
STAFFING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Prepared By:

Donna Daly, MSW
Donald Dudley, MSW
Dan Finnegan, Ph.D.
Loring Jones, Ph.D.
Leif Christiansen, BA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents information that will assist in developing action plans for recruitment and retention of professional social work staff. It was commissioned by the counties of Imperial, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino. A long-term effort combined with a commitment of resources is required to properly address these vital issues.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on an extensive literature review and presents findings from various disciplines including business, human resources, and social work. The review included a systematic search of computerized databases, hard copy sources, and unpublished reports.

SELECTED FINDINGS

- The estimated annual hiring need for Southern California counties* is approximately 650 positions for turnover plus any additional staffing funded in the state budget. Southern California universities graduate approximately 251 BSW's and 701 MSW's per year, but the number of those BSW/MSW graduates who choose Child Welfare Services as a career is not high enough to meet the hiring needs for the Southern California counties. (see pages 4-5)
- The workforce is changing dramatically, becoming older, more diverse and more selective in choosing an employer. (see page 9)
- The potential hiring pool does not see Child Welfare Services work as desirable and there are many alternative options for people in the helping professions. (see page 5)
- A stable and satisfied staff is the best recruitment tool. (see page 13)
- The key factor for social worker retention is competent and supportive supervision. (see pages 17-19)

* Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego

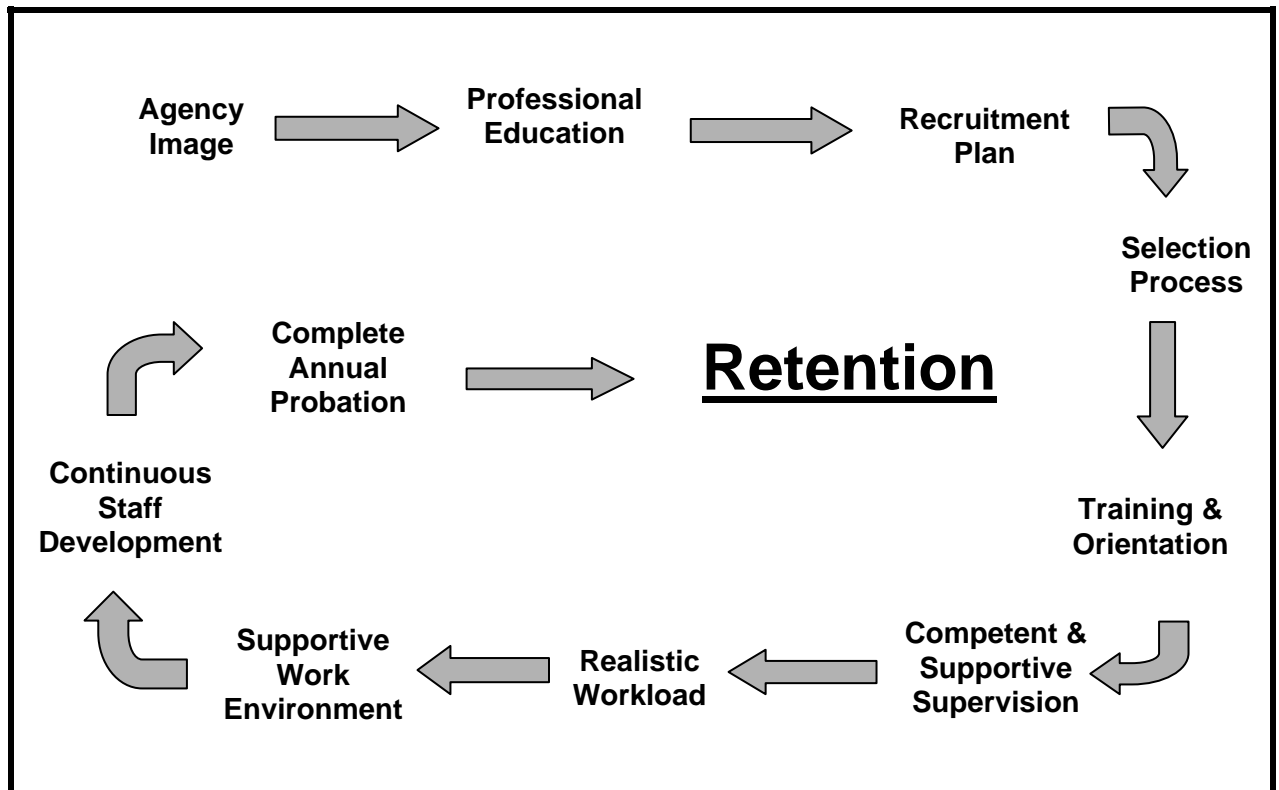
SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

- Agencies must form educational partnerships with local universities to 1) increase output, and 2) promote a positive image to the community. (see pages 25-26)
- Screening tools for hiring CWS staff should focus on the social work competencies and caseworker characteristics that are most likely to predict long-term job success. (see pages 14-15)
- Agencies must develop quality supervision needed by today's employees. (see pages 17-19)
- To enhance job satisfaction agencies should promote practices such as professional development, co-worker support, the authority to make professional decisions, and employee recognition. (see pages 21-22).

CONCLUSION

The following diagram features ten milestones that if satisfied, contribute to higher retention levels during the critical first year of employment.

