

Task Force on Strengthening the Child Welfare Workforce for Children and Families
 Department of Children and Family Services

WebEx/Telephone

July 29, 2020 – 10:30a.m.-11:30-a.m.
MINUTES

| MEMBERS PRESENT (in person) | MEMBERS PRESENT (via WebEx/Telephone) | MEMBERS ABSENT |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| N/A | Rep. Mary Edly-Allen | Denice Murray |
| | Sen. Julie Morrison | Rep. Mike Marrno |
| | Sen. Steve McClure | Sarah Tucker |
| | Deb McCarrel | Sen. Craig Wilcox |
| | Mark Stutrud | Sen. Patrick McGuire |
| | Victor Lasko | Rep. Karina Villa |
| | Anne Irving | Rep. Steven Reick |
| | Besty Goulet | Lisa Jones |
| | Monico Whittington-Eskridge | Jan Stepto-Millett |
| | Royce Kirkpatrick | |

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:33a.m.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Approval of July 15, 2020 minutes postponed to August 12, 2020 meeting date

III. Research Components

Michael Braun shared the following information with the Task Force regarding the Workforce Task Force Employer Survey Results. DCFS provided contact information for 94 individuals representing 120 programs or organizations, and the survey was distributed to these individuals on June 3, 2020. Reminder emails were sent on June 11 and June 16. Following discussion in a taskforce meeting about the response rate, Deb McCarrel from the Illinois Collaboration on Children and Youth (ICOY) reviewed the list of contact information DCFS provided and added alternative emails for some contacts. This new list was used by Dr. Tamara Fuller, director of the Children and Family Research Center, to send out personal reminder emails to each individual on July 7. In addition, Dr. Michael Braun, research specialist at the Children and Family Research Center, personally called each individual who had not yet responded on July

21. The survey was closed on Monday, July 27, in order to have time to summarize the data for the task force's meeting on Wednesday, July 29.

We received responses from 32 employers who provided information on 49 organizations and programs, for a response rate of 34% for individuals and 41% for programs/organizations. The employers surveyed reported what region(s) their organizations/programs served, and 20 reported serving the Cook Region, 16 the Northern Region, 27 the Central Region, and 15 the Southern Region.

On average, the organizations employed about 18 caseworkers and 4 supervisors, with an average ratio of caseworkers to supervisors at 3.5 to 1. (See all results in Table 1.) Organizations varied widely in size, employing between 1 and 153 caseworkers and between 1 and 31 supervisors. The median number of caseworkers was 6 and the median number of supervisors was 2. Three-quarters of the organizations employed fewer than 20 caseworkers and 5 supervisors. 62% of caseworkers and 77% of supervisors had been in their current positions for 18 months or more.

Overall, there were few vacant caseworker and supervisor positions. Employers reported an average of 2.1 openings for caseworkers, with 24 of 48 programs/organizations reporting no open positions, 18 organizations with between 1 and 4 open positions, and 6 organizations reporting between 5 and 20 open positions. Employers reported an average of 0.5 openings for supervisors, with 32 of 48 programs/organizations reporting no open supervisor positions, 10 reporting 1 open position, 3 reporting 2 open positions, and 1 reporting 6 open positions.

Employers were asked to provide salary information including average, minimum, and maximum current salaries for caseworkers and supervisors. On average, caseworkers made about \$37,000 per year, with a few positions paying less than \$20,000 a year. The highest reported caseworker salary was about \$59,000. Supervisors made more, earning about \$51,000 a year on average. The highest reported supervisor salary was \$100,000 per year.

Employers were asked to calculate turnover rate in their organization using the following formula: take the number of employees who left in the last year, divide that number by the average number of workers, and then multiple the result by 100. For example, if 5 caseworkers left in the past year out of an average of 20 caseworkers, then the turnover rate would be $5 / 20 * 100 = 25\%$. Average turnover rate for caseworkers was 24.5%, with values ranging from 0% to 66%. Average supervisor turnover rate was 13.3%, with values ranging from 0 to 100%.

Employers also provided reasons why caseworkers and supervisors left their positions. For caseworkers, the most common reason for leaving was accepting another position with a higher salary (49%). Leaving child welfare was also common (47%). Less common were promotion within the agency (24%) and moving (13%). In about 40% of cases, the participant provided their own text for why caseworkers left. Reasons cited more than once included having a child and not returning to work, being fired, and being hired by DCFS.

For supervisors, the most common reason for leaving was accepting another position with a higher salary (38%). Moving was the second most common reason (26%). Less common were promotion within the agency (15%), moving (8%), and retiring (3%). About 49% of participants indicated another reason for why a supervisor had left. Reasons cited more than once included leaving because of work stress and being hired by DCFS.

Finally, employers were asked if they had any additional comments to share.¹ Regarding staffing issues, the most commonly shared sentiment was that DCFS takes workers that private agencies have trained and mentored. For example, one employer wrote this: "[Our] program is [highly regarded] and is very stable, but the program still lost 50% of its case managers to DCFS—high salary, easier job." Another employer shared their view on the full costs of turnover: "The impact of turnover in child welfare positions goes well beyond the financial cost of recruitment, onboarding and training of new team members. The loss of established relationships and programmatic stability has a dramatic effect on our youth both emotionally and physically. Even though we have been very successful in mediating those effects, we know our outcomes could be improved if our staffing capacity was less disruptive."

Other employers shared information about the strenuous nature of child welfare work. One employer explained turnover as the result of how staff are treated: "Turnover is high [because] treatment of staff at court with CASA [is] demeaning. Treatment from parents [is] negative and degrading." Another employer cited bureaucratic demands of the work: "The documentation has increased dramatically. There are different documents used to assess the family's needs; however, policy has not been updated and therefore creates confusion regarding what documents have to be completed." To stay in child welfare even with these difficulties, one employer said, "Workers must have a true dedication to the field."

IV. Subcommittee Reports

a. Retention

Deb McCarrell reported that much progress has been made. The subcommittee is targeting the following:

- Immersion Site
- Paperwork Reduction
- LLSI Proposal
- OIG Recommendations
- Pay Differentials
- Privatization of the rest of the workforce
- Trauma Informed Care Training
- Court Relations

¹ The most commonly shared information related to the technical aspects of calculating turnover rates, including which program types turnover rate could and could not be calculated for.

b. Recruitment

No one from the Recruitment Subcommittee was able to give an update as no subcommittee members were able to be in attendance of the meeting during the time of this agenda item.

c. Racial Equity

Racial Equity has not yet had a subcommittee meeting. The host will continue to attempt to make contact and schedule the subcommittee meeting.

IV. Public Comment

None

V. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned