



Human Resources Division

Addressing Employee Concerns

Employees say:

“More inclusion in the design of the new direction for service delivery for HR services.”

“I like the freedom my supervisor gives me to manage my area as I deem appropriate.”

“I would like to see the ability to volunteer for projects rather than management picking the people...Employees have more skills and abilities than what management is aware of, they will never know if they do not ask.”

“My job gives me the opportunity to always learn and grow. There are constantly new issues and circumstances to deal with...”

“An opportunity to provide input before decisions are made impacting either myself and/or my co-workers.”

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Thank you for your feedback. We are interested and committed to working on improving our support for you. This year, 92 out of 111 employees (83%) responded to the survey. Such a high response rate not only helps provide an accurate picture of the employee environment and health of our organization, but also reaffirms our One Core Set of Values that guide our actions in the workplace. The survey results were encouraging but most importantly recognized improvements made after the 2007 survey.

We scored significantly above the DSHS average in areas such as:

- I know what is expected of me at work
- My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect
- I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency
- In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

We improved in nine of 19 questions over the 2007 survey and scored above the DSHS average on two of the six DSHS-wide questions with double digit increases in the following areas:

- My agency uses my time and talents well
- In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

You also shared information where there are potential opportunities for improvement. Other issues important to you include:

- I have opportunities at work to learn and grown
- My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance
- I receive recognition for a job well done
- My supervisor holds me and my co-workers accountable for performance

The Operations and Position Management sections have developed action plans to address three or four focus areas or “opportunities for improvement” that have the best potential for realistic improvement. This document is an evolving draft of an overall action plan summarizing common issues shared by both sections and provides us with the opportunity to react quickly and effectively. The Management Team has read all of the results and comments and selected a few of the most important issues for initial focus – as so many respondents point out, our workloads are high and too many changes at once can be overwhelming. Although we believe we have made progress, we are committed to improving upon what has already been accomplished and building a culture within HRD where staff feel valued for their talent and contributions towards organizational results.

I challenge each of you to be creative, flexible and actively participate in identifying solutions. As always, your feedback is critical. Thank you again for responding to the survey, for all of your hard work and for your continued efforts in making HRD a great place to work. We look forward to your continuing feedback as the year goes on.



Strengths: Employees gave high marks to their jobs, their supervisors, and their co-workers

Employees say:

“I like that my supervisor knows I have the abilities and allows me to work independently. My supervisor also gives me assignments that stretch me, thus giving me more confidence in myself.”

“Autonomy and independence. The ability to work with people who care about their work and have strong work ethic. The ability to use expertise.”

I like the fact that I can sit down to a survey like this and answer truthfully. I am encouraged to be professional, to act responsibly, and take responsibility for the work that I do.”

My co-workers, the nature of the work and the variety of issues that arise. HR is a very interesting career field.”

“I feel valued by my team and feel appreciated for the work I do.”

“I like my customers the best! I receive consistent positive feedback from them and know I’m doing a good job because they are the ones happy with my work and appreciate what I do for them.”

Over 80% of employees responded “always” or “usually” to these statements

- I know what is expected of me at work – 91%
- My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect – 90%
- I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency – 87%
- My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce – 84%
- My supervisor holds me and my co-workers accountable for performance – 82%

Other statements that rated higher than 70%

- I have received clear information about recent budget reductions and changes made within the agency – 78%
- A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup – 76%
- In general, I’m satisfied with my job – 74%
- My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information – 74%
- I receive the information I need to do my job effectively – 73%
- I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively – 71%

Comments in response to the narrative questions

- Job characteristics – four times as many employees made positive comments compared to “needs work.”
- Co-workers – Almost three times as many employees made positive comments compared to “needs work.”

Narrative questions:

1. What do you like best about your current job?
2. What changes would you like to see in your workplace?



Opportunity for Improvement #1: I receive recognition for a job well done

What our employees say:

“Supervisors do a few nice things to remind us how important we are... it does not have to include monetary things or even much time, just some genuine ‘thank you’s.’”

