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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



**Child Welfare Workforce Task Force:  
Literature Review, Employer Survey, and Recommendations**

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# Chapter 1: History and Purpose of the Child Welfare Workforce Task Force

Public Act 100-0879, which was enacted in August 2018, created “a task force to study the compensation and workload of child welfare workers to determine the role that compensation and workload play in the recruitment and retention of the child welfare workers, and to determine the role that staff turnover plays in achieving safety and timely permanence for children.”<sup>1</sup> The Task Force on Strengthening the Child Welfare Workforce for Children and Families was given the following goals:

- (1) Perform a policy and literature review regarding the compensation and caseload standards in the field of child welfare; staff turnover rates; and the impact compensation, caseload, and staff turnover have on achieving safety and timely permanence for children.
- (2) Survey employers in the public and private sector to determine
  - a. how many child welfare service jobs exist;
  - b. the compensation paid to child welfare workers;
  - c. how many child welfare service jobs are filled and how many are vacant;
  - d. how many child welfare service jobs are filled by persons who have at least 18 months in the position;
  - e. the rate of turnover for child welfare workers; and
  - f. the causes of turnover for child welfare workers.
- (3) Conduct a detailed time log analysis for child welfare workers to determine how much time is available to complete each administrative task and how much time is actually spent to complete each administrative task.
- (4) Develop recommendations on how to improve recruitment and retention of child welfare workers and reduce the turnover rates for child welfare workers.

The Task Force requested assistance with the literature review and data collection from the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. CFRC developed a work plan for the three tasks (the literature review, the employer survey, and the time log analysis) that was approved by the Task Force in February 2020. However, in March 2020, child welfare practice throughout the State was interrupted and drastically changed by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shelter at home order that was implemented. Because the purpose of the time log study was to determine how child welfare workers spend their time under “normal” work conditions and almost every aspect of their practice changed in March 2020 and forward, it was decided to suspend the implementation of the time log study. This report therefore contains the results of the literature review and the employer survey, as well as the recommendations of the task Force related to child welfare workforce recruitment, retention, and racial equity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/100/100-0879.htm>

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Workforce Turnover and Retention in Child Welfare

The child welfare workforce provides services and supports to keep vulnerable children, youth, and families safe, stable, and healthy. Because of this, “a well-trained, highly skilled, well-resourced and appropriately deployed workforce is foundational to a child welfare agency’s ability to achieve best outcomes for the vulnerable children, youth and families it serves.”<sup>2</sup> Retaining well-trained child welfare workers is a major challenge and high rates of turnover are an ongoing problem within the child welfare workforce. Although the results are now dated, a national study of the child welfare workforce published in 2001 found that 20% of public child welfare workers and 40% of child welfare workers in the private sector turned over annually; in addition, 8% of public child welfare supervisors and 28% of supervisors in the private sector left their jobs annually.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the average tenure of public agency child welfare workers was 7 years, compared to 3 years for private agency workers.<sup>4</sup>

The high rate of employee turnover in the child welfare workforce is a significant problem that has numerous and significant short- and long-term consequences, including strain on workers who remain and diminished quality of services.<sup>5</sup> Turnover leads to staff shortages and case transfers, resulting in case disruptions and overburdened workers. Turnover also strains limited agency resources because hiring and training new workers results in significant expenses to the agency. The total cost to replace a single worker can exceed \$57,000, according to one estimate.<sup>6</sup>

This literature review assesses the impact of workforce turnover on child welfare system performance, examines research aimed at understanding the factors associated with turnover, and identifies promising strategies to address turnover and retention.

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<sup>2</sup> Casey Family Programs (2017, October). *Information Packet Healthy Organizations: How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?* Retrieved from [https://caseyfamilypro-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/media/HO\\_Turnover-Costs\\_and\\_Retention\\_Strategies-1.pdf](https://caseyfamilypro-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/media/HO_Turnover-Costs_and_Retention_Strategies-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Alliance for Children and families, American Public Human Services Association, & Child Welfare League of America. (2001). *The child welfare workforce challenge: Results from a preliminary study*. Presented at Finding Better Ways 2001, Dallas, TX.

<sup>4</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2003). *The unsolved challenge of system reform: The condition of frontline human services workforce*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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.

<sup>6</sup> Leung, P., & Willis, N. (2012). The impact of Title IV-E training on case outcomes for children serviced by CPS. *Journal of Family Strengths, 12*, 1-16.

## 2.2 The Impact of Turnover and Retention on Child Welfare System Performance

As mentioned earlier, high rates of employee turnover have several potential impacts on child welfare system performance. When a child welfare worker leaves, cases on their caseload must be reassigned to other workers at the agency. The resulting increased caseloads make it more difficult for caseworkers to engage in high quality social work practices such as engaging with clients, performing thorough assessments, completing case plans and other documentation, conducting necessary home visits, and making carefully considered decisions regarding safety and permanency. It is reasonable to assume that the negative impact of turnover on the remaining child welfare worker performance will have an impact on child and family outcomes, such as child safety, placement stability, and the likelihood that a child will achieve a permanent home through reunification, adoption, or guardianship. Although the relationship between turnover, child welfare system performance or processes, and child and family outcomes seems logical, the research evidence for these relationships is scant. As a recent article articulated, “It is important to consider that real world systems function dynamically and it is difficult to know whether job turnover causes a malfunctioning system or is a symptom of it.”<sup>7</sup> In this section, we review the findings of the small number of studies that have examined these relationships.

In a 2003 study, researchers from the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) did focus groups with child welfare workers in four states to gather information on the reasons for and impacts of child welfare turnover.<sup>8</sup> According to caseworkers in all four states, high turnover rates (combined with staff shortages) led to insufficient time to establish relationships with children and families and to make the necessary decisions to ensure safe and stable placements. Caseworkers reported that gathering information to develop and manage a child’s case requires trust between the child and the caseworker. Due to turnover, trust is disrupted, making it difficult for caseworkers to elicit necessary information to ensure appropriate care for children. Additionally, transitioning cases to remaining staff takes time and can result in delays or changes in permanency decisions. These findings were corroborated in a 2010 qualitative study with youth in care, who reported that they experienced a lack of stability and loss of trust due to turnover among their child welfare workers.<sup>9</sup>

The GAO study also examined the relationship between the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) findings from 27 states and the presence of “workforce deficiencies” such as high

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<sup>7</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2006). *Relationship between staff turnover, child welfare system functioning and recurrent child abuse*. Retrieved from:

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff\\_Turnover\\_Recurrent\\_CA-3-06-NCCA\\_187006\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff_Turnover_Recurrent_CA-3-06-NCCA_187006_7.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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.

<sup>9</sup> Strolin-Goltzman, J., Kollar, S., & Trinkle J. (2010). Listening to the voices of children in foster care: youths speak out about child welfare workforce turnover and selection. *Social Work, 55*, 47-53.

caseloads, staff shortages, and inadequate training in their child welfare systems.<sup>10</sup> In all 27 of the CFSRs that were analyzed, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) cited these workforce deficiencies as factors that affected the attainment of at least one child welfare system assessment measures; the average number of performance measures that was affected by workforce deficiencies was 9. The performance measures that were affected by workforce deficiencies consisted of casework practices such as completing investigations in a timely manner, making diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children, establishing permanency goals in a timely manner, maintaining face-to-face contacts with parents to support attainment of case goals, and ensuring that case plans are developed jointly with assistance of parents. Thus, the GAO review found an association between workforce deficiencies, including high staff turnover and resulting vacancies, with caseworkers' abilities to perform high quality case management. The study did not, however, link turnover to child welfare outcomes such as maltreatment recurrence, placement stability, or attainment of permanency.

Another widely cited study examined the relationship between caseworker turnover and the attainment of permanency within the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW).<sup>11</sup> However, this study defined "turnover" as the numbers of caseworkers that were assigned to a child's ongoing permanency case between January 2003 and September 2004, as opposed to the more commonly used definition of worker's intention to leave a child welfare agency or the child welfare field. Unsurprisingly, the study found that the number of worker changes (or "turnovers") associated with a case was negatively related to the child's likelihood of achieving permanency (the article does not define what types of permanency are included in the analysis). The problem with this type of correlational analysis is that there were likely to be other unmeasured variables that were related to both a child's number of caseworkers and his or her likelihood of achieving permanency. For instance, children with severe behavioral or mental health needs change placements frequently, which can lead to an increase in the number of caseworkers and a decrease in the likelihood of being reunified or adopted. Thus, both the definition of turnover and the weak evaluation design limit the applicability of these findings to the current review.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency did a study that examined the relationships between turnover rates, workplace characteristics (average caseworker and supervisor salary, number of training days for new workers, worker to supervisor ratio, on-call time required, etc.), compliance with case practice standards (e.g., case processes), and outcomes (substantiated maltreatment recurrence within 3, 6, and 12 months) using data in 12 counties in California. The results of the analyses found that agency-level turnover rates were significantly negatively correlated with three measures of casework practice: the percentage of in-home cases with approved case plans ( $r = -.82$ ), the percentage of reunification cases with approved case plans ( $r = -.69$ ), and percentage of placement cases compliant with face-to-face

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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.

<sup>11</sup> Flower, C., McDonald, J., & Sumski, M. (2005). *Review of turnover in Milwaukee County Private Agency Child Welfare Ongoing Case Management Staff*. Retrieved from: <https://uh.edu/socialwork/docs/cwep/national-iv-e/turnoverstudy.pdf>

contact standards ( $r = -.61$ ). In addition, agency-level turnover rates were highly correlated with substantiated maltreatment recurrence at 3 months ( $r = .79$ ), 6 months ( $r = .72$ ) and 12 months ( $r = .60$ ). However, the authors caution that the study was an exploratory and correlational analysis of a complex issue and was based on a small sample of 12 county agencies.<sup>12</sup> In summary, there is evidence that turnover among child welfare caseworkers is related to agency-level measures of compliance or performance; as turnover increases, caseworkers' abilities to complete required casework practices are diminished. There is little evidence of an impact of turnover on child welfare outcomes, however.

### 2.3 Factors Associated with Turnover and Retention

A significant amount of research has assessed caseworkers' decisions to leave their agency or the child welfare workforce. A meta-analysis by Kim and Kao systematically reviewed 22 previous studies on child welfare workers' intentions to leave their current positions (intention to leave often serves as a proxy outcome for turnover in research studies).<sup>13</sup> The meta-analysis summarized factors associated with caseworkers' intention to leave by their level of influence<sup>14</sup> on turnover intentions, and grouped the reasons into four categories: demographic, work-related, work environment, and attitudes and perceptions (see Table 1). The study found that the attitudes and perceptions of child welfare workers such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and work-related factors such as stress and emotional exhaustion had high influence on turnover intention among child welfare workers. Work environment indicators such as different types of support (e.g., organizational, supervisor, co-worker, and spousal) had varying influence on turnover intention. Demographic predictors (e.g., race and gender) had relatively low effects on turnover intention. In the following sections, we examine the research linking several of these factors to child welfare worker turnover.