From Recruitment to Retention: One-Year Continuum



FINAL NOTE

The Network for Excellence in Human Services is ready to assist counties with this challenge. Please consult the full report for extensive information on all findings and recommendations.

STAFFING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

INTRODUCTION

Health and human services agencies are embracing the challenge of recruiting and retaining professional social workers. This is a particularly daunting task within the child welfare arena that is complicated by scarce resources, large caseloads, and a striking shortage of trained social workers (Jones & Okamura, 2000, in press). Employee recruitment and retention will become even more difficult in the new millennium due to anticipated shifts in labor pool demographics, baby boomers aging out of the workforce in record numbers, technological advances, and the expansion of child welfare services. Today, agency directors are tasked with developing creative strategies for attaining a competent, trained workforce. As noted in this report, recruitment and retention issues will require a shift in thinking and a long-term planning process.

To assist counties in meeting this challenge the Public Child Welfare Training Academy (PCWTA), an agency-university partnership, established an ongoing dialogue with regional county welfare directors in the southern California region. One product of this dialogue was the creation of the “Network for Excellence in Human Services” (NEHS). The NEHS was specifically developed to respond to organization development challenges that agencies will face in the new millennium. Established in 1999, the NEHS partnership includes two universities

(SDSU and CSU-San Bernardino), four counties (Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino), and one foundation (SDSU Foundation).

The NEHS assists agencies in developing a proactive plan to meet present and future human resource needs by identifying and analyzing critical research and evaluation issues, developing innovative training programs, and by providing faculty expertise in developing and implementing public policy. This paper is one of several ongoing efforts in the state of California that is targeted at recruiting and retaining qualified, professional child welfare services (CWS) social work staff.

METHODOLOGY

The literature review presented in this paper encompasses the results of a systematic search of computerized databases, hard copy sources, and unpublished reports. Once a pertinent article was found, its bibliography was used to widen the scope of the search. In all, over 100 articles were initially examined, resulting in the 33 references listed in the bibliography of this report. Additional information was collected from telephone interviews and meetings with county staff (i.e., counties in our partnership).

OVERVIEW

This paper begins with a synopsis of the number of jobs in social work, the available pool of new workers, and a discussion of turnover rates in public social services. Next, findings related to recruitment and the educational requirements of CWS positions, the agency's public image, and employee selection techniques are discussed. The paper continues with a discussion of employee retention issues. This section discusses four common themes found throughout the literature: (1) employee satisfaction, (2) competent supervision, (3) realistic workload, and (4) employee compensation. Finally, the paper concludes with specific recruitment and retention recommendations along with a call for more evidence-based research (i.e., research that incorporates random sampling techniques and whose results may be replicated) in the area of child welfare services.

Current CWS Workforce Issues

Research indicates that the shortage of social workers in California is reaching a critical level. Jones and Okamura (2000) assert that the number of social work graduates each year is insufficient to meet agency needs. Currently California produces approximately 1,100 new MSW and 500 new BSW graduates each year, while the southern region universities produce only 701 and 251 respectively. Los Angeles, the largest southern county, employs 2,747 CWS workers and absorbs the majority of the graduates. Data for the Southern California region is summarized in Table 1 below.

In comparison with the turnover estimates for the Southern California region, the annual number of social work graduates is vastly insufficient (see Tables 1 & 2). The number of BSW and MSW graduates who choose Child Welfare Services as a career is not high enough to meet the hiring needs for the Southern California counties. If all BSW and MSW graduates entered Child Welfare Services, staffing needs would be somewhat comparable to the number of graduates available each year. However, not all BSW and MSW graduates actually choose Child Welfare Services as a career. The only available data on the percentage of graduates selecting Child Welfare Services as a career suggests that a great majority choose not to pursue a career in Child Welfare Services.

Southern California universities graduate approximately 136 MSW's per year who receive Title IV-E stipends (see Table 3), and are thereby committed to 2-3 years of service in a CWS setting (number of years of service depends on number of years for which stipends were received). However, a small percentage of MSW graduates receiving Title IV-stipends elect to repay their stipends instead of completing their years of service in a CWS setting. Therefore, the number of MSW graduates who could be expected to enter CWS per year may be even less than the 136 MSW Title IV-E graduates. This is well below the number of staff persons needed to fill CWS positions each year (see table 2).

Table 1
Annual Number of Social Work Degrees Awarded
by University in Spring/Summer 2000*

University	BSW Degree	MSW Degree
CSU-LA	120	23
CSU-LB	51	207
CSU-SB	**	65
Loma Linda	**	30
SDSU	80	115
USC	**	192
UCLA	**	69
Total	251	701

*Numbers obtained from telephone contacts with School of Social Work admissions staff in 9/00.

**No BSW program.

Table 2
Estimated Turnover Rates for Child Welfare Social Workers
by County for 1999/2000

County	Positions	Estimated Turnover*
Imperial	20	2 (10%)
Los Angeles	2747	357 (13%)**
Orange	549	77 (14%)
Riverside	405	61 (15%)
San Bernardino	440	44 (10%)
San Diego	672	101 (15%)
Total	4833	642

*Includes laterals, transfers and promotions; data is based on Jan. 2000 county surveys and is used to predict training need.

