for the supervisor Training Needs Assessment:

<b><i>Core training</i></b>
Managing within a child welfare and family serving system: leadership, administration and performance improvement
Managing work through other people: diversity in the workplace
Transfer of learning: the supervisor's role in developing staff
Supervising and managing group performance: developing productive work teams
<b><i>Specialized training</i></b>
Casework supervision
Supervising assessment
Supervising case plan development
Supervisory issues in sexual abuse
Supervising adoption and foster care services
Supervising investigations
Supervising family-centered
Neighborhood-based services
Supervising legal issues in child welfare
Supervising legal issues in child welfare

Supervisory issues in neglect
Supervisory issues in abuse
Supervising preventive and supportive services
<b><i>Related skills</i></b>
Planning and decision making
Effective use of authority
Supervising for optimal job performance
Employee performance evaluation
Management of conflict, hostility and resistance
Public information and community relations
Time and stress management for
Supervisors/managers
Team development and facilitation
Budgeting and fiscal operations
Human resources management
Supervising challenging employees
Management of change
Supervisory and management issues in culture and diversity
Coaching and mentoring for skill development
Leadership development
Managing high-profile and crisis situations
Collaboration and coordination for supervisors and managers
Customer service for supervisors/managers
Contract management and monitoring
Quality improvement
Staff and workplace safety for supervisors/managers
Written and verbal communication for supervisors/managers

The plan to address these identified training needs could be multi-faceted and include traditional classroom training as well as independent learning, mentoring, and peer support.

See *Domain: Training; Condition: Confidence; Regarding Knowledge and Skills; Strategy: Use “Remedial,” Additional, or Advanced Training on Topics Identified through Individual Training Needs Assessment.*

Source:

Institute for Human Services (2003). *OCWTP supervisor/manager competencies*. Columbus, OH: Author.



### **Strategy: Address Secondary Trauma**

Current research suggests that effective intervention to impact secondary trauma requires a comprehensive, purposeful, and multi-dimensional approach. The approach includes attention to organizational culture, workload, group support, supervision, self-care, education, and work environment (Bell, Kulkarni & Dalton, 2003). Experts in the field of secondary or vicarious trauma make a distinction between burnout (which is a process and generally occurs over time) and vicarious or secondary trauma (which is a condition and can occur over time or as a result of a particular event). A number of organizational factors can increase the likelihood of burnout, including unsupportive administration, lack of professional challenge, low salaries, and difficulties in providing services. The above-listed factors undoubtedly increase staff stress and can exacerbate both the likelihood and impact of secondary trauma. However, secondary trauma is a specific condition that results from empathic contact with traumatized people or material that contains graphic images of trauma. This condition can result in physiological symptoms including flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive or obsessive thoughts, numbing, and disassociation (Beaton & Murphy, 1995). In addition to the personal toll this condition takes, there is a very real organizational impact, potentially involving less effective work, absenteeism, and ultimately, staff turnover.

Both *prevention* and *intervention* strategies are necessary to support staff in their work with clients. Bell, Kulkarni, and Dalton (2003) suggest a multi-pronged approach including:

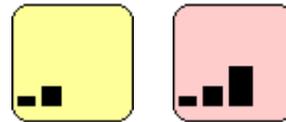
- Creating an organizational culture that openly acknowledges the reality of secondary trauma and creates an environment that encourages self-care, training, and group and supervisory support.
- Monitoring of workload for intensity, size, and the need for external resources.
- Providing a work environment that is safe, comfortable, and private.
- Ensuring that workers receive education about secondary trauma and concrete information on how to prevent, recognize, and intervene.
- Offering opportunities for structured and consistent group support. These can be peer or professionally led and take a variety of forms including consultation, treatment teams, case conferences, or clinical seminars.
- Providing regular and supportive supervision that provides opportunities for expressing fears, concerns, and inadequacies.
- Offering resources for self-care including peer support, therapy, stress management, and physical activities.

Colorado has a model that has been in place for many years. The state contracts with an expert consultant who provides a multi-faceted approach to child welfare staff including stress debriefings, individual consultation, secondary trauma training seminars and traumatic stress educational support group sessions (Conrad, 2005). This model has served hundreds of staff across the state and is seen as a valuable resource.

Sources:

- Beaton, R., & Murphy, S. (1995). Secondary traumatic stress of crisis workers: Research implications. In C. Figley (Ed.), *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized* (pp. 51-81). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Bell, H., Kulkarni, S., & Dalton, L. (2003). Organizational prevention of vicarious trauma. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 84(4), 463-470.
- Conrad, D. (2005). *Secondary trauma curriculum*. Denver, CO: University of Denver.

## **Condition: Supervision (Support)**



### **Strategy: Increase or Improve Supervisor Training**

It has been well documented that the quality of supervision plays a paramount role in an employee's decision to stay at or leave an agency (Bernotavicz, n.d.; Dickenson & Perry, 2002; Graef et al., 2002; Kleinpeter et al., 2003; Michigan State University School of Social Work et al., 2005; Rautkis & Koeske, 1994; United States General Accounting Office, 2003). In fact, state administrators report that the number one reason staff members stay in their jobs is good supervision, meaning supervisors who care about workers as people (Cyphers et al., 2004). Outside of the child welfare arena, 79% of top executives and 77% of senior managers surveyed believed that wisely managing people is very important to an organization's success (Deloitte Career Connections, n.d.).