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<sup>12</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2006). *Relationship between staff turnover, child welfare system functioning and recurrent child abuse*. Retrieved from:

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff\\_Turnover\\_Recurrent\\_CA-3-06-NCCA\\_187006\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff_Turnover_Recurrent_CA-3-06-NCCA_187006_7.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Kim, H., & Kao, D. (2014). A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among U.S. child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 47, 214-223.

<sup>14</sup> The level of influence is based on the effect size described in Kim and Kao (2014): low (<0.1), moderate (0.1-0.3), medium (0.3-0.5), and high (>0.5).

**Table 1. Turnover Predictors Among Child Welfare Workers**

	Demographic	Work-related	Work environment	Attitudes and perceptions
Low effect	Race, gender, social work degree, other degrees	Caseload	Spouse/other support	
Moderate effect	Age, tenure, education level	Job demand, coping, autonomy	Financial reward, coworker support, professionalism, salary	Career development, work self-efficacy
Medium effect	Well-being	Safety concern, depersonalization, role conflict, inclusion, role ambiguity	Organizational support, perceptions of fairness, organizational culture, policy, supervisor support	Professional commitment, organizational climate, human caring
High effect		Stress, emotional exhaustion		Job satisfaction, organizational commitment

### 2.3.1 Caseload

In an effort to promote best practice in child welfare, several organizations have developed caseload standards for child welfare agencies, including the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)<sup>15</sup> and the Council on Accreditation (COA).<sup>16</sup> Table 2 shows the suggested maximum caseloads for different types of child welfare workers.

<sup>15</sup> Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). (2003). *CWLA standards of excellence for services to strengthen and preserve families* (rev. ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>16</sup> Council on Accreditation (COA). (2019). *Child Protective Services*. Retrieved from <http://coanet.org/standard/cps/purpose.pdf>. Council on Accreditation (COA). (2019). *Family foster care and kinship*. Retrieved from <http://coanet.org/standard/fkc/purpose.pdf>. Council on Accreditation (COA). (2019). *Family Preservation and Stabilization Services*. Retrieved from <http://coanet.org/standard/fps/purpose.pdf>.

**Table 2. Child Welfare Caseload Standards**

Worker Type	CWLA	COA
<b>Child Protective Services Investigator</b>	12 active cases per month	Should not exceed 15 investigations
<b>Family-centered casework (also called family preservation services)</b>	No more than 12 cases per worker (2-4 families per worker for intensive family preservation services)	Should not exceed 12-18 families in programs providing family preservation services and 2-6 families in programs providing intensive family preservation services
<b>Foster care placement services</b>	12-15 children	Should not exceed 15 children; no more than 8 children for treatment foster care services

Several studies have explored the relationship of caseload to child welfare workers' turnover and retention. The meta-analysis performed by Kim and Kao (2014) found that caseload size had a "low" effect size on turnover intention (<.1)<sup>17</sup> and the study of turnover predictors in 12 California counties also found no relationship between average worker caseload and agency-level turnover.<sup>18</sup> Other studies, however, suggest a link between caseload and turnover. For example, a study found that retention was reduced by 6 percent for each additional case in a worker's caseload.<sup>19</sup> Another study of recently hired child welfare workers found that caseload size after the first week of training was a significant predictor of early job departure (within 6 months of hiring).<sup>20</sup> The researchers found that each additional case assigned to an employee increased the probability of early departure by 10%. Another study found that 47.8% of respondents mentioned that workloads influenced their departures.<sup>21</sup> Aspects of their workload that were identified involved issues such as having caseloads that were too large, unrealistic expectations, and long hours. When asked about factors that would have possibly made them stay on the job, 52.1% believed they would have stayed if they had more manageable workloads. Suggestions made by the participants including lowering caseloads, more realistic expectations by administration, and increasing numbers of staff.

The effect of high caseloads on turnover may also be mediated through its impact on other variables, such as stress and burnout. High caseloads have been found to increase workers'

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<sup>17</sup> Kim, H., & Kao, D. (2014). A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among U.S. child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 47*, 214-223.

<sup>18</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2006). *Relationship between staff turnover, child welfare system functioning and recurrent child abuse*. Retrieved from: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff\\_Turnover\\_Recurrent\\_CA-3-06-NCCA\\_187006\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff_Turnover_Recurrent_CA-3-06-NCCA_187006_7.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Smith, B.D. (2005). Job retention in child welfare: Effects of perceived organizational support, supervisor support, and intrinsic job value. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, 153-169.

<sup>20</sup> Wilke, D.J., Rakes, S., & Randolph, K.A. (2019). Predictors of early departure among recently hired child welfare workers. *Social Work, 64*, 188-197.

<sup>21</sup> Gonzalez, R.P., Faller, K.C., Ortega, R., & Tropman, J. (2009). Exit interviews with departed child welfare workers: Preliminary findings. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 3*, 40-63.

stress levels and have deleterious impacts on both physical and psychological well-being.<sup>22</sup> There is some evidence that a caseworker's perception of their caseload may be more strongly related to intention to leave than the actual number of cases assigned to them.<sup>23</sup> In this study, caseload was measured in three ways: 1) number of cases assigned, 2) caseworker perception of caseload, and 3) caseworker satisfaction with caseload. The correlation between caseload size and intention to leave was near zero, while both perception of and satisfaction with caseload had small but significant relationships to intentions to leave.

### 2.3.2 Compensation

Although the meta-analysis found salary to have a moderate effect on child welfare workers' turnover and retention, individual studies have identified it as a significant predictor. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency study cited earlier found that the average minimum salary for caseworkers had a significantly negative relationship with agency-level turnover ( $r = -.80$ ), as did the average minimum salary for child welfare supervisors ( $r = -.75$ ).<sup>24</sup> Unlike child welfare worker caseload, identifying standards for child welfare worker compensation is difficult because compensation varies widely across and within states based on differences in the costs of living. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual wage for all social workers in the U.S. in May 2019 was \$50,470.<sup>25</sup> The median annual salary for child and family social workers was \$47,390, which was significantly lower than that for healthcare social workers (\$56,750) but slightly higher than social workers in mental health and substance abuse settings (\$46,650).

Several sources have identified discrepancies between the salaries of child welfare workers in public versus private agency settings, with public agency workers making significantly more than private agency workers.<sup>26</sup> One study examined the relationships between various aspects of job satisfaction and intention to leave among public and private child welfare agency

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<sup>22</sup> Antonopoulou, P., Killian, M., & Forrester, D. (2017). Levels of stress and anxiety in child and family social work: Workers' perceptions of organizational structure, professional support and workplace opportunities in Children's Services in the UK. *Children and Youth Services Review, 76*, 42-50. Barck-Holst P., Nilsson, A., Åkerstedt, T., & Hellgren, C. (2015). Reduced working hours and stress in the Swedish social services: A longitudinal study. *International Social Work, 60*, 897-913.

<sup>23</sup> Jacquet, S.E., Clark, S.J., Morazes, J.L., & Withers, R. (2008). The role of supervision in the retention of child welfare workers. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 1*, 27-54.

<sup>24</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2006). *Relationship between staff turnover, child welfare system functioning and recurrent child abuse*. Retrieved from: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff\\_Turnover\\_Recurrent\\_CA-3-06-NCCA\\_187006\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/gtfcj/Staff_Turnover_Recurrent_CA-3-06-NCCA_187006_7.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2019, February 15). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Social Workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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. Hollinsworth, L.D., Bybee, D., Johnson, E.I., & Swick, D. (2010). A comparison of caseworker characteristics in public and private foster care agencies. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 578-584.

workers.<sup>27</sup> Type of auspice (public versus private) was strongly predictive of intention to leave, with private agency workers expressing significantly stronger intentions to leave than public agency workers. The key factor predicting private agency workers' intention to leave was their dissatisfaction with their level of pay.

Research on social work practice in general has demonstrated that employees that feel contentment with their income are more likely to experience job satisfaction, and worker dissatisfaction with compensation is a significant factor in worker turnover.<sup>28</sup> For instance, a study with 259 social workers in mental health agencies in New York found that participants' satisfaction with salaries was positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with intention to leave.<sup>29</sup> A study with 785 MSW alumni found that 92% reported that having an above average income was somewhat to extremely important. In addition, those that stayed in the social work profession were more likely to report that salary was important than those that had left the field. Other studies have found that early leavers (within 6 months) are more likely report lower levels of satisfaction with their salaries and benefits as well as perceptions that they are under-compensated in relation to their job expectations and workload demands.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3.3 Job Satisfaction

The recent meta-analysis indicated that job satisfaction has high influence on turnover intention and turnover among child welfare workers.<sup>31</sup> For instance, a longitudinal study of newly hired child welfare workers examined the factors that predicted which workers remained at their jobs after 3-5 years.<sup>32</sup> Three factors predicted retention: higher levels of job

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<sup>27</sup> Auerbach, C., McGowan, B.G., Ausberger, A., Strolin-Goltzman, J., & Schudrich, W. (2010). Differential factors influencing public and voluntary child welfare workers' intention to leave. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1396-1402.

<sup>28</sup> Schweitzer, D., Chianello, T., Kothari, B.H. (2013). Compensation in social work: Critical for satisfaction and a sustainable profession. *Administration in Social Work, 37*, 147-157. Scannapieco, M., & Connell-Carrick, K. (2007). Child welfare workplace: The state of the workforce and strategies to improve retention. *Child Welfare, 86*, 31-52.

<sup>29</sup> Acker, G.M. (2004). The effect of organizational conditions (role conflict, role ambiguity, opportunities for professional development, and social support) on job satisfaction and intention to leave among social workers in mental health care. *Community Mental Health Journal, 40*, 65-73.

<sup>30</sup> Chen, Y.Y., Park, J., & Park, A. (2012). Existence, relatedness, or growth? Examining turnover intention, of public child welfare caseworkers from a human needs approach. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 2088-2093.

Smith, B.D. (2005). Job retention in child welfare: Effects of perceived organizational support, supervisor support, and intrinsic job value. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, 153-169. Herschell, A.D., Kolko, D.J., Hart, J.A., Brabson, L.A., & Gavin, J.C. (2020). Mixed method study of workforce turnover and evidence-based treatment implementation in community behavioral health settings. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 102*.