**Estimated turnover rate for Los Angeles County is based on the average turnover rate for the other five counties.

In the Southern California region, child welfare social worker turnover averages 13 percent per year or approximately 642 positions. Turnover negatively affects health and human services agencies in a number of ways. First, agencies must compete with one another for a limited number of candidates, as many new graduates do not pursue child welfare services opportunities (see Table 3). Second, according to Dick Kataoka (Orange County financial officer), given the replacement cost per worker (estimated to be between \$15,000 and \$17,000), turnover can be a substantial strain on an agency's budget (D.H. Kataoka,

personal communication, February 11, 2000). This estimate includes costs associated with advertisement, recruitment, orientation, induction training, and time devoted to reduced caseload. However, it does not contain potential costs associated with lost human capital (i.e., the cost of replacing experienced workers with inexperienced workers). Finally, turnover often causes employee morale to diminish, resulting in even higher levels of employee turnover.

Table 3
Annual Estimated Number of Social Work Graduates Receiving Title IV-E Stipends
by University in Spring/Summer 2000*

University	Graduates**	
	BSW Degree	MSW Degree
CSU-LA		20
CSU-LB		20
CSU-SB	*	21
Loma Linda	*	14
SDSU		21
USC	*	16
UCLA	*	24
Total		136

*Numbers obtained from telephone contacts with School of Social Work Title IV-e program representatives in 9/00.

**No data on BSW's entering Child Welfare Services.

In conclusion, the low percentage of social work graduates choosing CWS as a career, along with agency growth and CWS turnover rates, creates a challenging workforce problem for agency management.

Workforce Diversity

Shifting demographics and an increase in workforce diversity have important implications for public sector human resource efforts. Definitions of diversity generally focus on the recognized areas of race/ethnicity and gender. It is

essential to add differences in nationality, language, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and lifestyle to this definition (Kossek and Lobel, 1996).

Numerous articles and books have been written on the merits of recruiting a diverse workforce. Heneman, Waldeck, and Cushnie (in Kossek & Lobel, 1996) note the importance of developing a sound recruitment strategy since there is competition for applicants with diverse backgrounds. They suggest providing opportunities for candidates to become familiar with the agency via internships and summer programs. Job search applications and brochures should emphasize diversity. Other practical implications include: use of multiple interviewers with diverse backgrounds; judging applicants on the basis of their skills rather than their diversity; and training interviewers in the area of cultural sensitivity.

Diversity management is broadly defined as an organizational commitment to recruit, retain, reward, and promote a heterogeneous group of employees (Ivancevich and Gilbert, 2000). The authors encourage the development of researcher-administrator partnerships to work collaboratively on diversity management. They further note the importance of more empirically based research in the areas of diversity management and training. Though much has been written on this topic, most is anecdotal.

Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1998) used a key-informant approach and interviewed 12 nationally recognized diversity experts to assess current status of

diversity initiatives and future trends. Results indicate the following four best strategies for managing workforce diversity: 1) using training and education programs that target skills for performing in a multi-cultural environment; 2) revising organizational policies to ensure that they mandate fairness and equitable treatment for all staff; 3) creating formal mentoring programs; and 4) implementing systematic career planning and guidance programs.

Digh (1999) outlines specific strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse staff. They include: understanding workforce demographic shifts, training staff to understand that diversity is not synonymous with “minority,” employing effective interviewing techniques for diverse groups, creating a diversity-friendly environment to ensure retention, facilitating a culturally-responsive and sensitive organizational culture, and measuring the effectiveness of recruitment and retention efforts.

RECRUITMENT

FINDINGS

In the next five to ten years, the age mix in the workforce will change dramatically. According to Arthur (1998), employees aged 45-65 will outnumber those under 30 and over 65 and are more likely to prepare for retirement. Additionally, the ethnic distribution of the labor pool will become more diverse. These demographic shifts underscore the importance of preparing for anticipated recruitment challenges in the new millennium.

Arthur (1998) identified four primary factors for consideration: (1) ensuring an adequate recruitment budget and plan; (2) utilizing “quick results” recruitment sources (e.g., referrals from current employees); (3) employing broad-based and creative efforts; and (4) refining strategy based on whether you are recruiting exempt versus nonexempt employees (i.e., employees exempt or not exempt from overtime pay). Additionally, Arthur warns against “quick fix” solutions such as recruiting without a strategic plan, which often impede agencies from achieving optimal results by filling positions with employees who leave prematurely due to poor organizational fit.

Another important recruitment consideration is the use of technology. Online recruiting consists of marketing available positions via the Internet. Agencies can post jobs to their Website or post jobs directly to one of the major job banks. In addition, job banks allow agencies to efficiently locate prospective candidates by

means of advanced search tools. The benefits of Internet recruiting include rapid turnaround, the ability to test and prescreen on-line, cost savings, and access to more highly qualified candidates. HR Focus 2000 recommends planning and designing user-friendly links, developing a compelling website, and budgeting adequate funds for Internet job board subscription fees and other site costs.

Performance-based rewards and workplace amenities have also been cited as useful recruitment tools in the human resource literature (HR Focus, 1999). The competition for professional, trained staff places agencies without performance-based rewards at a disadvantage in the recruitment arena. In addition to performance-based incentives, steps should be taken to ensure a pleasant work culture with diverse amenities (e.g., on-site childcare and gym facilities).

