

**RECRUITMENT
OF
CHILD WELFARE STAFF**

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By

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June 2008

*Child Welfare Training Institute
A Collaborative Agreement Between
Maine Department of Health and Human Services and
Muskie School of Public Service
University of Southern Maine*

*Funded by grant #90CT112/02
US-DHHS Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau*

Acknowledgements

The recruitment process and materials developed in Maine are the result of a team effort involving several dedicated individuals. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Recruitment and Retention Project Steering Committee who met regularly to provide oversight to the process. Members are: Freda Bernotavicz, Senior Research Associate and Committee Chair; Ilene Ford, Supervisor, DHHS-Rockland; Christa Gerrish, Constituent Services Specialist, DHHS; Faith Griffith, Supervisor, DHHS-Bangor; Stephanie Merrill, Assistant Program Administrator, DHHS-Augusta; Stephen Smith, Personnel Officer, Anne Cowperthwaite, Supervisor, DHHS-Bangor; DHHS-Augusta; Lynn Caldwell, Caseworker, DHHS-Skowhegan; Edward O'Brien, Caseworker, DHHS-Rockland; Brenda Frost, Caseworker, DHHS-Portland; Gina Googins, Supervisor, DHHS-Augusta; Sherry Barghi, Caseworker, DHHS-Biddeford; Jennifer Prescott, Caseworker, DHHS-Biddeford; Chuck Smith, Coordinator, Muskie School.

Many OCFS staff participated throughout the design process in providing input. Thanks to all of those who gave of their time and expertise to respond to surveys and drafts and participate in focus groups. Special thanks to Christa Gerrish who made a major contribution during her MSW internship to develop the Maine Recruitment Guide and to Laura Woods-Vachon for her hard work in formatting and producing this final document. Thanks also to Nancy Dickinson, Director of the Jordan Institute, University of North Carolina for giving permission to feature some of the innovative recruitment materials developed by the UNC Recruitment and Retention project. Teresa Hubley and Ann Farmer have been responsible for analyzing the data from the Entrance Questionnaires and providing information for the evaluation of the recruitment process.

Final thanks to the US DHHS Children's Bureau for their support of this project and to the Project Officer, Donna Hornsby for her leadership in child welfare workforce development.

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Project Director



**RECRUITMENT OF CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS
MAINE CHILD WELFARE TRAINING INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE**

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INTRODUCTION

Nationally, the issue of recruitment and retention of qualified child welfare staff is reaching crisis proportions and having a negative impact on the delivery of services to vulnerable children. A report by the General Accounting Office in 2003 showed that workforce problems – high caseloads, training deficiencies and staffing shortages – affected outcomes in terms of children’s safety, permanency and well-being. In response, the Children’s Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services has funded eight universities across the country to develop models and training related to effective recruitment and retention. The Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) at the University of Southern Maine is one of the recipients of this funding.

The goal of CWTI’s project is to increase the recruitment and retention of competent child welfare staff through the development and implementation of a comprehensive, research-based and practical training model. Research shows that there is no quick fix for the complex problem of recruitment and retention. In addition, some alarming trends for the 21st century are exacerbating this long-standing issue. We are facing a shrinking qualified labor pool: enrollment in social work schools is down with the result that the demand for qualified social workers is exceeding supply; the workforce is aging and as the baby boom generation retires it will be hard to replace them. Workload is a major factor: recent reform initiatives have added more responsibilities, cases are becoming more complex and technology is often seen as an additional burden rather than a time-saver. Workers have fewer opportunities for flexibility and autonomy: structured decision-making models, increased oversight and demand for accountability are eroding their sense of discretion. Most important, some workers perceive a disconnect between their personal sense of mission – the opportunity to make a difference with children and families – which attracted them to child welfare and what they see as an increased agency focus on documentation and court work.

Recognizing that there are no silver bullets for the complex, systemic issue of workforce development (Cyphers, 2001), the project is developing a mix of best practice strategies to improve recruitment, selection and retention as shown in the conceptual model on the following page. The intent is to develop agency capacity for effective human resource management, forging a link between the agency’s mission to deliver quality services and the recruitment, selection, motivation and retention of qualified staff. The project focuses on the Maine public child welfare agency and collaborates with New Hampshire and Vermont as well as with other New England states through the New England Association of Child Welfare Training Directors.

This paper summarizes best practice approaches to recruitment and provides examples of some innovative approaches.

APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is the process that an organization uses to let people know that a position is available and to describe that position in a way that leads the potential employees to apply for and accept a job if it is offered (Wanous, 1992). Recruitment and selection should be one seamless process of attracting, making the best match and achieving affective commitment that helps promote retention. This process begins with a commitment to Strategic Human Resource Management.

Strategic Human Resource Management

All child welfare agencies have an external focus in their mission on the safety, permanence and well-being of children. Most also recognize that this mission cannot be achieved in the absence of a committed and qualified workforce. However, few organizations have recognized the critical importance of strategic human resource management and elevated it to the level of the agency mission. In fact to be successful any organization needs to recognize the importance of balancing two purposes: the external or service mission of the organization and the internal purpose related to the human resource management or maintenance of the organization. The goals of strategic human resource management are to:

- Balance organizational realities and personal needs of employees;
- Link individual's professional goals and competences to the organization's mission and goals; and
- Make human resource concerns part of the strategy formulation, implementation and feedback processes (Miner & Crane, 1995).

Recognizing the critical importance of effective human resource management in addressing the workforce crisis in human services, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has funded numerous studies to identify innovative approaches and to promote a more strategic partnership between program administration and human resource management. Many of these studies are posted on the Cornerstones for Kids website, www.cornerstones4kids.org.

In a national study of Human Resource Management innovations in human services (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2002), the authors identify ongoing reforms intended to expedite the identification and selection of qualified applicants. Most of the efforts in this regard involved a reduction in the number of recruitment steps and authorizations that must occur before placement, simplified exam strategies, more aggressive outreach efforts, and decentralization of authority to line managers. Some examples follow:

Recruitment Reform Ideas and Programs

- Elimination of single point of entry.
- Abolition of most paper-and-pencil merit exams, expanded use of technology.
- Expanded outreach efforts targeted at high-need communities.
- Selective certification, by which agencies are empowered to hire individuals with special skills (e.g., bilingual).
- Continuous outreach in which applicants may apply for jobs at any time rather than at designated times and locations.
- On-the-spot hiring for high-need jobs.
- Highly proactive efforts to reach potential applicants and to encourage incumbent employees to assist in the search efforts.
- Financial incentives to attract needed skills.
- Early cultivation of professionals through Internships, tuition programs, job shadowing.
- Elaborate orientation programs that gently introduce employees into high-stress jobs in order to reduce anxiety, promote confidence, and enhance retention.
- Employee referrals are a superb way to fill job vacancies (90% of employees in private sector reportedly arrive through referrals).
- “User-friendly” application systems that incorporate an eclectic mix of outreach, low-stress testing strategies, and uncomplicated procedures are essential elements.
- Emulating private sector search firms.
- Expanded flexibility for the appointing authority – no arbitrary rule of three (etc); cluster recruiting that permits applicants to apply for several job categories through just one test or screening device.
- Linking recruitment priorities to Agency mission statements.

Center for the Study of Social Policy (2002)

These innovations in recruitment practices are occurring in agencies throughout the country. Some examples and their locations are included in the following chart.

Recruitment Locations of Best Practices

State of Florida: Exemption of line agencies from most state rules on recruitment and selection.

State of North Carolina: County agencies permitted to obtain “delegated authority” to recruit and select under very general guidelines from the State.

States of Colorado and Georgia: Eliminated merit system.

State of South Carolina: Eliminated merit system; created central job bank of position announcements, on-line postings of all jobs; extensive use of career fairs; virtual elimination of formal exams.

Albuquerque, New Mexico: Managers allowed to accrue compensatory time for energies expended in community outreach and recruitment efforts.

Austin, TX: Strategic planning program that ties HRM objectives – such as recruitment – to missions and goals.

Federal Government: Recruiters given authority to make “on-the-spot” offers to job candidates with needed skills, such as RNs and engineers. The only restriction is that the applicants have 3.0 or better GPAs.

Atlanta, GA: City provides low interest mortgage loans for new workers who agree to stay a given period of time, and to locate in transitional or deteriorating neighborhoods.