<sup>31</sup> Kim, H., & Kao, D. (2014). A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among U.S. child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 47*, 214-223.

<sup>32</sup> Faller, K.C., Grabarek, M., & Ortega, R.M. (2010). Commitment to child welfare work: What predicts leaving and staying? *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 840-846.

satisfaction, good quality supervision, and having viewed a Realistic Job Preview<sup>33</sup> prior to taking the job.

Job satisfaction may also influence turnover and retention indirectly through its relationship with other factors such as quality of supervision and organizational commitment. For example, according to a 2008 study, quality of supervision was strongly tied to job satisfaction among child welfare workers.<sup>34</sup> In this study, quality of supervision was defined as “workers’ perception of emotional support, advice giving, and amount [of supervision] received.” Workers who received at least two hours of supervision per week had higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those who received less than two hours of supervision. Additionally, according to the interviews conducted by the GAO, the caseworkers’ desire to stay in the child welfare profession was influenced by quality of supervision they received. Caseworkers who reported that they were satisfied with their jobs rated their relationship with supervisors as one of the most satisfying factors of their work.<sup>35</sup>

Some studies have indicated that job satisfaction may lead to turnover through its effects on organizational commitment.<sup>36</sup> Organization commitment is defined as “relative strength of an individual’s identification with the mission, goals and values of and involvement in a particular organization.”<sup>37</sup> Employees who are committed to the organization are willing to accept its values and beliefs and stay with the organization; employees with lower levels of commitment are less satisfied with their jobs and more likely to plan to leave the organization.<sup>38</sup> In a 2009 study involving child welfare workers in Connecticut, those who reported being committed to the mission of the agency were more satisfied at the job and less inclined to leave.<sup>39</sup> A study of commitment to child welfare work among newly hired public and private agency workers found that a worker’s level of commitment to child welfare work in general and to their agency in

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<sup>33</sup> Prospective child welfare employees may review Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) before or during their job interviews as one strategy to assess their goodness of fit for child welfare positions. Realistic job previews can be presented in various formats, including videos, online and face-to-face presentations, panel presentations or onsite meetings, structured observations/job tours, and written brochures or booklets. Based on Faller and colleagues (2009) review of 11 states’ use of RJPs, they are an average of 30 minutes in length (range: 11-36 minutes), and most use worker/supervisor narratives and mock client interviews. Some of the products feature footage of actual clients with agency administrators to highlight substantive elements of substantive and process-oriented tasks associated with case management.

<sup>34</sup> Barth, R.P., Lloyd C, Christ, S.L., Chapman, M.V., & Dickson, N.S. (2008). Child welfare workers characteristics and job satisfaction: A national study. *Social Work, 53*, 199-209.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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.

<sup>36</sup> Mor Barak, M.E., Nissly, J.A. & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and metanalysis. *Social Service Review, 75*, 625–661.

<sup>37</sup> Chernesky, R., & Israel, M. (2009, p. 26). Job expectations and intention to leave in a state child welfare agency. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 3*, 23-39.

<sup>38</sup> Mor Barak, M.E., Nissly, J.A. & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and metanalysis. *Social Service Review, 75*, 625–661.

<sup>39</sup> Chernesky, R., & Israel, M. (2009). Job expectations and intention to leave in a state child welfare agency. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 3*, 23-39.

particular were both significantly related to whether the worker remained employed at the agency 3 to 5 years later.<sup>40</sup> Public agency child welfare workers reported significantly higher levels of commitment to child welfare work in general and to their agency compared to workers at private child welfare agencies. In addition, public agency workers were significantly more likely to have taken their child welfare job because of good pay, good benefits, and opportunities for advancement, whereas private agency workers were more likely to have taken their jobs because it was the only job available and it was a good first job to take.<sup>41</sup>

Another study examined the relationships between job satisfaction, work commitment, and intention to leave among public and private child welfare agency workers.<sup>42</sup> The results showed that public agency workers were more satisfied with their opportunities for promotion, benefits, and the nature of their work, whereas private agency workers were more satisfied with their coworkers. Compared to private agency workers, public agency workers scored significantly higher on an overall job satisfaction scale that combined all job domains. For both types of workers, overall job satisfaction and level of commitment to child welfare predicted intention to leave.

### 2.3.4 Organizational Culture

A number of studies have indicated that organizational culture is related to turnover among child welfare workers.<sup>43</sup> Organizational culture—defined as “a pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational function and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization”<sup>44</sup>—is thought to have multiple dimensions: quality of supervision, peer support, and professional commitment.<sup>45</sup> Research related to each component is described below.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that adequate, supportive supervision is a critical factor associated with positive work-related outcomes among child welfare staff.<sup>46</sup> Supportive supervision is defined as the “extent to which social workers believe their supervisors offer

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<sup>40</sup> Faller, K.C., Grabarek, M., & Ortega, R.M. (2010). Commitment to child welfare work: What predicts leaving and staying? *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 840-846.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Auerbach, C., McGowan, B.G., Ausberger, A., Strolin-Goltzman, J., & Schudrich, W. (2010). Differential factors influencing public and voluntary child welfare workers' intention to leave. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1396-1402.

<sup>43</sup> Lee, J., Rehner, T., & Forster, M. (2010). Employees' intentions to remain employed in child welfare: Testing a conceptual model. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 4*, 174-197.

<sup>44</sup> Deshpande, R. & Webster, F. (1989). Organizational culture and marketing: Defining the research agenda. *Journal of Marketing, 53*, 3-15.

<sup>45</sup> Lee, J., Rehner, T., & Forster, M. (2010). Employees' intentions to remain employed in child welfare: Testing a conceptual model. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 4*, 174-197.

<sup>46</sup> Mor Barak, M.E., Levin, A., Nissly, J.A., & Lane, C. (2006). Why do they leave? Modeling child welfare workers' turnover intentions. *Children and Youth Services Review, 28*, 548-577.

them instrumental (knowledge/skill) and affective (emotional) support.”<sup>47</sup> In a 2009 study, supportive supervision was a strong predictor for intention to stay in the child welfare workforce among surveyed workers in California.<sup>48</sup> Supportive supervision, which includes instrumental and affective support, can motivate these workers to stay in the workplace despite the stress and frustration of the job.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the lack of adequate supervisory support can be a critical factor in caseworkers’ decisions to leave the child welfare workforce, as indicated by a qualitative study that included over 600 exit interviews with child welfare workers who left their positions.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, Chen and Scannapieco found that supportive supervision was especially important to retain child welfare workers with low self-efficacy. Low-efficacy workers are emotionally reactive and experience more emotional exhaustion and stress at work compared to high-efficacy workers.<sup>51</sup> According to a 2009 qualitative study with child protection workers, the lack of positive feedback and ambiguous messages from supervisors regarding work performance hindered workers from feeling valued and building self-efficacy.<sup>52</sup>

Similar to supervisory support, peer support—“perceived support (i.e. assistance and understanding) which coworkers receive from their immediate work colleagues”—can have a positive influence on retention. In a 2020 study conducted by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, the association between peer support and retention was examined among child welfare workers.<sup>53</sup> In this study, two types of peer support were assessed: social emotional support (e.g., “my coworkers listen to me when I need to talk”) and instrumental/operational support (e.g., “coworkers share information with each other to improve the effectiveness of client services”). Approximately 60% of caseworkers cited “coworkers” as a key reason they plan to stay in the job and both types of peer support were strongly associated with workers’ intention to stay in the agency.

Related factors that impact retention and turnover include promotion and career development; workers that feel limited in their ability to use their professional skills for career advancement are more likely to quit.<sup>54</sup> Having a supportive environment and opportunities within the

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<sup>47</sup> Chenot, D., Benton, A., & Kim, H. (2009). The influence of supervisor support, peer support, and organizational culture among early career social workers in child welfare services. *Child Welfare, 88*, 129-147.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Government Accountability 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.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Chen, S., & Scannapieco, M. (2010). The influence of job satisfaction on child welfare worker’s desire to stay: An examination of the interaction effect of self-efficacy and supportive supervision. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 482-486.

<sup>52</sup> Gibbs, J. (2009). Changing the cultural story in child protection: Learning from the insider’s experience. *Child & Family Social Work, 14*, 289-299.

<sup>53</sup> Sedivy, J., Rienks, S., Leake, R., & He, A.S. (2020). Expanding our understanding of the role of peer support in child welfare workforce retention. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 14*, 80-100.

<sup>54</sup> Strand, V.C., & Dore, M.M. (2009). Job satisfaction in a stable state child welfare workforce: Implications for staff retention. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*, 391-397.

organization were common themes that contributed to retention. Supportive environments were described as environments in which employees could both receive and provide support (e.g., with co-workers, supervisors), while opportunities within the organization referred to aspects such as the chance for career advancement, opportunities to acquire new knowledge, and job security. While examining the issue of turnover, the emergent themes revolved around 1) organizational factors linked to work demands, compensation, and unhelpful systems, and 2) stress. High work demands would often require overtime, but workers felt judged by supervisors when needing to justify overtime, and some spoke of scenarios where they would receive less compensation when working more overtime hours.

### 2.3.5 Burnout

Some studies have found that as many as half of child welfare staff report high levels of burnout.<sup>55</sup> “Burnout” is a term coined by Pete Freudenberger to describe when a practitioner becomes “inoperative.” This state of inoperativeness involves aspects of rigidity such as being “closed off” from input, feelings of resignation, irritability, and quickness to anger. Additional symptoms in this state include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of accomplishment.<sup>56</sup> A study of 751 practicing social workers examining burnout found that 39% reported currently experiencing burnout and only 25% reported never having any trouble with burnout.<sup>57</sup> A qualitative study of female social workers in child welfare that were dissatisfied had experienced burnout on the job felt compromised in both their performance and well-being.<sup>58</sup> Multiple studies have linked high levels of burnout with increased risks for turnover intention and actual turnover.<sup>59</sup> A meta-analysis on turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human services employees between 1980 and 2000 found that one of the strongest predictors for intention to leave and turnover was burnout.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sprang, G., Craig, C., & Clark, J. (2011). Secondary traumatic stress and burnout in child welfare workers: A comparative analysis of occupational distress across professional groups. *Child Welfare, 90*, 149–168.

<sup>56</sup> Maslach, C., Jackson, S. & Leiter, M. (1996). *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

<sup>57</sup> Siebert, D.C. (2005). Personal and occupational factors in burnout among practicing social workers: Implications for research, practitioners, and managers. *Journal of Social Service Research, 32*, 25–44.