Based on a recent survey of the top human resource issues for the new millennium, nearly two-thirds of the respondents identified recruitment, selection, and placement of employees within their top three priorities (HR Focus, 2000). Companies are responding with the following range of answers: “pay and benefits, working conditions, recruiting incentives, advertising, applicant sources, selection procedures, and testing” (HR Focus, 2000).

Employee training was ranked as the second most important priority. New hire training strategies include the use of mentors, conducting needs assessments to identify where training is most needed, and providing training not directly related

to work (i.e., including self-esteem and stress management as part of new hire orientation).

CHILD WELFARE FINDINGS

Child welfare research in the recruitment arena reveals four key themes (professional education, public relations, recruitment strategies, and successful selection plans), though these themes are largely discussed in general terms. Therefore, it is recommended that future research that focuses specifically on child welfare services recruitment be conducted.

Education

National studies show less than 40 percent of caseworkers employed by child welfare agencies have Social Work degrees, while less than 20 percent have Masters degrees in Social Work. Comparing percentages for the southern California region with national figures reveals a significant deficit in the number of southern Californian social workers with a Bachelors of Social Work degree (see Table 4). Currently, the percentage of social workers in the southern California region with Masters degrees in Social Work is slightly above the national percentage.

Table 4
Percentage of Child Welfare Staff with BSW's & MSW's*

COUNTY	Number of CWS Positions	Number of Staff with BSW Degree	Number of Staff with MSW Degree	Professional Social Worker Deficit

		N	Percent	N	Percent	Percent
Imperial	20	1	4.8	0	0	95.2
Los Angeles	2,747	198	7.2	536	19.5	76.3
Orange	549	18	3.3	132	24.2	72.5
Riverside	405	16	3.9	66	26.3	69.8
San Bernardino	440	43	9.7	158	36.0	53.3
San Diego	672	24	3.6	282	41.9	54.5
Total	4,833	300	6.2	1,174	24.3	69.5

*Data extracted from 1998 CalSWEC Report entitled, "A Report on the Public Child Welfare Workforce" and was gathered by surveying line social workers regarding their educational background.

Hiring practices aimed more towards non-professionally trained social workers in child welfare are another facet of the education issue. This trend may lead to "deprofessionalization" or "declassification" of child welfare positions according to several authors (Jones and Okamura 2000, in press; Dickinson and Perry 1998; Pecora and Austin 1987). Although California law requires MSW graduates for many CWS positions, counties frequently seek waivers to hire non-MSWs.

Of particular note, the child welfare recruitment literature does not make specific distinctions between the required knowledge and skills for various line positions. A closer study may reveal that some positions may be filled at the basic social work professional level rather than with an advanced degree, as long as service delivery is not negatively affected. A task analysis could be conducted to determine if a refinement of position requirements is warranted. This is an excellent area for future research.

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) was created in 1990 out of an effort to increase the number of MSW graduates in child welfare

services. Graduate students receive stipend support and participate in a specialized curriculum that focuses on child welfare knowledge, skills, and values. In the last 8 years, the CalSWEC stipend program has produced 1065 IV-E graduates. Counties may also profit from a similar stipend effort for BSW students, as select child welfare positions may be filled at the basic professional level.

Agency Public Relations And Recruitment Strategies

The most fruitful recruitment campaigns include an assessment of the agency's staff and community image. Hannes (1988) suggests that the single best recruitment tool is a stable, satisfied staff. Further, proactive and positive media are essential components of a comprehensive public relations plan. Pecora and Austin (1987) view human services recruitment and selection as a public relations effort and advocate using quality materials and treating all candidates, even those not selected, with professionalism and respect. Other successful strategies include year-round recruitment, energetic and creative advertisements, an increase in help-wanted ads and other publicity, hiring more part-time/temporary staff, use of job fairs/career open houses, and cooperation with educational and training institutes (Helfgott, 1991).

Employee Selection And Interviewing

Bernotavicz and Locke (2000) recommend the use of a "competency- based approach" when recruiting child welfare caseworkers. They advocate a process

that is both research-based and user-friendly for practitioners. Elements include: job analysis; an emphasis on specific competencies that are likely to predict long-term job success; multiple, work-related assessments, diverse questions; and standardization.

Child welfare worker studies identify a relationship between personal characteristics and turnover (Ellett et al, 1996). Caseworker characteristics that correlate with retention include: self-efficacy; motivation; energy and persistence in overcoming obstacles to accomplish goals; personal responsiveness to client needs (doing for others); and goodness of fit (personal job competence). Interview questions targeted toward these characteristics are helpful.

A planned and thoughtful hiring process is critical to ensure hiring applicants that are likely to be successful. A large survey conducted by Michigan State University reviewed 739 companies and recruiters. In this study, the authors identified the following components of a successful interview process: writing samples to check written communication skills; hypothetical/situational questions to check decision-making skills; questions designed to assess work ethics; and questions that review work habits, maturity level, and interpersonal qualities (Donahue Thompson Advertising, 1989). Ross and Hoeltke, 1987, identified the following characteristics that correlate with successful direct practice with children: sense of mission; relationship skills; empathy; responsibility; kinesthetic

work orientation; sense of gestalt (i.e., seeing the “big picture”), courage; objectivity; and nurturing.

