

## BRIEF WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

*The questions described below are intended to encourage you to begin a thoughtful and data-driven problem exploration, to identify the root causes of your agency's retention issues. Once you have a deep understanding of the issues contributing to your turnover, then you can better match an appropriate solution to your agency's specific challenges.*

What is the current turnover rate for your front-line child welfare staff? (See resource links at end for details on how to calculate)

- In what ways has the rate varied over time and what events might explain this?

Who leaves?

- Does your turnover rate vary by regions of the state? Why?
- Does it vary by supervisory units or types of work (for example, initial assessment workers versus foster care staff)? Why?
- Is there variation in when leaving occurs (for example, is there more turnover during the initial training period or first two years on the job)? Why?
- Are there demographic differences in who leaves and who stays?
- Are there racial or ethnic subgroup differences in retention? For example, do Black or Latinx staff leave more often than staff who are White?
- Are those who leave your good performers or the poor performers? To answer this, do you have reliable and readily accessed information about employee performance? If so, can you link this information to turnover records to determine trends in who is leaving? To some extent, having poor performers leave is *functional* (positive) for the agency. If the good performers are those who are leaving, the result is *dysfunctional* for the agency, as we want to retain those employees.
- Are those who leave doing so *voluntarily* (employee initiated) or *involuntarily* (such as through dismissal or layoff)?
- Were the departures *avoidable* (meaning the employee departure could have been prevented by the agency, due to poor supervision, workload, pay, etc.), or *unavoidable* (meaning the departure could not have been prevented by the agency, such as for reasons of illness, retirement, relocation due to spouse's employment, pregnancy)?
- Do the answers to these questions suggest factors for further investigation?
- What additional data might be useful to collect to help answer these types of questions?

When staff leave, where do they go?

- Do they leave human services work altogether, or do they go to neighboring child welfare or closely related agencies?
- Do staff who have left ever return to the agency? What can we learn from them?

What data do you have to understand why people leave?

- For example, are exit interviews regularly conducted? Are there trends in those data?
- Are employee attitude surveys or surveys of organizational culture and climate conducted? What do those data suggest?
- What additional data might be useful to collect to help answer these types of questions?

Additional questions to explore:

- What is the diversity of your workforce in terms of important social identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, national origin, or languages spoken? Does it vary at different levels of the agency?
- What recruiting processes are used and are they effective? Have you evaluated your yield from various recruitment sources?
- Do your recruiting processes effectively target the diversity of candidates you wish to reach? Does your workforce reflect the diversity of the talent pool that meets your hiring qualifications?
- How effective are the agency hiring processes in identifying candidates who perform well and stay with the agency? Has there been any formal evaluation of this?
- Are your hiring and promotion processes equitable? Does the workforce reflect the diversity of the candidates that meet hiring qualifications?
- Is there information available about candidates' perceptions regarding the recruiting and hiring process? What about internal perceptions (among hiring managers, supervisors, etc.) regarding the recruiting and hiring process?
- What onboarding strategies are used to orient and socialize new staff? Is there any information available about workers' perceptions regarding onboarding?
- What training do new and ongoing staff receive? Is it of high quality and delivered when and where employees can access it?
- What is the effectiveness of the supervision that front-line workers receive?
- Do child welfare workers receive any structured, individualized support in the field beyond regular supervision (e.g., mentors, coaches, field training specialists)?
- Are there clear performance expectations for workers? Is there a structured performance review process for workers and supervisors?
- What is the process for disciplining staff for problematic performance or behavior? What are the typical reasons people are terminated involuntarily? Are disciplinary processes and outcomes fair and unbiased?

- What incentives or supports are there for workers and supervisors to continue their education (tuition reimbursement, educational leave)?
- What strategies or systems are in place to recognize and reward workers and supervisors for good performance and/or longevity?
- Are there caseload or workload standards? If yes, what are they? To what extent are they being met? What do available data say about caseloads and/or workloads?
- How does your salary and benefits package compare to other employers in your area?
- Are opportunities for professional advancement readily available and well publicized within the agency?
- What are workers' attitudes regarding things like engagement, job satisfaction, coworkers, supervision, leadership, environment, fairness, inclusion, and organizational culture?
- What is your agency's reputation in the local community? How is the agency regarded by the press and the legal/court system?

The QIC-WD has created many resource briefs, videos, and blog posts that can assist agencies to better understand their retention challenges, including:

[Worker Turnover Is a Persistent Challenge—So Is Measuring It](#) This brief summarizes the current national turnover challenges and outlines specific recommendations for how to accurately measure and understand agency turnover.

[Introduction to Workforce Metrics](#) This blog post describes some of what is possible to explore within the realm of workforce metrics as they relate to employee well-being, performance, and retention, and it explains key terms and concepts.

[Workforce Metrics](#) This brief provides details on how to calculate over 90 workforce metrics applicable to the child welfare workforce, related to recruitment and selection, education, work hours, work arrangements, caseload capacity, supervision, career development, performance, turnover and tenure, and costs.

[Addressing the Disconnects Between HR and Child Welfare](#) This brief describes the challenges and benefits of collaborations between child welfare leadership and agency Human Resources to address workforce issues. Suggestions are provided for how to promote these partnerships.

[Creating a Workforce Analytics Team](#) When conducting workforce analytics, it can be helpful to adopt a team approach and involve various experts and stakeholders, each of which can make a valuable contribution. This brief provides suggestions for how to create a team to delve into your agency's workforce metrics.

[Umbrella Summaries](#) Umbrella summaries provide synopses of research on various workforce topics, along with recommended measures.

Find more at [www.qic-wd.org](http://www.qic-wd.org)