



Workforce Development in Child Welfare: Summary of Research, State Initiatives and Other Innovations

May 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was written in response to a request from Melissa Baker, a Casey Family Programs Director for Strategic Consulting, to gather information on workforce development initiatives in child welfare and in other fields with an emphasis on recruitment, screening, hiring, training, professional development and retention of experienced staff. In subsequent conversations with Melissa Baker and Amy Baker, Director of Workforce Development for New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), it was agreed that Knowledge Management (KM) staff would concentrate on five child welfare jurisdictions: Buncombe County (NC), Franklin County (OH), Cook County (IL), New Jersey; and Missouri. These jurisdictions were chosen because of current or past innovative workforce initiatives or because of the large role of private agencies in delivering child welfare services. Knowledge Management staff also agreed to search for other innovative initiatives in child welfare or related fields.

This report focuses on one or two workforce development initiatives in each of these jurisdictions and for the Annapolis Coalition, a non-profit entity dedicated to workforce development in the behavioral health field, and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI). This report is not, therefore, an exhaustive study of workforce development initiatives in these jurisdictions or projects of the Annapolis Coalition and NCWWI.

Themes

Common themes emerged in conversations with jurisdictional leaders and leaders of the Annapolis Coalition and NCWWI:

- There was a strong emphasis on quality of supervision in developing and retaining casework staff and in shaping organizational culture. Missouri, Franklin County (OH), and NCWWI have made large investments in leadership development programs for supervisors as a way of enhancing their leadership skills and organizational commitment. Missouri's child welfare system has developed an organizational structure for giving supervisors a voice in policy discussions. Top managers in Missouri stated a strong commitment to carefully listening to supervisors regarding policy and practice.
- NCWWI, Illinois, Franklin County, Ohio and New Jersey have emphasized development of an organizational culture that supports continuous learning through leadership development programs and the use of learning collaboratives. Illinois' Learning Collaboratives encourage practice innovations at the unit and office level among both public agency and private agency staff. NCWWI trains supervisors to model and support lifelong learning.
- NCWWI and Buncombe County's (NC) child welfare agency worked in partnership to implement a highly structured approach to recruitment, hiring and retention that includes realistic job previews, evaluation of job candidates' writing and critical thinking skills, and "Stay" interviews with caseworkers at 60 days and 90 days following an employee's date of hiring. This program is designed to hire candidates whose values, attitudes and skills are a good fit with the demands of child welfare work, and to retain these employees by checking in with them at regular intervals regarding how they are adapting to the job. Buncombe County has experienced a large reduction in turnover in recent years, though factors other than hiring practices may have also had an influence on staff retention rates.

- New Jersey, Franklin County, Ohio, Cook County, Illinois, the Annapolis Coalition and NCWWI have recognized that strategic investments in staff training and professional development can pay big dividends in both retention and improved organizational performance. The Annapolis Coalition, in cooperation with the Hitachi Foundation, recognizes behavioral health organizations that have implemented professional development programs for direct service staff. These programs generally include financial support to line staff for taking college level courses related to substance abuse or mental health, and may also provide support for graduate level courses for professional staff.
- New Jersey's training collaborative offers a wide variety of trainings that can lead to certification in domestic violence, mental health, etc. Making investments in the professional development—and leadership development—of staff is a key strategy for shaping an organizational culture and increasing the organizational commitment of line staff and supervisors.
- Some agencies using the strategies outlined above have greatly reduced staff turnover. Managers in New Jersey stated that the agency's annual turnover is less than 10 percent; and managers in Buncombe County, NC described a reduction in annual turnover from 39 percent to 10-12 percent.
- Both New Jersey's child welfare agency and Buncombe County, NC have developed personnel systems that engage in continuous screening and hiring of qualified candidates and, through this approach, have greatly reduced the average time required to fill vacancies. Human Resources managers in New Jersey stated that the average time needed to fill vacancies has been reduced from more than 60 days to 26 days.
- New Jersey's child welfare training system not only uses pre-tests and post-tests of new employees in basic training, but also evaluates effectiveness of specialized trainings by retesting training participants 90 days after completion of training to evaluate retention of learning. Follow-up refresher trainings for offices are used as needed, i.e., as determined by follow-up testing of staff who completed training. This approach to training evaluation was one of the few innovations in training practices we heard about from informants in the jurisdictions.
- It is important to note that CFP staff found large differences in salaries and benefits among jurisdictions that may account, in part, for differences in recruitment and retention rates.

In conducting a literature review for this report, CFP staff found very few experimental studies of workforce development initiatives. Charles Glisson's ARC organizational intervention has been carefully studied, but we did not find a jurisdiction where it is currently being utilized. The managers CFP staff talked with were reluctant to claim that workforce development initiatives caused reductions in turnover given that other factors (e.g., the recession) may have had an influence on staff retention. However, they were not reluctant to assert that investments in leadership development programs and other investments in the professional development of staff have had a positive effect on staff morale.

INTRODUCTION

This report was written in response to a request from Melissa Baker, a Casey Family Programs Director for Strategic Consulting to gather information on workforce development initiatives in child welfare and in other fields with an emphasis on recruitment, screening, hiring, training, professional development and retention of experienced staff. In subsequent conversations with Melissa Baker and Amy Baker, Director of Workforce Development for New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), it was agreed that Knowledge Management (KM) staff would concentrate on five child welfare jurisdictions: Buncombe County, North Carolina; Franklin County, Ohio; Illinois; New Jersey; and Missouri. These jurisdictions were chosen because of current or past innovative workforce initiatives, or because of the large role of private agencies in delivering child welfare services. CFP staff also agreed to search for other innovative initiatives in child welfare or related fields.

CFP staff conducted phone conversations with key managers in jurisdictions included in this report, as well as national experts in the field of workforce development. These experts included Michael Hoge of the Annapolis Coalition, a non-profit entity dedicated to workforce development in the behavioral health field, and Nancy Dickinson and Freda Bernotavicz of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), a national resource center whose mission is to build the capacity of the nation's child welfare workforce.

This report focuses on one or two workforce development initiatives in each of these jurisdictions and for the Annapolis Coalition and NCWWI, a decision based on the interests of ACS and, in part, the judgment of CFP staff regarding the potential value of workforce development initiatives to other child welfare agencies around the country. This report is not, therefore, an exhaustive study of workforce development initiatives in these jurisdictions or across the country. A table at the end of the report includes caseworker and supervisor salaries, training requirements and turnover rate for each of the states highlighted in the report.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A 2003 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report to Congress,¹ the GAO identified difficulties attracting and retaining child welfare caseworkers and supervisors as challenges which affect safety and permanency outcomes for children in the foster care system. The report recommended that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) take steps to help child welfare agencies address these issues. The report was based on a review of 27 states' Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) reports; on nearly 600 exit interviews completed by child welfare caseworkers and supervisors leaving employment in 17 states, 40 counties and 19 private child welfare agencies; and on multiple site visits in four states.

Factors the GAO found to be associated with workforce turnover included low pay, risk of work-related violence, understaffing and high caseloads, burdensome administrative requirements, inadequate training and inadequate supervision.