Maricopa County, AZ: Community outreach program includes automatic faxes of every job opening to community and social service agencies.

State of Wisconsin: Paperless application, walk-in testing, continuous recruitment, less reliance on exams, decentralized decision authority.

State of Washington: National search efforts using all the techniques of “head-hunter firms (paid for by charge backs to the hiring agencies.)

North Carolina County DSS Agencies: The Educational Collaborative with Universities in the state provides a pool of talent with staying power. Internship programs are part of this effort.

Fairfax County, VA: Uses continuous recruitment and web site to make job vacancies widely known. They have a university partnership that monitors a Student Unit Project.

Center for the Study of Social Policy (2002)

Shared partnership of Human Resource and Program Staff

A partnership between the Human Resource or Personnel department and agency line managers is critical to the success of a recruitment and selection process. In some agencies, the responsibility for recruitment and selection lies with the human resource department, in others line managers and supervisors are charged with this responsibility. There is considerable research evidence that internal sources of recruitment are the most effective in promoting retention. In a review of the literature on recruitment source research, Zottoli and Wanous (2000) found that referrals by current personnel, in-house job postings and the re-hiring of former employees are the most effective. In a summary of 12 studies, job survival (the number of months a new hire stays in the organization) was 24% higher for employee recruited using inside sources than for employees using outside sources. (Wanous, 1992). This finding has been supported by a study of direct service providers in residential

settings that found that 57% of new hires who stayed 12 months had heard about the job from an inside source, compared with only 36% of new hires who left during the first 12 months (a statistically significant difference) (Larson, Lakin & Bruininks, 1998).

Current staff therefore have a critical role to play in terms of promoting the agency as an attractive place to work and in actively recruiting and screening applicants. In the Maine child welfare program (the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)), recruitment and selection has consistently been part of the supervisors' job description. However, only recently have the performance expectations been revised to clarify the components of this responsibility as follows:

Maine Standards for Supervisors

Commit to recruitment, screening and selection of qualified staff

Expectations:

The quality of services to children and families is dependent on staff who possess the knowledge, skills and personal characteristics to work in and remain committed to this challenging field. Attracting and selecting the right person for the job is the critical first step in assuring a competent and stable workforce.

- Actively pursue recruitment opportunities and/or work with district administration to develop specific activities.
- Participate in agency sponsored recruitment activities.
- Maintain communication links with prospective candidates and present the agency in a positive light.
- Know and comply with law and policy related to fair hiring and selection processes.
- Develop and maintain current knowledge and skill in the screening and selection process.
- Participate in panel interviews to screen candidates.
- Conduct job specific interviews, reference and background checks to select the most suitable candidate for a vacancy.
- Identify and select people who are able to demonstrate the competencies needed and whose values and philosophy are consistent with the agency's mission and values and the
- Coordinate and support field placements and internships to attract qualified staff.
- Justify and document hiring decisions using job-related criteria.

In Maine, we also identified a person within each district office who can be contacted when recruitment needs/issues arise. To assist those individuals in their recruitment activities, we developed a Recruitment Resource Guide to provide information, guidance, inspiration and tools for supervisory staff to utilize in the recruitment process. The guide is available at www.cwti.org/rr

Recruitment plan

Recruitment needs to begin with a plan for marketing the organization to potential employees. Lawson and Hewitt (2005) outline eight steps for such a plan. The Maine OCFS Recruitment Guide identifies the ways in which the Maine child welfare program has implemented these steps and areas for improvement.

Maine Recruitment Plan

- 1. Identify the needs and perceptions of current employees and potential new hires**
OCFS does this yearly at the Fall Conference utilizing the Annual Job Satisfaction Survey. Results of this survey can be found at <http://www.cwti.org/RR/JobSat.htm>. In addition, OCFS surveys individuals entering and exiting employment with OCFS.
- 2. Craft an organizational identity**
OCFS has crafted its organizational identity as one that makes a difference in the lives of children and families in Maine.
- 3. Create or update the organization's mission and vision statements**
OCFS has its belief statement, as well as a new Practice Model.
- 4. Identify and remove barriers to attracting high quality recruits**
This can be accomplished by streamlining the hiring process and having a central person that applicants can contact to find out about the status of their application.
- 5. Package the organization's image**
In collaboration with CWTI, OCFS has created recruitment materials including an applicant packet, realistic job preview, and a caseworker recruitment drive display.
- 6. Spread the work to potential employees**
OCFS accomplishes this through advertising, attending career fairs, participating in classroom presentations, and word of mouth by current employees.
- 7. Enhance the organization's visibility**
OCFS can do more to spread the word. Press releases can be created to illustrate achievements and the need for others to make a difference. Casework staff can spread the word about OCFS' mission by speaking in public venues such as rotary clubs, VFW, women's clubs, church groups, etc.
- 8. Monitor and update the plan as needed**
It is important that the Office's needs are reviewed on a continual basis, so changes in the plan can be made as necessary to reflect those needs.

Organizational Analysis

All recruitment and selection activities need to be based on a thorough understanding of the job and the organization. A useful paradigm is: *To do this job, in this organization, we need this person.*

In addition to being clear about performance expectations of the job, the agency also needs to be clear about who they are as an agency. An agency also needs to critically examine its commitment to staff and the concept of strategic human resource management and to engage in a process of agency branding to communicate a clear message to the outside world about who they are and what they represent. This message is embodied in three key areas: the vision, the mission and the practice model.

The vision of an agency is an image of a desired future that spells out the conditions and quality of life the organization wants to achieve. It describes what will happen in the world if the organization is successful. For example: *All children will be safe and cared for in families.*

The mission describes how the organization will realize the vision and outlines why the organization exists and what it plans to accomplish. For example the mission statement of the Vermont child welfare program is: *The Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families partners with families and the community to promote safety, permanency, well-being and law abidance for children.*

The practice model describes how the values of the agency are put into practice to achieve the mission and produce the desired outcomes. It provides the basis for job descriptions, performance expectations, recruitment materials and selection criteria. Child welfare practice has changed dramatically in the last ten years with an increased focus on a family-centered, strength-based approach. Agencies need to review all of their human resource materials in light of current practice. Maine's practice model follows:

MAINE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PRACTICE MODEL

APRIL 2005

Child and Family Services joins with families and the community to promote long-term safety, well-being, and permanent families for children. This practice model guides our work with children and their families.

CHILD SAFETY, FIRST AND FOREMOST

- Making children and families safe is a collaborative effort. We create a team for each family, consisting of family, staff, and community members to find safe solutions for children.
- In our response to child safety concerns, we reach factually supported conclusions in a timely and thorough manner. Input from parents, children, extended family, and community stakeholders is a necessary component in assuring safety.
- We engage families with honesty and open minds. By exploring and listening, we help families use their strengths to meet safety needs of children.
- We value family perspectives, goals, and plans as critical to creating and maintaining child safety.
- We separate dangerous caregivers from children in need of protection. When court action is necessary to make a child safe, we will use our authority with sensitivity and respect.
- When children are placed in foster care, we ensure ongoing safety through frequent, meaningful contact with children and their caregivers. We welcome foster parents as a vital part of the family team.
- In our work to place children in adoption, safety is the first priority.

PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO RAISE THEIR OWN CHILDREN

- We recognize that family members know the most about their own families. It is our responsibility to understand children and families within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, and culture.
- Parents' voices are valued and considered in decisions regarding the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children and family.
- We believe that people can change. Their past does not necessarily define their potential.
- Family teams develop and implement creative, individualized solutions that build on the strengths of families to meet their needs.

CHILDREN ARE ENTITLED TO LIVE IN A SAFE AND NURTURING FAMILY

- As family team leaders, we share responsibility with the family and community to help families protect and nurture their children.
- We support caregivers in protecting children in their own homes whenever possible.
- When children cannot live safely with their families, the first consideration for placement will be with kinship connections capable of providing a safe and nurturing home.
- We believe that children's needs are best served in a family that is committed to the child. We support placements that promote family, sibling and community connections, and encourage healthy social development.
- We listen to children. Their voices are heard, valued, and considered in decisions regarding their safety, well-being, and permanence.