We know that strong supervision will help recruit and retain workers, and encourage workers to be productive and have high morale, ultimately improving outcomes for children and families (Nelson, 2004). This is because supervisors can help set the kind of work environment that encourages a good fit between the individual and the position. Supervisors can offer support as well as autonomy to their workers, act as gatekeepers in protecting employees so they can complete their work, and develop workers and mentor them through crisis periods so that it becomes very likely that they will stay at the agency (Bernotavicz, n.d.). Conversely, supervisors who are inaccessible or "too busy" to provide the necessary guidance and support, have too little experience themselves, lack leadership qualities, are poor communicators, or interact punitively rather than educationally or supportively negatively impact worker effectiveness and morale.

Individuals are often promoted to supervisory positions due to their technical accomplishment, seniority, or ability to get along with others. Unfortunately, the fact that an individual has one or more of these characteristics does not mean that she has the necessary supervisory knowledge and skills (Berman et al., 2001). Supervisors are key in moderating the impact of bureaucracy on workers in order to combat burnout. Because supervisors are in a prime spot to offer feedback from frontline workers to top administrators, how well supervisors work with staff determines how well an agency achieves its goals, implements program strategies, and delivers services. This information from workers helps administrators and supervisors evaluate policies, programs, and service delivery patterns; identify problems with service delivery and make suggestions for solutions; recognize difficulties in other agency systems (policies, resource allocation, personnel, coordination of the agency's services, conflicting rules and regulations); and spot issues for practice theory review and development and research (Zischka & Fox, 1983).

A 2005 survey, the Program Manager/Supervisor Training Needs Assessment (Michigan State University School of Social Work et al.), identified the following categories for supervisor training. Those marked with an asterix were rated by at least 70% of respondents as being most important<sup>16</sup>.

Professionalism	*Understanding the role of the supervisor
	*Judgment and decision-making
	*Client relations
	*Contractor/customer relations
	*Ethics
	Supervising former peers
	Public speaking
Relationship and communication	*Establishing rapport and credibility
	*Recognition and support of staff
	*Team development and decision-making
	Motivational techniques
	Conflict resolution/confrontation
	Dealing with difficult personalities
	Relationship with other supervisors
	Collaborative skills
Personnel administration	*Orientation of new staff
	Recruitment and university partnerships
	Entrance interview
	Employee evaluation
	Performance planning
	Coaching skills
	The supervision session
	Corrective action/firing
	Handling grievances
	Exit interviews
Accountability	Understanding/managing budget, outcomes, *program requirements
	Understanding and using data
	Program-related risk management
	Reporting
	Understanding government contractor responsibilities
Diversity	Cultural competence
	Valuing and using differences
	Gender and leadership
Mission and change	*Setting/maintaining priorities
	*Managing multiple projects
	Connecting to a unifying mission and values
	Dealing with barriers to change

<sup>16</sup> Reprinted with permission from Michigan State University School of Social Work, Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (90CT0113).

	Understanding dynamics
	Assisting staff to grieve losses
Self-care	*Time management
	*Balancing work and family
	*Stress management
	Peer and other support networks
	Professional development
	Setting boundaries

Choosing and training supervisors should always begin with a specific job analysis to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to effectively supervise in each unique agency setting (Graef et al., 2002). Based on this foundation, here are some recommendations for supervisor selection and the content of competency-based supervisor training.

***Characteristics to Look For When Choosing Supervisors:***

- Effectiveness in their current role
- Advanced degree from an accredited social work program or a comparable human service field (some agencies require or prefer an MSW)
- Two to five years of direct practice experience in services to families and children (for intensive family preservation, post-masters)
- Competence
- Empathy
- Team orientation
- Great respect for individuals
- Strong people skills
- High level of morale
- Ability to cope with stress
- Knowledge and skills in child welfare work
- Belief that their work is understood and appreciated
- Tactical vision
- Belief change in organizational structures and individual supervisees is possible
- Ability to learn quickly
- Willingness to try new things at work
- Ability to teach others
- Concern for colleagues' welfare

***Preparing and Supporting Supervisors:***

- Formalize supervision so that it does take place, but allow sufficient flexibility to meet individual needs and styles.
- Change supervisors' job duties to increase time with subordinates.
- Train supervisors before they begin, during the supervisory period, and follow up after supervision has ended. Offer repeated "booster shots."
- Teach supervisors to holistically meet employees' needs (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual).

- Provide coaching and mentoring for supervisors themselves, from either inside or outside the organization. Each new supervisor identifies his or her own mentor or coach, and conversations are confidential.
- Evaluate, reinforce, and provide feedback about supervisors' performance.
- The Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services recommends the following supervisory ratios:
  - Child Protective Services: 1:7 for workers who are experienced and professionally trained, 1:5 for those with less professional education and experience
  - Foster and Kinship Care Services: 1:5
  - Family Centered Casework, Intensive Family Preservation: 1:5-8, modified for total number of families represented, experience levels of practitioners, geographic distances, size of teams, and other relevant factors.

