



# Economic Services Administration

## *Addressing Employee Concerns*

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information, please contact Sam Senn at (360) 902-7784.

# Introduction

Thank you for your input. We've heard what you had to say and we're are committed to addressing your concerns.

ESA received over 6,000 comments from staff on the 2006 employee survey. At this time we are sorting the comments into categories and preparing to send them out to all staff for review via a webpage posting. This website will allow staff to view the responses and comments, and keep employees informed of the actions being taken to address issues identified in the survey.

Many of the survey results are encouraging and recognize improvements made after the last survey. Overall:

- We scored at or above the DSHS average on 17 of the 18 questions.
- ESA employees have a strong customer service focus. 83% of staff feel they know how their work contributes to the goals of our agency, and more than 1/3 of all staff mentioned helping clients as what they like about their job.
- 82% of staff feel they are treated with dignity and respect by their supervisor.
- 86% of staff feel they know what is expected of them at work.

# Introduction Cont'd

Initial analysis of the survey results identified the following organizational issues:

- *Concerns about effective personnel management.* Perceptions of favoritism, micro-managing, and ineffective management of poor performers.
- *Teamwork problems.* Perceived inability to work across organizational barriers and concerns about input not being solicited or listened to.
- *Mid to long-range planning.* Inability to manage change effectively or conduct good long-range planning.
- *Uneven workload management.* Perception that workload is overwhelming, and an inability to share effective work practices across organizational boundaries.
- *Using data to manage.* Too many measurements and data; not enough information that's useful in helping manage the organization.

Despite these challenges, we are continuing to move toward our goal of making ESA an organization that balances high care and commitment to staff with high organizational efficiency. Although we believe we have made progress in this effort, we are committed to improving upon what has already been accomplished and building a culture within ESA where staff feel valued for their talent and contributions towards organizational results.

# Action Planning - Current ESA Performance Measures

ESA continues to take a proactive approach to responding to the needs of our staff. We conducted our own employee survey in 2003 and again in 2005. Many of the questions from the 2003 survey were used as a basis for developing performance measures in ESA's 2007-2011 Performance Plan:

- Percent of staff who feel their professional development is encouraged and supported. (2003 = 45.7%, 2005 = 42.3%)
- Percent of staff who have received meaningful praise within the last month. (2003 = 61.5%, 2005 = 58.1%)
- Percent of staff who feel they are treated with dignity and respect by their peers and managers. (2006 = 86%)
- Percent of staff reporting they have the infrastructure, information, and systems to help them do their jobs as effectively as possible. (2003 = 61.5%, 2005 = 65.7%, 2006 = 67%)
- Percent of staff who feel their manager/supervisor supports their participation in continuous learning. (2003 = 71.2%, 2005 = 69.1%, 2006 = 55%)

The following measures are monitored monthly through the ESA Performance Review process, but have not yet been added to the employee survey:

- Percent of employees who feel their skills and/or training enable them to do their job well.
- Percent of overall employee satisfaction with their job.

Baselines for these measures are currently under development.

# Action Planning – Next Steps

This plan is not meant to be all-inclusive. Senior leaders will be conducting focus groups across the state to talk to staff at all levels about the results of the survey and what solutions can be implemented to address the issues they have identified. In order to ensure that staff at all levels can participate in suggesting solutions, the bulk of our action planning will not be finalized until the site visits are completed and the information is disseminated to staff across the organization. Local offices will have the information they need via the website to begin dialogues with their staff.

In light of this, we are proposing to accomplish the following between August and December 2006:

- Conduct a series of site visits throughout the state. These facilitated sessions will be attended by one or more of ESA's Executive Leadership Team, and outcomes will be monitored monthly through the ESA Performance Review process.
- Finish analyzing the survey results and develop final action plans based on the findings.
- Integrate issues identified in the survey into the "Appreciating and Respecting Staff" section of ESA's Performance Plan where appropriate.