ALL CHILDREN DESERVE A PERMANENT FAMILY

- Permanency planning for children begins at first contact with Child and Family Services. We proceed with a sense of urgency until permanency is achieved.
- All planning for children focuses on the goal of preserving their family, reunifying their family, or achieving permanent placement in another family.
- Permanency is best achieved through a legal relationship such as parental custody, guardianship, or adoption. 'Stability' is not permanency.
- Life-long family connections are critical for children. It is our responsibility to promote and preserve kinship, sibling, and community connections for each child. We value past, present, and future relationships that consider the child's hopes and wishes.

HOW WE DO OUR WORK IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WORK WE DO

- Our organization is focused on providing high quality, timely, efficient, and effective services.
- As with families, we look for strengths in our organization. We are responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive working and learning environment and for open communication and accountability at all levels.
- As we work with children, families, and their teams, we clearly share our purpose, role, concerns, decisions, and responsibility.
- Relationships and communication among staff, children, families, foster parents, and community providers are conducted with genuineness, empathy, and respect.
- Our staff is our most important asset. Children and families deserve trained, skillful staff to engage and assist families.

Job Analysis

In addition to organizational analysis, the agency needs to clarify the specific job expectations. Job analysis is the fundamental building block on which must rest all later decisions in the employment process (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). Job analysis provides the critical information about the job to use in advertising the position and is a basic requirement for developing valid selection procedures according to both professional (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1987) and legal (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1978) testing guidelines. Job analysis enhances the job-relatedness of the recruitment and screening process by making job responsibilities explicit and providing the basis for defining job qualifications and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). Job analysis documents comprise two major elements: job descriptions which specify the work to be done; and job specifications which indicate the personal characteristics necessary to do the work.

There are many ways to conduct job analysis including direct observation, interviews, panels of subject matter experts and questionnaires (including task inventories and checklists). These approaches are used to produce a job description that typically includes the following information: job title, job activities (tasks or responsibilities), working conditions (indoor/outdoor, heat, lighting), social environment (reporting relationships, co-workers), and conditions of employment (hours of work, benefits, payment, driving) (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005).

As noted earlier, child welfare practice has changed dramatically in recent years. Often the existing job description has not changed to reflect this change in practice. It is particularly important in the recruitment and selection process to update the job description to reflect the agency's current practice. The "new paradigm" of child welfare will often be more attractive to applicants and the process will be more content valid by reflecting the current realities of the position.

Along with updating the job description to reflect current responsibilities and practice, agencies need to review job requirements to reflect the personal characteristics needed to do the job. Some minimum qualifications need to be identified for all caseworkers. These include educational background and level, valid driver's license, no criminal history, etc. In addition, the personal characteristics (knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies) need to be clarified. Again, the change in child welfare is necessitating a change in the personal characteristics of caseworkers. In Maine, for example, the competency of "teamwork" has been added to the screening index to reflect the more team-based approaches to practice in the agency.

There are many resources available to identify the competencies of child welfare caseworkers. Job analysis provides necessary but insufficient information in deciding whether an applicant is best qualified for the job in question. Competency-based recruiting systems stress the need to identify competencies that are most likely to predict long-term success on the job and that are difficult to develop through either training or experience. Spenser & Spenser (1993) capture this basic human resource management concept in their saying: *you can teach a turkey to climb a tree, but it's easier to hire a squirrel*. Berman and Motowidlo (1992) further argue that selection criteria should embrace a domain of organizational behavior broader than just task activities. They should also include contextual activities—such pro-social organizational behavior as putting in extra effort on the job, persistence, cooperating with others, following organizational rules and procedures, and supporting organizational objectives.

In addition, studies of child welfare caseworkers have identified a relationship between personal characteristics and turnover. The characteristics that correlate with caseworker retention are: self-efficacy motivation (energy and persistence in overcoming obstacles to accomplish goals); personal responsiveness to the needs of clients (doing for others); and goodness of fit (personal job competence) (Ellett, Ellett, Kelley & Noble, 1996; Rycraft, 1994).

Together the organizational and job analysis will result in a clear picture of the job and agency that can be used as basis for recruitment materials.

REALISTIC RECRUITMENT

The cost of turnover

Some of the preventable turnover in child welfare at least in the first few months on the job can be attributed to inaccurate expectations of new hires who may have been misled by the organization that try to sell themselves or provide applicants with incomplete impressions about the nature of the work (CPS Human Resource Services, 2004). This early turnover can be mitigated by engaging in realistic recruitment and screening. Realistic recruitment is not a specific technique. It is a general philosophy or approach to dealing with newcomers: “Rather than ‘selling’ the organization, realistic recruitment presents outsiders with *all pertinent information without distortion*” (Wanous, 1992, p.43).

While all preventable turnover is costly and disruptive, early turnover is particularly unwelcome. In child welfare turnover in the first few months on the job can be very high. In Maine, during the period 1994 – 2003, 16% of workers hired through the pre-service program left within the first six months, 31 % within the first year (Sawyer, 2006). The recruitment, screening, orientation and training costs are the same for all workers regardless of their length of employment. However, the longer a person stays, the more these costs are offset. When a new worker leaves within the first few months sometimes before even carrying a case, these costs are a large financial and avoidable burden to the organization. In Wisconsin where the turnover rate was as high as 67% the estimated cost of turnover of caseworkers, in an eighteen-month period was estimated to be \$1.4 million (Flower, McDonald & Sumski, 2005). A research study in New York found that training costs alone total \$24,000 to replace each worker who leaves (Lawson & Claiborne, 2005). In 1995, a study in Nebraska found that it cost \$10,000 for one caseworker to leave the agency and be replaced (Graef & Hill, 2000). Using a similar formula for costing turnover (Cascio, 1987), Maine recently estimated the replacement costs for a new worker at \$15,162 (Cowperthwaite, 2006). The breakdown is shown in the following chart.

Separation Costs	\$181.66
Replacement Costs	\$928.07
Training Costs	\$15,161.62
Total Cost Per Worker	\$16,273.35

Larson and Hewitt (2005) also emphasize the importance of considering the human costs of early turnover. Co-workers and supervisors can become cynical and unwilling to invest in the time and energy needed to orient and train new staff. Clients suffer the consequences of having to form new relationships with a procession of caseworkers who may leave soon after meeting them. The agency’s image in the community is also affected and it may seem like an unwelcoming place to work. As a result, a pattern of early turnover may impact on recruitment efforts.

Realistic Recruitment

Realistic recruitment increases job survival by providing an accurate picture of the job and the organization. When used throughout the recruitment process in attracting and selecting staff, an applicant can make more informed decisions about whether this is the right job for him or her.

Wanous (1992) describes four ways in which realistic recruitment works: vaccination against unrealistic expectations; self-selection; coping; and personal commitment.

Vaccination: realistic recruitment operates like a medical vaccination because job candidates are given a small dose of organizational reality during the recruitment stage in an attempt to lower initial expectations of the job and reduce on-the-job disappointment.

Self-selection: by providing accurate about the job and organization, realistic recruitment helps job candidates make a more informed choice resulting in a better match between their individual job wants and the requirements of the job.

Coping: More accurate expectations for the job allows newcomers to develop coping strategies so that they will not fail in the new job. This results in better job performance and higher job satisfaction.

Personal Commitment: When individuals believe that they have made a choice without coercion or inducements, they are more committed to the decision. Job commitment is also increased as a result of seeing the organization as trustworthy.

Wanous (1992) further argues that these mechanisms are interlocked in an intricate way. “The “vaccination” of expectations seems to be the cornerstone of this psychological process. A more effective matching between person and organization is also a likely explanation, as is increased commitment to an organizational choice made without much external pressure or coercion” (p.52).

The philosophy of realistic recruitment should permeate all recruitment and selection activities beginning with community education and outreach, media campaigns, informational materials and through the selection process. The basic principles are to provide realistic information on the positive and negative aspects of the job so that applicants can make a more informed decision. One of the reasons that informal sources (e.g. referrals by current personnel) are more effective in recruitment than formal sources (defined as advertisements and employment agencies) is because of the realism factor – inside sources provide more accurate and more specific information than outside sources (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000).