***Interpersonal Skills to Train:***

- Conflict resolution
- Communication
- How to set an example
- Appreciation of what employees do
- How to show genuine concern
- How to seek out others' ideas and opinions, and listen with 100% attention (active listening and other skills of emotional intelligence)
- How to be more fun at work
- Decisiveness with flexibility
- Problem-solving
- Team orientation
- Intuition
- Enthusiasm
- How to gain respect of supervisees
- How to treat others with respect and dignity
- How to control with delegation

***Things to Include in Supervisory Training Related to the Administrative Role:***

- When assessing the organizational climate, supervisors should consider whether:
  - Lines of responsibility and authority in the hierarchical structure are clearly delineated.
  - There is a structure for feedback from all levels of staff regarding policy changes to improve client services.
  - Supervisors participate in the agency's decision-making process.
  - The agency gives meaningful recognition to staff dedication, commitment and skill.
  - The agency provides realistic opportunities for professional advancement.
  - There is an effective in-service training program, related to job requirements for each staff member, whose learning can be implemented within the requirements of each position.
  - The necessary supports staff need to carry out the requirements of the work.
  - Flexible work hours are provided to help staff meet professional and personal obligations.

- Hierarchy is dominated by one gender or racial or ethnic group, causing others to compete on an unequal basis.
- Professional practice and personnel policies discriminate against a particular group.
- Work on team building and development, and anticipatory decision-making.
- Avoid micromanagement.
- Arrange for assignment changes where indicated and feasible, and on a temporary basis during times of personal staff crisis.
- Conduct performance appraisals that evaluate workers' strengths instead of weaknesses.
- Relate to administrators as an advocate for staff.
- Reduce resistance to change.
- Understand the dynamics for organizational innovation.
- Understand the crisis sequence.
- Understand power as a psychosocial phenomenon.
- Assess the agency situation contributing to burnout and intervene to change it.
- Develop and administer budgets.
- Ensure safety and cleanliness of offices.
- Set service objectives.
- Ensure adequate information technology and training.
- Have administrative and legal expertise for employee discipline.
- Get work done through staff in a productive way.
- Implement policies.
- Develop a unit-wide perspective and efforts to move the unit forward.
- Consistently reinforce the rules.
- Tell the whole story – don't try to hide information, even if it's bad news.
- Exemplify how the agency respects and values staff and families by overseeing management of workloads, monitoring legal and service delivery requirements, and motivating staff.
- What to do during the first six months of a new employee's selection and hiring.
- Manage and sell ideas.
- Avoid favoritism.
- Help workers collaborate.

***Things to Include in Supervisory Training for the Education Role:***

- Teach employees what they need to know to do their jobs – supervise the worker rather than the case.
- Conduct needs assessments of employees' skills to match training, development, and professional learning.
- Help staff develop career planning strategies:
  - Work out activities that fit each individual employee.
  - Develop employees' human potential and opportunities to release that potential.
- Understand principles of learning (motivation, relevance and transference, underlying principles, repetition, feedback, and reinforcement).
- Train staff in participatory decision making.
- Develop staff's political awareness and skills.

- Plan and develop in-service training programs (be aware of and support the fact that learning may take place outside the traditional social work channels).
- Serve as a role model and mentor for staff in relationships with other supervisors, staff, and administration, to teach behaviors that help staff work effectively with clients.

***Things to Include in Supervisory Training for the Support Role:***

- Be willing to listen in a warm and friendly manner to supervisees' work-related problems.
- Be reliable when things get tough at work.
- Help supervisees in getting their jobs done, especially with difficult tasks.
- Respect employees.
- Motivate employees.
- Recognize and respond to the needs and concerns of caseworkers, and provide them with direction and guidance.
- Help staff manage the organizational aspects of the work (e.g., time commitments).
- Constantly look for special staff interest and skills, and ways to develop these both within and outside the existing structure.
- Encourage staff and administration working together by:
  - Serving as an active channel of communication between them.
  - Encouraging administration to share their problems openly with staff.
  - Helping administration hear staff concerns without being hurt, defensive, or retaliatory.
  - Avoiding the shut-out of administration from the broad-based concerns of staff.
- Provide meaningful recognition and encouragement on the administration and supervisory levels for work well done. Dispense both tangible and intangible benefits.
- Enable and strengthen development of a strong peer network and group cohesiveness among workers in the same unit.
- Provide opportunities for staff to participate in making decisions affecting their own job performance and ability to provide client services.
- Recognize and respond to burnout, the stress syndrome, and principles of stress management, while at the same time mobilizing the emotional energy needed for effective job performance. Recognize that if workloads are too high, this will not be enough to help workers to stay in their jobs.
- Mentor and coach employees.
- Negotiate workers' likely crisis of commitment after two to three years on the job and maximize their ability to move through it smoothly.
- Adjust reactions to life transactions.
- Develop realistic coping strategies.
- Address the complete individual as a professional member of the community with emphasis on balance between work and life, mental health, and quality of life and spirit. (Suggestions are from Bernotavicz, n.d.; Berman et al., 2001; Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999; Dickenson & Perry, 2002; Graef et al., 2002; Johnson, 2004; Kleinpeter et al., 2003; Michigan State University School of Social Work et al., 2005; Rauktis & Koeske, 1994; Smith, 2001; United States GAO, 2003; Zischka & Fox, 1983).