Approaches to workforce recruitment and retention noted in the report included university training partnerships; pursuit of external accreditation (i.e.: Council on Accreditation, or COA), which entails adoption of specified caseload standards and supervisor to staff ratios and

¹ U.S. General Accounting Office (2003). "HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff". Accessed 3-27-2012. Available: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/237373.pdf>

increased emphasis on professional credentialing; leadership development and mentoring programs; and use of recruitment / hiring strategies such as competency based interviews and realistic job preview opportunities.

Among the report's recommendations are:

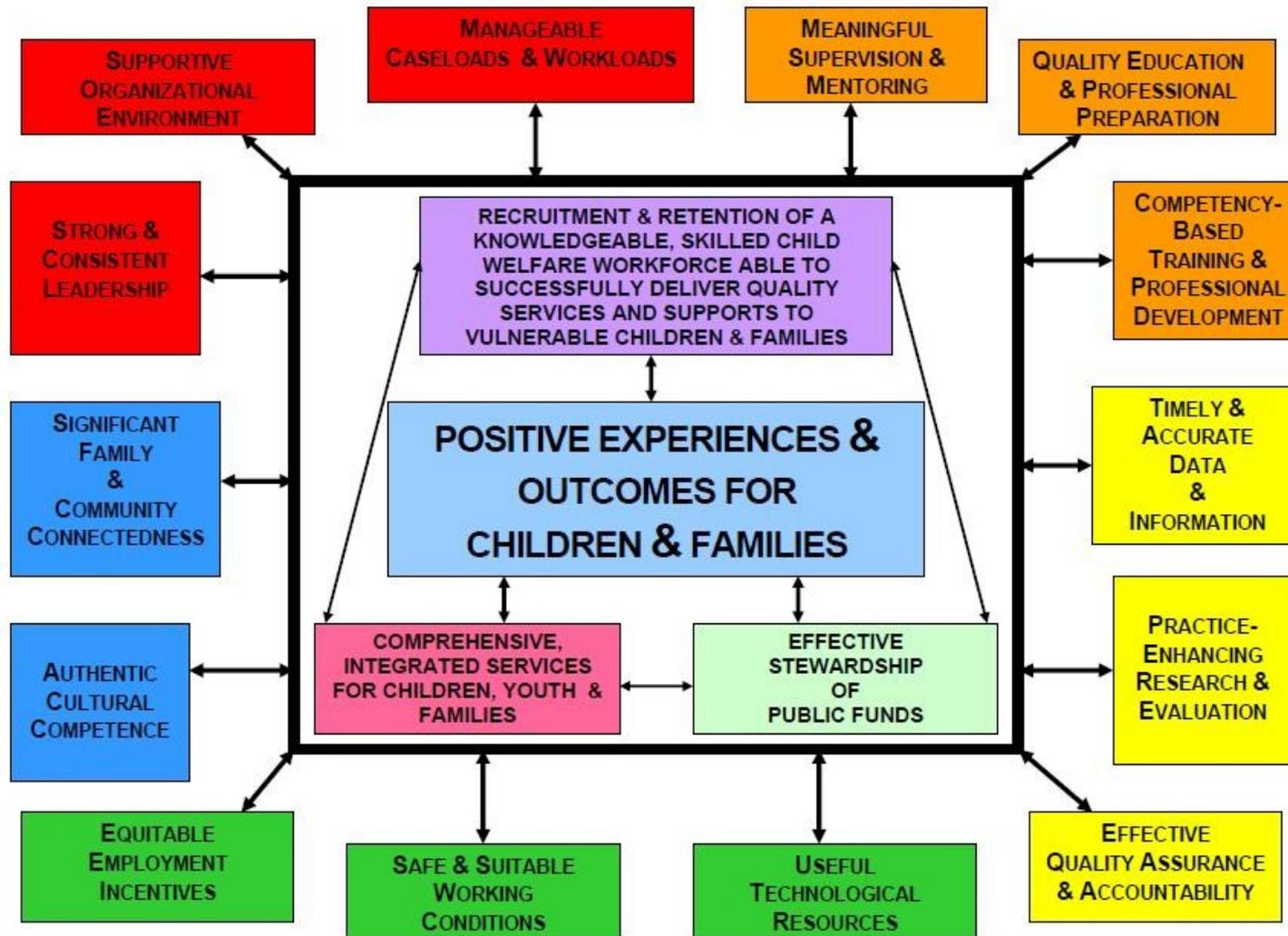
- The promotion of research to identify and determine the effectiveness of promising practices for the recruitment and retention of qualified employees, and;
- The provision of guidance or technical assistance encouraging states to use their CFSR Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) to address caseloads, training and staffing issues.

A number of studies have identified factors associated with child welfare workforce attrition in the public sector, in private agencies or both. The following variables have been found to affect intent to leave the job, intent to leave the field of work altogether or actual job exits: job satisfaction, organizational climate, commitment to an organization and to the field of work, levels of supervisory support, worker age and job tenure and conflicts between work and home life. While a number of studies have linked similar factors to workforce attrition, most of these studies have had methodological limitations which hampered their ability to demonstrate causal relationships between factors associated with retention and actual workforce outcomes, or to generalize study findings beyond the original samples.

As part of a larger project funded by Cornerstones for Kids to promote child welfare workforce improvements, the Children's Defense Fund and Children's Rights² conducted an extensive review of literature in this area and identified 14 key components of an effective child welfare workforce. Those elements are depicted in the chart on the next page.

² Children's Defense Fund and Children's Rights (2006). "Components of an Effective Child Welfare Workforce to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families: What Does the Research Tell Us?" Accessed: 3-30-2012. Available: <http://www.childrendefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/components-of-an-effective-child-welfare-workforce.pdf>

14 COMPONENTS TO SUPPORT AN EFFECTIVE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE



Source: Children's Defense Fund and Children's Rights (2006). "Components of an Effective Child Welfare Workforce to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families: What Does the Research Tell Us?". Accessed: 3-30-2012. Available: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/components-of-an-effective-child-welfare-workforce.pdf>

In a 2009 study of 432 public child welfare workers, Cohen-Callow and colleagues³ found that job related stress was associated with increased intent to leave the job while age, career commitment, organizational commitment, supervisory support and job satisfaction were associated with decreased intent to leave. Compared with older caseworkers, younger workers were found to be less engaged, reported higher levels of stress and were more likely to express intent to leave their jobs.

Claiborne and colleagues⁴ studied relationships between organizational climate and job commitment among 441 child care and preventive services workers in non-profit agencies contracting with public child welfare systems. These authors found that worker autonomy, having work which challenges employees to use their knowledge and skills and organizational innovation were significantly related to investment in the work, which in turn reduced intent to leave.

In a related study, Schudrich and colleagues⁵ measured intent to leave among 760 prevention and child care workers employed in voluntary agencies which provided contract services to the public child welfare system. Commitment to child welfare was found to be significantly predictive of intent to leave, while satisfaction with supervision significantly reduced intent to leave. In discussing the study's findings, these authors recommend that agencies take steps to improve commitment to the field, investment in the work, job satisfaction and contingent rewards in order to reduce workforce attrition. Expressions of support and appreciation for employees' contributions, and focus on the quality of supervision for direct care staff, were cited as key components of improved workforce retention.