<sup>58</sup> Gold, N. (1998). Using participatory research to help promote the physical and mental health of female social workers in child welfare. *Child Welfare, 77*, 701-724.

<sup>59</sup> Cahalane, H., & Sites, E.W. (2008). The climate of child welfare employee retention. *Child Welfare: Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program, 87*, 91–114. Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *The Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 499–512. Mor Barak, M.E., Nissly, J.A., & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and metanalysis. *Social Service Review, 75*, 625-661. Williams, S.E., Nichols, Q.I., Kirk, A., & Wilson, T. (2011). A recent look at the factors influencing workforce retention in public child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 157-160.

<sup>60</sup> Mor Barak, M.E., Nissly, J.A., & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and metanalysis. *Social Service Review, 75*, 625-661.

To measure burnout, researchers use tools like the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI).<sup>61</sup> CBI measures the state of both physical and emotional exhaustion, and respondents are asked to indicate the sources of these emotions from the following three domains of their life: 1) personal burnout, 2) work-related burnout, and 3) client-related burnout. Personal burnout refers to feelings of burnout that are unrelated to occupational status and is applicable to general audiences. Work-related burnout is the extent to which employees identify work as a source of feelings of burnout. Lastly, client-related burnout refers to an employee's association of their feelings of burnout through work with clients. A study of 2,302 caseworkers and supervisors found that staff had higher levels of work-related than client-related burnout.<sup>62</sup> There were no differences between caseworkers and supervisors on work-related burnout, but case-carrying staff reported higher levels of client-related burnout than non-case-carrying staff and supervisors. Burnout was positively associated with job stress and inversely associated with job satisfaction and intent to stay.

Other studies on burnout have utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which measures three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Exhaustion refers to a lack of energy and feeling emotionally drained. Exhaustion can lead to a lack of compassion or negative attitudes and behaviors, affecting workers' ability to meet their demands when working with clients. Cynicism refers to the process of distancing oneself from the emotional needs of clients as a coping response. Lastly, inefficacy is marked by individuals' perceptions that they are not adequate in meeting the needs of their clients and not making a difference. Research has shown support of the validity of these three distinct concepts,<sup>63</sup> although there seems to be some agreement by scholars that exhaustion is the most salient component of burnout.<sup>64</sup> A recent longitudinal study with 362 front line social workers and social work supervisors in the United States found that exhaustion significantly increased depersonalization. Exhaustion was significantly associated with both work withdrawal and exit, while depersonalization was associated with exit but not work withdrawal.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to these quantitative measures of burnout, qualitative research has shed some light on how aspects of child welfare work contributes to burnout and affect retention (e.g., demanding work, stress). A qualitative study using exit interviews with 69 departing child welfare workers found that 72.4% reported negative impacts of their jobs on their personal life

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<sup>61</sup> Kristensen, T.S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K.B. (2005). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory: A new tool for the assessment of burnout. *Work and Stress, 19*, 192-207.

<sup>62</sup> Leake, R., Rienks, S., & Obermann, A. (2017). A deeper look at burnout in the child welfare workforce. *Human Services Organizations: Management, Leadership, & Governance, 5*, 492-502.

<sup>63</sup> Maslach, C., Jackson, S. & Leiter, M. (1996). *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

<sup>64</sup> Boyas, J.F., Wind, L.H., & Ruiz, E. (2013). Organizational tenure among child welfare workers, burnout, stress, and intent to leave: Does employment-based social capital make a difference? *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 1657-1669. Cox, T., Tisserand, M., & Taris, T. (2005). Editorial: The conceptualization and measurement of burnout: Questions and directions. *Work and Stress, 19*, 187-191.

<sup>65</sup> Travis, D.J., Lizano, E.L., & Mor Barak, M.E. (2016). "I'm so stressed!": A longitudinal model of stress, burnout and engagement among social workers in child welfare settings. *British Journal of Social Work, 46*, 1076-1095.

as a reason for leaving, including feeling emotionally burnt out.<sup>66</sup> Workers in human service and crisis settings face unique stressors that increase their levels of stress, ultimately making them more susceptible for burnout.<sup>67</sup> Social service professionals that work with victims of interpersonal violence (IPV) are especially at risk for stress and burnout. For example, a study compared child protection workers with other types of social workers and found that exposure to child maltreatment and role stress were significantly associated with secondary traumatization, which led to increased risk of burnout and turnover.<sup>68</sup>

Studies have also examined worker characteristics that may be associated with burnout. For example, child welfare workers who are younger and have fewer years of professional experience have higher rates of burnout.<sup>69</sup> Previous research with welfare workers in the public sector has found high rates of burnout and stress, with 62% of front-line Child Protective Service (CPS) workers reporting high levels of emotional exhaustion.<sup>70</sup> Other studies have examined differences in burnout between workers in public and private child welfare sectors. For example, a study examined how public child welfare workers' perceptions of their job conditions, unmet expectations, and burnout differed from social workers in other settings (e.g., private child welfare, private mental health).<sup>71</sup> They found that public child welfare worker perceptions of work overload were significantly higher than social workers in other settings, and that public child welfare workers reported higher levels of role conflict than workers in private child welfare and mental health care settings. In addition, public child welfare workers had significantly higher levels of depersonalization than child welfare workers in the private sector but not of those in other settings. Public child welfare workers also reported significantly lower perceived personal accomplishment than private child welfare workers, public and private mental health workers, and social workers in other private settings. Another study found that social workers in public settings reported more burnout than those in private settings; moreover, burnout appeared to decline with increasing years in private agencies but not for those in public agency settings.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Gonzalez, R.P., Faller, K.C., Ortega, R., & Tropman, J. (2009). Exit interviews with departed child welfare workers: Preliminary findings. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 3*, 40-63.

<sup>67</sup> Lloyd, C. King, R., Chenoweth, L. (2002). Social work, stress, and burnout: A Review. *Journal of Mental Health, 11*, 255-265.

<sup>68</sup> Weiss Dagan, S., Ben-Porat, A., & Itzhaky, H. (2016). Child protection workers dealing with child abuse: The contribution of personal, social, and organizational resources to secondary traumatization. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 51*, 203-211.

<sup>69</sup> Salloum, A., Kondrat, D.C., Johnco, C., & Olson, K.R. (2015). The role of self-care on compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary trauma among child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 49*, 54-61.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, D. G. (2000). Coping strategies and burnout among veteran child protection workers. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 24*, 839-848.

<sup>71</sup> Kim, H. (2011). Job conditions, unmet expectations, and burnout in public child welfare workers: How different from other social workers? *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 358-367.

<sup>72</sup> Schwartz, R.H., Tiamiyu, M.F., Dwyer, D.J. (2007). Social worker hope and perceived burnout: The effects of age, years in practice, and setting. *Administration in Social Work, 31*, 103-119.

## 2.4 Strategies to Address Retention

As detailed above, extensive research has examined the predictors of turnover. This section outlines research on strategies to address worker retention or factors that are related to retention such as job satisfaction, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and organizational commitment. The majority of the strategies reviewed in this section can be categorized as promising practices, which means that they have been subject to evaluation in at least one study utilizing some form of control (e.g., untreated group, placebo group, matched wait list study) that established the intervention's benefit over the control group on outcomes specified in the criteria for that topic area (e.g., worker retention).<sup>73</sup>

### 2.4.1 Enhancing Workforce to Meet Professional Job Requirements

The demands of child welfare work require a skilled workforce well-equipped in many areas including applying culturally proficient interpersonal skills; implementing critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving; documenting progress of families towards goals; and working with service providers and court personnel to support children and families. As highlighted in the first section, the demanding nature of child welfare work is associated with increased turnover among child welfare caseworkers and investigators. To help workers better meet the demands of the job, one of the main strategies used by child welfare systems to improve work-related skills and supports is through worker training initiatives. This section highlights research on promising training strategies, including simulation-based training, supervisor training, and competency-based training.

The first approach we describe is simulation-based training, in which a child welfare worker is trained via the realistic simulation of their job duties, including investigating allegations of child maltreatment, interacting with parents (portrayed by standardized patients or professional actors), preparing supporting documentation of that maltreatment, and presenting the evidence in a mock court room. Following the success of simulation training in healthcare, child welfare training has increasingly focused on simulation-based training approaches.<sup>74</sup> For example, California, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Utah have adopted simulation-based approaches to training child welfare workers, and other states have begun implementation (personal communication, Dr. Betsy Goulet, 2019). Of particular relevance for the audience of this literature review are the efforts in Illinois. In the 2019 evaluation report of Illinois' simulation training initiative, Chiu and Cross assessed the impact of simulation training on turnover.<sup>75</sup> They found that, in comparison to a historical group that did not receive simulation training, staff who received simulation training were significantly more

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<sup>73</sup> This rating scale is described in more detail at the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare: <https://www.cebc4cw.org/ratings/scientific-rating-scale/>

<sup>74</sup> Steadman, R.H., Coates, W.C., Yue, M.H., Matevosian, R., Larmon, B.R., McCullough, L., & Ariel, D. (2006). Simulation-based training is superior to problem-based learning for the acquisition of critical assessment and management skills. *Critical Care Medicine*, 34, 151-157.

<sup>75</sup> Chiu, Y.L., & Cross, T.P. (2019). *FY2019 Program Evaluation of the Child Protection Training Academy for New DCFS Investigators*. Urbana, IL: Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

likely to remain on the job after 18 months. Because simulation training is a relatively new initiative, more research is needed to understand the relationship between simulation training and turnover. Previous findings suggest it is a promising practice to help workers meet the demands of their jobs and intend to stay in their positions.

The second training strategy with promising impact on worker retention is support for transfer of learning, in which supervisors and peers support the transfer of skills learned in training into practice in the field. Using a sample of 416 Ohio child protective services workers, Curry and colleagues analyzed factors affecting transfer of learning and staff retention/turnover among participants of a three-month training program.<sup>76</sup> The researchers assessed the association between training participation, transfer of learning, and retention. Transfer of learning was measured via worker ratings of how much they were able to put the knowledge gained in training into practice. Workers with higher ratings of transfer of learning were more likely to remain in their jobs. As with simulation training, the available research on the value of support for putting training skills into practice is promising, but limited. More research is needed to understand the full impact.