The following is an example of a self assessment for supervisors in their staff retention efforts<sup>17</sup>:

### Supervisory Competencies for Staff Retention – Assessment Tool

A) **Complete the assessment.** Read each statement and score yourself on the extent/frequency to which you do each of these behaviors. Use the following rating scale:

**1 = Almost Never          2 = Sometimes          3 = Frequently          4 = Always**

<b>Supporting Staff Development:</b> I support the personal and career growth of my staff by practicing mentoring skills. If asked, my staff would say that I...	<b>Score</b>
1. Take personal responsibility for retaining my staff.	
2. Give priority to maintaining a schedule of regular supervisory meetings with staff.	
3. Care about their values and help them connect their values with the agency's mission.	
4. Work to build partnerships between myself and my staff.	
5. Help staff cultivate and use self-awareness in their work with families, children, and others.	
6. Help staff take responsibility for their own learning and development.	
7. Assist staff to solve their own problems by understanding and using effective problem-solving and decision-making methods.	
8. Teach staff how to navigate the agency infrastructure.	
9. Engage staff to take part in growth opportunities within the agency and professional education.	
10. Broker, support, and use training opportunities within and external to the agency for staff development.	
11. Model with staff the type of relationship that they need to develop in their work with children and families.	
12. Link staff with others who can encourage their growth.	
<b>Total Score for Supporting Staff Development:</b>	

<sup>17</sup> Reprinted with permission from Michigan State University School of Social Work, Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (90CT0113).

1 = Almost Never

2 = Sometimes

3 = Frequently

4 = Always

<b>Working with Differences:</b> I respect and build on each individual's strengths and what makes each of them unique. If asked, my staff would say that I...	<i>Score</i>
13. Model respect for differences and diversity.	
14. Understand my assumptions about individual staff and work to value his/her unique differences.	
15. Treat staff respectfully and preserve their dignity.	
16. Understand how my personal learning style impacts my interaction with staff.	
17. Work to understand staff's learning styles and employ techniques that are designed to aid in their learning.	
18. Understand how my personal social style impacts on my interaction with staff.	
19. Work to understand my staff's social styles and how they impact our relationships.	
<b>Total Score for Working with Differences:</b>	

<b>Communication Skills:</b> I model the relationship and communication skills that I want my staff to emulate with their clients. If asked, my staff would say that I...	<i>Score</i>
20. Work hard to tailor my communication based on who I am, who my staff are, and what the situation requires.	
21. Listen carefully to what is being communicated and summarize what I hear.	
22. Ask questions that draw out additional information.	
23. Look for and evaluate nonverbal cues.	
24. Identify and work with the feelings behind the words.	
25. Keep an open mind and ask open questions.	
26. Tell the truth and give thoughtful feedback that focuses on actions and not attitude.	
27. Give feedback that works to instruct and assist staff rather than alienate them.	
28. Dig deep to get below the surface by asking clarifying questions.	
29. Challenge staff to rethink their blind spots, assumptions, and values.	
<b>Total Score for Communication Skills:</b>	

1 = Almost Never

2 = Sometimes

3 = Frequently

4 = Always

<b>Building Positive Culture:</b> I want to cultivate and share an environment where people feel encouraged and love to work. If asked, my staff would say that I...	<i>Score</i>
30. Insist on physical and emotional safety in the workplace.	
31. Support fun in the workplace.	
32. Encourage my staff to balance their work life and personal life.	
33. Care deeply about staff and their families.	
34. Facilitate open, honest, and frequent communication with upper management.	
35. Give staff freedom to work in their own creative ways.	
36. Give staff flexibility in work schedules and location of work.	
37. Work to help staff to celebrate accomplishments and weather disappointments.	
<b>Total Score for Building Positive Culture:</b>	

<b>Supporting Performance &amp; Outcomes:</b> I want my staff to be successful on the job and earn the respect of others. If asked, my staff would say that I...	<i>Score</i>
38. Teach and reinforce policies, procedures, and protocols relevant to the job.	
39. Model and teach how to effectively manage the workload.	
40. Help them make difficult decisions and set priorities.	
41. Teach child and family assessment skills.	
42. Teach report-writing skills.	
43. Teach how to access and use community resources.	
44. Find ways for staff to do more of what they love to do.	
45. Look for innovative and customized ways to reward and recognize talented people.	
46. Differentially assign work to the staff who are most passionate about it.	
47. Give credit and spotlight to staff.	
48. Give continuous feedback on individual staff performance.	
49. Conduct affirming and timely performance reviews.	
50. Find creative ways to encourage teamwork to manage workloads.	
<b>Total Score for Supporting Performance &amp; Outcomes:</b>	

**B) Summarize your scores.**

1. Circle the number on the chart shown below that best approximates how you scored in each category.

	<b>Supporting Staff Development</b>	<b>Working with Differences</b>	<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>Building Positive Culture</b>	<b>Support Performance &amp; Outcomes</b>
<b>Always</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>40</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Frequently</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>32</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>
	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>

2. Now draw a line through each of the five circles, connecting them on the chart. How do your scores compare? Are they in balance, or are some higher and some lower?
3. Look over your assessment scores and decide if there are any items that you feel are especially significant. Circle those that you think are most important and want/need to work on.