Wanous (1992) identifies some key design principles to be used throughout the recruitment process:

- Encourage self-selection explicitly: tell the candidates why they are being given the information so that they will be encouraged to make more effective job choices.
- Have credible sources communicate the information: use current employees in videos or selection interviews and make it clear that the information about the job is based on input from staff.
- Maintain consistency between the medium and the message: if using a video make sure that the audio matches the visual images.
- Communicate feelings as well as information: include employee quotes or information from job satisfaction surveys in either a video or brochure.

- Have the content reflect organizational climate: provide a balance of negative and positive job factors.

The basis for realistic recruitment is a complete and accurate job description. The description in itself is a way of communicating realistic information to the applicant and of clarifying job expectations within the organization. The next step is to gather information about characteristics of the job that current employees like or dislike. Some of this information can be gathered from job satisfaction surveys or analysis of exit interviews. Data from the organizational analysis is also important input in this process.

The next step in the process is to summarize information potential recruits have unrealistic expectations about or are unlikely to know. Often past surveys have identified paperwork as a source of dissatisfaction in child welfare; working with children and families is a common source satisfaction. Potential recruits may not be aware of the need for computer skills and working with data; or the emphasis on team work and collaboration.

The North Carolina Recruitment and Retention project has done a very effective job of realistic recruitment as the following flyer illustrates.

LOW pay,
a **ton** of paperwork,
a **massive** caseload,
upset parents?

**SURE,
SIGN ME UP!**



Public Child Welfare Work.
It's not for everyone.

It's for people
who believe they can
make a difference in
a world of challenges
and hard knocks.

**You know who you are.
Find a job that matters.**

Contact your
County Department of Social Services.

© 2004 Jordan Institute for Families, JNF, Chicago Hill School of Social Work

Realistic Job Previews

A Realistic Job Preview (RJP) is a specific technique or mechanism for providing realistic information about a job prior to the person becoming employed (Wanous, 1992). Larson and Hewett (2005) provide a comprehensive listing of the many different strategies that can be used to provide realistic job information to potential employees. Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) include structured observations; meetings with current staff, videotapes, photograph albums or scrapbooks; booklets or brochures; web-based multimedia presentations; group RJPs; and internships or volunteer programs. The authors provide extensive tables summarizing the development issues, implementation considerations, cost implications and advantages and disadvantages of each approach. They note that since the goal of RJPs is to present undistorted information to job applicants about the job and the organization before a job offer has been made, the organization should select the format that will best convey the information in the most affordable and practical manner given current resources and needs. For small organizations the authors also recommend a hybrid approach combining strategies such as an industry-specific professionally produced videotape with a site-specific scrapbook.

Several states including Nebraska, Delaware, Michigan, New York, North Carolina have developed videos to provide a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) of the position of child welfare caseworker. Preliminary research from the Michigan video indicates that the realistic depiction of the job led about ten percent of prospective recruits to abandon the application process, caused about 20 percent to give more intentional, honest thought to their ability to handle the challenges and left 70 percent still interested and feeling better prepared (Robison, 2006). CPS Human Resources has produced a review of the literature as well as a Realistic Job Preview Toolkit with detailed information including how states can produce their own videos. For more information see www.cornerstones4kids.org/new_reports. The following chart provides some information on the Maine Realistic Job Preview.

Maine Realistic Job Preview Information Points

What is a Realistic Job Preview?

As the name implies, a Realistic Job Preview is a mechanism for providing realistic information about a job prior to a person becoming employed (Wanous, 1992). There are several methods of realistic job previews including internships, job shadowing, site visits, informational materials, dramatizations and job sample tests. In Maine, as well as using some of these methods, we also developed a video that presents information about the job of a child welfare caseworker.

Why a Realistic Job Preview?

In Maine, about one out of five new hires leave within the first year of employment. At least some of that turnover is because people have a limited understanding of what the job is about. The research on realistic job previews shows that when accurate information about both negative and positive aspects of the job is provided to applicants or newcomers prior to their starting work in an organization, their expectations are more likely to be met. As a result satisfaction and job performance are often higher and turnover lower than when such information is not provided (Wanous, 1992).

How does the Realistic Job Preview work?

The goal of the Realistic Job Preview is to provide a balanced view of the job and organization, presenting both positive and negative information about critical elements. After viewing the Realistic Job Preview, some applicants will self-select out of the hiring process before substantial resources are invested in their hiring and training. This results in a better job-applicant fit and prevents hiring ill-informed applicants who quit when the reality of the job hits them (Graef, 2002). A Realistic Job Preview also makes applicants feel more positively about an organization because they feel that the organization has been more honest with them.

How was this Realistic Job Preview developed?

We surveyed all caseworkers and supervisors in Maine to ask them to identify critical issues in the caseworker position both positive and negative. We then asked them to rate 33 issues on 'frequency with which they occur' and 'how you view each issue (positive, neutral, negative)' (Graef, 2002). The goal was to balance the challenges with the more fulfilling aspects of the job that occur most frequently for caseworkers. Once the survey results were compiled, the script and the 'storyboard' were developed. Actual child welfare workers and other professionals in the field chose to collaborate with us on this project to give it more authenticity.

References:

Graef, M. (2002). *Developing and Implementing a Realistic Job Preview*. Presentation at the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) Conference. Nashville, TN.
Wanous, J. P. (1992) *Organizational Entry: Recruitment, Selection, Orientation and Socialization of Newcomers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

In child welfare the concept of realistic recruitment generally takes the form of a videotape. However, the concepts and underlying philosophy of realistic recruitment need to permeate all recruitment and selection activities. The goal is to improve the person/job match and reduce early turnover by encouraging more informed decision-making on the part of the job applicant.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

In child welfare, a number of outreach strategies, including media advertising, college recruitment, utilizing current agency staff as recruiters, and interagency collaboration, have proven effective in recruitment across the United States (Reitz, 2001). Other strategies appropriate to the information age include employee referral programs, with incentives for successful matches, online recruitment, automated weekly fax system to local agencies and agency websites. A pilot program in Maine had dramatic success in using non-traditional strategies. Maine's Region 5 offices are located in areas that are rural and poor, lacking social options for single, unattached workers and job opportunities for spouses of prospective workers. The region developed a recruitment plan to include: new advertising copy targeted at older workers; ads in local rather than statewide newspapers; revising letters to applicants to present the agency in a more friendly and informative manner; local newspaper articles and speaking engagements to communicate DHHS's role and career opportunities. The first two months of the new campaign produced an increase of more than 100% in applications (from 6/month to 62/month) and a reduction in the cost per inquiry from \$388.22 to \$14.90 (Beerits & Morris, 2001).

The challenge in today's job market is to get the attention of qualified candidates and together make an informed decision about whether this is the right job for them. As the NASW slogan says: *If you're right for the job, it's the best job in the world.* (NASW, 2004)

Link to mission and public image

Recruitment has a strong affective component. It is about building a relationship and in building the relationship some of the same principles of casework practice apply: mutual respect, shared decision making, clarifying goals. We need to explore not just "are you the right person for this agency?" but also "is this the right job for you?" The process needs to clarify the connection between the individual's values and aspirations and the agency's values and mission promoting the affective commitment to both the profession and the organization that will result in a satisfied, competent and committed employee. "Employees are connected and powerfully committed to the unifying mission of the organization Employers must capture the hearts of their staff so that they view their work as much more than just a job or a paycheck" (Alwon and Reitz, 2000).

Child welfare workers are mission driven. In fact, as Barth (2003) notes in his analysis of the social work labor market: *the taste for social work is strong... for social workers, mission trumps money.* A systematic review of the research (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005) identified professional commitment (along with level of education) as the most consistent personal characteristic influencing the retention of child welfare staff. This suggests that an agency's recruitment strategies should emphasize the agency vision and mission.

Recruitment and retention are critically intertwined. In a Minnesota survey, staff members concurred that "the single best recruitment tool is a stable, satisfied staff" (Hannes, 1988). In a survey, CWLA member agency executives consistently stated that the success of their agencies' recruitment campaigns was directly dependant on the reputation of the agency and its image as a good place to work (Child Welfare League of America, 2001). This survey result is supported by studies in the corporate sector showing that job choice decisions are highly related to the image of an organization

held by potential employees. Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager (1993) found that the image applicants formed about an organization based on their recruitment brochures accounted for 60 per cent of the variance in decisions to apply for work. This finding clearly highlights the importance of early impression formation in the likelihood of pursuing employment.