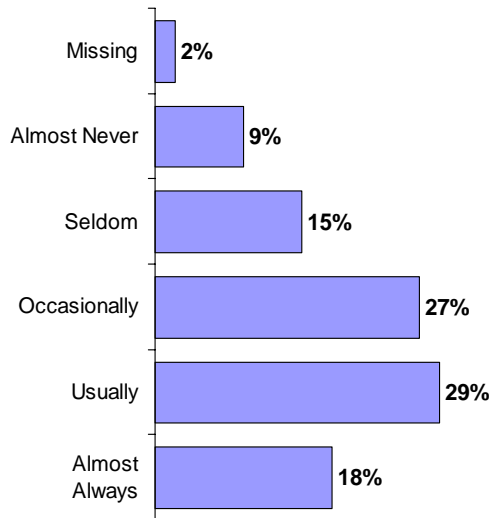
The remainder of this report focuses on the four areas where less than 50% of ESA staff answered "almost always" or "usually":

1. *I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work. (48%)*
2. *I receive recognition for a job well done. (50%)*
3. *I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in ESA. (35%)*
4. *In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes. (43%)*

We have developed a number of initial action items for each of these four areas; however they may be revised based on the outcomes of the site visits.

# Focus Issue 1: Opportunity to give input into the decision-making process.

**Question:** *I have the opportunity to give input to decisions affecting my work.*



**Employees say:**  
*"Receive input from all levels of the organization before implementing changes and allocating resources. Look at the whole picture."*

## Summary of the issue

Over the past three years, this administration has greatly increased its efforts to solicit input from staff at all levels on proposed changes. Survey comments suggest that although staff acknowledge their input is solicited, many felt that the decisions had already been made before input was gathered. Others felt that their opinions and suggestions were discounted.

## What we're already doing

- ESA's Performance Plan includes goals, strategies, and measures related to soliciting input and using collaborative decision-making to implement major changes. Related objectives and performance measures include:

### Objectives:

1. Use collaborative planning and decision-making to implement major changes.
2. Build capacity in project and change management.

### Measures:

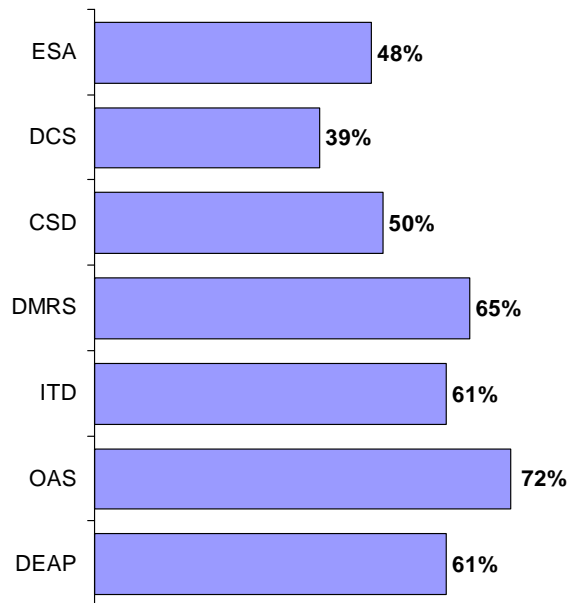
1. Percentage of staff satisfaction with implementation of policy changes.
2. Percentage of policy changes that had IT support, training, and supporting materials in place prior to implementation.

- Recent major policy changes have utilized workgroups with representation from all areas of the organization. Examples include WorkFirst Redesign, Transitional Food Assistance, the Child Support Schedule, and IT systems changes.
- The Division of Child Support (DCS) posts all draft policy documents and policy re-writes on the intranet for staff review prior to finalization. Policy writers are required to respond to each question posed and Q&A documents are posted with final policy documents. A similar system is under development for other divisions in ESA.
- ESA posts all WAC and manual changes on the internet for public review and comment prior to finalization. This "blue page" is available to staff and outside stakeholders.
- DCS staff were recently provided the opportunity to provide direct input into the selection of a new permanent District Manager in the Fife office (via the intranet).

