Survey Results

A survey was distributed to all 67 Children and Youth Administrators regarding staff retention. Twenty-eight (42%) responded. The following information provides a glimpse about both the strengths and barriers that Administrators face in keeping competent and committed staff.

Agency strengths associated with retaining competent and committed staff:

- Support of CWEL participation
- Step raises tied into Civil Service positions
- Experienced, skilled and committed supervisors who are actively involved
- Rich array of agency and community services
- Manageable/realistic caseloads
  - Some respondents share that 17 is the average caseload size
- Emphasis on ongoing training and professional development
- Flexibility in working hours/schedules
- Line staff’s ability to give input in program development
- Positive relationships among staff
- Salary increase has served a temporary fix
- Agency works to ensure workers not overwhelmed
- Hiring of CWEB students upon successful completion of internship
- Culture of the agency that is conducive to retention
- Reasonable salary and benefits and pensions
- Professional atmosphere
- Encouragement of pursuit of higher education
- Positive organizational climate
- Supportive work environment
- Union contract that provides competitive salary and benefits
- Comprehensive in house training program that fosters teamwork
- Mentoring of new workers
- Supervisors and other administrative staff are diligent in assisting casework staff when crises occur and when workers are feeling overwhelmed
- In house orientation for new staff
- Shadowing experiences
- Monthly staff recognition and an annual all staff recognition event
- A morale committee that schedules positive events with and for staff
- Several food related functions annually to involve staff
- Weekly supervisory support
- Regularly scheduled performance reviews
- Above average employee compensation for the field and local area
- Management is knowledgeable and supportive
- Paid time off
- County cars
- Dedicated staff
Survey Results

- Communication of higher level information provided to staff, as much as possible in advance - prevents continual going back to gain data and further allows for positive implementation of program/policy changes with staff input
- A morale committee that is active and works at creating positive interactional activities between the supervisors and staff and between units.
- Ease of communication between workers
- In house recruitment and retention committee
- Staff involvement in decision making within the agency and the community
- More effective interviewing process allows for choosing better applicants

Agency barriers associated with retaining competent and committed staff?

- Difficulties recruiting quality staff upfront as our starting salaries are not competitive with other child welfare agencies of similar class or with comparable positions in the private sector
- Starting salary and first several salary steps are not competitive with neighboring counties and are lower than that in other comparative departments in the county
- The staff vacancy rate contributes to the stress level for the existing staff and leads to further turnover
- We have a group of committed professionals who sometimes get stuck in how things were done in the past and who often have difficulties with changing behaviors and protocols to better meet today’s needs
- A hectic period of administrative changes and instability which have more than likely contributed to retention issues
- Salary compared to state positions
- Limited opportunity for advancement
- Low pay and poor benefits
- Workers tire of always feeling they are never done
- Workloads
- Work hours
- Handling crises
- Home/work responsibilities
- Stress from worries about clients
- The nature of the job
- Benefits
- No merit based reward system
- Civil service requirements
- There are not a lot of qualified candidates in the area that will work for the low pay
- Trauma and secondary trauma inherent in the job
- Recognition by the general public
- Location – proximity to other jobs that pay more and require less work
- Burnout
Survey Results

- Supervisory staff that would rather do the job themselves
- The need to assign cases too soon after hire to maintain regulatory compliance regarding child contact
- Too many state forms that are not user friendly or computerized so that data can be imported from one document to another
- Too low pay for too high an expectation
- Overwhelming responsibilities of the job placed on young adults
- So much of the job is subjective - leading to conflicts between staff and workers
- Difficulty in prioritizing (not just on the caseworker level, but also in fiscal and clerical departments)
- Despite civil service information, information provided at interviews and orientation processes in place - some people cannot effectively do this job and don't find that out until they've been hired (at least for a portion of staff)
- Civil service requirements significantly impact this - simplest example - none of the job descriptions require computer skills, yet critical to the completion of tasks
- Need more staff to deal with increase in caseload numbers
- No pay raises allowed for upcoming fiscal year

The Center for the Study of Social Policy has recognized several promising strategies that have been identified to build a stable and quality Child Welfare workforce. These areas include practices associated with: 1) Recruitment and Hiring; 2) Professional Development and Employee Retention; 3) Organizational Culture and Employee Relations. Respondents were asked to identify which of the following strategies have been: used-successfully, used-unsuccessfully, considered using, have not used, or have no interest in using to improve outcomes for keeping competent and committed staff.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

