



DSHS Children's Administration

Addressing Employee Concerns



Thank you for your input. We hear you. We are committed to working on improving our support for you.

This year, 78 percent of employees responded, a huge increase over 2004 when only 37 percent of employees completed the survey. Such a high response rate helps provide an accurate picture of the employee environment in Children's Administration.

CA management is reviewing the survey responses at the administration, division, region, and office levels to identify major issues and create actions plans to address these issues.

While upper management has read all the results and comments, we are picking 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.

The 2006 Employee Survey results are posted on the DSHS Children's Administration intranet at:
<http://ca.dshs.wa.gov/intranet/qualityimprovement/survey2006.asp>

– Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary

CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Employees say:

"I love working with families and seeing positive changes. I enjoy and appreciate my coworkers and supervisors, as they make an otherwise difficult job something to look forward to."

"I am treated as a professional. I am able to be independent and innovative in the work I do."

"I like the variety of tasks that I do for my unit and the fact that I feel very included in all the unit participates in, even though, I'm unique in that I'm the secretary."

"I like the knowledge that I am contributing to the benefit of children in our community."

"The feeling of a 'job well done' when I know that my work is appreciated."

Over 75 percent of employees responded "always" or "usually" to these statements

- My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect—81 percent.
- I know what is expected of me at work—80 percent.
- I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency—78 percent.
- My supervisor holds me and my coworkers accountable for performance—77 percent.

Other statements rated higher than 50 percent

- In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination—65 percent.
- A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup—65 percent.
- My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance—62 percent.
- I receive the information I need to do my job effectively—57 percent.

Comments in response to the narrative questions

- Job characteristics—4 times as many employees made positive comments compared to "needs work."
- Coworkers—Almost 3 times as many employees made positive comments compared to "needs work."

Narrative questions:

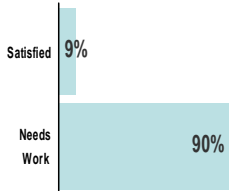
1. What do you like best about your current job?
2. What changes would you like to see in your workplace?



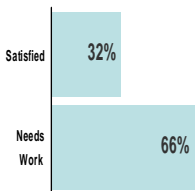
Addressing Concerns: Communication and Confidence in Senior Leaders

Comment Themes

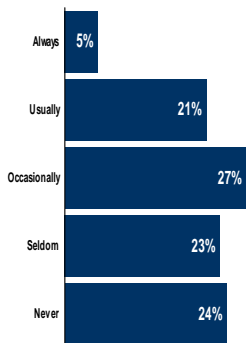
Communication



Management



Statement: *I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in CA.*



Employees say:

“Workers always need input, but upper management also needs to listen to the workers.”

“I would like to see line staff be asked their opinion about how they might be able to do their jobs more efficiently.”

Communication was a strong theme in employee comments

- Less than 50 percent of employees responded “always” or “usually” to having the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting work (26 percent said “never” or “seldom”).
- 34 percent of employees responded “always” or “usually” to using customer feedback to improve work processes (38 percent said “never” or “seldom”).
- 25 percent of respondents who made comments talked about Communication.
- 90 percent of all comments made about Communication indicated this area needs work.
- The leading areas of concern were regarding management listening, including staff in decision-making, and not sharing enough information.

Employees lack confidence in decisions made by senior leaders

- 26 percent rated this “always” or “usually,” compared to 35 percent in all of DSHS.
- 47 percent responded “seldom” or “never” to this question.
- More than half of the survey respondents who made comments talked about Management.
- There were 670 “needs work” comments out of 993 total comments about Management.

What we’re already doing

- Ongoing effort with the Boeing Lean Team to improve our structure, management, and organizational culture.
- Quarterly Extended Leadership Team meetings.
- Implementation specialists in each region will facilitate two-way communication around changes and new requirements.

Our plan for the coming year

- Visits to local and regional offices by the Field Operations Division to gather more information and include line staff in developing action steps for improving communication.