# Focus Issue 1: Opportunity to give input into the decision-making process.

**Question:** *I have the opportunity to give input to decisions affecting my work.*

*Percent answering "Almost Always" or "Usually":*

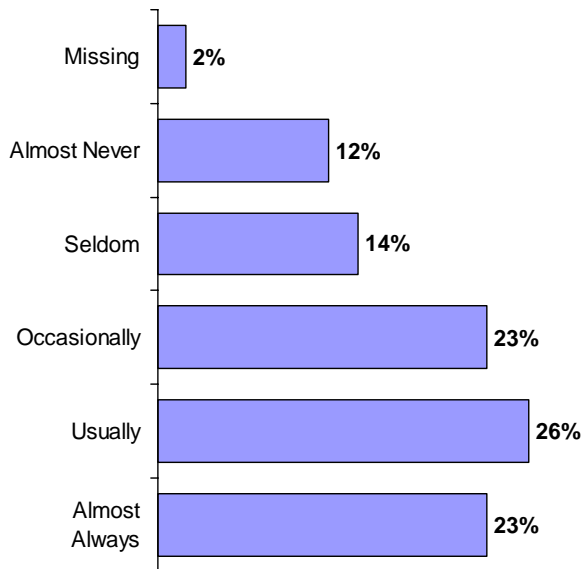


## Our plan for the coming year

- Develop future policy changes (e.g., TANF reauthorization) with input from staff at all levels of the organization.
- Once a decision is final, communicate the rationale with the workgroups and other staff who were involved and/or affected.
- Develop and implement a policy portal webpage similar to what DCS utilizes to solicit input from staff on policy changes.
- Analyze current venues for staff to submit suggestions and determine:
  - whether these resources are sufficient to meet the need; and
  - how the venues can be consolidated to ensure most of the questions and suggestions are answered.

## Focus Issue 2: Recognition for a job well done.

**Question:** *I receive recognition for a job well done.*



**Employees say:**

*"[We would like to see] more praise and recognition from management for the work we do."*

**Summary of the issue**

Many of ESA's offices and divisions devote significant time and resources to their employee recognition programs and events. In addition, the mechanisms in place for staff to recognize each other are consistently used. However the survey comments suggest that many staff feel like their local and statewide management teams do not do enough to acknowledge and celebrate the hard work of ESA staff.

**What we're already doing**

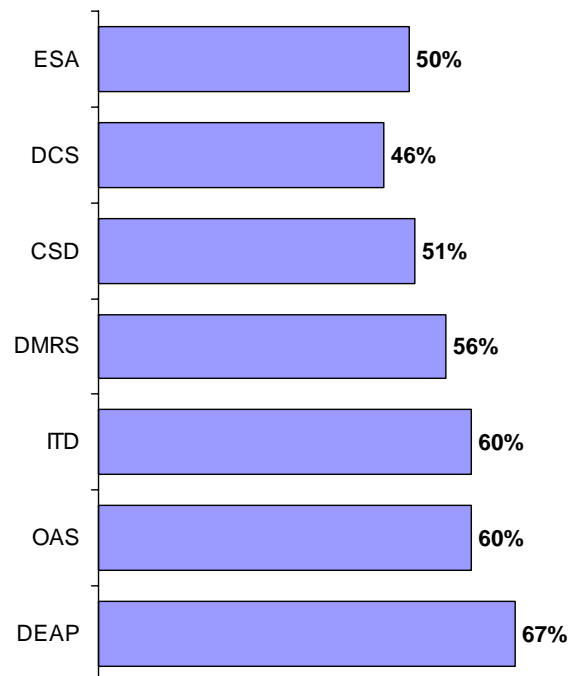
- The iESA webpage currently allows staff to send electronic "kudos" to each other. This is utilized by staff to recognize their peers, subordinates, and supervisors/managers. Messages are posted daily and available for viewing by all DSHS employees.
- ESA's Performance Plan includes measures related to praise, recognition, and feedback:
  - Percent of staff who have received meaningful praise within the last month
  - Percent of staff who feel their manager/supervisor recognizes employees and teams for their contribution
  - Percent of staff with Performance Development Plans
- The DCS website includes a section highlighting collection successes. Messages are posted regularly and available for viewing by all DSHS employees.