Defining Job Qualifications:
1. Clear identification of job tasks and responsibilities
   - Used Successfully – 85%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   - Considered Using – 11%
2. Reasonable job qualifications
   - Used Successfully – 81%
   - Considered Using – 15%
   - Never Considered – 4%
3. Honest description of work demands
   - Used Successfully – 78%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 11%
   - Considered Using – 11%
Survey Results

Outreach
1. Ongoing and continuous recruitment
   • Used Successfully – 32%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 25%
   • Never Considered – 32%
   • No interest in Using – 7%
2. Targeted recruitment
   • Used Successfully – 39%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 7%
   • Considered Using – 21%
   • Never Considered – 29%
   • No interest in Using – 4%
3. Recruitment from local colleges and universities
   • Used Successfully – 54%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 7%
   • Considered Using – 25%
   • Never Considered – 11%
   • No interest in Using – 3%
4. Internship opportunities
   • Used Successfully – 96%
   • Considered Using – 4%
5. Partnerships with Schools of Social Work
   • Used Successfully – 63%
   • Considered Using – 10%
   • Never Considered – 27%
6. Use of CWEB and CWEL students
   • Used Successfully – 79%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 11%
   • Considered Using – 7%
   • Never Considered – 3%

Job Previews
1. Internship opportunities
   • Used Successfully – 100%
2. Realistic job previews (video)
   • Used Successfully – 41%
   • Considered Using – 11%
   • Never Considered – 41%
   • No interest in Using – 7%
3. “Job Shadowing”
   • Used Successfully – 52%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 14%
Survey Results

- Never Considered – 26%
- No interest in Using – 4%

4. Orientation for new employees
   - Used Successfully – 74%
   - Considered Using – 22%
   - Never Considered – 4%

5. Clear mission, vision and values shared with applicants
   - Used Successfully – 63%
   - Considered Using – 30%
   - Never Considered – 7%

Application and Hiring

1. Accessibility of applications
   - Used Successfully – 36%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 7%
   - Considered Using – 18%
   - Never Considered – 39%

2. Competency-based behavioral interviewing
   - Used Successfully – 15%
   - Considered Using – 22%
   - Never Considered – 63%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Supervision

1. Coaching and mentoring
   - Used Successfully – 89%
   - Considered Using – 11%

2. Policies for regular supervisor case consultation
   - Used Successfully – 81%
   - Considered Using – 19%

3. Two-way communication with supervisor and management
   - Used Successfully – 100%

Training and Development

1. Competency-based curriculum for training
   - Used Successfully – 68%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 11%
   - Considered Using – 16%
   - Never Considered – 5%

2. Mentoring programs
   - Used Successfully – 47%
   - Considered Using – 32%
   - Never Considered – 21%
Survey Results

3. On-site training beyond new worker orientation
   • Used Successfully – 70%
   • Considered Using – 15%
   • Never Considered – 15%

4. Tuition assistance for job-related degrees
   • Used Successfully – 45%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 5%
   • Considered Using – 5%
   • Never Considered – 18%
   • No interest in Using – 27%

5. Professional development programs and opportunities
   • Used Successfully – 66%
   • Considered Using – 17%
   • Never Considered – 17%

Leadership Development
1. Succession planning and implementation
   • Used Successfully – 18%
   • Considered Using – 42%
   • Never Considered – 36%
   • No interest in Using – 4%

2. Leadership training
   • Used Successfully – 36%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 42%
   • Never Considered – 18%

3. Special course curricula for prospective leaders
   • Used Successfully – 11%
   • Considered Using – 43%
   • Never Considered – 46%

Wage Benefits Structure
1. Adequate salary examples
   • Used Successfully – 33%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 26%
   • Considered Using – 30%
   • Never Considered – 11%

2. Pay for performance
   • Used Successfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 33%
   • Never Considered – 48%
   • No interest in Using – 15%
Survey Results

3. Retention and length of stay incentives
   • Used Successfully – 26%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 33%
   • Never Considered – 33%
   • No interest in Using – 4%

