

DSHS Children's Administration

Addressing Employee Concerns



Thank you again for participating in the 2007 Employee Survey. The response rate for Children's Administration (CA) was overwhelming. Eighty-seven percent of you responded – a nine percent increase over the 2006 survey. The percentage of staff responding “Always” or “Usually” increased in all areas, with significant increases in 9 out of 17 areas. It shows that you continue to care about what we do in Children's Administration and want your voice to be heard in regard to decisions being made about your clients, your work and your workplace.

One of our goals is to see consistent improvement from one survey period to the next. CA management team has reviewed the survey results and individual comments closely in an effort to identify what we've done well and where we have fallen short. I believe it is important that we acknowledge and celebrate the areas where we've scored strong positive ratings. At the same time, we need to determine if there are practices we can change or improve in order to increase overall employee satisfaction.

On the following pages you will find the CA Action Plan, where we identify several administration-wide areas on which we will continue to focus our improvement efforts. Also included are some of your comments and [this link to complete survey](#) results broken down by CA offices.

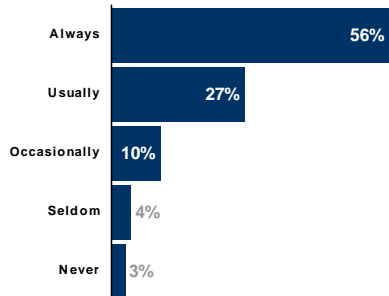
I appreciate the time you took to respond to the survey and to share your thoughts and opinions. I look forward to working with all of you to improve our work environment and processes so that we can continue to support the state's children and their families.

– Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary

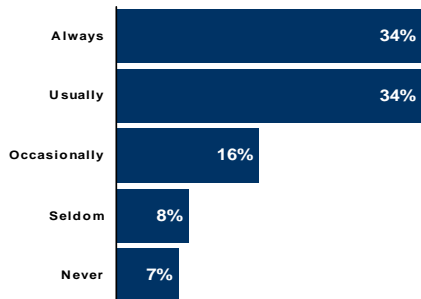
CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, please contact **Sherry Brummel** at **360.902.8050**.

Statement: *My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.*



Statement: *In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.*



Strengths

Children’s Administration employees are dedicated workers who care deeply about the children and families that they serve. They feel supported and respected by their supervisors and their co-workers, and know how their work contributes to agency goals.

The percentage of CA staff responding “always” or “usually” exceeded or equaled all of DSHS in the areas of supervisory support, accountability, staff cooperation and teamwork.

My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect—83 percent.

I know what is expected of me at work—81 percent.

I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency—80 percent.

My supervisor holds me and my coworkers accountable for performance—78 percent.

In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination—68 percent.

A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup—67 percent.

My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance—63 percent.

Eighty percent of all staff who responded to the survey wrote thoughtful comments in response to the narrative questions

Job characteristics—7 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.”

Employees Say: *“My supervisor is supportive and respectful. She doesn’t micromanage....She gives consistent feedback on performance at monthly reviews and remembers to give positive feedback as well as areas for growth. ”*

“I like the support of my supervisor, working with families that want support, the diversity of people I work with, the diversity in my daily work activities, flexibility in my schedule...”

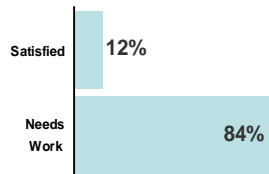
I like the fact that we can truly make a difference in peoples lives for the better. I like the fact that I can help keep children safe and achieve permanency in a expeditious manner. I like the majority of people I work with. We have an office where most people strive for excellence.”

Opportunity for Improvement

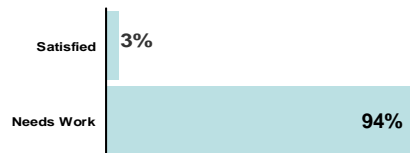
Communication about work processes and policies

Comment Themes

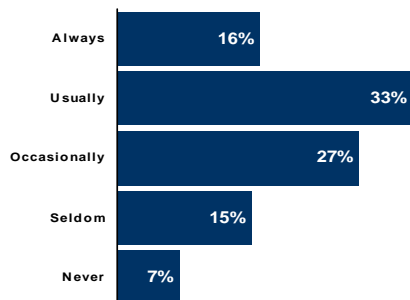
Communication



Work Process/Policies



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



Summary of the Issue

Children's Administration employees express frustration over being asked for their input without seeing results, or receiving feedback or regular updates about the progress or status of a given project, policy or study. Staff clearly want to be consulted on matters that affect their work and feel that their input is important. They want to understand how and why decisions are made, and to be given the information they need to continue to be effective in their jobs.

