Reducing Turnover in Child Welfare: Building evidence for what works

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Child Welfare: The turnover issue

Current Landscape

- Staff recruitment, retention, and workforce development are persistent challenges for many child welfare agencies.
- Costly to continually recruit, train, and replace personnel.
- Staff vacancies increase workload for remaining staff, creating additional stress.
- Staff turnover can negatively impact relationship between agencies and families, leading to poorer child and family outcomes.
- Over the past three CFSRs, agencies have noted issues with workforce turnover as a strong contributor to inability to meet federal performance standards.
Job related Factors
- Stress and burnout
- Lack of decision making inclusion/autonomy
- Role conflict and ambiguity
- Safety concerns

Work Environment
- Poor organizational culture
- Lack of supervisor or peer support
- Dissatisfaction with salary
- Lack of fairness

Individual Factors
- Low organizational/ professional commitment
- Low job satisfaction
- Lack of coping skills
- Lack of confidence in their abilities
- Low service orientation

Community Factors
- Availability of alternatives
- Negative public perceptions of CW


What is the QIC-WD?

- 5-yr cooperative agreement between the Children’s Bureau and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families and the Law
- Charged with conducting research on what works to support the Child Welfare workforce and reduce turnover
Washington: Telework

• Research indicates benefits of telework including improvements in job satisfaction, organizational commitment...

• Rigorous research still needed in child welfare

• A data-driven selection:
  • 70% said that a flexible schedule was a reason for staying, but only 39% expressed satisfaction with the mobility of the work
  • Desire for alternate arrangements is mostly about where work is done
  • Flexible schedules/telecommuting was the 4th most common response to the question about desired change
Oklahoma: Competency-Based Employee Selection Process

• What are competencies?
• Process includes job analysis, identification of competencies, implementation of selection measures, and evaluation

• A data-driven selection:
  • Lack of standardized selection process across site jurisdictions
  • Root cause analysis pointed to a need to better understand the qualities and characteristics needed to perform the job well

• Selection validation studies
Milwaukee County: Organizational Culture & Climate

- Organizational culture and climate linked to the quality and outcomes of children’s services (Glisson & Hemmelgran, 1998; Martin et al., 1998; Glisson & James, 2002; Hemmelgarn et al., 2006)

- A data-driven selection:
  - **OSC**: Predicts job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover
  - OSC and needs assessment results identified this as an area of opportunity
Nebraska: Addressing Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Two-part intervention will address worker and supervisor coping skills and establish a critical incident debriefing process
- STS interventions are being conducted across the country, without much rigorous evaluation
- A data-driven selection:
  - Half of surveyed frontline staff experienced elevated levels of STS
  - Additional input from staff corroborated this as a high-need area
Louisiana: Job Redesign

- **Job Redesign** (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980; Fried & Ferris, 1987; Parker, Turner, & Griffin, 2003)
- Process includes job analysis, identification of key KSAs, examining reconfiguration options, implementation, and evaluation
- A meta-analysis of 259 studies shows that job characteristics influence performance, job satisfaction, stress, and turnover intentions.
- A data-driven selection:
  - Root cause analysis revealed an unmanageable workload driven by too many tasks and not enough people
Ohio: Supportive Coaching Model & STS

- Research shows that perceived supervisor support and attachment is associated with job satisfaction and retention (Jacquet et al., 2008; Yankeelov et al., 2009)
- Although many supervision theories exist, very few studies have examined impact of supervision interventions
- Multi-level system approach
- A data-driven selection:
  - Surveys of frontline staff indicated high burnout, high STS, and low engagement
  - Focus groups identified a need for workers to strengthen coping skills and a need for additional supervisor guidance and support
Virginia: Mobile Technology

• Workers spend up to 50% of their day gathering and processing data (GAO, 2003)

• Mobile technology can boost worker efficiency and productivity (Whitaker, et. al., 2010)

• Success of implementation is dependent on end user buy-in (Schneider, 2017)

• A data-driven selection:
  • Previously identified need around completing timely casework; resulting in negative outcomes for families and workers
  • Theory of Change: Flexibility of transcription services in the field will result in positive worker and agency outcomes
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians: New Employee Onboarding Process

- Organizations with more structured onboarding processes tend to have better outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007)
- Newcomer adjustment: role clarity, self-efficacy, social acceptance
- A data-driven selection
  - Root cause analysis with frontline staff identified inconsistent job expectations across team units and a lack of understanding of the duties of other teams
For More Information

Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development

www.qic-wd.org

and

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute

https://ncwwi.org