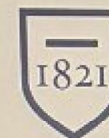




Turnover in the Child Welfare System: Compensation and Caseload Satisfaction Among Office of Children and Youth Employees



Brooke E. Morales, BSW Candidate

Student Biography

Name: Brooke E. Morales

Major: Social Work and Sociology

Hometown: Hamilton, NJ

Internship: Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth (OCY)

Leadership Roles:

- CWEB Program Participant
- University Honors Program
- National Honor Society of Leadership & Success
- International Honor Society in Social Science (Pi Gamma Mu)

Project Purpose

- To explore job satisfaction levels for OCY Intake caseworkers
- This project examines compensation and caseload sizes and the impact on decisions to stay in their agency.

Literature Review

- Research suggests CPS workers are one of the highest at-risk professions for burnout (Shadik et al., 2022).
- CWLA (Hughes & Lay, 2012, p. 5) recommends no more than 12 active reports per month for intake workers.
- In reality, case workers hold an average of 20 to 30 cases at a time. This forces them to work longer hours, which can contribute to low self-esteem and emotional exhaustion. Noncompetitive salaries can also lead to low self-esteem (Griffiths et al., 2017).
- High rates of job dissatisfaction were associated with high workloads for workers leaving the field (Shadik et al., 2022).
- Child welfare workers typically last two years before leaving the field (Hughes & Lay, 2012, p. 4).
- The national average child welfare turnover rate is estimated to be 30%. This is considered severe since an annual turnover rate of 12% in the healthcare and human services sectors is considered optimal (Casey, 2023).

Methodology

Research Question

- How satisfied are OCY intake caseworkers with compensation and caseload sizes?
- How effective is OCY in attracting and retaining their employees?

Gathering Information

- Staff meetings
- Consultations with Field Supervisor and Deputy Administrator

Survey distributed to 5 employees within Intake Department

- 10 Likert Scale questions
- 4 close-ended questions
- 2 demographic questions



Findings & Discussion

Sample

- 4 women and 1 man
- 2 supervisors and 3 caseworkers
- 3 from Assessment Unit and 2 from Screening Unit
- All 5 have worked over 5 years at agency

Survey Findings

- 0/5 agreed with being adequately compensated for amount of work
- 3/5 agreed that agency assigns reasonable caseloads
- 4/5 disagreed they feel overwhelmed by their amounts of work
- 5/5 agreed with their ability provide effective and timely services to clients

Findings from Existing Organizational Data

- Caseworkers:
 - 80% retention rate
 - 88% fill rate
 - Median tenure at separation: 17 months
- Supervisors:
 - 9% retention rate
 - 100% fill rate
 - Median tenure at separation: 6 months

Connection to Social Work & Competencies

- **Competency 4:** Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
- **Competency 9:** Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

NASW Code of Ethics:

- **Values:** Dignity and Worth of the Person, Integrity, and Competence

Call To Social Action

- Advocate for more funding and "right-size caseloads" for child welfare public agencies.

Rationale:

- A successful intervention in Texas showed an increase in state funding led to lower caseloads and increased salaries (Casey, 2018).
- Associations have linked staff turnover with multiple placements, extended time in foster care, reentry into foster care, and more incidents of maltreatment (Casey, 2023).



References

- See binder for references.