RETENTION

FINDINGS

Following an extensive review of numerous companies Harris and Brannick (1999) identified best practices in the area of retention. They underscore the importance for agencies to employ creative, results-based strategies that align the organization and its employees. The authors note that top-performing agencies facilitate employee “connectedness” by tying rewards to the core culture and focusing on intangible benefits such as team spirit and staff development. Aligned agencies understand the importance of communication and how it helps facilitate a sense of “connectedness.” The authors also urge agencies to become “learning organizations”— organizations that continually expand their capacity to create their future (Senge, 1990). This includes investing significant funds in training activities. Finally, Harris and Brannick emphasize the important balance between work and personal life and recommend that agencies survey staff to identify how they currently integrate these best practices into their retention strategies and what can be done to enhance this process.

CHILD WELFARE FINDINGS

Balfour and Neff (1993) analyzed social worker and organizational attributes in a child protection agency during a period of crisis and high turnover. Specifically, they investigated the characteristics of caseworkers who are most likely to leave a human service agency under conditions of high turnover and organizational stress and the effect of the agency's intervention (an intensive training program). They hypothesized that seven factors affect the probability of turnover: age, tenure, experience, internship, education, overtime, and training.

Results indicated that of the seven factors, age and training were not statistically significant predictors of employees who stayed versus those who left the agency. The authors found caseworkers that were most likely to stay were those with a bachelor's degree and at least two years of service with the agency preceded by relevant internship experience. Additionally, caseworkers working for agencies with few pay differentials and advancement opportunities were less likely to leave if they were able to accrue overtime and benefits. Caseworkers most likely to leave were new workers (i.e., caseworker with less than two years employment with the agency) with no previous experience in human services. The probability of leaving increased for those with master's degrees and limited overtime hours. Thus the authors suggest that one way to reduce turnover is to focus on staff with more education, less experience, and less stake in the organization.

While Balfour and Neff's results point to educational level and time with an agency as the best predictors of caseworker retention, the majority of the child

welfare worker retention literature focuses on four key themes (employee satisfaction, competent supervision, realistic workload, and compensation).

Competent Supervision

The most important aspect of child welfare worker retention is competent supervision. To better understand the characteristics of competent supervision it is necessary to focus on three key areas: 1) elements of good supervision, 2) what good supervisors do for staff, and 3) problems associated with supervision.

Helfgott (1991) highlights the importance of the supervisor's role in ensuring the delivery of competent and goal directed services. Among the critical considerations are supporting workers with consultation when needed, motivating workers to reach their potential, encouraging staff development; and participating in agency recruitment efforts. A top priority for agencies is to train and cultivate supportive supervisors.

Inflexibility in work assignment and poor relationship with supervisor were identified as the two key factors that influence social workers in their decision to leave public child welfare (Samantrai, 1992). Personal interviews were conducted with social workers in a large Northern California urban county to identify possible reasons for leaving the agency. The author advocates for clear and consistent expectations on CWS supervision. Staff benefit from training specifically geared toward supervisors and regularly scheduled "networking"

meetings. Additionally, institutionalized support mechanisms must be developed for workers, as CWS is an emotionally intense and draining occupation. Supervisors who establish regular case conferences and employ a team approach in working with families will increase worker retention in their unit.

Supervisors hold a crucial position in child welfare agencies. They have the best understanding of worker responsibilities and caseload demands. When interviewed, caseworkers note the following qualities and attributes in good supervisors: “being accessible, being knowledgeable of the system and of casework practice, possessing management and leadership skills, and above all else, being supportive.” Rycraft (1994)

Among various factors related to retention, inadequate supervision has the highest correlation with burnout (Verstraete, 1992). Shapiro et. al. (1992) advises supervisors to “copiously orient new staff.” Critical orientation components include clear expectations, a review of formal and informal agency rules, and assisting the new worker in defining his or her role in relation to the job, the client, and the supervisor. Additionally, a part of each supervisory conference should focus on learning.

Dickinson and Perry (1998, in press) examined the reasons why MSW graduates stay in the public child welfare arena. They noted that workers who stay with the agency longer report higher levels of work-related support. The MSW graduates

indicated that supervisors were more willing to listen and to step in when difficulties arose. Likewise, long-term employees rated their supervisors as “competent, concerned, and helpful.”

Employee Satisfaction – Avoiding Burnout

Burnout and stress in CWS have been well documented in the literature. In a seminal book, Factors Contributing To Burnout, Maslach (1982) identified several factors that contribute to “burnout” among health and human services employees: (1) working with families in crisis; (2) receiving little positive feedback or support; (3) having an outward focus; (4) lack of power or control to change problems combined with the influence of funding source requirements; (5) difficulty in defining role as a result of the conflict between the implicit and explicit rules governing the client/worker relationship; (6) experience in field of CWS is fairly narrow focus which creates difficulty in changing careers; (7) demanding workload; (8) low social support; and (9) feeling ineffectual.

In a national study, Jayaratne and Chess (1984) examined burnout among CWS, mental health, and family services workers and found that the determining factors varied by field. For example, CWS workers reported significantly higher levels of depersonalization, role ambiguity, role conflict, and stress than did mental health or family services workers. When compared with mental health and family services workers, CWS staff carried the smallest number of cases on the average, though 43 percent considered their caseload too high.