Another promising practice is to establish job-related competencies so that workers understand the skills they are expected to have in their positions and the link between available trainings and required skills. Job-related competencies are an integrated and detailed set of abilities, attributes, and skills which help an individual to perform the duties associated with their job role. When child welfare organizations define job-related competencies, "all employees are recruited, selected, developed, appraised, and promoted" based on shared set of attributes for each position.<sup>77</sup> Establishing job-related competencies may increase employee retention, at least among new employees. An evaluation of a competency-based training program in California among prospective child welfare workers found those who received the training remained in their positions significantly longer than workers in the comparison group.<sup>78</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Providing Peer and Supervisor Support to Address Job Demands

The professional job demands that workers may improve through training are only one piece of the demands on workers; to meet the emotional requirements of the job, peer and supervisor support may help reduce emotional burnout and increase worker retention. One specific area in which peer and supervisor support may be particularly useful is in helping workers deal with secondary traumatic stress that comes from working closely with children and families that have experienced, and/or perpetrated abuse, neglect, and trauma. Secondary traumatic

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<sup>76</sup> Curry, D., McCarragher, T., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M. (2005). Training, transfer, and turnover: Exploring the relationship among transfer of learning factors and staff retention in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, 931-948.

<sup>77</sup> Brittain, C. & Bernotavicz, F. (2015). *Competency-based workforce development; A synthesis of current approaches*. Albany, NY: National Child Welfare Workforce Institute.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, L.P. & Okamura, A. (2000). Reprofessionalizing child welfare services: An evaluation of a Title IV-E training program. *Research on Social Work Practice, 10*, 607-621.

stress<sup>79</sup> is defined as "the natural, consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person."<sup>80</sup> In a study of about 1,200 child welfare professionals in five different child welfare organizations in four states, Middleton and Potter found a significant association between vicarious trauma experienced by child welfare workers and workers' intent-to-leave.<sup>81</sup> Peer and supervisor support may offer a way to reduce the negative effects of secondary traumatic stress and thus reduce worker intent-to-leave. In a study of 154 social workers providing support to survivors of family violence or sexual assault, higher levels of support from peers, supervisors, and work teams was associated with lower levels of self-reported secondary traumatic stress.<sup>82</sup> In a statewide sample of about 200 child welfare workers in a New England state, Boyas and Wind found significant association between perceptions of increased supervisor support and reduced job stress and emotional exhaustion.<sup>83</sup> Increased peer and supervisor support may help workers handle the demands of their jobs and lead to reduced turnover.

### 2.4.3 Building Proficient Organizational Cultures

Building from quality supervision, organizational culture is a broader concept that encompasses an organization's shared values and beliefs and sets the standard for employee contributions to the organization's mission.<sup>84</sup> When workers share the values and beliefs of the organization and are committed to the organization's goals, they are more likely to remain in their positions.<sup>85</sup> Organization commitment is one of the strongest predictors of turnover intention and turnover among child welfare workers.<sup>86</sup> Building proficient organizational cultures is a difficult task. We will review three methods that include evidence of reduced intention-to-leave as a result.

### Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is "leadership behavior that influences [employees] to transcend their individual self-interests for the collective good of their organizations," while also

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<sup>79</sup> This concept may also be called secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, or other related terms.

<sup>80</sup> Figley, C.R. (1999, p. 10). Compassion fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the costs of caring. In B.H. Stamm (Ed.), *Secondary traumatic stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers, and educators* (2nd ed., pp. 3-28). Lutherville, MD: Sidran.

<sup>81</sup> Middleton, J.S., & Potter, C.C. (2015). Relationship between vicarious traumatization and turnover among child welfare professionals. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 9*, 195-216.

<sup>82</sup> Choi, G.Y. (2011). Organizational impacts on the secondary traumatic stress of social workers assisting family violence or sexual assault survivors. *Administration in Social Work, 35*, 225-242.

<sup>83</sup> Boyas, J., & Wind, L.H. (2010). Employment-based social capital, job stress, and employee burnout: A public child welfare employee structural model. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 380-388

<sup>84</sup> Deshpande, R. & Webster, F. (1989). Organizational culture and marketing: Defining the research agenda. *Journal of Marketing, 53*, 3-15.

<sup>85</sup> Mor Barak, M.E., Nissly, J.A. & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and meta-analysis. *Social Service Review, 75*, 625-661.

<sup>86</sup> Kim, H., & Kao, D. (2014). A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among U.S. child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 47*, 214-223.

addressing individual need.<sup>87</sup> Rittschof and Fortunato examined the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and intention-to-leave. Among a sample of 197 caseworkers, higher ratings of transformational leadership were associated with reduced job burnout, improved organizational commitment, and reduced intent-to-quit.<sup>88</sup> In a survey of 264 child welfare caseworkers in a Midwestern state, Park and Pierce analyzed the relationship between workers' intention-to-leave and their ratings of supervisor's transformational leadership behaviors, as well as ratings of organizational climate, culture, and commitment. Within this sample, one-third of the leaders being rated participated in a leadership development training project.<sup>89</sup> They found transformational leadership was directly and significantly related to decreased turnover.

## Design Teams

Another organizational intervention that strengthens organizational culture and increases worker retention is the use of design teams.<sup>90</sup> A design team is a workgroup with representatives from all levels of an organization that collaborates to create a solution-focused model for organizational improvement. Design teams may be aided in this work by internal data and metrics as well as the assistance of an external facilitator. For guidance on how to implement a design team, numerous resources are available. Two recent publications may provide useful starting points, including a publication about building effective child welfare teams and a resource from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.<sup>91</sup>

The results of several studies show that design teams have promising results for improving organizational climate and job satisfaction, as well as reducing workers' intention-to-leave.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Park, T., & Pierce, B. (2020). Impacts of transformational leadership on turnover intention of child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 108*, 1-10.

<sup>88</sup> Rittschof, K.R. & Fortunato, V.J. (2015). The influence of transformational leadership and job burnout on child protective services case managers' commitment and intent to quit. *Journal of Social Service Research, 42*, 372-385.

<sup>89</sup> Park, T., & Pierce, B. (2020). Impacts of transformational leadership on turnover intention of child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 108*.

<sup>90</sup> Design teams are sometimes called simply "child welfare teams" or "workforce innovation teams."

<sup>91</sup> Cull, M. & Lindsey, T. (2019). *TeamFirst: A field guide for safe, reliable, and effective child welfare teams*.

Chicago, IL: Praed Foundation. Annie E. Casey Foundation (2019). *Five steps to a stronger child welfare workforce: Hiring and retaining the right people on the frontline*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/five-steps-to-a-stronger-child-welfare-workforce/>

<sup>92</sup> Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H. A., & Barkdull, C. (2002). An evaluation of child welfare design teams in four states. *Journal of Health & Social Policy, 15*, 131-161. Caringi, J.C., Strolin-Goltzman, J., Lawson, H.A., McCarthy, M., Briar-Lawson, K., & Claiborne, N. (2008). Child welfare design teams: An intervention to improve workforce retention and facilitate organizational development. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*, 565-74. Strolin-Goltzman, J. (2010). Improving turnover in public child welfare: Outcomes from an organizational intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1388-1395. Strolin-Goltzman, J., et al. (2009). Design teams: A promising organizational intervention for improving turnover rates in the child welfare workforce. *Child Welfare, 88*, 149-168. Claiborne, N., et al. (2014). Design teams as an organizational intervention to improve job satisfaction and worker turnover in public child welfare. *Journal of Family Strengths, 14*, 1-20. Lawrence, C.K., Zeitlin, W.S., Auerbach, C., & Claiborne, N. (2015). Climate change in private child welfare organizations. *Human Service Organizations Management Leadership & Governance, 39*, 290-305. Lawrence, C., Claiborne, N., Zeitlin, W., & Auerbach, C. (2016). Finish what you start: A study of Design Team change initiatives' impact on agency climate. *Children and*

For example, Strolin-Goltzmann found that, compared to control group, workers in Design Team agencies had significantly higher job commitment, lower burnout, and lower intention-to-leave.<sup>93</sup>

### The Availability, Responsiveness, and Continuity (ARC) Organizational Intervention

The third organizational intervention that may reduce employee turnover is the Availability, Responsiveness, and Continuity (ARC) organizational intervention. Developed by Charles Glisson and colleagues, ARC aims to improve organizational culture through a structured program that builds case management teams; these teams then work to serve clients by identifying barriers in service innovation and effectiveness. The program is designed to be implemented in a 1 to 3 year period and requires agency-wide training and specially trained team leaders.<sup>94</sup> Glisson and colleagues conducted several randomized controlled trials on the effects of implementing the ARC organizational interventions in youth-serving mental health and juvenile justice agencies.<sup>95</sup> The results of these studies show positive results of implementing ARC for organizational climate and culture ratings compared to control group participants.

One of the first randomized controlled trials on the effects of ARC was conducted with 235 child welfare caseworkers from 26 case management teams in a Southeastern state. Compared to the control group, staff in the ARC program demonstrated lower turnover and lower ratings of role conflict, role overload, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion at the end of the 1-year intervention period.<sup>96</sup> In a follow-up randomized controlled trial with 197 clinicians from 26 programs providing mental health services to child welfare-involved youth, Glisson and colleagues found significant intervention effects on worker organization ratings over an 18-month intervention period. Compared to the control group, ARC participants reported less rigid, less centralized, and less apathetic organizational cultures.<sup>97</sup> The ARC group also

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*Youth Services Review*, 63, 40-46. Leake, R., De Guzman, A., Golieb, K., & Rienks, S. (2020). Workforce development strategies: a model for preparing the workforce to support transformational systems in child welfare. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 14, 19-37.

<sup>93</sup> Strolin-Goltzman, J. (2010). Improving turnover in public child welfare: Outcomes from an organizational intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 1388-1395.

<sup>94</sup> Glisson, C., Dukes, D. & Green, P. (2006). The effects of ARC organizational intervention on caseworker turnover, climate, and culture in children's service systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 855-880.

<sup>95</sup> Glisson, C., Schoenwald, S.K., Hemmelgarn, A.L., Green, P.D., Dukes, D., Armstrong, K.S., & Chapman, J.E. (2010). Randomized trial of MST and ARC in a two-level evidence-based treatment implementation strategy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78, 537-550. Glisson, C., Green, P., & Williams, N.J. (2012). Assessing the Organizational Social Context (OSC) of child welfare systems: Implications for research and practice. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 36, 621-632. Glisson, C., Williams, N.J., Hemmelgarn, A., Proctor, E., & Green, P. (2016). Aligning organizational priorities with ARC to improve youth mental health service outcomes. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 84, 713-725. Glisson, C., Williams, N.J., Hemmelgarn, A., Proctor, E., & Green, P. (2016). Increasing clinicians' EBT exploration and preparation behavior in youth mental health services by changing organizational culture with ARC. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 76, 40-46.