Another recent study, by Boyas, Wind & Kang⁶, found that links between job related social capital (cooperation, as a proxy for trust; perception of fairness; social relationships; supervisor and co-worker support, organizational commitment, communication, and perceived influence) and negative outcomes including job stress, burnout and intent to leave, differed for older as compared to younger public child welfare caseworkers. Based on 209 participant responses to online and paper-and-pencil surveys, these authors determined that organizational commitment was a stronger influence among older caseworkers, while younger caseworkers were more affected by job stress. They suggested that all caseworkers may benefit from promoting employees' sense of organizational fairness in dealing with employees; fostering organizational commitment through inclusion and strengthening attachment; and from efforts to provide caseworkers with influence within the organization. For younger caseworkers in particular, mentoring and peer consultation may contribute to job related social support and increased staff retention, according to these authors.

Noting that previous research had found turnover in private agencies to be as much as twice that in public agencies, and that Performance Based Contracting (PBC) may place additional work stress and time pressures on staff in private agencies which operate under contract with

³ Cohen-Callow, A., Hopkins, K.M. & Kim, H.J. (2009). "Retaining Workers Approaching Retirement: Why Child Welfare Needs to Pay Attention to the Aging Workforce". *Child Welfare* 88 (5), 209-228.

⁴ Claiborne, N., Auerbach, C., Lawrence, C., Liu, J., McGowan, B.G., Fernandes, G. & Magnano, J. (2011). "Child welfare agency climate influence on worker commitment". *Children and Youth Services Review* 33, 2096-2102.

⁵ Schudrich, W., Auerbach, C., Liu, J., Fernandes, G., McGowan, B. & Claiborne, N. (2012). "Factors impacting intention to leave in social workers and child care workers employed at voluntary agencies". *Children and Youth Services Review* 34, 84-90.

⁶ Boyas, J., Wind, L.H. & Kang, S. (2012). "Exploring the relationship between employment-based social capital, job stress, burnout, and intent to leave among child protection workers: An age-based path analysis model". *Children and Youth Services Review* (34), 50-62.

public child welfare systems, Levy & colleagues⁷ surveyed 152 privatized child welfare staff to examine relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work-family conflicts, as well as intent to leave employment. Controlling for hours of supervision per week and for years of child welfare experience, the study found no significant effect for levels of organizational commitment, but determined that work-family conflict (work demands interfering with family responsibilities) significantly increased intention to leave, while job satisfaction had a strong effect in reducing intent to leave the job.

Recent Studies Identifying Interventions to Improve Child Welfare Workforce Outcomes

Evidence regarding interventions agencies have employed to improve workforce recruitment and increase the retention of qualified employees is limited. Though child welfare workforce initiatives have been examined in various studies, relatively few studies have employed experimental designs capable of producing strong evidence for or against interventions intended to attract qualified applicants and reduce workforce attrition in child welfare agencies.

One—and possibly the only—study to employ an experimental design in evaluating a workforce intervention in a child welfare setting has been described by Glisson, Dukes and Green.⁸ Randomly assigning 10 urban and 16 rural child welfare and juvenile justice case management teams to receive either the Availability, Responsiveness and Continuity (ARC) organizational intervention or a control condition, these authors examined effects on organizational culture, organizational climate and caseworker attrition among 235 study participants over the course of a one year study period. The ARC model consists of 12 components implemented in three phases labeled "Collaboration", "Participation", and "Innovation". The authors describe the ARC model as having strong emphasis on teamwork, participatory decision making, and goal setting within a continuous quality improvement framework.

In a multi-level analysis controlling for additional variables including differences in team composition, location and individual level factors (age, education, gender, and race/ethnicity), Glisson and colleagues estimated that odds of leaving the job were only about 5 percent as high for caseworkers in teams receiving the ARC intervention as for caseworkers in control group teams. Caseworkers in teams receiving the ARC intervention reported significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, role conflict and role overload than their counterparts in control group teams. While no differences were found between the ARC and control groups in organizational *culture* (behavioral norms and expectations of employees which characterize how work is done), the study found significant differences in organizational *climate* (i.e., the impact of the work environment on caseworkers' perceptions of their work, the workplace and the organization).

While findings from Glisson's and colleagues' research are promising, the authors point out several limitations of the study. Implementation of the ARC intervention was time and labor intensive, requiring 20 hours of training per week over a period of 6 months for each of the five identified "change agents" working with the ARC case management teams, in addition to two hours per week for one year which the change agents spent with each ARC team. In addition, this study did not assess child or family variables such as case outcomes. Further research is

⁷ Levy, M, Poertner, J. & Lieberman, A. (2012). "Work Attitudes and Intention to Quit Among Workers in Private Child Welfare Agencies Operating Under Performance-Based Contracts". *Administration in Social Work* 36, 175-188.

⁸ Glisson, C., Dukes, D. & Green, P. (2006). "The effects of the ARC organizational intervention on caseworker turnover, climate, and culture in children's service systems". *Child Abuse and Neglect* 30, 855-880.

needed to determine that the ARC intervention would deliver similar improvements in organizational climate and workforce retention in other agency settings.

Strolin-Goltzman and colleagues⁹ studied an organizational intervention consisting of Design Teams (DTs) which focused on resolving problems related to workforce turnover and poor child and family outcomes in a public child welfare agency. External facilitators led teams through a seven-step solution-focused process using a strength based logic model. A total of 526 caseworkers, supervisors, managers and support staff from 12 county agencies completed pre- and post-intervention surveys intended to measure intent to leave, burnout, agency commitment and job satisfaction. Actual caseworker turnover was measured through state personnel records.

While no significant differences were found between DT counties and comparison counties on burnout or job satisfaction, marginally significant ($.05 < p < .10$) differences favoring the DT counties were found on actual turnover and agency commitment. Counties which implemented the DT intervention saw a significantly ($p < .05$) greater reduction than comparison counties in intent to leave. A second analysis comparing counties which sustained the DT intervention independently, after external facilitators were phased out, with control counties found statistically significant differences in favor of DT counties on most of these variables, including actual turnover.

Although noting that the DT intervention requires resources and sustained effort, Strolin-Goltzman and colleagues suggest that the intervention can be effective in addressing workforce attrition and related issues. Because participating counties self-assigned to either the DT intervention or the comparison condition, however, a limitation of the study was its inability to demonstrate that observed differences on outcome variables were attributable to implementation of the DT intervention.

CONVERSATIONS WITH EXPERTS

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)¹⁰

The NCWWI is funded by the Children's Bureau for the purpose of developing the leadership capacity of the child welfare workforce to implement change that supports positive outcomes for children, youth and families. The NCWWI, a member of the Children's Bureau's Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network, is a partnership among nine universities.