Koeske and Koeske (1989) tested the impact of social support and perceived accomplishment on employee satisfaction and perception of burnout. Their results indicate that a demanding workload contributes to burnout under the following specific conditions: low social support (especially low co-worker support) combined with a sense of being ineffective with clients.

In a similar study, Jayaratne and Chess (1994) advocate for field-specific interventions. Specifically, the authors encourage agency staff to examine caseload size, as it is a critical issue in both social worker burnout and retention.

Arches (1991) surveyed social workers to better understand burnout and job satisfaction. Results indicated workers were most satisfied when they were autonomous, not hampered by funding source demands, nor bound by numerous bureaucratic controls.

Several authors highlight the importance of social supports and organizational climate. Um and Harrison (1998) employed a causal model to identify processes that trigger burnout and job dissatisfaction for social workers. Specifically, they examined burnout, role stressors, individual coping skills, and social supports. Results indicated that role conflict increases the amount of burnout and job dissatisfaction, however social supports may be intervening and moderating factors. Koeske and Koeske (1989) suggest that agencies focus on creating a socially supportive work environment. Verstraete (1992) recommends reducing

social worker burnout by incorporating flexible work hours, career planning, and benefit packages targeted at individual needs. Additionally, the author recommends micro level approaches such as training in stress management, health education, mandated vacations, and personal counseling.

In a more recent study, Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1997) examined the impact of organizational climate and staff morale on outcomes for children. Children served by child welfare offices with a positive climate showed greater improvements in psychosocial functioning.

Given the strong relationship between burnout and job satisfaction, agencies should look for ways to reduce employee burnout by increasing job satisfaction. Dickinson and Perry (1998, in press) highlight eight practice and work environment conditions that enhance feelings of job satisfaction: (1) personal growth and development opportunities; (2) co-worker support and recognition; (3) opportunities for enhancing knowledge and skills; (4) a personal sense of accomplishment; (5) the authority to make professional decisions; (6) ways to make a difference in client lives; (7) extent of global satisfaction with job; and (8) level of personal influence to positively affect clients.

Realistic Workload

SB 2030 was passed and signed into law in 1998. This legislation funded a statewide workload study of child welfare workers. The California Department of

Social Services (CDSS) contracted with the American Human Association to conduct the study and identify recommendations for statewide CWS agencies. Results have been released and indicate a significant impact on recruitment and retention needs.

Koeske and Koeske (1989) note that under certain conditions heavy workload demands may place workers under stress. Stressful conditions include working with large caseloads that involve intense client interaction, lack of social supports, and lack of corrective actions to ameliorate the workload. Their findings suggest that a socially supportive work environment and caseload relief are valuable tools.

Compensation

In a literature review Helfgott (1991) reveals that competitive pay in the CWS arena may not be an adequate tool for retaining skilled workers. Pay rate ranks below several other factors such as competent supervision, workload, safety, recognition, and opportunities for growth. Moreover, Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayaratne, and Chess (1994) note that job satisfaction and retention are not as influenced by what workers receive (i.e., pay and seniority), as they are influenced by what workers believe they have or may have in the future. Specifically, opportunities for promotion and challenge were identified as key factors.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementing recruitment and retention recommendations in the new millennium will require agencies to embrace a strategic planning process. Moreover it is a challenge that requires a fundamental shift in thinking and business operations and a call for collaborative solutions. Potential collaborators include California Schools of Social Work, counties, child welfare training academies, California Department of Social Services, County Welfare Director's Association, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Social Work Unions, and the Child Welfare League of America.

Most studies in the child welfare recruitment and retention area are based on anecdotal evidence, practice wisdom, and qualitative research. The authors of this paper strongly recommend a focus on evidence-based research to augment current practices. The NEHS is invested in assisting counties with this type of follow-up work.

RECRUITMENT

While there is limited information from the CWS arena, the private sector suggests several creative recruitment techniques such as on-line marketing and selection, performance-based rewards and amenities, and providing a positive work environment that is sensitive and responsive to diversity. In addition, it is

recommended that new hire training utilize mentors and needs assessments to identify where the training is most needed.

The NASW Child Welfare Committee developed a “position paper” that provides recommendations vis-à-vis the SB 2030 statewide child welfare workload study. The report makes 3 key recommendations on the subject of education and training.

Education and Training

NASW education recommendations include developing and increasing the capacity of schools of social work, providing support of and expanding community colleges, and adding doctoral program fellowships.

The NASW Committee also made recommendations for change in social worker training. They advocate for additional pre-service training and reduced caseloads for trainees. Other suggestions include BSW stipends and scholarships, support for BSW students, community college stipends for students pursuing an AA in social work or human services with an emphasis on child welfare, and the addition of human services high school academies to transition students into a career path.

As previously noted there is need for additional social work graduates, both at the BSW and the MSW levels. In addition to the above recommendations, it

would be beneficial to closely study child welfare line positions to assess tasks that may be completed by candidates with a BSW degree or an associate's degree in a health and human services area.