<sup>96</sup> Glisson, C., Dukes, D. & Green, P. (2006). The effects of ARC organizational intervention on caseworker turnover, climate, and culture in children's service systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 855-880.

<sup>97</sup> Glisson, C., Green, P., & Williams, N.J. (2012). Assessing the Organizational Social Context (OSC) of child welfare systems: Implications for research and practice. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 36, 621-632.

experienced more engaged and functional organizational climates with less role conflict, as well as better work attitudes (morale, satisfaction, commitment), compared to the control group. Though the ARC program is intensive and it has not been linked specifically to worker retention, the available evidence suggests it may be effective at enhancing organizational culture as well as reducing factors associated with turnover.

# Chapter 3: Child Welfare Employer Survey

## 3.1 Survey Methods

DCFS provided names and email addresses for 94 individuals representing 120 programs or organizations; the survey was emailed to these individuals on June 3, 2020. Reminder emails were sent on June 11 and June 16. Following discussion in a taskforce meeting about the response rate, Deb McCarrel from the Illinois Collaboration on Children and Youth (ICOY) reviewed the list of contact information DCFS provided and added alternative emails for some contacts. This new list was used by Dr. Tamara Fuller, director of the Children and Family Research Center, to send out personal reminder emails to each individual on July 7. In addition, Dr. Michael Braun, research specialist at the Children and Family Research Center, personally called each individual who had not yet responded on July 21. The survey was closed on July 27, 2020.

Survey responses were received from 32 employers who provided information on 49 organizations and programs, for a response rate of 34% for individuals and 41% for programs/organizations. The employers surveyed reported what region(s) their organizations/programs served, and 20 reported serving the Cook Region, 16 the Northern Region, 27 the Central Region, and 15 the Southern Region. Even with the individual telephone calls to each employer to promote completion of the survey, the response rate was lower than anticipated and could affect the representativeness of the results of the survey. It is recommended that the survey be repeated in the future and the results compared to the current results in order to have more confidence in their veracity.

## 3.2 Survey Results

On average, the organizations employed 18 caseworkers and 4 supervisors, with an average ratio of caseworkers to supervisors at 3.5 to 1 (see Table 3). Organizations varied widely in size, employing between 1 and 153 caseworkers and between 1 and 31 supervisors. The median number of caseworkers was 6 and the median number of supervisors was 2. Three-quarters of the organizations employed fewer than 20 caseworkers and 5 supervisors. Sixty-two percent of caseworkers and 77% of supervisors had been in their current positions for 18 months or more.

Overall, there were few vacant caseworker and supervisor positions. Employers reported an average of 2.1 vacant positions for caseworkers, with 24 of 48 programs/organizations reporting no open positions, 18 organizations reporting between 1 and 4 open positions, and 6 organizations reporting between 5 and 20 open positions. Employers reported an average of 0.5 openings for supervisors, with 32 of 48 programs/organizations reporting no open supervisor positions, 10 reporting 1 open position, 3 reporting 2 open positions, and 1 reporting 6 open positions.

Employers were asked to provide salary information including average, minimum, and maximum current salaries for caseworkers and supervisors. On average, caseworkers made about \$37,000 per year, with a few positions paying less than \$20,000 a year. The highest reported caseworker salary was about \$59,000. Supervisors earned about \$51,000 a year on average. The highest reported supervisor salary was \$100,000 per year.

Employers were asked to calculate turnover rate in their organization using the following formula: take the number of employees who left in the last year, divide that number by the average number of workers, and then multiple the result by 100. For example, if 5 caseworkers left in the past year out of an average of 20 caseworkers, then the turnover rate would be  $5 / 20 * 100 = 25\%$ . Average turnover rate for caseworkers was 24.5%, with values ranging from 0% to 66%. Average supervisor turnover rate was 13.3%, with values ranging from 0 to 100%.

**Table 3. Summary of Employer Survey Responses**

	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>Total Caseworkers</b>	17.9 (31.5)	6	1	153
<b>Total Supervisors</b>	4.4 (6.3)	2	1	31
<b>% Caseworkers in Position 18+ Months</b>	62.2% (30.0%)	60%	0%	100%
<b>% Supervisors in Position 18+ Months</b>	76.6% (33.4%)	100%	0%	100%
<b>Vacant Caseworker Positions</b>	2.1 (4.3)	0.5	0	20
<b>Vacant Supervisor Positions</b>	0.5 (1.0)	0	0	6
<b>Average Caseworker Salary</b>	\$37,273 (\$5,755)	\$38,926	\$17,500	\$46,474
<b>Minimum Caseworker Salary</b>	\$34,214 (\$5,456)	\$35,568	\$15,640	\$43,372
<b>Maximum Caseworker Salary</b>	\$43,885 (\$7,178)	\$43,000	\$20,840	\$59,287

<b>Average Supervisor Salary</b>	\$50,902 (10,346)	\$50,000	\$22,810	\$72,000
<b>Minimum Supervisor Salary</b>	\$45,502 (\$10,990)	\$45,800	\$19,480	\$72,000
<b>Maximum Supervisor Salary</b>	\$62,533 (\$16,906)	\$59,323	\$28,500	\$100,000
<b>Caseworker Turnover Rate</b>	24.5% (23.0%)	25%	0%	66.6%
<b>Supervisor Turnover Rate</b>	13.3% (22.9%)	0%	0%	100%

Employers were also asked about the reasons why caseworkers and supervisors left their positions. Possible answers included: higher salary in another agency, promoted to another position within the agency, left child welfare, moved, and retired. Employers could also specify other reasons for leaving by writing them in. For caseworkers, the most common reason for leaving was accepting another position with a higher salary (49%). Leaving child welfare was also common (47%). Less common were promotion within the agency (24%) and moving (13%). In about 40% of survey responses, participants provided their own text for why caseworkers left. Table 4 provides a list of the other reasons for caseworker turnover that were provided by employers.

**Table 4. Other Reasons for Caseworker Turnover**

Went to work for DCFS at a higher rate of pay
Terminated
Personal, Quit- treatment from CASA and Court, Return to School
Didn't pass prerequisite exams
Other opportunity
Hired by DCFS
Stayed home after having a baby
Resigned
Burnout with minimal pay
Had a baby and didn't return to work
Terminated

The most commonly reported reason for supervisor turnover was accepting another position with a higher salary (38%). Moving was the second most common reason (26%). Less common were promotion within the agency (15%), moving (8%), and retiring (3%). Table 5 provides a list of the other reasons for supervisor turnover that provided by the employers taking the survey.

**Table 5. Other Reasons for Supervisor Turnover**

Went to work for DCFS at higher rate of pay
Terminated
Termed
Voluntary
Hired by DCFS
Went to an agency for less stress
Burnout with minimal pay
Went to a less stressful job

Finally, employers were asked if they had any additional comments to share. Table 6 contains a complete list of all comments provided in response to this question.

**Table 6. Additional Comments From Employers**

We have always had significant turnover in our case manager roles. It has been as high as a 100% before. We train and they get an opportunity with the State quite often. We need the means to entice workers and reward them for a very difficult job.
Workers must have a true dedication to the field
The impact of turnover in child welfare positions goes well beyond the financial cost of recruitment, onboarding and training of new team members. The loss of established relationships and programmatic stability has a dramatic effect our youth both emotionally and physically. Even though we have been very successful in mediating those effects, we know our outcomes could be improved if our staffing capacity was less disruptive. Our training programs and the experience employees gain with us prepares them to move on to higher paying, similar work settings or higher paying, less challenging positions that offer a better work / life balance. The main reason employees leave us is for higher paying jobs.
The type of cases are increasing; turnover is high- treatment of staff at court, with CASA demeaning. Treatment from parents negative and degrading. We have spent a lot of time with on-boarding revamping, ongoing training, mentoring for new workers, burn out group for workers and a wellness program to retain staff. Salary assessment completed last year and wages increased- merits given instead of cost of living.
In FY19, agency had a 0% turnover rate. Turnovers from this year were planned and workers left in pursuit of other opportunities outside of child welfare. Most agency staff have been

<p>with agency 5 years on average. Agency had 2 staff not pass CWEL exam. Agency also promoted 1 candidate from within from case manager to therapist.</p> <p>Both Supervisors have been with agency 8 years+.</p>
<p>(Program) hired 3 extra workers in order to assist with current caseloads. Also, the documentation has increased dramatically. There are different documents used to assess the family's needs; however policy has not been updated and therefore creates confusion regarding what documents have to be completed. At times it appears that the APT monitors have the discretion to say how to do Intact Family ; however they have never been trained to do Intact Family.</p>
<p>The extras at (Program) (401K, vacation, sick time, flex time, etc.) are wonderful and a reason many people stay with the agency. Other POS agencies in the area do pay higher.</p>
<p>Our program is considered and is very stable, but the program still lost 50% of its case managers to DCFS -- high salary, easier job.</p>
<p>Residential employees about 60 staff but are mostly comprised of youth care workers doing direct care. I did not count them as they are not caseworkers.</p>
<p>We just started this program, hiring our employees in June and July so we have not had any turnover yet. Two of our caseworkers are still in training.</p>
<p>Our child welfare program has been growing at a rate of 10% per year or the past 3 years.</p>
<p>Due to declining census due to permanency achievement and difficulty recruiting new homes particularly for Specialized youth, we have downsized our program by reducing two full-time caseworker position and a supervisor position.</p>
<p>This survey encompasses Case Workers and Supervisors, but not Direct Care. Our Direct Care turnover is over 100%</p>
<p>The agency Spec FC program shares case workers that also have Tradition and Relative FC cases.</p>
<p>Group home has 9 youth care workers assigned in addition to a therapist and milieu counselor not included in this count.</p>
<p>We have had low turnover, we are expanding for fiscal year FY21, I did not include those in position with these numbers.</p>
<p>This is a very small program. Approximately 1 child per year in this program.</p>
<p>Small program with an incredibly dedicated and committed staff who are underpaid.</p>

## Chapter 4: Task Force Recommendations

Three task force subcommittees were created to focus on reviewing information and making recommendations related to the following topics: child welfare worker recruitment, retention, and racial equity. Each sub-committee met for a period of several weeks and developed recommendations related to their content area.

### 4.1 Child Welfare Worker Recruitment

The subcommittee, along with DCFS staff, met to discuss various concerns and possible solutions to the recruitment of qualified and committed staff to the child welfare system. Of particular concern was the recruitment and retention of staff to Purchase of Service (POS) agencies. The following recommendations and concerns highlight our discussion and are submitted as a report to the task force:

- (1) Creation of a five-year pilot program, funded by a 75% match from the federal government, to provide an annual \$10,000 financial aid stipend to undergraduate and graduate social work students specializing in child welfare. Forty states currently have such programs. The goals of the stipend program are to attract men and women to careers in child welfare and to help fix the retention problem at POS organizations by reducing the student loan debt of beginning child welfare specialists.