## Focus Issue 2: Recognition for a job well done.

**Question:** *I receive recognition for a job well done.*

*Percent answering "Almost Always" or "Usually":*

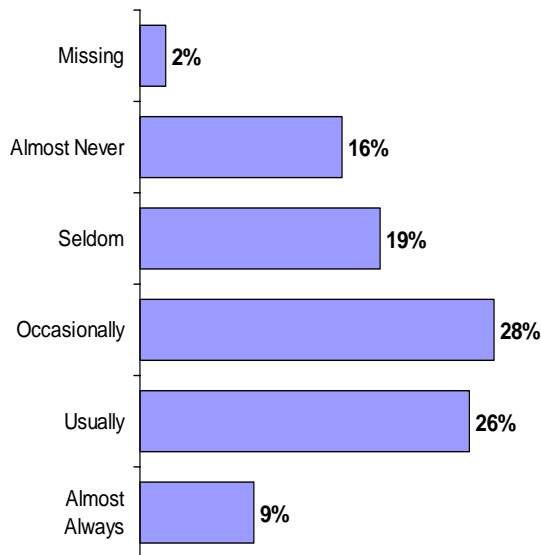


### Our plan for the coming year

- Solicit input from staff to determine what they meant by their comments in this area and what solutions can be reached.
- Increase the number of formal and informal visits to the field/local offices by members of the executive leadership team.
- Increase the number of kudos messages sent by members of the executive leadership to staff in the field and HQ.
- Encourage regions and local areas to develop recognition programs that meet the needs of their staff.

## Focus Issue 3: Lack of confidence in decisions made by senior leaders in ESA.

**Question:** *I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in ESA.*



**Employees say:**

*"I do not believe that management makes decisions that reflect a necessary level of empathy for line staff. As a result the line staff does not feel valued and is always waiting for the other shoe to drop."*

**Summary of the issue**

Although many comments from this most recent employee survey suggest staff are pleased with their immediate supervisors and local leadership, the percentage of staff answering "always" or "usually" to the statement *I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in ESA* dropped from 45% in 2003 to 35% in 2006.

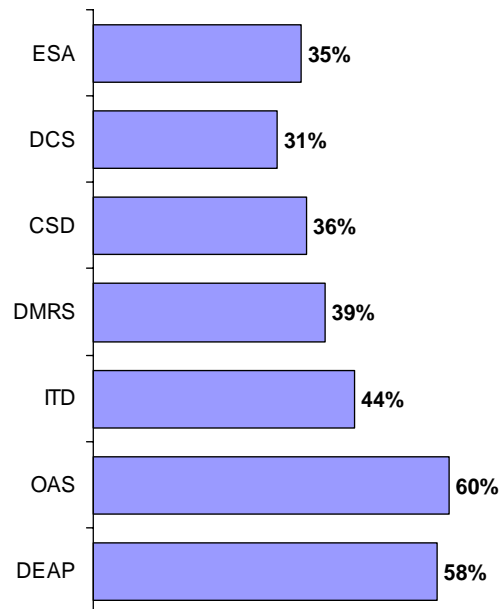
**What we're already doing**

- The Assistant Secretary and other leaders have issued communications outlining the rationale for several recent unpopular decisions (e.g., work schedules).
- Bi-monthly Expanded Leadership Teleconferences give field office supervisors and other office leaders the opportunity to hear directly from the DCS Director and senior leaders.
- DCS field office staff are invited to attend monthly HQ Leadership Team meetings as a mentoring opportunity.
- ESA conducts monthly Performance Review sessions to review the measures outlined in our Performance Plan and discuss issues impacting performance. The meeting format mirrors the GMAP process, and staff at all levels of the organization are encouraged to attend.