Public Relations and Recruitment Strategies

Next to a stable, satisfied staff, agencies can develop recruitment plans that include proactive and positive media relations. Agencies must learn how to project a positive image to their community. Other recommendations include continuous recruitment, creative/high energy advertising, on-line marketing, and cooperative agreements with educational and training entities.

Successful Selection

A well-planned hiring process is essential. This includes the use of creative and social work-specific assessment tools during the screening process (e.g., realistic job preview). Exercises and questions that are targeted toward the skills and characteristics of successful child welfare workers are particularly useful in hiring the right person (i.e., a person who can learn and grow with the organization).

RETENTION

General recommendations include shoring up a sense of employee “connectedness,” embracing a “learning organization” orientation, investing significantly in training and creating a work environment where training/learning is valued and supported. Additionally, experts recommend that agencies survey staff to pinpoint the best retention strategies.

Employee Satisfaction

Numerous studies identify staff morale as a vital factor in child welfare retention. Recommendations for achieving a satisfied, stable staff include providing autonomous working conditions, flexible hours, staff development opportunities, competent and accessible supervision and social supports, and on-going training (both in child welfare and in areas such as stress management and time management).

Competent Supervision

The ability to provide clear and consistent expectations, accessibility and supportiveness are among the most salient characteristics of competent child welfare supervisors. Further, several studies recommend that supervisors utilize unit meetings as training and networking opportunities. Regular case conferences and teamwork are also invaluable strategies.

Realistic Workload

The forthcoming SB 2030 Workload Study Report will contain numerous recommendations. This has several recruitment and retention implications in the areas of staff selection, training, and on-going development. A collaborative planning process which includes, but may not be limited to, state, county, school of social work, training academy, and CalSWEC representatives, is strongly recommended.

Compensation and Benefits

While adequate compensation and benefits are important considerations, it should be noted that pay rate generally ranks lower than other retention factors such as supervision, workload, recognition, and growth opportunities. However, compensation may be an issue for southern region counties as there is competition for a limited pool of workers.

One-Year Recruitment and Retention Continuum

As a result of this literature review, the NEHS developed a one-year continuum that features several recruitment and retention milestones. Figure 1 below summarizes the key events that shape the first year for a new social worker. Inadequacies in the areas noted are likely to contribute to workers exiting the system prior to completing probation. Figure 2 presents the steps that should continue past the first year. Each of these four factors (i.e., competent/supportive supervision, realistic workload, supportive work environment, and staff development) is a necessity for employee retention.

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**Figure 1. From Recruitment to Retention:
One-Year Continuum**