DCFS staff led by Meaghan Jorgensen designed the DCFS Child Welfare Stipend Program for a Fall 2020 launch at five universities chosen because they are DCFS University Partnership Program participants. Each school is to receive ten stipends per calendar year. The number of annual stipends is expected to increase after the first year of the program.

In order to satisfy the program's payback requirement, stipend recipients will be required to work for a minimum number of years for a POS organization which contracts with DCFS.

- (2) With any pilot program, especially one that will take not less than five years to see the fruits of this work, we ask that an evidence-based and statistically accurate review of these stipend opportunities be documented and a report submitted by DCFS to members of the General Assembly in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Tracking the progress of individuals and the work of the universities associated with these programs will be extremely beneficial to all stakeholders and shall be the responsibility of DCFS.
- (3) The Recruitment Subcommittee suggests that the stipend program include opportunities for stipend recipients to decide early on if child welfare is a good fit for them. Activities suggested to accomplish this are job shadowing, internships, visits to a Child Protection Training Academy simulation laboratory and attendance at professional

conferences. The subcommittee believes that giving new employees or individuals considering employment at either DCFS or a POS the opportunity to visit and participate in a simulation laboratory is important. We want especially those students who will be benefiting from state dollars through the stipend program to understand the type of work that they will be expected to engage in.

- (4) In the course of our conversations with staff, we became aware of two full-time staff positions within DCFS that act as recruiters for new employees of the agency specifically at colleges and universities. These recruiters attend job fairs, create postings, and interface with institutions of higher learning across Illinois. As the DCFS workforce provides critical services, as the agency is currently struggling to fill vacancies, and as recruiting social work students from schools expands the workforce in the child welfare field, staff recruitment is important. The DCFS recruitment program should be evaluated to ensure maximum efficacy. It is our recommendation that these positions be critically evaluated because they do not on the face of it appear to be the most efficient or effective use of DCFS dollars. This evaluation from the agency should be delivered to members of this task force within the next year.

## 4.2 Child Welfare Worker Retention

**Recommendation #1: Reduce or minimize the burden of necessary paperwork required for child welfare direct services staff.**

*DCFS should conduct further discussions with the DCFS Immersion Site Ad Hoc Advisory Group and review of the Workforce Development Subcommittee recommendations that point to approaches that minimize paperwork without sacrificing necessary documentation.* The increasing amount of paperwork resulting from duplicated processes and other administrative requirements creates an overwhelming burden and can reduce client and family engagement. See recommendation #8 for a more expansive review of the administrative burden.

**Recommendation #2: Supervisors serve as the cornerstone for direct practice. Supervisors should be supported and appropriately trained to effect best practices and encourage team-building.**

*The Department should embrace wide-spread use of problem-based learning and simulation training beyond investigations to supervisors and direct service workers.* This learning modality can be used to develop critical thinking skills, identify gaps in knowledge, and reinforce appropriate child welfare practice. Policy and procedure used as a 'supervisory tool' for staff that do not have a specific child welfare practice associated with it should be eliminated. This curriculum should include a module on addressing supervision issues with subordinate staff.

**Recommendation #3: Support the implementation of strategies that show a positive impact on retention, such as a team-based approach to casework and the development of credentialed paraprofessionals as team members.**

*DCFS should explore team models such as the one developed by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) that includes parent specialists, foster parent specialists, and therapists trained in evidenced based practices.* The Literature Review clearly points to the workload experience of foster care workers as a major reason for turnover. Due to the increasing administrative burden, the role of the foster care worker is overloaded. There is too much administrative responsibility resting with a single worker whose main objective should be family engagement. It is imperative that change occur to allow child welfare professionals to have a clear purpose, a meaningful job and a tangible impact. A redesign that employs a team approach, supported by evidence-based practice, will focus efforts through greater case coordination. Teams can effectively share in the workload and enhance the work experience that should contribute to workforce retention.

*DCFS should engage the Illinois Community College Board and university partners to explore paraprofessional certificate programs.* The ability for a direct service worker to achieve timely permanency for youth in care is affected by the amount of time they are involved in family engagement. The addition of paraprofessional staff members to the team to assist with the administrative processes would allow the direct service worker to focus on and increase family engagement activities. Development of a certificate program at the community college level may increase the flow of new child welfare workers into the workforce. One such program to consider is the Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) academic minor and certificate program that focuses on child maltreatment. The CAST curriculum, established in 2004, is now in 74 academic institutions, both nationally and internationally. CAST focuses on educating students, professionals, and the general public about all aspects of child abuse and neglect. This includes developing skills to effectively recognize child maltreatment, intervene and prevent child abuse. CAST also provides training in how to respond to allegations of abuse by those in social services, law enforcement, education, health professions and the justice system.

**Recommendation #4: Minimize or eliminate the salary disparity between direct service staff employed by DCFS and those in POS child welfare providers.**

*DCFS should adopt a rate methodology that will allow for continued investments in the community-based child welfare system and update their administrative rate to better reflect the fiscal reality of providing child welfare services.* DCFS presented state staff direct service salaries and a breakdown of the Case Management and Administrative Fee model used to support community-based agencies. An analysis of the model concluded that the average salary for community-based direct service workers is approximately \$18.75/hr. while the state staff equivalent position salaries are

considerably higher. The Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY) that advocates for the majority of the community-based child welfare providers surveyed their membership on staff retention and turnover. Their survey exhibited upwards of a 45% turnover rate at the direct service level. The lack of monetary investment in direct service staff has contributed to a very high turnover in direct service workers in community-based foster care. The rate methodology and administrative rate updates should focus on enhancing direct service worker salaries and benefits to increase workforce retention.

**Recommendation #5: Support the implementation of direct service staff training models that replicate child protection simulation training developed by the collaboration between DCFS and the University of Illinois-Springfield.**

*DCFS should continue to expand the use of the simulation training partnership with the University of Illinois and other university partners to include direct service workers across all service domains. Simulation training recreates a realistic experience for the workforce to expand skill sets, build worker confidence, and allows workers to practice those skill sets in an environment that is similar to the complex situations they will encounter during family engagement. Program evaluations of the CPTA find that investigators that did not receive simulation training were twice as likely to leave their jobs at 18 months compared to those who had received simulation training.*

Through the new “Keeping it Real” website on the Capacity Building Center for State’s section, the Administration for Children and Families is showcasing Illinois’ Child Protection Training Academy simulation model. (<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/workforce/simulationtraining/> In FY’21 the Academy is developing and hoping to implement the cohort model for training DCP investigators and supervisors, increasing the opportunities for simulation training throughout the six weeks of classroom Foundation training. Members of the Illinois General Assembly requested a proposal for a model more closely resembling the Illinois State Police cohort training model with additional scenarios and training environments. This type of investment should be extended to the direct service workforce as well.

**Recommendation #6: Build or enhance relationships between direct service staff and local courts to increase collaboration and coordination. Training and education related to local court processes can assist direct service staff in their continued engagement with the court system.**

*DCFS will continue to partner with the University of Illinois, other universities, and court stakeholders to expand courtroom simulation training to include direct service staff on preparing for court appearances and testimony. Clarification of the juvenile court process and the roles of judges, state’s attorneys, and the guardian ad litem should be a priority to reduce the tensions that can occur at hearings. The tensions many times result in negative public experiences for foster care workers and are cause for significant turnover. The simulation training should include clear standards for communication and*

expectations of direct service workers in a courtroom environment. This should include training on hearing procedures, reporting at hearings, preparing data for hearings, and a supervision process to manage the timelines of court activities and court orders.

*DCFS should engage the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) and the Office of Legal Services to ensure courtroom simulation training aligns with state and local court procedures to reduce error and lapses in communication and develop a shared understanding of responsibilities for placement determinations.* The imperative to improve the courtroom knowledge and expertise of direct service workers should be extended to court personnel also. The culture of the court must be one of order and respect, therefore it is equally important for court personnel to have a deep understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the direct service worker. There must be clear communication and expectations of data necessary for the court to determine appropriate placement decisions. This investment in the relationship between the courts and DCFS will result in a more positive experience for direct service workers and better outcomes for children and families.

**Recommendation #7: Support the implementation of a trauma-informed model that will institutionalize the protection of the health and well-being of staff.**

*DCFS should explore the contractual process used by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to attain their goal of having 100% of their funded youth service providers become trauma informed through a standardized curriculum that includes a vicarious trauma component.* As a result of their work, staff can experience secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma that can impact burnout and turnover. When available, support for staff, such as preventative measures that minimize the impact of trauma, are often informal and different across agencies. Identifying tools that can help direct service staff process and manage trauma can increase the likelihood of staff retention. These challenges are likely to be exacerbated by the current pandemic and disruption in normal activities.

**Recommendation #8: Develop data collection processes that measure and evaluate the impact of child welfare related work on staff.**

*DCFS should collaborate with a university partner to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the rules and procedures required by direct service workers.* This research project should map the life of a DCFS case across service domains. This would allow for the identification of redundant and obsolete policies, to streamline data requirements, improve client engagement, and increase workforce retention. The research should include a comprehensive review of the DCFS Office of the Inspector General Annual Reports for recommendations to improve service delivery. This will also document issues that may arise and further inform decision-making by tracking the efficacy of policies and practices and eliminating or changing those that have limited impact.

Similarly, those that show a positive impact on individuals, organizations, and systems can be strengthened.

### 4.3 Racial Equity

The task of the Racial Equity Sub-Committee was to collect, analyze and to make policy focused recommendations regarding equity and disparities in the child welfare workforce in Illinois. The sub-committee added subject matter experts from the DCFS Office of Affirmative Action and the Office of Employee Services to determine existing reports, compliance to federal guidelines and data collection deficiencies. Although DCFS is the statutorily designated responsible entity for the children in care in Illinois, 85% of the services delivered are provided by agencies contracted by the Department. Provider community workforce data information will be a critical component to the assessment process. The sub-committee has determined that a uniform process for collecting data from the provider community and manual process for review contributed to inconsistencies in the reporting process. This report focuses on the three Illinois Department of Human Rights (DHR) regions that have the largest workforce populations. These regions differ for DCFS and the Purchase of Service (POS) agencies. For DCFS, DHR reports the largest regions as Regions 1, 7, and 8. For POS, DHR reports the largest regions as Regions 1, 2, and 7.