Among other services, the NCWWI provides a Leadership Academy that offers two training programs nationally at no cost to participants from public and tribal child welfare agencies and in private agencies delivering child welfare services traditionally delivered by public agencies. The Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS) provides online training for front-line supervisors who have at least one year of experience in child welfare supervision; and the Leadership

⁹ Strolin-Goltzman, J., Lawrence, C., Auerbach, C., Caringi, J., Claiborne, N., Lawson, H., McCarthy, M., McGowan, B., Sherman, R., & Shim, M. (2009). "Design Teams: A Promising Organizational Intervention for Improving Turnover Rates in the Child Welfare Workforce". *Child Welfare* 88 (5), 149-168.

¹⁰ Information provided to Casey Family Programs on April 9th, 2012 by Nancy Dickinson, NCWWI Project Director and Freda Bernotavicz, NCWWI LAS Team Leader.

Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM) offers a week long residential program and webinar-based follow-up trainings and coaching. The goal of both components is to develop leadership skills for implementation of change.

Both the LAS and the LAMM begin with an on-line introductory module that provides an overview of the key issues in the child welfare field and a preview of the Academy. The core curriculum begins with a unit on Foundations of Leadership which provides an opportunity for self-assessment. Subsequent units cover concepts related to the four domains of the NCWWI Leadership Model: Leading in Context, Leading People, Leading for Results and Leading Change. Both curricula include real life examples from the jobs of child welfare managers and supervisors, and follow a case example of leadership to illustrate the competing forces and competency requirements of each of the domains. Both the LAMM and the LAS also include pre- and post-training activities to promote transfer of learning.

The curricula of the Leadership Academy emphasizes the distinction between leadership and management and promotes a framework for application of leadership skills that includes: self-reflection and self-care; becoming a role model and supporting the professional development of unit members; developing a personal vision and organizational vision of what's possible and desirable in child welfare; and a commitment to continuous learning and embracing change.

The LAS core curriculum consists of six online modules followed by webinars for a total of 30 contact hours of training. The workforce development module is the longest (at six hours) and includes information on evidence-based practices in recruitment, screening and hiring of caseworkers, developing a learning culture in the unit and organization, creating cohesive supportive unit cultures, engaging in empowerment practice, and supporting diversity and performance management. In addition to the core curriculum, the LAS offers stand-alone modules of less than 45 minutes on subjects such as recruitment, screening, diversity, leadership and coaching.

Nancy Dickinson, NCWWI Project Director and Freda Bernotavicz, LAS Team Leader, stated that findings from both programs have demonstrated significant gains in learning in all competency areas. Follow-up evaluations suggest that participants continue to develop their skills on the job, use those skills to implement their learning and action plans and believe that the training is leading to improvements in their leadership skills. However, the approach to self directed learning in the LAS has been challenging for participants, resulting in lower than expected participation and completion. As a result, NCWWI has collaborated with several states to offer the LAS in a state coordinated approach resulting in a much higher completion rate. Dickinson and Bernotavicz stated that supervisors appear to be under too much pressure to make the required commitment to self directed, on-line learning without organizational support and incentives.

NCWWI advances a conceptual framework for workforce development that emphasizes the importance of achieving congruence between and among personal values, agency mission and child welfare practice, creating an organizational culture that supports continuous learning and recognizes and celebrates good work. NCWWI cites research on staff retention that has confirmed the importance of the following characteristics of committed and competent staff that choose a career in child welfare:

- Self Efficacy
- Organizational Commitment
- Shared Mission

- Role Clarity
- Supervisory Support
- Teamwork

NCWWI recommends the following retention strategies for public child welfare agencies:

- Communicating the commitment of senior leadership to workforce issues.
- Developing a clear mission that is congruent with staff's personal values
- Using competency based approaches to recruitment, selection and performance management
- Having clear expectations for staff performance
- Giving staff the opportunity to develop and use knowledge and skills that have been shown to be effective with children, youth and families in the child welfare system
- Supporting professional discretion in decision making and utilizing participatory decision making
- Valuing and engaging in open communication and teamwork
- Creating a learning organization which provides opportunities for professional growth and development
- Establishing a system of recognition and rewards for excellent work
- Developing a family friendly structure for employees
- Investing in workforce development training for all supervisors and managers

More detailed information on the NCWWI and links to workforce development strategies are available on the website: www.NCWWI.org

Annapolis Coalition¹¹

The Annapolis Coalition (AC) was founded in 2001 by members of the American College of Mental Health Administrators and the Academic Behavioral Health Consortium. In 2005, the AC was incorporated as an independent non-profit entity in Ohio. The Coalition includes stakeholders from the addiction and mental health sectors of the behavioral health field, with participation and leadership from persons in recovery as well as family members.

The Pacesetter Awards are a joint initiative of the Annapolis Coalition and the Hitachi Foundation whose purpose is to identify, recognize and support exemplary workforce practices in the behavioral health field. The awards recognize organizations whose workforce initiatives have (a) strengthened business performance and bottom line results, (b) improved work life, skills and educational advancement opportunities of direct service staff and (c) improved client outcomes.

In 2011, five organizations received the Pacesetter Award. Common themes of exemplary practices in these five organizations included:

- Use of evidence-based practices that were implemented with fidelity
- Support of educational and career development of front-line workers
- Provision of competitive wages, benefits and incentives

¹¹ Information provided to Casey Family Programs on February 9th, 2012 by Michael Hoge, Professor & Director of Clinical Training in Psychology Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine.

- Development of partnerships with academic and research institutions to promote the training and education of front line staff
- Provision of individualized and supportive supervision to staff on a regular and frequent basis

One of the Pacesetter award recipients in 2011 was Stanley Street Treatment and Resources (SSTAR) in Fall River, Massachusetts, a community with a high unemployment, low educational achievement among residents and significant drug and alcohol problems. Prior to 2006, STARR had experienced serious difficulties in hiring certified or licensed counselors. According to their director, "We were spending thousands of our advertising dollars on recruitment and not getting responses." As a result, SSTAR faced a circular dilemma: lack of certified staff resulted in a reduction in billable services and less revenue which led to lower salaries and problems with staff retention. This resulted in limited access to care for consumers and reduced growth potential for the organization.

As a result of state and federal grants, SSTAR was able to launch (in partnership with a local college) an on-site educational program of three courses and 15 college credits for its non- BA direct service staff at a cost of \$50 per person per course. Nine SSTAR employees enrolled in the program the first year and by the end of 2010, 23 employees had completed the three courses. Ninety-six percent of these employees passed the substance abuse or mental health certification test.

These courses helped SSTAR staff to implement three evidenced based practices: Motivational Enhancement Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and ARISE, an engagement intervention designed to increase enrollment in and completion of treatment programs. In addition, SSTAR has initiated an advanced on-site educational program of 270 hours for its BA level staff.

SSTAR's educational initiative has reduced waiting lists, increased billable hours and improved the quality of care. SSTAR is continuing its experiment in work-based learning and the educational advancement of both the professional and non-professional staff. The average salary of STARR employees has increased 17 percent since 2006 when the on-site educational program was initiated.