“Being told that my input is appreciated, but never knowing where the thought is in the process becomes unsettling.”

“I feel valued by my team and feel appreciated for the work I do.”

“I like that my supervisor knows I have the abilities and allows me to work independently.”

Summary of the Issue

HRD scored 8% higher than the DSHS average on this topic, however the 2009 survey also showed an 8% decrease from 2007 (67% to 59%) in response to the question, *“I receive recognition for a job well done”*. Although overall job satisfaction reflected a slight increase over the 2007 survey, it is clear that there is work to be done in recognizing and celebrating the efforts and successes of our staff. In addition to employee recognition, we need to make opportunities to communicate and interact informally in ways intended to promote teamwork, camaraderie, and improve morale.

In an environment with ever-changing priorities, reduced budgets and looming deadlines, focus easily shifts from recognizing employees for their accomplishments to concentrating on the task at hand. While formal recognition of staff achievements on an annual basis is very important, we must continue to focus efforts on more frequent informal recognition opportunities to say “Thank You” or “Way to Go” for a job well done.

What we’re already doing

- Informal recognition via email or personal thank you for instances of outstanding effort.
- Annual formal employee recognition events.
- Supervisors identifying work deserving of recognition and making time to acknowledge the quality of work and their appreciation of the individual, and sharing accomplishments with the Office Chief and Senior Director.
- Encourage greater use of the HRD Appreciation Board in OB-2 to post positive feedback from customers, co-workers and supervisors.
- Recognizing employees during HR Staff Meetings, Director Chats, etc.

Planned Improvements

- Research and consider development of a Kudos page on the HRD website as an opportunity for managers, peers, and customers to publicly recognize HRD employees for their efforts.
- Consistent with the principles of Talent Management, in terms of development and retention, managers and supervisors should make recognition of good work a priority.
- Increase management visibility and informal interactions with staff and be more involved in HRD events and activities.
- Establish within HRD Guiding Principles, a value for sincere and valid recognition of good work by supervisors and co-workers.



Opportunity for Improvement #2: Communication

Summary of the Issue

Communication is key to ensuring staff have the information they need to work effectively and efficiently. In answer to the question **‘I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work’** the survey showed a decrease from 67% in 2007 to 58% in 2009. **‘I receive the information I need to do my job effectively’** however showed a 3% increase from 69% in 2007. Although there are improvements, the decrease is significant and demonstrates a need for continued improvement.

Employees say:

“To be included in decisions that affect my work, rather than be informed after a decision has been made.”

“Better communication and accountability to providing the right and consistent information.”

“Fearless communication, open and honest, without fear it will change the way the leaders see you and communicate with you.”

“Better communication! Less secrets.”

“I would like to see management give up their attitude of ‘this is how we do it’ rather than ‘how could we do this better’ and solicit everyone’s ideas and actually use them.”

The ‘09 survey also identified increases in the percentage of employees who indicated **“I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things”** and **“In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes.”** Human Resources is a challenging and ever changing area with diverse job responsibilities and customer needs. As the individuals working closest to an issue or process, employees frequently have good, sound ideas for improvements in work processes. We should continue to encourage employees to share their thoughts and ideas, and to participate in the planning and implementation of process changes.

In an environment of fewer employees, reduced resources, and less time to focus attention on a single issue, it is critical that we listen to employee ideas and customer feedback. This focuses our efforts where they matter most and ensures that communication is on-going and work processes make sound business sense.

