



Effective Workload Management

Kim, J., Yi, E. H., Pierce, B., & Hall, J. (2019). Effective workload management in child welfare: Understanding the relationship between caseload and workload. *Social Policy & Administration*, 53(7), 1095-1107.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This study surveyed 1,263 workers in a Midwestern state to determine factors that influence workload perceptions related to manageability and overtime work. Analysis differentiated between caseload (the number of cases assigned) and workload (the totality of tasks and responsibilities). Caseload characteristics, supervisor support, and regional staffing needs were examined.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Results showed:

28% of caseworkers perceived they had an **unmanageable workload**.

86% of caseworkers had recently worked **overtime**.

16% of investigative workers had caseloads **exceeding the recommended level**.

61% of ongoing caseworkers had caseloads **exceeding the recommended level**.



- Regional staffing needs were not sufficiently met, leading to increased overtime for workers.

- Satisfaction with supervisors increased the likelihood of a manageable workload and less overtime work.

As hypothesized, the study found that:

- Workers reported higher workloads when they had blended caseloads.
- Workers in regions with unmet staffing needs had higher caseloads as they had to cover other cases.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

The study offers clear guidance on how to improve workload perceptions and reduce overtime:

- Enforce caseloads at the recommended standard of 12 investigative cases and 17 ongoing cases.
- Employ specialized teams of either investigative or ongoing cases to help maintain role clarity.
- Sustain supportive supervision through effective hiring, training, and retention of supervisors.
- Assess regional staffing needs regularly and deploy strategies such as traveling investigative teams to maintain staffing equilibrium.