The sub-committee identified the following activities as necessary to complete the final report:

- Review of existing internal reports to determine any gaps in data information;
- Outreach to the provider community to assist in the collection and interpretation of data, challenges and opportunities for system improvements;
- Determination of disparities;
- Recommendations to the Taskforce.

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this analysis is to make recommendations regarding equity and disparities in our workforce. DCFS reports its human resource information directly to DHR. DCFS is mandated to comply with DHR reporting requirements. DCFS uses the same reports that DHR uses to analyze all state workforce data. All forms and reports mentioned in this analysis are forms and reports from DHR. Although DCFS is not required to report the private provider agency diversity data to DHR, it collects the private agency data to monitor compliance with federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulation.

## DCFS WORK FORCE ANALYSIS

### 1. DCFS Gender and Race

The Workforce Analysis form (DHR-9) by region details the present number of employees in each EEO by job category, race and sex. Each region is displayed separately and has a combined total by race and sex for all regions. Data received from POS agencies indicate the following:

#### *Gender*

- Males: 20.91% of workforce population
- Females: 79.09% of the workforce population

#### *Race*

- Black: 38.65%
- Latino: 9.78%
- White: 49.14%
- Asian: 2.17%
- Native American/  
Alaskan Native: 0.20%
- Native Hawaiian/  
Pacific Islander: 0.07%

*Note: There are 5.83% of DCFS workforce population who are people with disabilities.*

### 2. DCFS Job Categories

The data for DCFS focuses on the three DHR regions that have the largest workforce populations of DCFS staff: Regions 1, 7, and 8 (see Appendix Chart 1). Region 1 includes Chicago and Cook County (Region also includes the following counties: DuPage, Will, Kankakee, Grundy, Kendall, Kane, Dekalb, McHenry, and Lake). Region 7 encompasses Springfield and parts of the central region (counties of Logan, Menard, Greene, Scott, Maucopin, Montgomery, Christian, Shelby, Macon, Morgan, and Cass); Region 8 encompass (counties of St. Clair, Bond, Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Clinton, Washington, Randolph, and Monroe). Because of the racial diversity in different regions, it is expected that different races may be represented at a higher or lower rate than others. However, a large disparity between the EEO job categories has emerged from the data.

- In Region 1, the **data indicates a rich representation of people of color** as evidenced by **Black (61.43%) and Latino (18.86%) comprising 80.29% of the staff** across all categories.
- In Region 7 White employees outnumber Black and Latino employees significantly. **The data across all job categories shows at least 80% of the workforce is White.** 86% of Officials/Administrators in Region 7 are White. There is a need for more diversity in Region 7.
- Region 8 has disparity across all job categories as **there are no Latinos reported to be working for DCFS** in St. Clair, Bond, Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Clinton, Washington, Randolph, and Monroe counties. **The data demonstrate a lack of diversity and inclusion**

**for Latinos.** Region 8 has the third highest number of employees. The baseline data demonstrates a need for the hiring of Latino staff across all job categories (see Chart 1).

### **PURCHASE OF SERVICE AGENCIES WORKFORCE DATA ANALYSIS**

The Purchase of Service (POS) agencies report human resource information directly to DCFS by completing the Title VI compliance packets. The Title VI compliance packet is a mandatory, annual report that POS agencies provide to DCFS a detailed reporting on the diversity of their staff. The POS agencies are mandated by the federal government to comply with Title VI reporting requirements. For the purposes of this analysis, DCFS used the same format that the DHR uses to analyze all state workforce data. All forms and reports mentioned in this analysis are forms and reports utilized by DHR.

#### 3. POS Gender and Race

The Workforce Analysis form (DHR-9) by region details the present number of employees in each Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) by job category, race and sex. Each region is displayed separately and has a combined total by race and sex for all regions. Data received from POS agencies indicate the following:

##### *Gender*

- Males: 20.26% of workforce population
- Females: 79.74% of the workforce population

##### *Race*

- Black: 34.71%
- Latino: 13.59%
- White: 48.57%
- Asian: 2.89%
- Native American/  
Alaskan Native: .25%

*Note: POS agencies indicated that no people within their workforce population are people with disabilities. This may be a data discrepancy that speaks to a need for training on the accurate completion of the Title VI packets.*

#### 4. POS Job Categories

This POS data set focuses on the three DHR regions that have the largest workforce populations for Child Welfare private agency staff: Regions 1, 2, and 7. Region 1 includes Chicago and Cook County (Region also includes the following counties: DuPage, Will, Kankakee, Grundy, Kendall, Kane, Dekalb, McHenry, and Lake). Region 2 encompasses Rockford and parts of the northern region (counties of Stephenson, Winnebago, Boone and Ogle); Region 7 encompasses Springfield and parts of the central region (counties of Logan, Menard, Greene, Scott, Macoupin, Montgomery, Christian, Shelby, Macon, Morgan, and Cass).

This is the first time that DCFS Office of Affirmative Action (OAA) has conducted an in-depth analysis of the numbers provided by POS agencies. This data represents a baseline. OAA will need to ensure the accuracy of the numbers and collect the data at intervals through the year. DCFS reports workforce data once a quarter and analyzing the data from the POS agencies at minimum twice a year will identify trends and allow for corrections as needed. Utilizing the baseline, some trends in the POS workforce have emerged. Because of the racial diversity in the general population in different regions, it is anticipated that different races may be represented at a higher or lower rate than others. It was not projected, however, that a large disparity between the races in the Official/Administrator, Professional, and the Paraprofessional / Administrative Support categories in Region 7 would be as prevalent.

- In Region 1 the data indicated there needs to be more diversity and inclusivity in the Official /Administrators category. In the Professional category for Region 1, the numbers indicate a more racially equitable distribution. Although Latinos comprise 25.38% of the total workforce in Region 1, which may lead one to believe there is diversity in the workforce, most of the Latino workforce falls into the Paraprofessional and Administrative Support job categories—**nearly 54% of all Latinos employed in Region 1 are Paraprofessional and Administrative Support.**
- In Region 2, diversity in Officials / Administrators and Professional categories needs to improve to create equity and inclusivity in the decision making for children and families. In the *Paraprofessional / Administrative Support* categories the data regarding disparity is evident and this category also demonstrates a need for diversity (see Chart 1).
- In Region 7, ***there are disproportionately more White employees in all job categories (79%). In the Official/Administrator category 94% is White (see Chart 1).***

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *DCFS*

- 1) DCFS hiring of African-American, Latino and Asian staff in the Officials/Administrators in Region 7 needs to increase.
- 2) DCFS hiring of Latino staff across all job categories in Region 8 needs to increase.
- 3) DCFS needs to conduct an annual review of its hiring processes to assess diversity hiring practices and identify any discrepancies that lead to racial inequities with a focus in Region 7 and 8.
- 4) DCFS Rutan interview panels should be diverse and reflective of the population being served.
- 5) DCFS needs to recruit in minority communities to increase the diversity of applicants in Region 7 and 8.
- 6) Repeal (20 ILCS 405/405-413 new, Sec. 405-413. Geographic consolidation of State employment positions. DCFS data shows that there is a significant disparity in Region 7 which includes Sangamon County. The data shows a high percentage of Officials/Administrative positions held by Whites (86%) as compared to other parts of the state with the highest number of employees. Also, the effectiveness of tele-work practices statewide during COVID-19 has shown that work can be successfully carried

out regardless of the physical location of leadership. Repealing the Geographic consolidation of State employment positions Act will allow for more diversity and inclusion in the candidate pool from other areas in the State.

*POS*

- 7) DCFS collect POS Title VI agency data twice a year.
- 8) The data needs to be collected electronically to improve the accuracy and efficiency of data collection.
- 9) The data collection needs to be consistent across all POS agencies regarding definitions and how to categorize their job titles.
- 10) DCFS provide training to the POS agencies on how to complete the Title VI packets and gather data from their employees.
- 11) The completion of the POS Title VI agency data should be written into the direct service contract boilerplate along with other required reports with specified dates for submission.
- 12) POS hiring of African-American, Latino and Asian staff in the *Officials/Administrators* in Region 7 needs to increase.
- 13) POS agencies need to conduct an annual review of their hiring processes to assess diversity hiring practices and identify any discrepancies that lead to racial inequities.
- 14) POS agencies need to ensure that job descriptions are culturally competent and reflective of the populations being served.
- 15) POS agencies need to develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan to recruit more minority staff to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.

## APPENDICES

**CHART 1: DCFS WORKFORCE DATA**

Job Categories	Region 1		Region 7		Region 8	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>All Job Categories</b>						
Black	811	61.43	99	15.73	87	45.78
Latino	249	18.86	15	2.38	0	0
White	260	19.69	515	81.87	103	54.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>1320</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Officials/Administrators</b>						
Black	143	60.33	12	11.42	14	46.66
Latino	33	13.92	2	1.9	0	0
White	61	25.73	91	86.66	16	53.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>17.95</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>16.69</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15.78</b>
<b>Professionals</b>						
Black	556	63.98	69	17.42	63	46.32
Latino	178	19.86	12	3.03	0	0
White	162	18.08	315	79.54	73	53.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>67.87</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>62.95</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>71.57</b>
<b>Paraprofessionals / Administrative Support</b>						
Black	101	58.72	17	15.31	9	42.85
Latino	35	20.34	3	2.70	0	0
White	36	20.93	91	81.98	12	57.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>13.03</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>17.64</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11.05</b>

**CHART 2: POS WORKFORCE DATA**

Job Categories	Region 1		Region 2		Region 7	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>All Job Categories</b>						
Black	1661	42.94	1071	39.40	237	19.17
Latino	982	25.38	267	9.82	20	1.61
White	1225	31.67	1380	50.77	979	79.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>3868</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2718</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1236</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Officials/Administrators</b>						
Black	126	27.69	90	28.48	7	4.45
Latino	73	16.04	16	5.06	2	1.27
White	256	56.26	210	66.46	148	94.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>11.76</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>11.62</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>12.70</b>
<b>Professionals</b>						
Black	477	35.81	392	29.90	123	18.69
Latino	293	22.00	168	12.81	8	1.21
White	526	39.49	645	49.20	527	80.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>1296</b>	<b>33.50</b>	<b>1205</b>	<b>44.33</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>53.23</b>
<b>Paraprofessionals/Administrative Support</b>						
Black	824	45.62	378	46.26	99	26.75
Latino	532	29.45	50	6.11	10	2.70
White	386	21.37	378	46.26	261	70.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>1742</b>	<b>45.03</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>29.65</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>29.93</b>