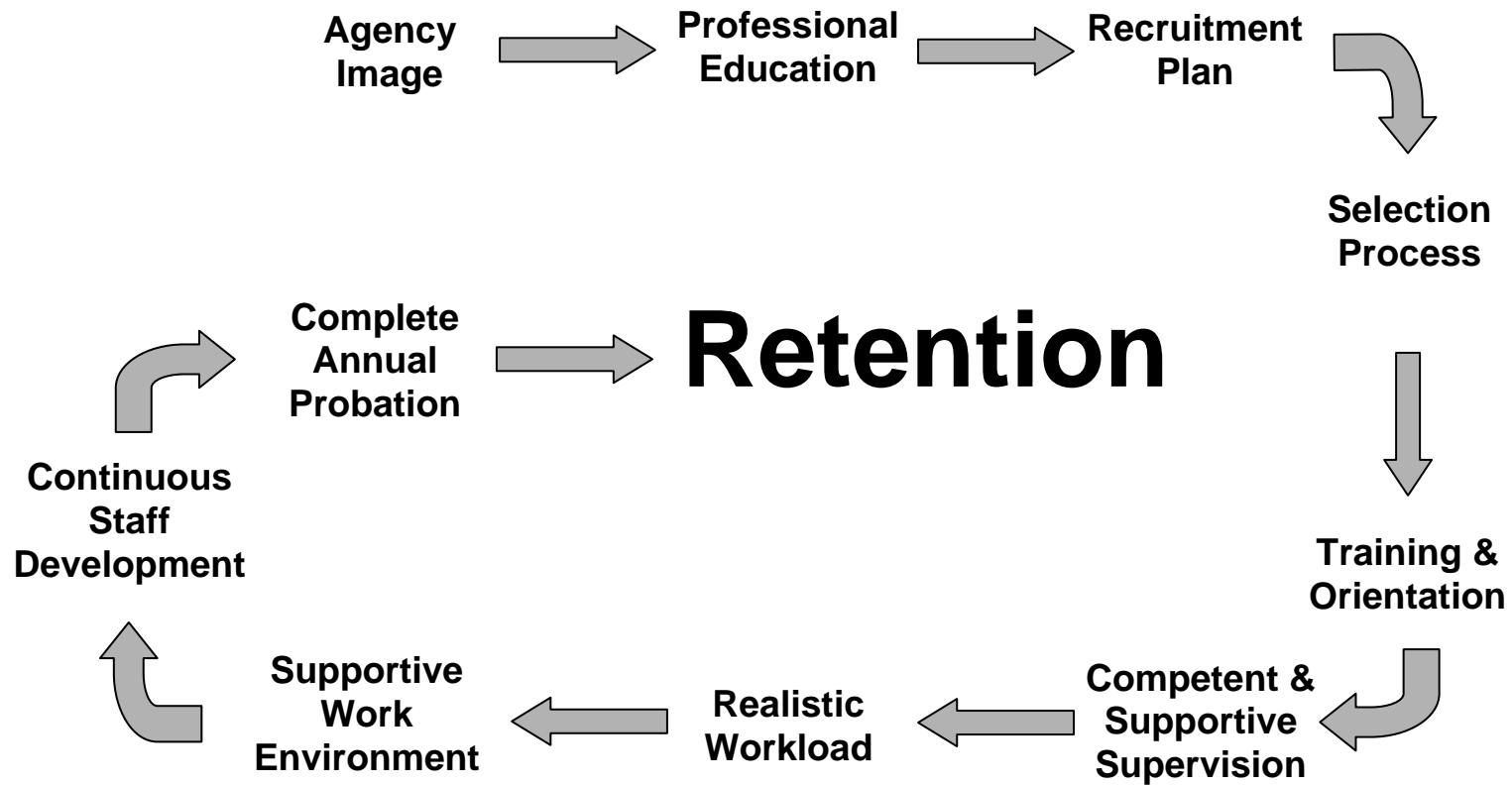
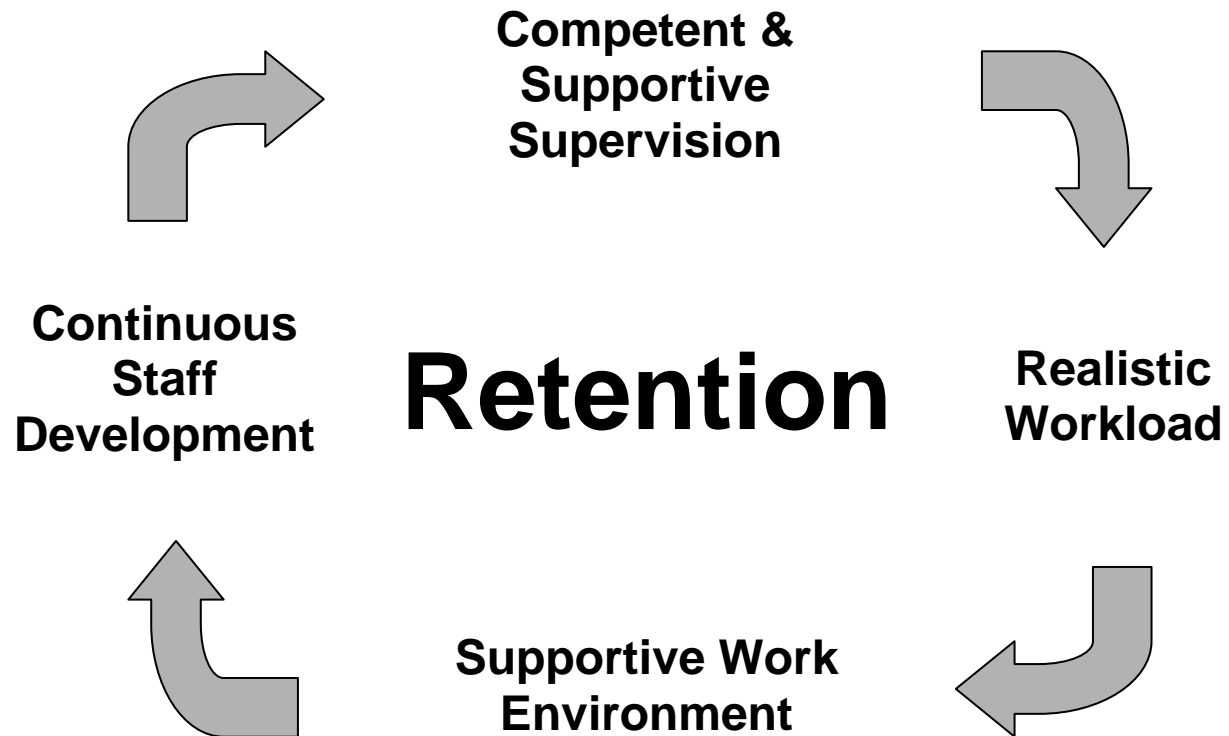


Figure 2. Retention: A Continuous Process



FINAL NOTE

In sum, the NEHS is committed to working with counties on developing specific recommendations and facilitating planning processes. Working in partnership, counties will benefit from pooled resources, while identifying and achieving their future staffing needs.

ADDENDUM

Ongoing National and Statewide Efforts

- 1) Child Welfare League of America Symposium on Recruitment and Retention, 12/99.
- 2) California Department of Social Services' Literature Review on Recruitment and Retention, in progress.
- 3) California Bay Area Academy Recruitment and Retention Summit, 5/00.
- 4) California County Welfare Directors Annual Children's Managers Meeting, 7/00.

Websites

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| 1) Council on Social Work Education: | www.cswe.org |
| 2) CalSWEC | http://128.32.203.242 |
| 3) NASW (California Chapter): | www.naswca.org |
| 4) NASW (National Web page): | www.naswdc.org |
| 5) California Department of Social Services: | www.dss.cahwnet.gov |
| 6) Child Welfare League of America | www.cwla.org |
| 7) Public Child Welfare Training Academy | www.rohan.sdsu.edu/~pcwtas |

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