Organizational Culture and Employee Relations

Quality of Work Life Programs
1. Flexible scheduling options
   • Used Successfully – 67%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 22%
   • Never Considered – 7%
2. Case teaming
   • Used Successfully – 63%
   • Considered Using – 26%
   • Never Considered – 11%
3. Appropriate safety measures for staff
   • Used Successfully – 85%
   • Considered Using – 11%
   • Never Considered – 4%
4. Technological support/Employee recognition
   • Used Successfully – 67%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   • Considered Using – 25%
   • Never Considered – 4%
5. Periodic employee attitude surveys
   • Used Successfully – 22%
   • Considered Using – 44%
   • Never Considered – 34%
6. Benefit programs (i.e. child care support, wellness programs)
   • Used Successfully – 19%
   • Considered Using – 48%
   • Never Considered – 26%
   • No interest in Using – 7%

Performance Appraisal and Career Management
1. Performance evaluation system
   • Used Successfully – 61%
   • Used Unsuccessfully – 14%
   • Considered Using – 18%
   • Never Considered – 7%
Survey Results

2. 360-degree evaluations
   - Considered Using – 19%
   - Never Considered – 78%
   - No interest in Using – 3%

3. Job movement and promotions based on equity
   - Used Successfully – 30%
   - Considered Using – 19%
   - Never Considered – 51%

4. Flexible job classification system
   - Used Successfully – 7%
   - Considered Using – 26%
   - Never Considered – 67%

Labor-Management Cooperation
1. Mechanisms for dealing with staff grievances
   - Used Successfully – 71%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 4%
   - Considered Using – 7%
   - Never Considered – 18%

2. Training for supervisors and management on how to resolve grievances and disputes
   - Used Successfully – 46%
   - Used Unsuccessfully – 7%
   - Considered Using – 36%
   - Never Considered – 7%
   - No interest in Using – 4%

3. Consensus bargaining
   - Used Successfully – 4%
   - Considered Using – 14%
   - Never Considered – 64%
   - No interest in Using – 18%

4. Productive bargaining
   - Used Successfully – 4%
   - Considered Using – 7%
   - Never Considered – 70%
   - No interest in Using – 19%
Survey Results

How information is gathered about staff turnover:
- Exit interviews – to include questions about what can be done to improve the agency; Some also conduct exit interviews with the Commissioners
- Informal process based on reason for resignation at the time of resignation
- Surveys
- Ongoing discussions with workers
- Discussions with directors and supervisors
- Statistical analysis
- Comments from staff
- HR and management meetings
- Gossip

How information is gathered about staff retention:
- Exit interviews
- Small group discussions--currently considering Sanctuary Model
- Ongoing dialog about barriers, challenges, attitudes, positive aspects of the job
- Surveys
- Ongoing discussions with workers, supervisors and directors
- Informal discussions with staff
- Employee evaluations
- Discussion at staff meetings
- Union discussions
- Observation
- Use of group work with the Child Welfare Training Program
- An MSW student recently did some staff satisfaction/dissatisfaction meetings and developed a list of strengths/ concerns that management has committed to reviewing, and where possible altering procedures and expectations
- Employee reviews
- Continued information provided to supervisors about the importance of their role
- Quarterly meetings
- Human resources and management meetings
- “Never thought of that!”
Survey Results

What are the reasons given by staff about why they stay?

- Ability to make a difference (89%)
- Part of a quality team (79%)
- Support of the agency’s mission (61%)
- Organizational climate (50%)
- Acceptable working conditions (i.e. on the job safety) (46%)
- Autonomy (46%)
- Generous benefits (46%)
- Recognition for contribution (46%)
- High quality supervision (43%)
- Manageable workloads (39%)
- Opportunity for personal growth (29%)
- Competitive pay (21%)
- Opportunity for career advancement (18%)
- Good community relations (18%)
- Community perception (4%)

Other reasons given:
- Flexible work hours
- Opportunity to develop programs of interest
- Flexibility to meet personal obligations
- Opportunity for CWEL
- Relationships and support built with peers is what will be missed (and may not be duplicated in their new position)

What are the reasons given by staff about why they choose to leave?