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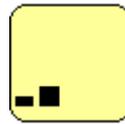
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## **Condition: Support Diversity in the Workplace**



### **Strategy: Design and Implement a Diversity Initiative**

El Paso County in Colorado committed to a formal initiative to increase diversity and cultural competence at their agency. This multi-pronged effort has successfully increased diversity of staff as well as the cultural responsiveness of all staff. Their strategies include:

- The Cultural Competency Committee adapted a variety of organizational self-assessment instruments capable of identifying system strengths, gaps and areas for growth and development.
- A Diversity Coalition sponsors and promotes culturally-responsive practices. It also sponsors events and brown bags presenting diverse topics
- Staff routinely study and provide information to management and the community on trends in customer services demographics, especially in regard to ethnicity/race of the populations being served.
- A formalized goal states that the department employees reflect the community they serve with ethnic staff diversity and representation throughout the agency.
- The department completed the analysis of the Cultural Self-Awareness Survey.
- The Diversity Coalition supports scholarships from funds raised through a silent auction, and Bowl-a-Thon.
- The managed service organization for Core Services has added diversity and culturally competent providers in core service programs.
- Two staff members co-chair the Consumer Advisory Council and Training Institute, whose mission is to increase consumer involvement and empowerment in a decision-making role that affects families in the community.
- A pilot project has been implemented to offer high pay scales for foreign language proficiency.

- A bilingual committee is chaired by a line staff person.
- The department has a stated goal to hire a defined number of Spanish-speaking caseworkers.
- Employment opportunities are posted with the additional notation that bilingual capability in Spanish is preferred. Pre-employment language screening process is utilized for final candidates who identify themselves as bilingual.
- The department purchases services from the Foreign Language Center and Globeline for Language Skills Assessment.
- Cultural responsiveness efforts are evaluated frequently.

Source:

El Paso County Department of Human Services. (Internal document dated July 6, 2004.). *“Progress in motion”— Updates and newly created initiatives.*

See *Domain: Recruitment*; *Condition: Need to Increase Diversity of Applicant Pool Strategy*; *Create a Hiring Pool to Ensure Ongoing Resources.*

### **Condition: Workload Stress**



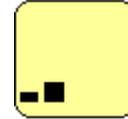
#### **Strategy: Improve Use of Technology** **(e.g., laptops, wireless technology, cell phones)**

In a 2004 study by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), 42 state child welfare agencies ranked provision of technology (such as laptops as cell phones) fourth among fourteen effective strategies for preventing turnover. Technology allows workers to stay connected and be productive during what might otherwise be “downtime,” such as waiting for a client or waiting for a court hearing. As a result, workers can take control of their work time and workload to a larger degree. Caution must be exercised, however; with portable technology comes portable work. There is the risk that workers will carry their work into other parts of their lives, which can contribute to burnout and increase stress if workers feel like they must always be connected. Clear policies around use of technology can help reduce this risk.

Technology comes at a cost: both financial in terms of the actual hard cost of the technology and human in terms of the cost of training new users. However, as costs for technology are decreasing as it becomes ubiquitous among the general public, it may not be as expensive as initially thought.

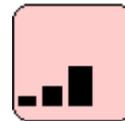
Source:

Cyphers, G., Light, A., LaRue Gertz, L., MaGowan, N., Vandergrift, K., & Plummer, M. (2004). *Report from the 2004 Child Welfare Workforce Survey: State agency findings.* Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association.



### **Strategy: Use Legislative Support to Secure Funding for More Positions**

Arizona has undergone a child welfare reform process that is a prime example of the impact that gaining legislative support can have on securing funding for new positions. A three step approach was developed that included mobilization and assessment of the issues, an action plan, and implementation. Securing the interest and support of Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano was key to the success of the reform effort. This was certainly a top down approach that resulted in some substantial gains for CFS staff, including a 10% salary adjustment for all CPS staff, equipment support, employee assistance, and tuition stipends. For additional information visit the Arizona State Web site at [www.de.state.az.us/dcyf/cps](http://www.de.state.az.us/dcyf/cps).



### **Strategy: Conduct a Workload Study Every Five Years**

The Child Welfare League of America recommends two systems for the development of workload standards: Casework Standards, the amount of time that workers devote to direct contacts with clients; and Work Unit Standards, the amount of time required to perform a specific task such as processing an application for service. Work Unit Standards have to do with workload, and, according to the CWLA, a workload study should be conducted every five years (CWLA as cited by Yamantai & Engle, 2002).

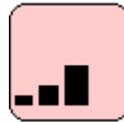
In Jefferson County, Colorado, the plan to implement a workload study consisted of the following steps:

1. Establish an Advisory Committee to determine the parameters of the study. Ensure that a broad representation of staff is included. Consider coordinating this committee with other existing groups.
2. Gather information; review the organization. Since the organizational context of the services clients receive is critical, review of pertinent documents should include:
  - Organizational chart of all staff positions
  - List of programs
  - Mapping of programs to organizational chart
  - Definitions of types of clients, for example,
    - Enrolled voluntary
    - Enrolled involuntary
    - Children and youth
    - Family
    - Foster parents
    - Other organizations
  - Policies and procedures
  - Currently used Code Lists
  - Applicable state law.