STATE EXAMPLES

The following section contains summaries of conversations with jurisdictions regarding their current or past workforce initiatives. Due to the scope of the report, one strategy per state is summarized, even if there were multiple initiatives in the jurisdiction. The following strategies are highlighted: recruitment and retention; leadership development; learning collaboratives; training and improving supervision. A table at the end of the report includes caseworker and supervisor salaries, training requirements and turnover rates in each of the states included in the report.

Recruitment and Retention: North Carolina¹²

In 2005, Buncombe County, North Carolina's Division of Social Services (DSS) was randomly chosen along with 34 other North Carolina counties to participate as pilot sites in the implementation of a grant funded Child Welfare Recruitment and Retention Project, developed by the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. At the time, Buncombe County had a 39% turnover rate in investigations which resulted in high caseloads that further contributed to the low retention rate. The Recruitment and Retention Project featured multiple interventions to enhance Buncombe's capacity to recruit, select and retain a qualified child welfare workforce. Although the pilot project with the Jordan Institute was completed in fall of 2008, DSS continues to use these strategies to build capacity to recruit and retain a strong workforce.

Informants stated that the goals of the project were for DSS to decrease the time to fill positions; to fill vacancies with qualified and competent applicants; to reduce the time for staff to take on a full caseload; and to promote accountability throughout the agency. The two primary strategies to accomplish these goals were: 1) continuous open recruitment to build a steady pool of qualified applicants and 2) an improved structured interview and selection process.

Open Recruitment

According to informants, DSS partnered with their Human Resources (HR) division to implement an open recruitment process in order to decrease the lag time in filling vacancies. HR now continuously posts positions for DSS so that there is a ready group of qualified applicants who have already been assessed. Interviews are held twice per month even when there are not vacancies, and the qualified applicants can stay on the register for up to three months. When there is an official job opening, the pre-screened applicant then has an interview with supervisors from the field office. Participants stated that open recruitment has helped significantly decrease the time required to fill vacancies.

Structured Interview and Selection Process

Each applicant then goes through a rigorous structured interview process which differs from the traditional interview approach. To begin, the project includes a "pre-screening" component to ensure the right fit for the position. For example, there are pre-screening questions, such as, "Can you work after-hours or on weekends?" and "Do you have any concerns making unannounced home visits in potentially dangerous situations?" to ensure that the candidate has a clear and accurate perception of exactly what the job entails. There is also a 33 minute realistic job preview video which features interviews with caseworkers who talk about the challenges and rewards of their work. Informants stated that the pre-screening has been proven effective as applicants have self-selected out after viewing the video or answering the pre-screening questions.

Once the candidate passes the initial pre-screening process, a two hour structured interview led by a three person supervisory panel trained in the process is scheduled. The panel includes one member who is a seasoned interviewer responsible for facilitating the interview process and ensuring consistency and reliability in the scoring of applicants.

¹² Information provided to Casey Family Programs on March 23, 2012 by Angie Pittman, Buncombe County North Carolina Division of Social Services Program Administrator.

Respondents stated that the interviews are structured around a competency based approach to hiring based on ten different core competencies. The interview focuses on those competencies that are most difficult to improve through trainings such as values, attitudes and personality traits. The interviewers also look for a comprehensive assessment of the candidate and the ability to:

- Synthesize information to develop a case analysis.
- Use judgment and a fact finding process to elicit additional information about the case.
- Use that assessment to clearly and concisely give recommendations using computer technology.

Scoring and Assessment

Once the interview is completed, the components of the selection process are then rated separately based on the scoring of the standard interview, fact-finding interview and written exercise. Candidates are also scored on the ten competencies with behavioral indicators. The interview team participates in an interactive conversation that results in a consensus score for each competency. The Summary Composite Score is calculated and becomes the final score for each candidate.

Retention

Once the candidate is hired and “in the door”, DSS also conducts “Stay” interviews with all the newly hired employees at the 30, 60, and 90 day mark. “Stay” interviews are structured conversations between supervisors and new staff at the 20 and 60 day mark, and then the employee meets with the program administrator after 90 days. According to informants, “at 60 days there is a lot that you can do to iron out the bumps in the road to make sure that they are aligned for success.”

The “Stay” interviews are composed of structured questions:

1. Are you getting the tools and training that you need?
2. Do you have a good relationship with your peers?
3. What is the fit with your supervisors?
4. What is the cultural fit with the agency?

DSS also hired a critical incident stress management clinician to work with caseworkers who have experienced secondary trauma related to work issues, have a very difficult case or are struggling with work/life balance. The clinician’s main focus is to assist individuals in overcoming complex and intense reactions to stressful incidents and trauma through debriefing on an individual basis. According to informants, staff view this clinician/role as a tremendous support.

Measuring Outcomes

DSS measured retention rates before and after the project, and found a decrease in turnover from 39 percent in 2007 to 10 percent in 2011. In addition, the time to fill a vacancy has decreased from over 60 days in 2007 to 26 days in 2011.

An analysis of interview data compared composite interview scores with future performance ratings in casework positions (employees rated as stellar, solid or poor). The majority of poor performers scored below 100 on the interview, while the median scores of stellar and solid performers were a bit higher than 100. Interestingly, the evaluation found that the “stellar performers” did better on written exercises, and were better able to distill information regarding

safety and risk. “Poor performers”, on the other hand, scored high on the verbal portion of the interview but lower on fact finding and written sub-scores. Because potential poor performers could be more adept verbally, our informants emphasized that it is important to check references and carefully review candidates’ job histories.

The analysis also examined education levels to determine if a degree in social work was a predictor of job performance, and found that employees with a bachelor’s degree in a field other than social work were more likely to leave the agency than employees with a degree in social work.

Lessons Learned

When asked about lessons learned during the implementation of the project, the following points were emphasized:

- **Risk and safety training:** No matter how well an applicant scores on the interviews, it is important to continually train them on risk, safety and protective factors.
- **Listen to staff:** Managers noted that staff forums are held regularly to learn about stressors that employees experience on the job and to ask for ideas for how to reduce the impact of those stressors.
- **On-going staff supports:** It is important to continue to support staff once they are hired through mentoring and facilitating professional development.

Leadership Development and Planning: Franklin County, OH¹³

Background

In 2008, in anticipation of an increase in the number of staff retirements in the upcoming years, the Director of Franklin County Children Services (FCCS), Eric Fenner, established a comprehensive approach to succession planning. A full time Leadership Developer position was created devoted to career and leadership development within FCCS. This position was envisioned as strengthening the field of existing leaders, promoting a higher level of leadership and strong mentorship and building capacity within the organization. The Leadership Developer’s initial task was to develop the agency’s core leadership competencies, first through interviewing external leaders and experts on the subject and then vetting those views internally. In the end, five core competencies were identified for FCCS to develop, with behavioral indicators to support measurement:

- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Performance Motivation Skills
- Cognitive Skills
- Administrative Skills

¹³ Information provided to Casey Family Programs on April 5, 2012 by Crystal, Executive Director, Public Children Services Association of Ohio, Tina Rutherford, Deputy Director, Franklin County Children Services, and Vicki Rhoads, Leadership Developer at Franklin County Children Services.

