Direct Practice Contact: Predicting frontline workers' time with clients

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This study examines worker, client, agency, and societal factors that predict the time frontline child welfare workers spend in direct client contact. Understanding these dynamics can help child welfare leaders support the frontline workforce in increasing direct contact time with the vulnerable children and families being served.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The findings show a complicated relationship between workforce issues at the societal, agency, worker, and client levels that impact the amount of time frontline workers spend in direct contact with families. The research found the following factors impacted contact time:
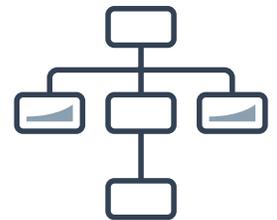
SOCIETAL

Amount of blame felt when a tragedy occurs increased job stress and decreased contact time

AGENCY

Satisfaction with supervision improved agency culture of practice and increased time spent with clients

WORKER

Job stress decreased contact time. Job stress was increased by:
• too many job pressures
• concerns about physical safety in the field
• workers feeling they give more than they receive in work with families

CLIENT

High levels of client trauma increased worker stress and decreased contact time

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Child welfare leaders should strive to improve agency culture of practice to reduce worker stress and increase the time child welfare workers spend with families.

Culture of practice is improved when staff:

• Share new information with others in the agency
• Strategize ways to improve practice
• Seek opportunities to learn new approaches
• Actively explore ways to increase effectiveness of services for people of different backgrounds and beliefs