3. Hold focus groups to determine the task list to be used in the data collection software.
4. Design or customize data collection software to reflect all categories and tasks.
5. Work with agency IT department to arrange for data collection submission at a third party site.
6. Train trainers and staff to use the data collection software so they in turn can train staff.
7. Conduct a two-week time-study to determine the pattern of work being done and the average amount of time required to complete that work. Have all staff participate in the study, and record *all* work-related activities, including breaks, leave, vacation, holidays, after-hours, and weekend work. Have staff self-report the type of work and the time it takes to complete it, and record the work using a list of work-defining activities determined by focus groups, and using the data collection program. Staff may use paper logs to jot down notes about their activities then record in the data collection program at least once per day.
8. Hold focus groups to determine the minimum and optimum amount of time required to complete the work analyzed during the time-study.
9. Submit data analysis and final report.

Source:

Yamantai, H. & Engle, R. (2002). *Workload assessment study: Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, and Families*. University of Pittsburg, PA: School of Social Work. Retrieved from <http://www.uky.edu/socialwork/cwse>



### **Strategy: Follow CWLA Caseload Standards**

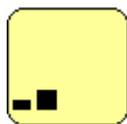
In June 1993, the Child Welfare League of America published caseload guidelines for child welfare social workers. The recommendations are as follows: For workers investigating allegation of abuse and neglect, carry at most twelve active cases per month. Workers carrying ongoing in-home protective services cases should carry no more than fifteen to seventeen families. Those providing intensive family preservation services should serve between two and six families at a given time. For workers in family foster care or out of home services, the guidelines recommend at most twelve to fifteen children. For more information on CWLA Caseload Standards, visit <http://www.cwla.org/programs/standards/caseloadstandards.htm>.

A 1998 study by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) of workers in seventeen states found that average caseloads for workers in far less than half of the agencies represented in the survey met the CWLA guidelines for any of the four types of cases. The 2004 ASPHSA study reports that of thirty-five states responding to their survey, six (17%) reported having state statutory caseload standards and fifteen (35%) have child welfare caseload standards (ASPHSA, 2005). Setting workload guidelines in agency guidelines will help to better distribute workload.

Sources:

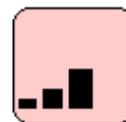
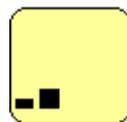
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### **Strategy: Increase Support Staff**

See *Domain*: Retention; *Condition*: Administrative Support for Job Duties.



### **Strategy: Assess Impact of Policies on Worker Stress**

Employees' desire for a well-balanced life has increased significantly over the past decade, which is critical because job-related stress costs US employers more than \$200 billion a year in absenteeism, tardiness, low productivity, and high turnover. Agencies with a reputation for treating employees well and attending to their needs for stress management and wellness will see increases in recruitment, retention, and positive outcomes for children and families (Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999; United States General Accounting Office, 2003). Although setting, changing, and monitoring policy may seem to be an impenetrable process, the reality is that the deployment of staff is within the control of the agency, the provision of supervision is the responsibility of the agency, and staff working conditions, compensation, and benefits are an integral part of administrative practice (Cyphers, 2001).

Cyphers (2001) suggests beginning by analyzing agencies' particular situations. To design a comprehensive stress management and wellness system, managers should meet face-to-face with employees (individually, in focus groups, or through stay and exit interviews) to learn what they really need, how they're feeling, what they're thinking, what's happening in their personal and professional lives, what their hopes and dreams are, and how closely they're living in alignment with their goals and values (Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999).

Ask workers themselves about policies—both agency-wide and those that relate to their particular positions—that add to their stress. When talking with staff about these issues, be clear that some policies will be available for change, and some will not. Make it clear that the information they give now is critical to designing new policies and programs that meet the unique needs of a particular office, unit, or division. Stress-reducing and wellness-building programs should be built *specifically for each person*, including options from the organization's menu of offerings and also possibly custom methods created just to meet an individual's needs.

For this work between employees and supervisors to be productive, attention must be paid to the supervisors themselves. Create an ongoing structure to examine, revise, and continually monitor supervision, including the following:

- Clearly articulate the role of the supervisor, which includes establishing trust, open communication, cooperation, honest expression of feelings, and support for the employee; giving clear direction, expectations, and feedback; problem-solving; professionalism; and specific knowledge, skills, and abilities as are relevant to different positions.
- Identify, train, and nurture as supervisors only capable leadership personnel who cope well with change and have strong interpersonal skills. Appointment to a supervisory position must follow an assessment of how well an individual's personal qualities and abilities fit with the articulated role of supervisors.
- Reduce the supervisory ratio.
- Change supervisors' duties to allow increased time with subordinates.
- Establish an ongoing review of barriers to supervision, and be able to correctly identify and remove these impediments.
- Create systems to make supervisor/supervisee matches based on individual qualities. Regularly assess each supervisor/supervisee relationship, remedy weaknesses, and change if necessary.
- Require mentoring during employees' first two to three years, by either a peer or more experienced staff member (Bednar, 2003; Cyphers et al, 2004; Dickenson & Perry, 2003; Graef et al., 2002).

Issues from the following areas are likely to emerge from conversations between supervisors and workers: personal (e.g., the individual's sense of control, family demands); job (e.g., workload, collegial support, traumatic incidents); administration (e.g., supervisory support); and organization (Bernotavicz, n.d.; Graef & Potter, 2004; Regehr et al., 2004). Regehr et al., (2004) found that organizational stress factors are the most problematic for workers, so policy examination and revision should be sure to include this area. States whose child welfare system is fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (ensuring compliance with organizational, management, and service standards, especially those related to caseloads and supervision) report enhanced worker morale and performance.