Leadership Academy

To support the advancement of the above listed core competencies among staff, FCCS created Franklin County's Leadership Academy. According to informants, 70 people, or about 10% of the workforce in FCSS, are currently participating in leadership learning and coaching activities through the Leadership Academy. Applicants must come prepared to discuss their professional pathways, and how the Leadership Academy can help them identify realistic goals and develop a plan to accomplish those goals. All participants complete a Professional Development Plan that helps them map out "where they are right now, where they want to be in the future, and how FCCS can help them get there." If employees are unrealistic regarding their preferred pathways, this is an opportunity to have a "crucial conversation with them around the issues", according to informants.

The Academy is structured into four different tiers; participants are placed in a tier depending on their position and experience:

- **Pre-Supervisory Leadership:** Staff participating in this group do not have supervisory responsibilities in their current job. This group participates in a monthly facilitated session supporting leadership development.
- **Supervisory Series:** This group is comprised of supervisors. They are given training directed toward their job responsibilities with an emphasis on promoting higher levels of organizational effectiveness. Course work content includes the following modules: "The 360 degree leader", "What is in a leader", "Developing the leader within you", "How to build organizational capacity", and "Meeting from the middle".
- **Administrative Series:** Staff enrolled in the administrative series have higher level administrative/supervisory responsibilities. This cohort receives training directed toward their managerial responsibilities. In addition, the trainings are conducted with the expectation that participants will be actively involved in an agency problem solving experience which will challenge their critical thinking skills. This involves more advanced organizational strategy course work such as "How to lead in lean times", "How to deal with adversity", and "Stepping out of the box in creativity".
- **Coaching Series:** This group is comprised of staff who participated in the initial Leadership Academy. A coaching plan is instituted with monthly coaching from peers. The group meets bi-monthly to discuss their coaching experience and participate in a structured training. A meeting is scheduled with each participant to discuss their Personal Development Plan and decide on the coaching experience.

Staff interested in the leadership academy must apply and be prepared to devote 60 hours of learning for each track. Applicants are formally reviewed by Human Resources and then asked to develop three learning outcomes. Since the Academy's inception, about 15 participants have been promoted within the agency. It is important to note, however, that caseworkers and supervisors are not required to participate in the leadership academy in order to be promoted; rather, it is viewed as a learning opportunity for professional growth, not a requirement for promotion in the agency.

Measuring Outcomes

Our informants commented that FCCS has experienced a decrease in turnover over the past few years; however, they were uncertain regarding the impact of the Leadership Academy on turnover rates given the effects of the recession on retention rates across the county.

Nevertheless, the agency's turnover rate has been stable at about two percent, which is extremely low for Franklin County. Our informants emphasized that the Leadership Academy has led to a "culture of learning and engagement", and they have noticed an improvement in employees' attitudes throughout the agency.

Other Initiatives

When asked about workforce development initiatives beyond the Leadership Academy, informants mentioned that the agency is focusing on improving supervisory skills as new supervisors coming on board are a largely inexperienced cohort. Informants emphasized that the first step to consider is whether supervision is a good fit for this person since "a good caseworker does not always make a good supervisor." The focus of the new initiative is on giving supervisors strategies around disciplinary and performance issues, as well as the nuts and bolts of conducting a good performance evaluation of staff. In addition, new supervisors receive training in corrective action plans.

Our informants stated that, due to this new initiative and focus on the supervisory improvements, the Leadership Academy is undergoing modifications. They said that it is unlikely there will be as many tiers of participants in the near future because of the current focus on new supervisors and Associate Directors.

Use of Learning Collaboratives to Train State and Contract Agency Staff: Illinois

The Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) has adopted the "Learning Collaborative" approach as a group training modality for both state and contract agency (referred to as POS, or Purchase of Services) employees. One objective of this process is to address elements of the state's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) in response to findings of the federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs).

The Learning Collaborative (LC) model has been used extensively in the health care field since being developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in 1995. DCFS is currently utilizing the approach in system-wide quality improvement efforts, including:

- Engagement and Involvement of Fathers in Child Welfare; Increasing Family Connectedness;
- Improving Stability for Children and Families;
- Implementing the agency's Trauma-Informed, Family-Centered Strength Based (FTS) practice model;
- Family Focused Practice;
- Critical Thinking in the Assessment of Child Safety; and
- Implementing and testing the state's child welfare Differential Response initiative, titled Pathways to Strengthening and Supporting Families (PSSF).

Use of Learning Collaboratives as the primary vehicle for full, statewide implementation of the FTS practice model is a major emphasis for DCFS, and received significant attention in the state's second round CFSR PIP document.

Under the Illinois adaptation of the Learning Collaborative approach, the state is divided into 15 Regional Learning Collaboratives and 54 Local Learning Communities. Each participating DCFS

office and contract agency designates a core team of at least five employees representing a range of positions within the organization. The core team is responsible for dissemination of the targeted practices within their office or agency through classroom presentations, video or audio presentations and field based transfer of learning activities. Participants remain members of the same local Learning Community over time, and focus on new initiatives as needed. The Regional Learning Collaboratives come together three times per year for Learning Communities to share what each has learned.

All Learning Communities within the state implement the same trainings during the same time period. According to Illinois's 2011 second round CFSR PIP document, "A Collaborative Leadership Team crafts the framework and curricula for each LC phase, trains facilitators and content experts in the LC approach, provides support and coaching to the trainers and facilitators, and manages day-to-day activities of the LC. Content Experts/Trainers and Facilitators convene LC meetings, serve as coaches and facilitate consistent contact among their LC team members."

A report summarizing DCFS's trauma informed, strength based practice initiative identifies the following "key premises" of a Learning Collaborative:

1. The Learning Collaborative does not "create" new knowledge. It uses existing knowledge based on evidence of what has worked and tries to help systems modify and apply the knowledge to fit their systems' individual needs.
2. There is significant practice variations within and among child welfare agencies.. Some agencies may do something well; others may not have as much success. Thus, there is much room for improvement through sharing of information.
3. Measurement for improvement is critical in order to ensure that all changes are resulting in positive outcomes. Small tests of change are done to allow for rapid implementation and careful tracking of the impact each small change has on the system.
4. "Every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets." People within the system want to do good work; they are mission driven and well intentioned, but systems can get in the way of doing good work. It is the system that needs fixing -- not people within the system.
5. Employees can learn more from collaborating than from working alone. There is no need for every agency in the country to make the same mistakes -- and every reason for them to benefit from others' successes.

DCFS lists the following guidelines to describe how its trauma informed, strength based practice Learning Collaboratives should operate:

1. **Small Tests of Change are Used** : The most noteworthy difference between a Learning Collaborative and the usual work done in clinical or child welfare settings is in the "small tests of change" LC participants use to test and implement changes. Agencies tend to be good at planning for changes. Agencies often spend a significant amount of time planning and then move straight to implementation. The "small test" method allows ideas to be tested incrementally, where the consequences are minimized before a change is rolled out to multiple

units or agencies. In the LC, teams are encouraged to try new ideas immediately without any planning effort. One of the LC mantras is “never plan more than you can do.” Because small ideas are tested in rapid succession, and often simultaneously, less time is spent on planning and more time is spent learning from practice in agency settings.