Hornung (2007) describes the concept of “branding” as a way of giving an agency a competitive edge in a tight labor market. He describes an employee brand as the promise made to current and prospective employees – the bundle of compensation, benefits and work challenges that make a job appealing to certain people. Once the brand vision and message has been developed, every piece of employment related communications must reflect those elements. He encourages agencies to review everything from application forms and job descriptions to on line job postings and print advertisements to ensure that all of them capture the spirit and meaning of the brand vision. The goal is to appeal to people who share your passion for your agency’s mission. Emphasize the mission of the agency and emphasize the pride you have in it when communicating to others about employment. The following flyer was designed in Maine to present information about the agency mission in a way that would appeal to the personal values of potential recruits.

Agencies need to re-design all PR materials including brochures, manuals, newsletters and websites to provide a more attractive image and accurate information about the mission, values and practice model. In North Carolina, the Jordan Institute has developed a recruitment toolkit that includes flyers, posters, brochures and two public service announcements designed for distribution to local television stations to encourage interest in applying for child welfare work (more information is available on the website (<http://ssw.unc.edu/jif/rf>)).

“Making A Difference In The Lives of Children And Families in Maine”

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difference one child at a
time kept me hooked!”**



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- Promotional Opportunities
- Credit Union

**“When you see people changing
right before your eyes and you
know you had a role facilitating
that, it’s a powerful thing.”**

Streamline process

A survey of college students uncovered some alarming information about their perceptions of working in the human services. Liberal arts and social work majors in 2002 revealed that only 21 percent of the graduating seniors gave serious consideration to pursuing work in human services. Those who expressed interest in the field said that they expected jobs to be hard to find and the entry process to be confusing and slow (Light, 2002).

Data such as this and the workforce crisis have precipitated a movement throughout the country to reform human resource management programs and practices and to streamline the recruitment and selection process (CSSP, 2002). Examples include elimination of a single point of entry for applications, decentralizing authority from personnel departments to line managers; selective certification by which agencies are empowered to hire individuals with special skills (e.g. bilingual); expanded flexibility for the appointing authority – no arbitrary rule of three; cluster recruiting that permits applicants to apply for several job categories through just one test or screening device. Some best practices are listed in the following chart.

Best Practices in Streamlining the Recruitment Process

State of Florida: exemption of line agencies from most state rules on recruitment and selection.

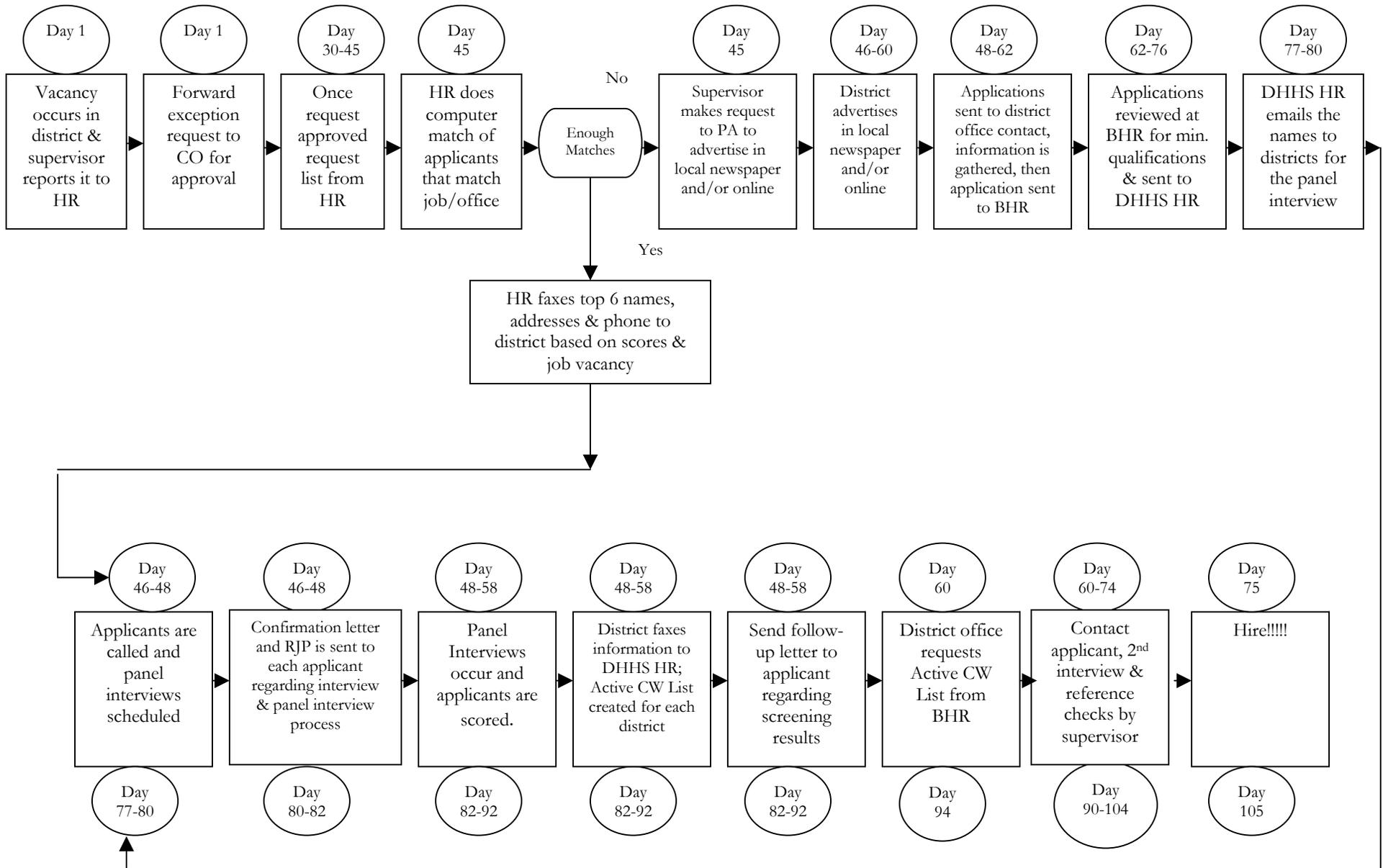
State of North Carolina: County agencies permitted to obtain “delegated authority” to recruit and select under very general guidelines from the State.

State of South Carolina: Eliminated merit system; created central job bank of position announcements, on-line postings of all jobs; extensive use of career fairs; virtual elimination of formal exams.

Federal Government: Recruiters given authority to make “on-the-spot” offers to job candidates with needed skills. (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2002)

The workforce issues in child welfare include not just turnover, but also the length of time that positions are unfilled. Many public sector HRM systems (such as the state of Wisconsin) have adopted “continuous recruitment” practices to provide a pool of candidates when vacancies occur (CSSP, 2002). This practice permits prompt referrals to the interviewing agency and more rapid hiring. Some states (e.g. Michigan and Delaware) have been successful in reducing the time that positions are unfilled by establishing a pool of workers who are already pre-screened and trained and available to move into positions as they open up (CPS Human Resources Services (2006b). In Maine, we conducted an analysis of the steps in the recruitment and selection process and identified the amount of time needed to complete each step. This flow process diagram shown on the following page provided a basis for identifying bottlenecks in the system. However, data from our Entrance Questionnaires shows that new hires still perceive the process as lengthy and confusing.

Recruitment and Selection Process



Expand Outreach and Target Recruitment

Recruitment is frequently treated as if it were a one-way process – that is, organizations searching for prospective employees. In practice, however, prospective employees are also seeking out organizations. The so-called “mating theory of recruitment” (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005) appears more realistic and more relevant to the child welfare field. Today all employers are facing a dual challenge in terms of recruitment: the pool of qualified job applicants is reduced and the demographics of the workforce are changing. Given the changing demographics of the workforce and of the client population in child welfare, it is important to reach out beyond the young, white, female group that has been the traditional pool to attract a more diverse workforce including older workers as well as cultural and racial diversity. In the following section, we will describe recruitment strategies to attract three potential groups: older workers, non-white workers and millennial workers.