Within each of these areas, there are also likely to be solutions that require large or moderate levels of new resources (reduced caseloads, increased salaries, educational financial support) as well as those that require few or no new resources (valuing and recognizing workers, greater flexibility, mentoring). Make sure that final decisions about policy change and program implementation include many different yet well-coordinated strategies that may be customized to fit uniquely expressed specific circumstances (Cyphers, 2001).

Please see page 122, *Assess the Impact of Policies on Workers*, and page 66, *Value, Reward, and Recognize Workers*, for many other specific ideas to reduce worker stress. Here is a brief list of proven stress-reducing methods from a variety of types of workplaces, designed in response to their employees' expressed needs:

- Attend to three dimensions of workers' lives: physical, and emotional (handling feelings), and spiritual (meaning and purpose) well-being.

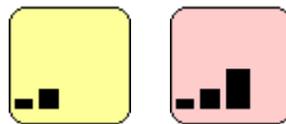
- As a supervisor, provide improved support and technical assistance, rather than acting as an administrator or an educator. An unmanageable workload negates this stress-reducing factor, so the two must be examined together. Supervisory accountability is critical.
- Recruit only managers and supervisors who score highly on measures of emotional intelligence, and train them in active listening and other key supervisory skills such as leadership and mentoring.
- Use reward systems for those who manage their stress well and live balanced lives.
- Provide concierge service.
- Provide privacy rooms for nursing mothers.
- Provide free on-site massages.
- Implement a survivor support program for employees who have lost a partner.
- Provide a \$3,000-a-year per child college tuition payment.
- Provide a health club membership reimbursement, a physical fitness allowance, or an on-site fitness center.
- Have a family gratitude day, a day off with pay to spend time with family.
- Provide benefits and stress-reduction strategies tied to people's needs across the lifespan (partnering, having children, aging parents, college tuition, etc.).
- Establish career ladders and promotional opportunities.
- Allow for the delegation of certain tasks and activities to case aides.
- Increase clerical support.
- Provide professional child welfare backup support.
- Limit caseload size and workload demands.
- Reduce caseworker time spent on service negotiation and payment.
- Reduce caseworker time spent on locating placements for children.
- Increase salaries to be competitive and commensurate with the work.
- Collectively re-examine and revise overtime and on-call policies. Authorize non-emergency overtime pay so workers may get caught up, or more quickly move children to permanency.
- Enhance pre-service, in-service, and supervisory training.
- Allow alternate work structures, such as:
  - Flexible hours
  - Job sharing
  - Flexible job assignments
  - Telecommuting
  - Compressed workweek
  - Short breaks and time off
  - Respite

(The above list is taken from Bednar, 2003; Berman et al., 2001; Bernotavicz, n.d.; Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999; Cyphers, 2001; Cyphers et al, 2004; Dickenson & Perry, 2003; Graef et al., 2002; Rautkis & Koeske, 1994; United States General Accounting Office, 2003; Whitaker et al., 2004.)

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### **Strategy: Streamline Paperwork**

Overwhelming and repetitive paperwork is named as a contributing factor in nearly every study of child welfare personnel turnover. In many situations, caseworkers need to put in overtime hours to complete their paperwork, but due to funding shortages, cannot be compensated with overtime pay. Instead, time off is awarded, but staff often cannot take advantage of this option because being away results in an even greater paperwork backlog. When 50% to 80% of workers' time is spent on administrative tasks, including paperwork, something needs to change (US GAO, 2003).

A logical way to begin streamlining child welfare paperwork is to conduct a workload analysis, by reviewing all paperwork and documentation needed for each case (perhaps through flowcharting processes) to consolidate and simplify requirements, focus on the most critical success factors to reach desired outcomes for children and families, and eliminate all excessive and redundant steps. As part of the study, consider using technical and clerical support staff and cross-functional teams to consolidate efforts (Michigan Federation for Children and Families et al., 2005).

A formal workload study is typically done in order to focus on the services that clients receive, provide a valid and reliable measurement of work, offer methods that can be replicated, make

information and conclusions relevant to the local service delivery system, provide a comprehensive assessment of all resources used, capture client, service and organizational perspectives, and invest resources in the measurement process most efficiently.

Agencies interested in streamlining should also consider moving toward a paperless work environment. The Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Small Business Administration defines an office as paperless if “its work processes are essentially electronic, with minimal required use of paper documents and reduced need for human handling of routine tasks.” Some of the challenges that must be addressed include access to appropriate technology, employee computer skills and willingness to use the technology, and security and legal questions, including whether confidential materials are secure, and whether electronic transactions will be treated as legally authentic and binding in court (*Moving Toward a Paperless Environment*, n.d.).

A positive precedent lies in the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA), which requires federal agencies to allow other entities “to submit information or transact with the agency electronically, when practicable, and to maintain records electronically, when practicable.” Furthermore, the GPEA “specifically states that electronic records and their related electronic signatures are not to be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability merely because they are in electronic form,” making it absolutely clear that electronic documents will be valid in court (*Moving Toward a Paperless Environment*, n.d.).

