

**Department of Social and Health Services
Children's Administration**

August 31, 2012

Dear Children's Administration Colleagues:

This document is the first quarterly Employee Survey Action Plan Progress Report submitted in follow up to the 2011 statewide employee survey and the corresponding [action plan](#) published this past Spring.

Through your candid feedback, my leadership team and I learned about the strengths, successes, and struggles you face in doing the important work you do. We made a commitment to realistically, quickly, and efficiently address many of those concerns.

This report details the accomplishments and areas of progress in the first three months since submitting our action plan. We are committed to continually improving workplace communications, leveraging resources, and cultivating a supportive workplace culture that supports you as you address the needs of children and families.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the safety, permanency, and well-being of vulnerable children and families.



~ Denise Revels Robinson,
Children's Administration, Assistant Secretary



The purpose of the CA employee Action plan is to improve work life for those improving quality of life for children and families.

Focus Issue: 1. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Summary of the Issue:

Survey statistics show that overall, CA staff feel that "Management" needs work. While this theme became more prevalent across all of DSHS in the most recent employee survey, the Children's Administration shows a greater decline in satisfaction regarding management. Specifically staff would like management to have a greater understanding of the nature and scope of their work, to value their work, and cultivate a work environment that is affirming, supportive, and demonstrates intolerance for unfair hiring practices, inequity, intimidation or fear-based management. In addition, staff are concerned about too many big changes in close succession, allowing for no real adjustment to one change before another one rolls out.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **The Administration made a number of changes to policy, practice, and administrative procedures in an effort to acknowledge the body of work performed by field staff and take steps to mitigate workload impact from headquarters. One such policy change implemented a numbering system for any assignments from headquarters to the field and establishing a typical set turn-around time of two weeks from when the assignment is sent out. Additional strategies include but are not limited to:**
 - i. **Eliminated hand counts for data.**
 - ii. **Changed requirements for Child Protective Teams endorsed by Governor Gregoire and formalized by revised Executive Order.**
 - iii. **Updated Who's Who in the CA intranet home page to clarify reporting authority. Commit to consistently updating the information.**
 - iv. **Established workgroup to help address issues related to staff out-of-state travel.**

Focus Issue: 1. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. Update provider contracts to require electronic submission of reports; this will allow for ease of uploading and improved tracking and dissemination. Scheduled for phase in beginning October 2012.
- b. Establish consistent courtesy supervision referral and documentation process across the regions. (Policy 4430 establishes this. Will convene a workgroup to gather recommendations for making consistent across the regions. Scheduled for September 2012.)
- c. Streamline the process and reduce the workload impact for Exceptional Cost Plans. Implementation timeline is still under discussion.
- d. Develop consistent materials packets for relative caregivers and explore communications strategies for interacting with relative caregivers. Scheduled for September 2012, and ongoing.
- e. Explore reinstating mileage reimbursements for staff who must travel more than 30 miles for supervised visitation. Fiscal staff are currently evaluating this possibility.
- f. Reduce or combine the number of required case staffings. Scheduled for September 2012.
- g. Have Skype available in more field offices. Currently exploring technology needs to make Skype more widely available. Each region is currently in the process of planning for implementation.
- h. Increase webinar training and bring more trainings to local offices to reduce travel time. Currently partnering with the Alliance for child Welfare Excellence to assist with this.

Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Summary of the Issue

While employees acknowledge that the Administration has engaged in increased communication, field staff are requesting more timely communication before changes are made.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Continue to hold statewide communications committee meetings monthly or every-other-month and usher recommendations for improved communications through to leadership.**
- b. **Exploring a process for streamlining requests for communications support.**
- c. **DSHS hired a Deputy Director of Public Affairs who will have the primary responsibility for communications to press and media.**
- d. **Distributed highlights after monthly Union Management Communications Committee meetings jointly drafted and signed by Denise Revels Robinson and Sherri-Ann Burke, Labor Advocate from the Washington Federation of State Employees.**
- e. **Began utilizing the Good News site to recognize children and families and as a place of recognition for staff as well.**

Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. **Continue to hold statewide communications committee meetings monthly to every-other-month and usher recommendations for improved communications through to leadership.**
 - i. **Explore development of a committee charter to formalize committee objectives and improve quality and accountability in administration communications.**
- b. **Partnering with DSHS Public Affairs to explore the use of new media including Facebook and Twitter to disseminate critical information quickly.**
- c. **Currently exploring regional and headquarters all staff meetings to have face-to-face conversations about issues of importance Administration-wide within fiscal resources available.**
- d. **Developing new comprehensive Children's Administration communications plan for known annual events, regularly occurring activities, and major initiatives. The new plan is scheduled for submission in November 2012.**

Focus Issue: 3. Resources

Summary of the Issue

Employees feel strongly that in addition to having to perform stellar work with fewer staff, they often feel they lack the basic tools and resources necessary to complete their jobs. Specifically lack of access to agency vehicles and widespread breakdown of computers, copiers, and faxes is hindering work.

Our efforts to date:

- a. Reviewed OFM Policy 12.20.35 that allows the Secretary to authorize transportation from office to residence for several reasons, including safety of employee and convenience to the agency, exploring establishing protocols for application of this policy where appropriate.
- b. Requested and received input from regions regarding need for additional vehicles. Prepared request for additional state vehicles for regional offices as part of the budget process.
- c. Assessing the replacement of aging equipment which is no longer under lease nor covered by warranty due to its age, scheduled completion of assessment is September 30, 2012.
- d. Based on the identified needs of staff, CA is seeking funding to purchase computers and will assist in assigning and delivering the appropriate equipment to employees.
- e. Added "resources" subject as an agenda item for discussion with Field Office staff by our three Fiscal Program Evaluation Managers.
- f. Through routine visits to the Field Offices by our Fiscal Program Evaluation Managers, we have provided the opportunity for direct feed back regarding resource concerns.
- g. Required Fiscal PEMs to visit all field offices within their regional responsibility on a routine basis (every 2-3 months) to share information and obtain feedback, concerns and answer questions.

Focus Issue: 3. Resources

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. **Establish written guidance regarding situations that would warrant an employee to keep an official vehicle overnight at their residence in conjunction with official business.**
- b. **Using our routine visits to Field Offices, we will ask for input regarding copiers, cell phones, cameras, and any other equipment, as to their reliability, usefulness and need. Responses will be consolidated for Management consideration and future action plan.**
- c. **We will continue to emphasize to field staff that while resources are limited, we will prioritize resources to support field personnel in keeping children safe and families stable. We will also emphasize that Management must be informed when there are resource, material, or equipment needs.**

Focus Issue: 4. FamLink

Summary of the Issue

Staff continue to express concern over the capacity of FamLink to serve as an effective case management tool.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Secured list of FamLink related comments from the employee survey**

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. **Catalogue employee survey comments into specific subject areas**
- b. **Review the subject areas of the comments for themes or practice/policy specific issues**
- c. **Create FamLink survey based on the comments**
- d. **Create staff communication to support staff training needs identified in the survey comments**
- e. **Through Union Management Communication Meetings, continue to work to identify and prioritize FamLink modifications to support field staff.**

Focus Issue: 5. Immediate Supervisors/Supervisor's Support

Summary of the Issue

Staff feel that their greatest support comes from their immediate supervisor. This perception is especially true among field personnel. Many work units have strong camaraderie, good work/life balance, and good productivity. It was suggested that we take this work unit success model and find ways to operationalize on an agency-wide level.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Implemented the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, a professional development training system with the University of Washington Seattle School of Social Work, University of Washington Tacoma Social Work Program, the Eastern Washington University, Partners for Our Children, and Children's Administration to enhance training for staff and supervisors at regional training hubs.**

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. **Explore opportunities for increased in-person communications and camaraderie-building activities both in local offices and throughout the state.**

Contact Information

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEE SURVEY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

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