Older Workers: For the first time in history, the older segment of the population is growing at a faster rate than the younger segment of the population due to the worldwide declines in birthrates and the increase in life expectancy (Calo, 2008). This trend is exacerbated in the social work field where the workforce is aging disproportionately to the overall population (NASW, 2004). As these workers leave, replacing them will be increasingly difficult.

However on the positive side, labor force participation rates are increasing for those 55 and older due to changes in Social Security benefits (the rise in age required to qualify), the erosion of pensions and retiree health benefits, the elimination of the mandatory retirement age and the desire for an adequate retirement nest egg (Pynes, 2008). Several studies show that labor participation rates for persons aged 55 – 64 and 65 and older have increased, most noticeably in the case of women between the ages of 55-64. By 2010, BLS projects that 17% of workers in US will be 55 and older. By 2050 it will be almost 20% of the workforce (Brown, 2003). 65% of baby boomers plan to work in some capacity throughout their retirement years and more than half would like to find work that enhances the well-being of others, such as work in the education, health and human services sub-sectors (Civic Ventures, 2005). Some older workers feel the need to be productive, others may need health benefits and additional income, still others may want to stay mentally and physically active or have an opportunity to give back to society. This group provides a rich resource of potential workers in child welfare.

There is some evidence that older workers and those with work experience tend to stay longer in child welfare (Rosenthal, McDowell & White, 1998). Some come with experience in other fields such as teaching or have entered the profession after raising their own families. Doverspike et al (2000) provide some specific recommendations for attracting older workers including advertising (message and placement of the ad); interview and follow up; and nature of the work such as flexibility of hours. In advertising the position using phrases such as experienced or mature suggest that past work experience is valued; materials can also appeal to the older workers desire to “make a difference”. Placing ads in locations where older workers are likely to see them is a crucial consideration. The authors also provide recommendations on ways of attracting older workers in the interview process. For some, the job security and benefits such as health insurance and the retirement program may be attractive; for other older adults flexibility in the number of work hours is a critical component. Agencies can explore offering phased or partial retirement to current workers reaching retirement age; or offering opportunities for a reduced work schedule and/or job sharing.

Non-white workers: The US population is growing more diverse. Currently it is 69% white, 13% African American 13% Latino, 4% Asian and 2.5% other races. By 2025 minorities could compose 32% of the population, the fastest growing cohorts being Latinos and Asians (US Census Bureau 2004). This growing diversity has an impact on the composition of both the client population and the workforce. Minorities will constitute more than half of net new entrants to the US workforce over the next 15 years, though in some states the growth rates for Latinos and Asians may be much higher (Judy & D’Amico, 2007).

To respond to the increasing diversity, organizations need to become more inclusive and accepting of difference. Most important is the commitment of leadership – it must be long term and should integrate inclusiveness holistically into the organization. The culture of inclusiveness should include both external elements such as how organization relates to underserved populations and internal elements including recruitment and the retention (Pease & Associates 2003).

Some agencies have made a concerted effort to increase the racial diversity of their workforce to ensure that staff represent the communities that they serve in both cultural and ethnic characteristics. Doverspike et al (2000) suggest that to increase the recruitment of minorities, agencies need to feature successful minorities in advertising and recruitment efforts and deploy minorities as recruiters particularly in settings where minorities are prevalent. This sends a signal to applicants that the organization is committed to diversifying its workforce, that potential role models exist within the organization and that minorities have a strong likelihood of success. Other strategies include cooperative and outreach efforts with educational institutes and internships with colleges and universities that target minority candidates.

Sacramento County, California has established “culture competency” as a qualification for certain jobs and tests for language proficiency and cultural knowledge awarding successful candidates a 5% salary differential (CSSP, 2002). In New Haven, Connecticut, recruitment teams consisting of diverse (ethnic and gender) workers are used to visit career fairs, attend public meetings and school fairs. The El Paso County, Colorado, Department of Human Services created a Diversity Coalition to lead efforts to recruit and retain minority staff. This coalition has developed and promoted a broad range of strategies to make the agency a more diverse and welcoming work environment (Robison, 2006).

Millennial workers: Sometimes referred to as Gen Y, millennial workers are those born between 1982 and 2002. They are a diverse group; one in three are not Caucasian. They are skeptical and unimpressed by authority, want a better balance between work and life and are technology savvy (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). They are looking for organizations that provide multiple training and development opportunities, long-term career progression, variety in daily work, a dynamic, forward-looking approach and where employees are cared for as individuals (Terjesen, Vinicombe & Freeman, 2007). As a group that grew up in the self-esteem movements in the 1980s and 1990s, they have been provided positive feedback all of their lives and as result believe that they have the answers resulting in a strong sense of goal attainment and motivational drive (Wallace & Edwards, 2008). Information from surveys and focus groups suggest that they will be a very choosy generation of workers that we will need to meet more than halfway in order to attract them to the many public sector jobs that we will have to offer as the current workforce ages out in very large numbers (Anderson, 2007).

Consistent with other research on the workforce (Halpern, 2006), a study of recruitment and retention of child welfare workers in Maryland found generational differences in employees' perceptions of the organizational environment and their reports of organizational withdrawal. A theme that emerged from focus groups in the Maryland study was related to generational and cultural aspects and their relationship to retention. Younger generations were found to move jobs more often, not necessarily out of discontent with the work, but as a result of various factors such as moving locations, entrance and exit from the work force for child rearing and less commitment to the organization. This was noted as a reality of the current workforce members of whom have less sense of loyalty to a workplace and more concern about taking care of themselves. The authors conclude that the attitudes and behaviors of younger employees are having an impact on recruitment and retention and will likely have an effect on the nature of child welfare work. They note that Gen Y employees demonstrate high career commitment, have higher expectations for career development, desire more work/life balance, want fair compensation for their effort, and perceive themselves as more "undervalued and unappreciated" by supervisors than previous generations. This underscores the importance of addressing the organizational, structural and resource related issues of the workplace (Hopkins, 2007).

To recruit and attract Millennial workers, Wallace and Edwards (2008) recommend a two step process beginning by creating highly engaging work climates where employees understand they have the power to make decisions, can access information sources needed; have opportunities to update their knowledge and are rewarded for improving the effectiveness of the workplace. Such systems will respond to the Millennial workers' desire for daily variety, support of their career progress and demonstrate concern for each employee. Once such a system is in place, the organization can begin recruiting this group of workers. Wallace and Edwards (2008) note that many of the old ways of attracting new employees may not reach this group and recommend shifting media recruitment messages to better target where they are in the wired world.

Grubb (2008) concurs that the most effective recruitment way to attract Millennials is to embrace technology. She recommends a number of specific strategies such as:

- Distribute flash drives w/ company information
- Use text messaging to communicate w/ recruits
- Accept video resumes
- Create Company Facebook and MySpace pages linked to your website
- Find a reason to be on YouTube
- Conduct webinars to promote your company
- Create blogs on your website.

Recruiting Students

Colleges and universities are a major source of future child welfare workers and, thus, an excellent site for recruitment efforts. Generally, the most effective strategies revolve around building relationships with the departments that are most closely related to child welfare. The most direct approach is to bring students to the agency sites through practicum and internship placements. Other relationship builders include involving school faculty in agency research and evaluation efforts, using faculty as agency trainers, arranging for agency staff to speak at college classes on

issues in the field, sending agency staff to the college for advanced course work, and encouraging qualified agency staff to serve as part-time faculty. In addition, many colleges have active and involved placement offices. The staff providing these services can also be very helpful contacts for agencies in their recruiting efforts.

Agency/university partnerships: In child welfare, agency/university partnerships have been identified as one of the most useful strategies in addressing recruitment and retention problems in states. A national survey (APHS, 2005) found that partnerships with universities were somewhat or very useful in addressing both recruitment and retention problems, at least 30 states reported having tried either partnerships with the university or stipends for students in the last 5 years, or both, and 27 states did early and aggressive recruiting at schools of social work.

There are two sources of funding that support agency/university partnerships: entitlement funds under IV-E of the Social Security Act and the discretionary grant program under Title IV-B, Section 426 administered by the Children's Bureau. These programs contribute to recruitment efforts in a number of ways:

- Increased awareness of child welfare issues by infusing child welfare content into courses, funding faculty positions and using agency staff as adjuncts.
- Providing quality pre- and in-service training programs for agency staff.
- Providing educational benefits for staff existing staff including tuition support and educational leave; and
- Attracting applicants to the agency through undergraduate and graduate internship programs.