An example of a human services agency that is using paperless technology is the Human Resources Administration (HRA) of New York City, which is using a new paperless model for delivering welfare services through integrated systems (Fecci, n.d.). The goal was to provide a work environment that truly facilitates caseworker and client interaction, which meant developing new computer systems to help the city reduce its caseload and engage more welfare recipients in work activities. Networked PCs were installed on every worker’s desk in the Family Independence Administration (FIA). Once in place, these networked computers gave workers access to a variety of systems and tools which greatly improved their ability to conduct business easily and efficiently, including:

- E-mail
- Word-processing applications
- Spreadsheet applications
- Electronic imaging of documents (including electronic capturing of signatures and scanning personal documentation)
- Creating and maintaining electronic case files (beginning with intake)
- The ability to access data from any office site
- Interfacing with agency systems throughout the welfare service community for an integrated case management system
- Performing automatic checks that ensure all the necessary information has been recorded and the appropriate support documents have been confirmed
- Storing key data elements that follow the progress of a case
- Generating reports that track the progress of cases, for management oversight and support (Eggleston, 2003; Fecci, n.d.).

During 2002-2003, twenty-four client service centers in the FIA fully implemented the paperless office system, and six additional sites came online during 2004 (Eggleston, 2003). Part of the FIA paperless office system includes imaging, which has significantly reduced the paperwork burden through the electronic management, storage, and retrieval of HRA's case records. Imaging supports paperless office systems and case record storage by creating electronic case folders where all documents can be stored and retrieved. The benefits of the paperless office system and imaging include the following:

- Improved worker productivity and efficiency
  - Improved customer service through efficient processing
  - Less paperwork and fewer visits for clients
  - Decreased center traffic through the elimination of multiple customer return trips due to misplaced or lost documentation
  - Improved overall quality of center operations
  - On-line data retrieval and access
  - Increased program integrity
  - Centralized data storage
- (Eggleston, 2003)

Banks, the U.S. Department of Defense, hospitals and medical offices, and the Pentagon all use paperless technology for sensitive and confidential business communication and recordkeeping. The future for child welfare systems to also do so looks bright.

Sources:

Eggleston, V. (2003). *Major accomplishments 2002-2003*. New York: City of New York Human Resources Administration Department of Social Services.

Fecci, D. (n.d.). *Creating the "paperless office."* Retrieved from [http://www.uwnyc.org/technews/v4\\_n4\\_a4.html](http://www.uwnyc.org/technews/v4_n4_a4.html).

Michigan Federation for Children and Families & School of Social Work, Michigan State University. (2005).

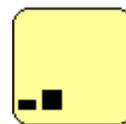
*Developing Models of Effective Child Welfare Staff Recruitment and Retention Training*. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University School of Social Work, Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (90CT0113).

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United States General Accounting Office. (2003). *Child welfare: HHS could play a greater role in helping child welfare agencies recruit and retain staff*. (GAO-03-357). Washington, DC: Author.

### **Strategy: Implement Programs Designed to Reduce Workload Stress**



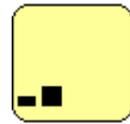
Recommendations for reducing workload stress include several creative strategies to increase efficiency within the workload, including:

- Issue Request for Proposals (RFPs) for services from providers who are traditionally sought and referred to by workers. Then purchase the services through a contract to require specific services within specific time frames and specific outcomes so that workers do not have to “shop” for services. Such a system would also allow for the provider to have greater accountability for providing outcomes-oriented service.

- Reduce the time spent by workers on locating placements for children. Assign responsibility to a central person to place children and oversee the exploration of innovative ways to increase the number of foster homes, including improved marketing materials and development of more efficient databases to locate placements.
  - Establish a clerk or case aide to facilitate and troubleshoot the authorization and payments process for workers and providers.
- (Bernotavicz, n.d.)

Source:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:  
<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.html>.

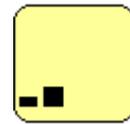


### **Strategy: Implement a Program for Caseworker Sabbaticals for Independent Study After Two Years on the Job**

Develop a program to allow workers to take a sabbatical of four weeks for independent study on a topic of their choice in child welfare or a related field. A requirement of the program is to agree to a pay-back by continuing to work for the agency for an additional eighteen months following the sabbatical. Any caseworker in good standing would be eligible for the sabbatical and could apply every two years (Bernotavicz, n.d.).

Source:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:  
<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.html>.



### **Strategy: Implement an MSW Internship Program to Help Alleviate Heavy Caseloads**

Implement a structured MSW internship program. A program such as this also has the advantage of acting as a fill-ahead position and could be a gateway for future employees.

1. Contact local colleges and universities offering BSW or MSW degrees, or both, and request to become a field placement site for their students. This process is not complicated. Most public human service agencies readily qualify.
2. Identify volunteer field supervisors within the agency who meet the school's standards. These differ depending on the degree. Some schools will even assist in securing a qualified supervisor if there are no internal candidates available.
3. Ensure that the new field instructor is given time to attend the school's training, which is usually one day or less.

4. Interview prospective students using selection techniques similar to those used for hiring new employees.
5. Prepare agency/unit staff for the student's placement, making sure staff understand the difference between the internship and employment with regard to training, expectations, hours, etc.  
(Bernotavicz, n.d.)

Source:

Bernotavicz, F. (n.d.). *Retention of child welfare caseworkers: A report*. Retrieved from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Web site:

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