



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Environmental Scan: Staff Turnover

A representative from OFA's Region I-IV would like to know how agencies deal with staff turnover. Many staff who process TANF or SNAP also receive the offered benefits, so what are some innovative strategies that states use to retain valuable staff? ***The OFA PeerTA Network conducted an environmental scan of programs in the field, which are listed below.***

- ACF's Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) website recently released materials around reducing staff turnover and retention:
 - On Tuesday, March 24, 2015, the HMRF Technical Assistance Team conducted a webinar entitled, "Keeping the Ship Afloat: **Reducing Staff Turnover and Building Stability Systems.**" The webinar provided context, challenges, and solutions associated with retaining staff and managing transitions. Featured speakers discussed promising practices and lessons learned from research and a veteran program with extensive experience. View the webinar recording (<https://hmr.acf.hhs.gov/resources/webinar-keeping-the-ship-afloat-reducing-staff-turnover-and-building-stability-systems/>) and featured presentation (<https://hmr.acf.hhs.gov/resources/webinar-keeping-the-ship-afloat-reducing-staff-turnover-and-building-stability-systems/>).
 - Achieving Program Stability through a Focus on Staffing (<https://hmr.acf.hhs.gov/resources/achieving-program-stability-through-a-focus-on-staffing/>) is a fact sheet that highlights effective strategies HMRF programs can implement to retain staff and maintain services during staff transition. Examples and tips for implementing these strategies are included.
 - The Staff Transition and Retention Checklist (<https://hmr.acf.hhs.gov/resources/staff-transition-and-retention-checklist/>) is a follow-up to the fact sheet and provides practical strategies and tools for grantees to use, such as checklists, conversation guides, etc., to effectively manage and maintain staff commitment to the program as the grant program ends.
- A 2014-15 Oklahoma Department of Human Services performance report (http://www.oksenate.gov/Committees/Cmte_Meeting_Notices%20-%202015/FY'15-DHS-Mission%20and%20Governance.pdf) to the Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations mentioned that the Adult and Family Services (AFS) director and senior leadership are building processes and procedures to incorporate programs and field staff so all AFS staff are working with the same shared direction and purpose. AFS senior staff visited small, medium, and large county offices in 2013 and 2014 to observe how personnel interact with clients from the time they walk through the door, conduct interviews, request documentation, and approve or renew benefits. This analysis helps communicate and standardize best practices in all offices and enables senior staff to visit with front line and supervisory staff to examine personnel issues that may contribute to staff turnover and dissatisfaction. Child Welfare Services experiences high

turnover rates for child welfare staff, hiring and training approximately 500 each year. This toll on families and the system will be curbed by new hiring, training, and retention strategies; assessments will be conducted for new hires that will improve the selection process. Upon completion of training, new staff are required to pass competency exams before being assigned a workload, and if they fail the test after two attempts, they are not retained. In 2013, a new field training program became available for all front line staff with assigned mentors guiding them in the field.

- The State of South Carolina, Child and Family Services Plan, FFY 2015-2019 (https://dss.sc.gov/content/library/statistics/APSR/files/SC_CFSP2015-2019FINAL_06302014.pdf) describes high caseworker turnover in the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) and an identified need for an increased amount of on-the-job and classroom training. The SCDSS has been working on approaches to review child welfare caseloads, including streamlining casework processes, addressing employee turnover, and enhancing the practice. SCDSS exit interviews indicate that one frequently cited reason for leaving employment is lack of appreciation for the work that caseworkers do. To address these issues, the SCDSS reports being in the process of implementing strategies such as establishing a second shift to distribute the workload more evenly within County Offices.
- The Colorado Counties, Inc. Health and Human Services Committee featured a report responding to an August 2014 study (<http://ccionline.org/download/HHS%20123.pdf>) conducted by the Colorado Office of the State Auditor to review the current child welfare workload at the direction of the Governor. The report recommends that a strategic recruitment and retention plan for child welfare-related occupations be formulated and states that retaining Colorado's caseworkers is critical to serving children and families and achieving sustainable outcomes. Recruiting as well as retaining top talent is critical, ensuring there is an adequate pipeline of qualified workers for the occupations within the Child Welfare system. Partnering with academic institutions is critical to addressing the workforce development needs of Colorado's child welfare occupations labor market.
- An article "Looking After the Welfare of Child Welfare Workers" (<http://citylimits.org/2014/01/07/looking-after-the-welfare-of-child-welfare-workers/>) by Rachel Blustain reports on the collaboration of the not-for-profit Fostering Change for Children with New York City's Children's Services to help stop the flood of caseworkers leaving New York City's child welfare system, which had a 40 percent annual turnover rate the year they started.