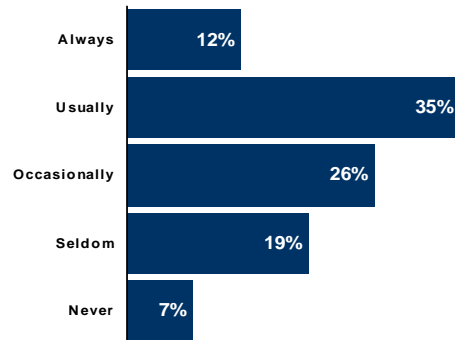
What we're already doing

- We continue to work with Boeing consultants to improve our structure, management and organizational culture.
- All management staff are going through Solution Focused Management training
- Implementation Managers have been identified in each region to facilitate two-way communication around changes and new requirements.
- Focus groups have been established in the regions to gather input to decision-making on new policies and practice issues.
- Regular meetings are held with groups of similar functions, such as Area Administrators, Regional Business Managers, Deputy RAs, Implementation Managers
- Quarterly Extended Leadership Team meetings are held.
- Quarterly Union/Management Communication Committee (UMCC) meetings are held.
- Members of the Executive Management Team are spending more time in the field.

Our Plan

- Biweekly updates to all staff from Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary
- Requests for input on "*Send a Message to Cheryl*" intranet site
- Gathering more information about where the staff feels input is not utilized – through:
 - A closer look at individual survey comments
 - Listening Tours by Cheryl Stephani and other executive management
- Considering other possible solutions:
 - Changes to the method and timing of gathering input
 - Better identification of the source or rationale behind new policies and procedures.
 - Identify examples where staff input impact management decisions, make sure this known.

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



Employees say: *"Utilization of information from the workload study conducted earlier this year ...Updates to staff regarding what specific outcomes were received and what action/strategic plan is being developed to provide tools to support front line staff in achieving the expected performance outcomes."*

"More training that is directly related to how I should do my job. Academy was not very helpful."

"Employ clerical and social worker I positions to assist in filing, faxing, copying, doing ICW research, setting up visitation, doing relative searches, processing paperwork for courts..."

Opportunity for Improvement

Resources for staff to do their job effectively

Summary of the Issue

The majority (90%) of resource related comments are suggestions for improvements. 26 percent responded "seldom" or "never" to having the tools and resources needed to do the job effectively. (47 percent responded "always" or "usually" to the statement, compared to 62 percent in all of DSHS)

41 percent of survey respondents who made comments talked about Resources.

90 percent of all comments made about Resources indicated this area needs work.

Staffing—372 "needs work" comments

Other resources (supplies, cars, time)—102 "needs work" comments

Training—137 "needs work" comments

Facilities—108 "needs work" comments

Pay/Benefits—100 "needs work" comments

What we're already doing

- Adding social workers to meet increased workload requirements.
- Ongoing contracts review to improve the service array.
- Continuing work on a new automated information system – FAMLINK
- 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.
- Redesigning Social Worker Academy and Post Academy curriculum and schedule.

Our Plan

- The new supplemental budget funds 64 additional FTEs and provides CA with resources to cover caseload growth and to contract out for certain services including:
 - 12 additional CHET screeners
 - 7 additional licensers
 - Expanding contracts for visitation services
- Regional and statewide plans to reduce staff workload to make it easier for staff to meet expectation for monthly child visits.
- Continue to work with staff through ad hoc UMCC meetings to identify efficiencies.

What is working well to ensure workers' personal safety?

Employees say: "Worker buddies, out and about board, cell phones, car phones."

"Our department works well with law enforcement and is often able to take them on dangerous referrals."

What could we do better to ensure workers' personal safety?

Employees say: "A planful response, across units, to safety issues in and outside the building, including the various parking lots. I would like to see safety issues addressed effectively and outcomes be communicated amongst the units in this building rather than each of us 're-inventing the wheel' each time an issue arises."

"Increase workforce and support SW to go out in pairs whenever they are responding to a high risk case of abuse especially when law enforcement is not available."

"I am afraid that worker safety tends to be reactionary rather than preventive."

One other very important issue

Staff Safety

Based upon recommendations in the "CPS - Staff Safety Report" and concerns about on the job safety expressed by staff, CA added questions specifically about safety to the 2007 CA Employee Survey.

In response to the scaled questions:

- 36 percent of the staff said "always" or "usually" when asked if the nature of their work made personal safety an issue and 36 percent responded "seldom or never".
- 46 percent said they "always or usually work together with their supervisor to address personal safety issues.
- 65 percent said that personal safety standards are "always" or "usually" followed and 69 percent said they are "always" or "usually" clear about personal safety standards related to their work.

What we're doing

- NCIC access for use in CPS investigations
- Satellite phones and WSP radios for areas where cell phones do not work
- Off site safety procedures required in all offices for accreditation process
- Additional cars purchased
- Local CPS/LE protocols
- Training on notification/documentation of potential risks to worker safety was added to the training for Intake workers
- Pocket cards for law enforcement that clarifies statutory authority for placing children in protective custody.
- Critical incident protocol, including a peer support team.

This document is the continuation of the action plan we began after the 2006 Employee Survey to address issues identified from your survey responses. It represents our commitment to work on the "opportunities for improvement" while maintaining our "strengths" and ensuring staff safety. Action steps will be continue to be refined with employee input gathered during visits to local offices.

Thank you all again for your thoughtful input!