IV-E Entitlement Funds: Under IV-E the funding can be used for training of “personnel employed or preparing for employment by the state agency or by the local agency administering the (Title IV-E plan) (Section 474A, P.L. 96-272). According to a recent review of the research (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005) there are many different models of agency/university partnerships under IV-E including consortia of several social work programs (e.g. Kentucky and North Carolina). Some states target BSW degree education (Kentucky, Maine); others MSW (California and New York); some both (Maryland, Texas). Some focus on professional development of current staff; others focus on attracting social work students towards child welfare careers. Under the IV-E regulations, there is an employment pay back requirement that promotes retention of the graduates of the program. Information on IV-E partnerships can be found at <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/> and at CSWE's website entitled Partnerships in Child Welfare.

The Public Child Welfare Certification Program in Kentucky is one of the most effective partnerships in achieving recruitment goals. This program is “a special multi-university preparation program designed to recruit excellent workers from BSW programs who are prepared to take on complex cases with normal supervision within weeks of employment and to sustain those workers over time” (Fox, Miller & Barbee, 2003, pp 67-68). Under this program, students are recruited in their junior year and have a two year payback requirement.

In North Carolina, the *Child Welfare Education Collaborative* is a joint arrangement among the accredited Social Work programs in the state's public universities and the DSS agencies. Stipends of \$15,000/year are awarded to students who intend to pursue careers in child welfare. In exchange, the students agree to stay in the field of child welfare for at least the number of years that they receive funding for their education. Federal money through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act (TANF) and the child welfare program funding known as "IVE" is used to fund the program, along with the required state matching funds. In order to expedite the graduates' transition into the front lines, the universities have altered their curricula to encompass the "core competencies" that a social worker must have in order to work "in the field". The program has proven to be so successful that an effort is now underway to expand it to the Bachelor's degree level (it now applies only to the Master's level).

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) uses Title-VE funds to offer financial support to graduate social work students who are preparing for careers directed toward child welfare practice in publicly support social services. This program which has been in existence since 1993 offers stipends to MSW students at schools participating in the consortium (currently 18 universities). Students are required to work in an MSW position at a public child welfare agency (county or state) or tribal agency for a period of time at least equal to the period for which they received support.

Evaluations of these partnerships are positive showing that interns tend to stay longer and to be more effective (Fox, Miller & Barbee, 2003). However, these programs are not sufficient to meet the need for qualified child welfare workers "Despite IV-E partnerships in about 40 states, few if any states are able to educate a sufficient number of social workers to meet the entire child welfare hiring demand, requiring that child welfare agencies use other strategies to hire and train workers as well" (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005, p. 12).

Title IV-B, Section 426 discretionary funds: This funding program includes traineeships to attract BSW and MSW students to child welfare careers. Recent grants have included recruitment of specific populations to work in child welfare (e.g. Loyola of Chicago) and Native Americans (University of Maine). Grantees are required to work in partnership with their state or local public child welfare agency and students receiving traineeships are required to work in child welfare as a payback for the support they have received.

Unlike the IV-E traineeship program where there are several studies about their effectiveness in recruitment and retention, there is only large-scale examination of the career paths of those who received child welfare traineeships (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005). In a follow up of graduates in the period 1979 – 1981, Vinokur-Kaplan (1987) found that after one year the majority of trainees had entered child welfare and over half were employed by public agencies. However, "the limited funds available for new grants restricts 426 benefits to a small cadre of states and social work education programs each year (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005, p. 13)

Internships: Enrollment in social work programs has been dropping slightly, according to CSWE with BSW enrollment down 6.9 per cent and MSW enrollment down 4.4 percent (Barth, 2003). As a result, there are insufficient social work graduates to meet the employment need in child welfare; in these cases, establishing relationships with related academic programs provides a source of

caseworkers. In addition to social work, many undergraduate human service-related academic programs require an internship experience (social services, psychology, counseling etc). Internships are an opportunity for the child welfare agency and educational institutions to meet mutual goals, to work together to meet the needs of students investigating career options in child welfare and learning to apply academic knowledge in a real workplace setting. The child welfare agency has a substantial stake in the success of internships because staff who have had previous experience in child welfare tend to be more satisfied with the work and to stay on the job longer. Interns have the opportunity to observe the variety of work done in child protective services—from assessments to reunification work to adoptions – and make informed decisions about the best fit for them if they decide to work in the field.

Unfortunately, many states lack an organized process for interns. Students often receive little guidance from their academic program in locating and selecting internships; and agencies lack procedures and guidelines for creating a successful internship experience. To address this need, Maine has developed a resource manual that includes contact information on the human service academic programs in the state requiring an internship, contact information on the public child welfare agency, procedures for screening and selecting interns, experiences appropriate for an internship and procedures for evaluating the experience. The goal is to make this a more valuable experience for both the agency and the interns.

Some interns find the agency to be a good fit professionally and are hired as child welfare caseworkers upon graduation. Others choose to begin their careers in child welfare-related fields. All benefit families and children and serve as valuable assets as they enter the field with a working knowledge of child welfare practice, goals and policies.

Classroom visits: Meeting with students in classes is an effective strategy that accomplishes goals beyond recruitment. It also provides an opportunity to educate people about the mission of the agency, to encourage their support in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect and in promoting a sense of collaboration in the community. Being a guest speaker in high school, undergraduate or graduate classes is part of a larger strategy to encourage ownership of issues related to vulnerable children and families and may result in a career choice down the road. Classroom visits provide an opportunity to inform students about some of the financial benefits of a career in child welfare. For example, high school students and undergraduates in the first years of college could be attracted by the Perkins Loan Forgiveness program. Under this program, schools may cancel up to 100% of Perkins Loan if the borrower has served full-time as an employee of an eligible public or private nonprofit child or family service agency which is providing or supervising the provision of services to both high risk children who are from low-income communities and the families of such children. More information can be found at <http://12.46.245.173/cfda/cfda/.html>. Talking points for making classroom visits can be found in the Maine Recruitment Resource Guide.

Service Learning: Many high schools, colleges and universities have instituted courses and requirements for students to participate in service learning. Under these programs students engage in activities that promote the public good. Like an internship, service learning experiences provide an opportunity for students to be involved in a child welfare agency, and provide an opportunity for the agency to observe the students and to encourage those who might be a good fit to consider a career in child welfare.

Expand external recruitment strategies

Given the looming workforce crisis, agencies need to engage actively in a variety of recruitment strategies to create a pool of potential workers for the long term. Some of the most common sources for external recruiting in child welfare include media advertising (newspapers, journals, television and radio); the internet; educational institutions and career fairs.

Media Advertising: Media advertising is a critical component of the recruitment process. As discussed earlier, agencies must advertise much more than job openings. They must develop and perfect an overall advertising approach. The advertising strategy must identify the target audience, assess what the agency has to offer prospective applicants, and design advertisements that will reach and engage the target audience. In general, agencies report the most success when recruitment emphasizes the agency mission (e.g., "making a difference in the lives of children") and the opportunities for training, education, and overall career advancement that they offer. Pitching the challenging, but exciting, aspects of a child welfare job and a collaborative, team-oriented workplace have also been effective approaches in attracting applicants (Reitz, 2001).

Print media: Newspapers continue to be the most frequent site for agency advertisements, but even in this arena many agencies have modified their approach. In addition to advertising in large, daily newspapers, agencies have had success targeting regional and local papers, as well as minority publications, those targeting specific audiences and other human service publications. In a pilot recruiting project in two rural small towns in Maine, ads were placed in local rather than statewide newspapers in order to attract workers who are already living in the area. To be effective, print ads require focus and restraint: less is definitely more. The essentials include: strong headline, readability, copy which engages the reader, legible font and white space (50% of the print area). Some publications offer graphic design as part of the ad cost. If the agency has a contract with the hometown newspaper or other publication, it is worthwhile working with that person to develop the ad that will likely attract the audience. To keep the clean, uncluttered look of the print ad, a link to the agency website can be included to provide more information on the position.