## Focus Issue 3: Lack of confidence in decisions made by senior leaders in ESA.

**Question:** *I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in ESA.*

*Percent answering "Almost Always" or "Usually":*

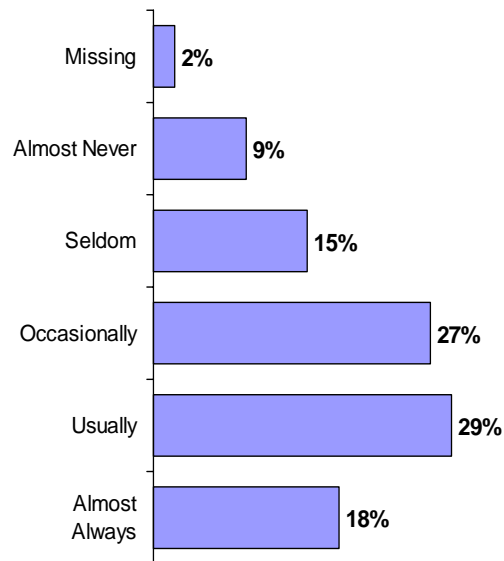


### Our plan for the coming year

- Issue a communication to all-staff to reaffirm leadership's commitment to a healthy workplace and show that the key messages from the survey have been heard.
- Issue a monthly statement on iESA about future challenges and reasons for recent decisions (Asst. Secretary).
- Regional, District and Local Office Administrators will take an active role in communicating the rationale behind decisions to field staff.
- Continue to hold GMAP sessions at the state, regional, and local office levels.
- Conduct an agency self-assessment as part of the department's efforts to analyze and improve decision-making processes.
- Implement electronic 360° feedback surveys, starting with Executive Leadership in late September 2006.

## Focus Issue 4: Using customer feedback to improve work processes.

**Question:** *In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes.*



**Employees say:**

*"[We would like] clearer descriptions of changes made to policy and a delivery method that ensures all staff are reviewing the changes."*

### Summary of the issue

Although this score was among the lowest for ESA, few staff comments mention this as an issue. Site visit discussions are needed to determine what staff meant by "customer" and discuss potential solutions.

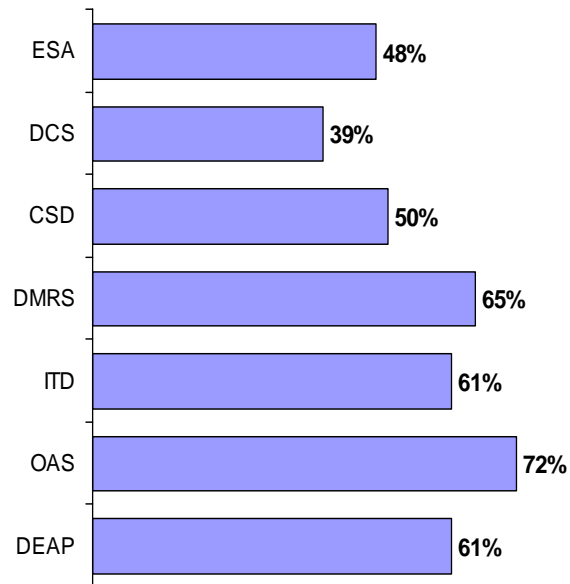
### What we're already doing

- Articles are frequently posted on iESA by the Assistant Secretary and other leaders when major policy changes are approaching.
- ESA's Performance Plan includes measures related to collaborative decision-making and partnering with customers:
  - Percent of forms and WACS developed with consumer input
  - Percent of clients reporting they are treated with dignity and respect
- DCS created an action plan with several initiatives addressing gap areas from the 2005 DSHS Client Survey.
- ESA has a number of advisory and advocacy groups that are actively involved in the decision-making process when policy or operation changes occur.
- ITD recently developed a Rapid Application Development (RAD) process, which allows staff to make enhancements to ACES, eJAS, and BarCode based on suggestions from field staff/users.

## Focus Issue 4: Using customer feedback to improve work processes.

**Question:** *In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes.*

*Percent answering "Almost Always" or "Usually":*



### Our plan for the coming year

- Solicit input from staff to determine what they meant by "customer" in this area and what solutions can be reached.
- Continue to monitor and develop specific action items for initiatives in the ESA Performance Plan that relate to partnering and customer input.
- Continue to solicit feedback from the advocacy communities, the Refugee & Immigrant Advisory Committee, ESA advisory groups, and the tribes on current and future policy items.