2. **Anyone Can Have and Test Ideas:** The Learning Collaborative encourages anyone with an idea to test it out and see what happens. Having multiple people testing their ideas fosters creativity, generates synergy among staff and accelerates the speed at which changes can be made. The more people in a site who engage in the “Plan-Do-Study-Act” (PDSA) process, the faster buy-in will occur as tests achieve successful results.
3. **Consensus Is NOT Needed:** Unlike most planning processes, where consensus and buy-in are critical steps to moving forward, consensus is not needed for someone to test an initial idea. Testing an idea without spending a large amount of time discussing it first often generates consensus in the long run, because the results of the test can speak for themselves. Because participants don’t have to achieve consensus prior to testing an idea, more ideas can be tested at any one time and less time is spent in meetings resolving opposing viewpoints.
4. **Changes Happen at All Levels (not just the top):** Using the Learning Collaborative methodology, changes can be tested at all organizational levels at once. This is not a sequential process, and teams will find that while caseworkers and clinicians are focusing on one set of changes, supervisors may be testing ways to spread a different set of changes across the organization.
5. **All Summary Framework Components Must Be Addressed:** The Summary Framework is used to guide the work, and consists of five components that involve the entire system of adopting and implementing the FTS Child Welfare Practice model. Teams neither select a single component on which to focus for the entire year, nor do they work sequentially through each of the components. All teams are required to address all five components simultaneously. Components are inter-related, and often one change will impact other pending changes. In order to affect system-wide changes, all five areas must be addressed in this Learning Collaborative.
6. **Ideas Are Stolen Shamelessly:** This methodology is described as a “Collaborative” for a distinct reason. Each team has strengths and every team in the Learning Collaborative can benefit greatly from the strengths of the others. The Learning Sessions, the Intranet, and the conference calls present opportunities for teams to capitalize on the successes of others and learn from their mistakes. If one team designs a tool to accomplish a goal, there is no reason that the other teams in the Collaborative should not customize this tool and begin testing it in their target area the following week. If all teams in the Learning Collaborative share their learning, every team involved will reap the rewards.
7. **Successes Are Spread Quickly:** Commonly, pilot projects are tested and then gradually disappear. Practice changes made through participation in the Learning Collaborative are sustainable. Once a change has been implemented

successfully in the target area, the key team members are responsible for spreading that change throughout the entire site. Once again, this is not done through workgroups, committees or task forces. It is done through focused and rapid small tests of change reinforced through the caseworker-supervisor relationship.

8. **Measurement Is for Improvement, NOT for Research:** Many measures are either mandated or are being used for research purposes. However, the Learning Collaborative strives to evaluate improvements over time. While measurement is a critical aspect of the Learning Collaborative and all metrics must be reported on a monthly basis, the Learning Collaborative is not about measurement. It is about practice improvements.

In April 2012, Larry Small, Associate Deputy Director in the DCFS Office of Behavioral Health, said that "it's still a bit premature for specifics" in terms of outcomes data from the Learning Collaboratives, but added that "we are seeing consistent progress and success" in PIP areas targeted for improvement through the LC approach.

A wide range of tools and materials for each LC training phase are published and available on DCFS's training website at http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/library/com_communications_train.shtml

Training: New Jersey's Training Academy¹⁴

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) Child Welfare Training Academy has 32 employees and contracts with three state universities. These three institutions comprise the training consortium, created as part of the 2006 Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA). The MSA was created in response to litigation filed by Children's Rights, and training of staff on practice fundamentals was one of the ten key areas of practice and principles on which the MSA focused. The Training Partnership works in cooperation with New Jersey's social work and child welfare professionals, higher education communities and other practitioners who serve children and families to ensure that the Department's training programs reflect best child welfare practices and policies across all disciplines.

Mandatory, foundational and elective workshops are offered year round at training locations throughout New Jersey. The Partnership effort significantly supports the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy's ability to achieve its training goals as outlined in the MSA. The goals are to train more than 5,000 DYFS caseworkers, supervisors, managers and community partners per year in case practice.

DCF also launched an intensive Case Practice Model (CPM) immersion training process, beginning in four DYFS Offices in 2008. The process involves training, on-site coaching, engagement with community partners, service expansion and implementation of Family Team Meetings. The immersion training has since expanded to 34 offices, and the final phase will take place in 2012 with the remaining 13 offices scheduled to complete the training.

¹⁴ Information provided to Casey Family Programs on March 7, 2012 by Robert Ring, New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy Director.

When Robert Ring, Director of the Child Welfare Training Academy, was hired in 2007, he restructured the University Partnership to contract with a dozen or so expert consultants for training on specific subjects. These courses are developed from recommendations of managers to address practice gaps in the field. As a result of the restructure, the number of courses created in a year increased from seven in 2007 to over 40 new courses developed and offered by the end of FY 2012. Each caseworker will receive 13 days of training, and supervisors will receive 15 days of training by the end of 2012.

Training Requirements

DCF training requirements for staff include a pre-service training for new staff, as well as on-going mandatory in-service trainings for all staff. The pre-service training instructs new caseworkers, prior to their assuming a full caseload, how to conduct interviews with parents, medical staff and other child welfare professionals, as well as how to refer families for services. A key component of the training is the use of an investigation simulation. New caseworkers interview a simulated “family” in a staged apartment about concerns referred to DYFS. The entire new worker training lasts approximately two and a half months, and is broken up equally into classroom work and field work. There is also a six day supervisory training developed to train newly promoted supervisors on the essentials of quality supervision.

The In-Service Foundation Courses are mandatory training courses offered to newly hired DYFS employees within their first year of service. All caseworkers and their supervisors have an annual training requirement of 40 hours of training, with about half of those hours devoted to specific mandatory trainings. Training courses are designed to provide caseworkers with an overview and basic knowledge of factors involved in child abuse and neglect. A sampling of the courses includes:

- Understanding Substance Abuse & Addiction
- Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Child Sex Abuse Identification & Investigation
- Concurrent Planning

Measuring Outcomes

The Training Academy utilizes multiple ways to measure the success of their trainings. For all courses, they conduct pre and post-test evaluations for each participant. Additionally, they have implemented an innovative “transfer of learning” strategy in their Case Planning Training. Once an office completes the Case Planning Training, the results of the office’s post-test results is compared with a re-administration of the post-test six months later. The results of both of those tests are compared, and a training plan is formulated for the office based on the office’s needs. The process is repeated again after six months.

They also hope to initiate a “certification” program whereby caseworkers and supervisors who are trained in use of an abuse/neglect substantiation program will be given (online) 10 random scenarios and asked to place the scenario in the proper substantiation tier. If they pass, the caseworker will be certified in the use of that process for one year at which time they will be expected to repeat the process with new scenarios.