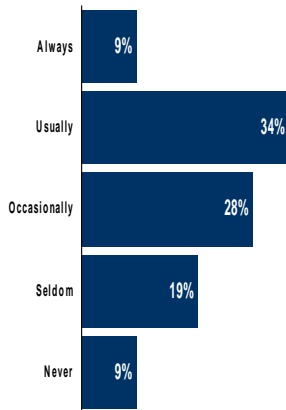
Other Steps

- Regularly scheduled field visits by executive management.
- Regularly scheduled meetings with groups of similar functions, such as Area Administrators, Regional Business Managers, Deputy RAs/SHPM4s.
- Focus groups in the regions for input to decision-making on practice issues.
- Interactive feedback tools on the CA Intranet.
- Intranet-based survey tool to monitor implementation of statewide and regional action plans.



Addressing Concerns: Resources to do the Job Effectively

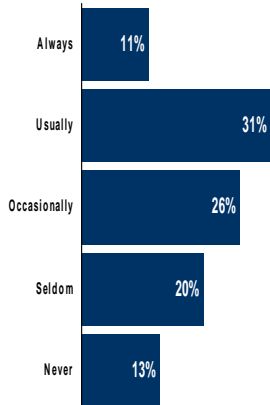
Statement: *I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively.*



Employees say:

"When we do not make the resources available to do the work, we become part of the barrier to success for our clients."

Statement: *My agency uses my time and talents well.*



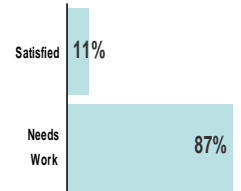
Employees say:

"More effective use of social workers' time; less time spent in clerical duties."

Employees want more tools and resources

- 29 percent responded "seldom" or "never" to having the tools and resources needed to do the job effectively.
- 43 percent responded "always" or "usually" to the statement, compared to 60 percent in all of DSHS.
- 42 percent of survey respondents who made comments talked about Resources.
- 88 percent of all comments made about Resources indicated this area needs work.
 - Staffing—232 "needs work" comments
 - Other resources (supplies, cars, time)—205 "needs work" comments
 - Resources for clients—118 "needs work" comments
 - Facilities—90 "needs work" comments
 - Pay/Benefits—68 "needs work" comments

Comment Theme
Resources



And better use of individual time and talents

- 42 percent rated this "always" or "usually," compared to 51 percent in all of DSHS.
- 32 percent responded "seldom" or "never" to this statement.

What we're already doing

- Adding social workers to meet increased workload requirements.
- Contracts review to improve the service array.
- Beginning work on a new automated information system (SACWIS).
- Implementing recommendations of the legislative worker safety task force; in place are satellite phones and WSP radios, compensation for worker injuries.

Our plan for the coming year

- Visits to local and regional offices by the Field Operations Division to gather more information and include line staff in developing action steps around resources and tools to do their jobs.

Other Steps

- Workload study of direct service workers to determine the time and staff needed to comply with statutory and policy requirements.
- Work with Land & Buildings Division to find adequate space for new employees.
- New evidence-based programs to effectively meet the needs of children and families.
- Implement protocols to support staff involved in critical incidents, including a peer support team.



Additional Concerns: Innovation, Performance Evaluations, Recognition

Employees say:

"I love my job, but my caseload is too high to produce great work on every case."

"The expectations are far beyond what is allowed by time and by resources."

"More opportunity to problem-solve and compare work-related issues with peers."

"I would like timely performance evaluations."

"Greater support and appreciation for the hard work everyone does."

"Better ways to budget and obtain resources for the clients."

"More information from upper management; more visits from headquarters."

"I would like line workers to have input on the decisions that are made that affect the work we do."

Other important issues

- I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things—43 percent responded "always" or "usually" and 32 percent "never" or "seldom."
- My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information about my performance—44 percent responded "always" or "usually" and 33 percent "never" or "seldom."
- I receive recognition for a job well done—46 percent responded "always" or "usually" and 29 percent "never" or "seldom."

Informal plan to address these issues

- Remind managers and staff why these are important.
- Keep in mind during our strategic planning process and in everyday decision-making.
- Encourage staff/managers/supervisors to work on and discuss these at the workgroup level.
- Incorporate into supervisor/management training.
- Develop new and/or advertise existing methods for staff to surface issues.

We can't separately address every individual situation brought forward on the survey. In many cases, the anonymity of the survey keeps us from finding an exact location. But we are glad to hear what issues concern you, and will do our best to respond to them.

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 issues identified from your survey responses.

More specific action steps will be defined with field staff input gathered during the Field Operations Division visits to field offices.

Thank you for all the thoughtful input!