

Telework

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Exploration of Needs

The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) worked with the Washington Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) to conduct a [needs assessment](#). A variety of information was explored to learn about the workforce and the agency's child welfare workforce practices, including 1) recruitment, hiring, and retention metrics and processes, 2) organizational culture and climate, and 3) other workforce processes and initiatives, such as onboarding, mentoring, supervision, performance management, and employee recognition. More specifically, four major types of information were considered:

- 1) objective data from various agency databases and reports;
- 2) subjective perceptions of staff and supervisors, gathered through surveys and focus groups;
- 3) expertise and input of the project steering committee; and
- 4) QIC-WD team expertise and feedback.

The goal was to identify areas of need within DCYF that could be addressed through a workforce intervention that met a set of QIC-WD criteria.



Identification of Priority Needs

Three areas of need were identified as offering the strongest opportunities for intervention through the QIC-WD project:

- 1) hiring of new workers and promotion decisions for supervisor positions,
- 2) recognition of good performance, and
- 3) use of alternative work arrangements.

For each area, a problem statement was developed, and in-depth [root cause analysis](#) discussions were conducted. These discussions helped the team to better understand the dynamics and underlying factors that contributed to the identified issues. [Theories of change](#) were developed for each area of need, to provide road maps for addressing the underlying causes and achieving desired outcomes.

As the [implementation team](#) was in the process of deciding which problem to

focus on, the agency underwent a reorganization and was in the process of developing a new Human Resources department. With their input, it was decided that employee selection was not the optimal area to focus on at that time. For the remaining two areas of need, the possible interventions were:

- 1) a rewards and recognition program, and
- 2) telework.

Though there was initial consideration of other alternative work arrangements, based on data that showed they were infrequently used but desired (e.g., flexible schedules or compressed work weeks), other agency survey data showed that staff were generally



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author

quite satisfied with the flexibility of their schedules; instead, they were dissatisfied with the mobility of the work. Thus, it appeared that the desire for alternate arrangements was mostly about where work was done, rather than when.

Intervention Selection

The team considered the fit of each intervention with the following QIC-WD criteria:

- 1) alignment with agency need,
- 2) level of existing evidence of effectiveness,
- 3) applicability to other agencies' needs and circumstances,
- 4) scope and magnitude, relative to agency and QIC-WD capacity,
- 5) evaluation potential,
- 6) contribution to a diverse array of interventions across QIC-WD sites, and
- 7) agreeable to both the agency and the QIC-WD.

Through that process and further discussion among other DCYF child welfare leaders, telework was ultimately selected as the intervention for the QIC-WD project. In addition to meeting the project criteria, two other factors made telework a good fit for the project:

- 1) Child Welfare Field Operations (CWFO) had recent experience with implementing telework as a pilot project, and there was interest in expansion; and
- 2) there was a new executive order from the governor that required state agencies to increase the mobility and flexibility of work (see the [Executive Order](#) and related state government [goals](#)).

Thus, there was already a vision to move in this direction, and there were resources and support for doing so.

The agency was interested in having the QIC-WD's support for a more careful and thorough implementation process and for determining the effectiveness of the program.