Certifications

DSCF staff may also receive certification in different subject areas. Employees are allowed time off to attend the certification programs but do not receive extra compensation after being certified. The certification programs include:

- Child Advocacy Center (five post-BA college courses in child advocacy)
- Adoption (six one-day courses over a year)
- Domestic Violence (ten one-day courses over ten months)
- Adolescent Work (five post-BA college course in adolescent advocacy)

Funding

The Partnership receives funding by the state and is a separate line item budget. Since 2009, the training budget has remained steady at \$3.5 million. It was stated that on the average, with one trainer in the classroom, it costs \$93,000 to train all caseload carrying staff in a one-day mandatory training.

Improved Supervision: Missouri's Children's Division¹⁵

Background

In 2005, while Missouri's Children's Division (CD) agency administrators were developing strategies to achieve their Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), they realized that most of those strategies directly related to improvements in supervision. According to our CD informants the managerial view was that if there were strong supervisors who could properly support front line staff, the agency would be able to best serve children and families. The CD engaged the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) and National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology (NCWRCDT) to provide technical assistance to the agency.

The Strategic Plan

A workgroup was formed with representation from seven Missouri sub-regions, and the top performing supervisors were invited to join the workgroup. The first order of business was to figure out "where supervision was now and where they wanted to it to be", so the workgroup spent time brainstorming ways supervision could be improved in Missouri. From the list of recommendations, the CD developed and implemented their Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan created by the workgroup in 2006 was implemented statewide. The Strategic Plan can be broken into four overarching areas:

- Supervision Training
- Supervisor Support
- Casework Practice
- Management/Administrative Supervision/Communication

¹⁵ Information provided to Casey Family Programs on March 9, 2012 by Susan Savage, Deputy Director, Children's Division, Ann Martin, Program Manager, Children's Division, and Melody Yancey, Program Manager, Children's Division.

The plan was comprised of more than 25 strategies that the Supervision Advisory Committee (SAC) recommended. Informants reported that CD has completed or is making progress in the majority of those areas. Successes since the Strategic Plan has been implemented include:

- Creation of a Quality Assurance Supervisory Review Tool;
- Consistent expectations for supervisors;
- Learning Labs that train supervisors on a variety of topics, and local plans for community involvement and education;
- Accreditation, which reduced supervisor to caseworker ratios to 1:7.

Our informants acknowledged that there are still some areas of the Strategic Plan that they have not made much progress on, such as career ladders for caseworkers and supervisors and increasing supervisor compensation. Nevertheless, they hope to make progress toward these goals in coming years.

Supervision Advisory Committee (SAC)

Once the Strategic Plan was created, agency leadership decided that the workgroup should become an ongoing committee to inform leadership about practice issues and assist in implementing the Strategic Plan. To achieve this goal, the temporary supervisory workgroup evolved into the permanent SAC. The SAC is composed of two supervisors from each of the seven sub-regions selected by regional directors as the most outstanding performers in their region. The SAC also includes some non-supervisory roles, such as the QA Manager, CFSR Lead, and Training Manager. Each member serves a two year term. The purpose of the SAC is to:

- Support supervisors
- Enhance supervision
- Advise leadership on supervision needs and make those recommendations available to staff on the CD intranet

The SAC meets monthly to review and record any progress made on the strategic plan; written recommendations are then provided to agency leadership. Minutes and agendas are posted on the intranet following the meetings.

Measuring Outcomes

Around 2008, the CD decided to measure impact of the strategies that had been implemented from the Strategic Plan through utilization of their annual Survey of Employee Engagement, an organizational climate assessment for all CD employees. The findings of the survey indicated a significant improvement between 2006-2008 in “supervision effectiveness”, “team effectiveness” and “job satisfaction.” Another noteworthy finding from the annual surveys has been that, although caseworker retention rates varied from year to year, supervisors’ retention rates have been extremely stable over the past few years. From 2006-2012, supervisor retention rates remained steady at close to 90 percent. One of our informants emphasized that they “can’t definitely say that SAC group had the sole impact on the supervisory retention rate but there is definitely a direct relationship between these areas.”

Lessons Learned

The respondents noted several lessons learned from their experience in creating the Supervision Advisory Committee and implementing the Strategic Plan:

- **Supervisor Involvement:** It is important to begin with an assessment of the agency and make sure that the team includes the most outstanding performers in the agency.
- **Leadership Buy-In:** It is important component to have a commitment to the process by leadership and allow supervisors to have access to top agency managers so they feel that they are truly being heard.
- **Transparency:** Transparency was also emphasized as necessary to obtain buy-in by staff impacted by committee decisions. This has been accomplished through detailed documentation and postings of all decisions on the agency intranet.

CONCLUSION

Children and families with open child welfare cases are best served when there is a skilled and stable workforce available to meet their needs. Nationwide, a number of child welfare jurisdictions are making investments to build and maintain workforce capacity and support the development of skilled caseworkers and supervisors. These efforts align with the research regarding the child welfare workforce that emphasizes the critical importance of quality supervision, investments in professional development, a more structured approach to recruitment and hiring and creating an organizational culture of learning. However, more rigorous experimental research utilizing comparison groups is necessary to accurately evaluate the impact of these interventions on long term outcomes for children and families.

CFP also found large differences in caseworker and supervisor salaries, and in turnover rates, among states. Some states or counties have reduced annual turnover to 10 percent or less, a significant improvement from annual turnover rates of 20- 25 percent which have been found in a number of studies of staff retention in child welfare.

Table 1: Salary and Training Requirements

States	Missouri	Illinois	New Jersey	Franklin County, OH	Buncombe County, NC
Salaries: Caseworker (2011)	Average \$32,762 Range \$31,176-\$44,220	Range* \$55,476-\$75,900 (2012)	Family Service Specialist 2 Range \$52,458 - \$74,335	Range \$32,156-\$49,920	Range \$48,000-\$51,000
Salaries: Supervisors (2011)	Average \$37,076 Range \$33,420-\$47,184	Range* \$77,844-\$108,000 (Public Service Administrator 2012)	Supervising Family Service Specialist 2 Range- \$62,935.36-\$89,533.96	Range \$47,840-\$79,040	Range \$58,780 - \$61,550
Training Requirement (Caseworker) (2011)	Core Training 2 weeks On the Job Training- 2 weeks	Initial Pre-Service Foundation Training 3 weeks class/online 1 week in the field Ongoing Training 20 hours every 2 years	Pre-Service Family and Community Engagement training- 2 ½ months CW annual training requirement of 40 hours	Core Training At least 102 hours in first year. Ongoing Training 36 hours annually	Pre service Training- 72 hours Ongoing Training 24 hours annually
Training Requirement (Supervisor) (2011)	16 training hours per year	Same as above	New Supervisory Training 6 days	Core Training At least 60 hours in first year as supervisor Ongoing Training 30 hours annually	Pre service Training- 72 hours Additional Training 54 hours
Turnover Rate (2011)	18% CW 10% Supervisor (37% Ca/N staff)	13%	7%	2%	10%

*http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/docs/BW_Are_You_Interested.pdf