What we’re already doing

- Director’s Chats – sharing information throughout HRD and with HR staff in the programs
- HR All Staff meetings; Extended Management; 1 on 1 w / Direct Reports; E-mails, etc.
- Quarterly HR Representative meetings
- Updating HRD webpage with current information
- Informing staff about employment opportunities
- Prior notification to HRD staff before distribution of information to customers
- Continue to recognize employees on the HRD Appreciation Station (OB2)

Planned Improvements

- Create a process for HRD staff to provide suggestions
- Develop “communication tree” to share information from internal/external meetings
- Create a process for HRD employees to provide input (when possible) in areas that affect them
- Whenever possible, ask impacted staff for feedback, before making a decision or communicating the change
- Develop a customer survey to determine the key services our customers need; what we are doing well, and where improvements are needed
- Encourage all staff to communicate ideas for process improvements to their supervisor and the Office Chief
- Quarterly employee focus groups on issues of concern
- Continue statewide visits by the Senior Director



Opportunity for Improvement #3: Developing, Expanding Upon and Utilizing Employee Talent

Employees say:

“Employees have more skills and abilities than what management is aware, but they will never know these if they do not ask.”

“...there are skills and abilities that I have that are not fully being utilized.”

“I like that my supervisor knows that I have the abilities...My supervisor also gives me assignments that stretch me, thus giving me more confidence in myself.”

“More ‘hands-on’ with other areas.”

“Because of my current classification, there are skills and abilities that I have that are not fully being utilized.”

Summary of the Issue

While HRD scored 4% above the DSHS average of 54%, the '09 survey showed a 13% decrease from 71% in 2007 in answer to the question, **“I have opportunities at work to learn and grow”**. Although the response to **“My agency uses my time and talents well”** reflected a 2% decrease from 66% in 2007 HRD scored 12% above the DSHS average of 56%.

Employees are our greatest resource. Within our Talent Management environment we should focus on engaging, recognizing, supporting and retaining top performing employees and their contributions to the One Department, One Vision, One Mission, and One Core Set of Values of DSHS. While we look to individuals within HRD as subject matter experts, we should also be identifying other hidden talents, skills, and abilities that we may not be aware of. Additionally, we should be training and developing staff to prepare them for promotional or other career opportunities within the organization.

What we're already doing

- Continue providing developmental job opportunities wherever possible. Opportunities within Operations and Position Management will be extended to all HRD employees to express their interest in participation
- Management will work on growing the leadership to ensure there is more support and encouragement with staff and that staff's time and talents are used appropriately
- Management accessibility and flexibility regarding learning interests

Planned Improvements

- Emphasize use of the PDP process to identify employee growth and development interests
- Explore resources for no-cost training and development opportunities for staff
- Expand and explore developmental /rotational job opportunities across office lines designed to discover “hidden” talents
- More consistency in sharing information regarding real or perceived developmental job opportunities
- As part of Talent Management, develop resource guidelines or tool kits that employees can use to plan and manage their own individual or professional career development.



Other important issues

We can't separately address every individual situation brought forward as a result of the survey, however that doesn't mean additional concerns are not important to us or will not be addressed in some way. We know however from your feedback, there are other areas we need to focus on; for example, training for continued Job Growth and Development to enhance staff's ability to more effectively consult with customers. The HRD Leadership Team is committed to making improvements and we intend to focus on and develop steps to address these concerns as additional opportunities for improvement. The following areas of concern were identified in the survey as important to you.

Other concerns we acknowledge and recognize

- I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively
- My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance
- I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work
- Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life

Our plan to address these concerns

- Remind managers and staff why these are important
- Encourage staff and management to work on and discuss these at the unit/team level
- Partner with Administrations to pay for trainings
- Consider eliminating non-critical HR functions
- Modify Service Delivery Standards
- Incorporate into supervisor/management training
- Encourage mentoring, developmental job assignments and volunteer opportunities within HRD
- Encourage career development opportunities such as in-training, train-the-trainer, and cross-training

We are glad to hear what issues concern our employees. The HRD Leadership Team is committed and intends to focus on developing appropriate steps to address these "opportunities for improvement". This document is the beginning of a high-level roadmap to address areas over the next year. It represents our commitment to work on the concerns identified from your survey responses.

Improving our Division and your Work Unit is an ongoing effort. When you see opportunities for improvement, please tell your Supervisor, Administrator, Office Chief, or Senior Director. Please don't wait until the next survey to share your comments and suggestions. **Thank you for your thoughtful input!**