Television: Although television advertising can be a very costly medium for recruitment, TV spots, if done effectively, engage people in an interactive manner which other media do not. Some local stations will produce a 30 second spot for \$700 – 1,000 (including copywriting, art direction and filming) and charge \$240 each time the spot airs during the 5am – 7 am morning news as people are preparing to head to work. If a TV spot is cost prohibitive, other options include a “Weather Channel Crawl” that can reach a large target audience for as little as \$100 a week (much less than a newspaper ad). Some agencies have begun to have success with radio and cable television advertising. These outlets are considerably less expensive than major network television and also tend to target very specific audience demographics. Advertising in these outlets enables agencies to provide very focused ads that reach the targeted groups.

Internet: The Internet is becoming an increasingly popular recruiting tool and includes both job boards and the agency specific website. Job boards provide an inexpensive way of reaching a large number of applicants beyond the agency’s immediate geographical area. Sites include general employment sites such as Monster.com and America’s Job Bank and field specific sites such as www.socialservice.com, and www.socialworkerjobs.com

However, as Cober et al. (2000) point out, the generic job boards may increase the potential audience but do not provide the unique information that would allow an organization to distinguish itself from other organizations. This can be accomplished through an agency specific website that provides several advantages over traditional approaches:

- An employment Web page is a low-cost alternative to traditional recruitment strategies for both organizations and applicants
- Applicants are able to access more detailed information about the position and benefits.
- Organizations are able to design the materials to provide a positive first impression to potential applicants.
- Information can be presented that highlights unique aspects of the organizational culture that may attract individuals who would fit especially well (Cober et al, 2000).

The authors provide guidelines on designing employment sites to promote attraction of applicants, engaging their interest, building relationships including employee testimonials and presenting organizational values. A well-designed website can help potential applicants determine the fit between their own capabilities and an available job. Websites can also help expedite the application process. Some states including Vermont, Maine and Washington have developed internet application systems that allow individuals to apply online within the Web site making the application process more efficient and user-friendly. In Maine we have found that approximately 89% of new hires in 2006 learned about the position on the web; 86% obtained their application materials on the internet.

Career fairs: Attending career fairs can accomplish two goals: increasing public awareness and understanding of the agency's mission, values, services and processes and increasing the qualified applicant pool for positions within the agency. Agency staff need to be provided with attractive recruitment materials and guidelines in setting up the table, assessing prospective applicants, responding to inquiries effectively, and following up systematically. Guidelines for setting up the table, assessing prospective applications, responding to inquiries and following up effectively are provided in the Maine Recruitment Resource Guide.

While career fairs can serve an important public relations function, they are not necessarily effective in attracting new hires. In Maine, only 5% of new hires in 2004-2005 learned about the caseworker position at a job or college recruiting fair.

Engage in Inside Recruiting

While the previous strategies for long term recruitment are a key component of a comprehensive recruitment plan, agencies also need to engage in inside recruitment. A review of the research clearly indicates that the most effective recruitment sources in terms of turnover/job survival rate and job performance are referrals by current personnel, in-house job postings and the re-hiring of former employees (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000).

Using current agency staff as recruiters has a number of advantages. From the applicant perspective they are a credible source since they know the job and the agency and are in the best position to describe its advantages and rewards to prospective applicants. From the agency perspective, they know what personal and professional skills are required to do the job well and are, thus, able to

identify applicants who are most likely to succeed. Involving staff in the recruitment process is also a way of promoting their organizational commitment. As they present the agency in a realistic, but hopefully favorable light, they are encouraged to re-examine their own commitment to the field and to the agency. To be successful in their recruitment efforts, staff must be given some measure of training, direction, and support and need attractive and relevant recruitment materials.

Recruitment bonuses: Inside recruitment can be encouraged by providing recruitment bonuses. Larson & Hewett (2005) note that several factors need to be considered in developing a recruitment bonus plan including: having current employees part of the team that develops the marketing plan so they understand the organizational message and understanding that the goal is “not to simply find people to apply for a job but rather to identify people whose interests and skills are a good match with the organization and who will want to work for the organization for an extended period” (Larson and Hewett, 2005, p. 35). Awards can include cash, gift certificates, sporting event tickets, entry into a cash drawing, paid time off. These can be provided at hire or after the person has been on the job for specified periods of time (from a month to a year).

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the effectiveness of recruitment includes both quantitative and qualitative data. Some critical trade-offs between cost and quality need to be made based on empirical data. Cascio & Aguinis (2005) list some important metrics including cost of operations, cost-per-hire, cost-her-hire by source, source yield and source efficiency, and acceptance/offer ratios. Wanous (1992) further argues that the effectiveness of recruitment can be best assessed by examining employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment and voluntary turnover.

In Maine, evaluation data from a pilot recruitment project in a rural district yielded dramatic results. The first strategy was to expand the applicant pool by developing new advertising copy targeted at older workers who are considering changing careers. As a result of the new campaign, applications increased by more than 1,000% (from six per month to 62 per month). District supervisors were also impressed by the increased diversity of respondents and the number of older, experienced workers in the applicant pool.

The second strategy was to expand recruitment sources by placing ads in local rather than statewide newspapers to attract people already living in the area and using internet job sites to attract candidates who may not be living in the area but are actively looking for jobs in Maine. An analysis of the cost per inquiry (CPI) showed that the existing state-run program cost was \$388.22. The new campaign's CPI was \$14.90 (Beerits and Morris, 2003).

For the past three years, Maine has also implemented an Entrance Questionnaire in order to get feedback on the recruitment process on an on-going basis. This questionnaire is administered on the first day of the pre-service training to all newly hired caseworkers. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather data on what drew people to the job and solicit their response regarding the recruitment and selection process. From January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007, 161 of the caseworkers entering through Pre-service completed an Entrance Interview Survey. The goal of this survey is to supply useful feedback on the recruitment and screening process. Key findings from 2005-2007 include the following.

The mission is crucial to recruitment. Over three-quarters of caseworkers (77%) reported that their personal values in wanting to help families and children had attracted them to the job. About two-thirds (64%), were attracted to the benefits. More than half (55%) were attracted to the education and training opportunities and about half (49%) to the job security offered with the position.

Online job postings and applications are the most popular recruitment practices. Over two thirds of survey respondents (68%), learned of the caseworker position on the internet. Of these, 49% found the position on the State of Maine website and about 19% on the DHHS website. Moreover, 88% of respondents obtained application materials for the position via the internet.. A high level of satisfaction was shown (over 90%) with the ease of finding information and its completeness.

There is still room for improvement in the application and hiring process. From 2005 to 2007, caseworker satisfaction with the overall hiring process was 56%. The proportion of satisfied respondents decreased from 65% in 2005 to 48% in 2006 and 45% in 2007. Part of this decrease in satisfaction may be attributed to the difficulty and the length of the hiring process. For instance,

about 25% of respondents for 2005-2007 indicated that the application process was “difficult” or “somewhat difficult”. In addition, more than half of all respondents (52%) indicated that the employment process was “long” or “somewhat long”.

Experience regarding the overall employment/application process								
	All		2005		2006		2007	
	N=161		N=82		N=27		N=51	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Long	57	52.0	43	53.0	14	52.0	12	24
Difficult	27	25.0	17	20.0	10	37.0	9	18
Not Helpful	17	16.0	14	17.0	3	11.0	1	2.0
Satisfied	89	56.0	53	65.0	13	48.0	23	45.0

Work life balance continues to be the top concern for new caseworkers. The top concern for new caseworkers regarding their new job is work/life balance. The level of concern for job security, salary and benefits decreased from 2005 – 2007. Also important concerns were personal values and job location.

New caseworkers consider personal convenience and professional atmosphere important in choosing an office. In considering the attractiveness of a particular district office, respondents’ top three factors were proximity to home, sense of community in the workplace, and teamwork in the district office. Also important were aspects of the work, such as ability to pursue higher education and training, and variety of case assignments and workload.

A majority of caseworkers were placed in their first choice of position and office. More than two-thirds (69%) of new caseworkers were placed in their first choice of district office and in their first choice of position (64%).

This data is proving to be invaluable in making recommendations regarding improvements to the recruitment process. For example, we have recommended that staff no longer participate in job fairs since costs in employee time, fees and materials can be so high and the source yield is so low.

Recruitment of high quality staff will continue to be a challenge as the impact of demographic forces are felt in the field. However, increased knowledge about strategies that work will help agencies address this important issue.

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