- Lack of pay (75%)
- No opportunity for career advancement (57%)
- Unmanageable workloads (54%)
- Not able to make a difference (21%)
- Lack of benefits (18%)
- No recognition for contribution (18%)
- Organizational climate (18%)
- Lack of opportunity for personal growth (14%)
- Community perception (11%)
- Poor supervision (7%)
- Unacceptable working conditions (i.e. safety issues) (7%)
- Don’t support the agency’s mission (4%)
- Lack of job autonomy (4%)
- Not part of a quality team (4%)
- Poor community relations (4%)
Survey Results

Other reasons given:

- Fear of being blamed if a child dies on their caseload
- High liability for low pay and low prestige
- Can't perform duties to the expectations of supervisory staff
- Burnout due to ongoing, chronic cases
- Stressful work
- We ask most staff to leave if they are not working out
- Comfort level involving confrontation
- Job interferes with personal life and activities
- Change of career
- Educational advancement
- Burnout
- High stress
- Life changes
- Mental health
- Change of residency
- Economic reasons
- Stress of daily job requirements
- Caseloads too high
  Many see this job becoming more about the funding issues and compliance with paperwork and far less about being part of improving life for children and families

Ideas about how you can achieve more stable, qualified staff with the Civil Service System and Human Resource Support that is currently in place:

- I believe SCSC is an archaic system that does not allow for the flexibility we require in hiring competent staff
- Less hassle from SCSC about promoting staff to CW III status
- Make pay and benefits statewide rather than county provided - would eliminate the competition among counties
- Lower maximum caseload size
- Provide standardized interview competency based questions
- Increase the standard for being eligible to take the caseworker tests
- Individuals that have a sociology, psychology, or a social work bachelor or above degree are far better employees even in the long term than those employees with other degrees or those employees who can move up the ranks based on years of services such as an aide who can become a caseworker
- More flexibility outside of rule of three and/or eliminate the rule of three
- Recruit competent people to take the Civil Service test and hope they score high enough and there is not a list blocker
- A more realistic description of the job from the beginning of the Civil Service process
Survey Results

- Scoring well on a test does not qualify a person to be a good caseworker
- Change Civil Service hiring requirements
- Addressing/educating about secondary trauma before it occurs...perhaps in early training
- Salary that recognizes the degree of difficulty of this work
- Union restrictions impact flexibility of agency to reward performance
- Civil Service is an impediment to hiring; There is no positive there; I'd like to be able to give a pay incentive for the work a lot of our staff do; We have high expectations and give few tangible benefits
- Not make it mandatory that one of the top three Civil Service applicants be hired...allow the county to choose the best applicant from the list, even if that is the 4th or 5th person
- To have a system to utilize for recruitment
- Clear explanation and definition of what is required of CYS workers-examples of hours and work
- I believe we are doing what we can; The State could change the caseload requirements because it is believed that with lesser caseload caseworkers would be able to enjoy extra trainings and committee involvement

Resources would be helpful in assisting you to better recruit and retain a competent and committed Child Welfare workforce:

- Strategies for getting Commissioners to commit to paying higher wages/benefits
- We are examining the Sanctuary Model
- Ability to seek prospective employees without rule of three lists
- If pay, benefits, lower caseloads, and higher expectations of degree were implemented, I believe this would lower some of the exodus of workers in the CYS system
- The problem is being in same location with other agencies who have lighter workloads but earn same amount
- Interns have been our best resource
- Some issues, such as pay, recognition, etc. are issues on the county level and can't be resolved by the State
- Competitive salary, better pay
- Further study and research
- 100% state funding for staff with statewide minimum salary
- Advanced training for seasoned worker would help with professional development
- Lower caseloads
- Fewer paper responsibilities – caseworkers want to see families and do casework, not paperwork
- Better training for doing one on one work with children and parents
- Recognition that there work is worth it
- Trainings on ethics and boundaries
Survey Results

- Consistent paperwork from the State
- A specific Child Welfare exam through Civil Service
- Remember that none of this is all about what CYS does - the county and the State priorities shift, thus their decisions shift, which impacts the staff
- The union is a big factor in terms of opportunities for advancement and how the labor contracts are negotiated; Between unions, Civil Service and county human resources, there are limits on how we can use 360 evaluations and performance based pay adjustments
- Improve interviewing techniques to determine candidates qualifications and commitment

Thank you to all the respondents that took the time to respond to this survey!