

Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration

Dear Children's Administration Colleagues:

In September and October 2009, Children's Administration leadership asked each of you to "take the time to take the survey."

We assured you that we would hear your responses, take action on your recommendations, and report back to you the outcome of the survey.

This document is the 2010 Employee Survey Action Plan in response to the 2009 survey. This is the result of your responses, Research and Data Analysis compilation and interpretation of results, and our own internal team working together to develop strategies for improvement.

There were certain themes that emerged from your responses and additional comments. Those issues that received the greatest emphasis in the survey have been addressed here.

We welcome your comments and recommendations for continued improvement.

Thank you for taking the time to take the survey and for the work you do every day on behalf of children and families.

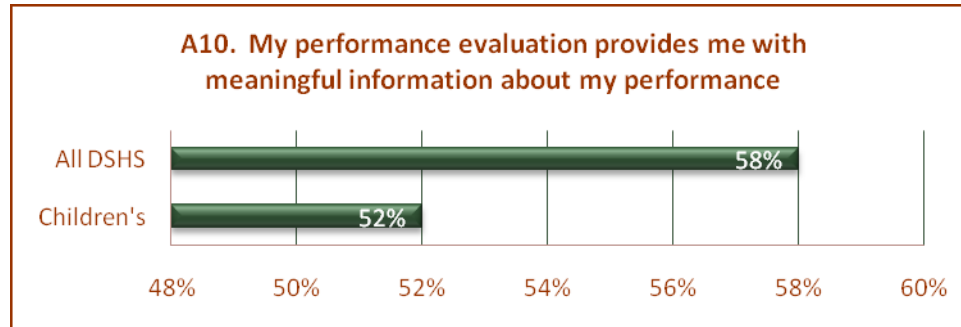


~ *Denise Revels Robinson,*
Children's Administration, Assistant Secretary



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. Workforce Development



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, only 52 percent found that their performance evaluation provided meaningful information about their job performance.

Summary of the Issue

There needs to be: Ethics, accountability, consistency, and transparency in staff hiring, promotion, and evaluation practices. Hiring and promotion must be equitable, open, competitive, and based upon skills, abilities, and merit.

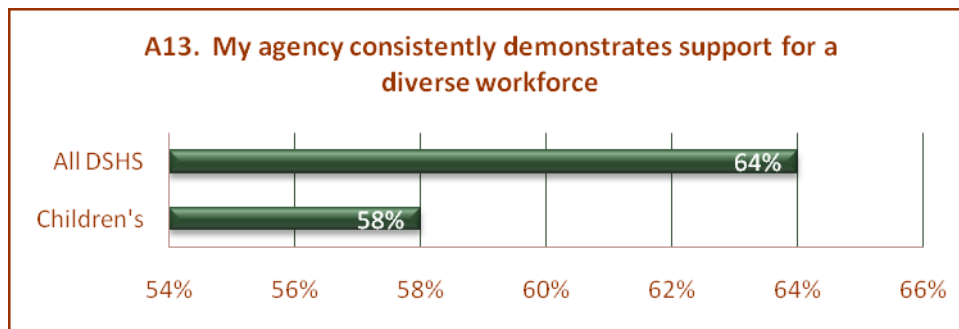
What we're already doing

- The field offices are required to report about performance evaluations.
- Classified and WMS positions are posted and have competitive hiring processes.
- Interview questions have become more standardized and interview materials are archived more effectively than they have been in the past.
- The Administration compiles Affirmative Action reports and is working to ensure equitable opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Focus Issue: 1. Workforce Development: New Commitment

I. CONSISTENCY IN HIRING AND PROMOTION

- a) All job openings including newly created jobs must be posted to appropriate peer group including those for exempt positions. Any exceptions to postings must be explained to all staff in writing.
 - i. Children's Administration Human Resource personnel must track postings.
- b) Interview panels are employed and whenever possible outside "objective" representatives are included on the panel.
- c) Leverage resources of the DSHS consistency in hiring committee led by the Diversity Affairs Office and ensure there is Children's Administration representation on that committee. This is to support hiring opportunities for underrepresented populations.



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, only 58 percent believed that our agency supports a diverse workforce

Focus Issue: 1. Workforce Development: New Commitment, Continued

II. PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

- a) Evaluations must be administered annually according to a predictable schedule and must be relevant. Both headquarters and the regions must be held to the same standards with reference to timeliness of performance evaluations. Must be mandated and measured.
- b) Managers and supervisors need ongoing training and support/consultation on writing evaluations. Human Resources must offer good samples of performance evaluations for supervisors.
- c) Employees should not write their own evaluations
- d) Institute 360 degree evaluations. In human resources or industrial/organizational psychology, 360-degree feedback, also known as multi-rater feedback, multisource feedback, or multisource assessment, is feedback that comes from all around an employee. "360" refers to the 360 degrees in a circle, with an individual figuratively in the center of the circle. Feedback is provided by subordinates, peers, and supervisors. It also includes a self-assessment and, in some cases, feedback from external sources such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders.

III. SUCCESSION PLANNING

- a) Revive succession planning workgroup.
- b) Publish and distribute recommendations of succession planning to middle and upper management.
- c) Build on existing succession planning materials we already have
- d) Utilize HRD and DOP resources for expertise in succession planning strategies.
- e) Strive for one-week overlap of new and old employees for adequate orientation and training.
- f) Offer employee mentoring.

“More focus on staff support, training, and succession planning.”

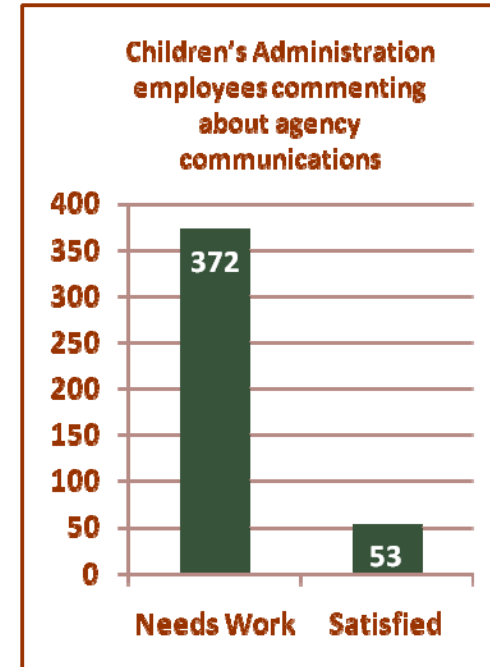
Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Summary of the Issue

Historically agency communications have been top-down, management-driven, and reactive. Often information that field personnel deem critical is not disseminated in a timely and transparent manner. Employees would like clear, concise, honest, transparent, timely, audience-driven communications and would like to have input into what gets communicated and how it gets communicated.

What we're already doing

- Have developed and distributed a statewide electronic newsletter.
- Policy Requirements – new policy format has been established .
- Program and policy roll out has been systematically presented in April and July of each year.
- Statewide communication team (35people, ears and eyes of CA).
- Putting out communications/email box; Denise sends out regular updates/letters.



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, 425 made specific comments about agency communications. 372 comments indicated the need to improve communications while 53 staff reported being satisfied with agency communications.

Focus Issue: 2. Communication: New Commitment

Our plan for the coming year

Standardize e-mails communications they are consistent ,searchable and not duplicative . Avoid multiple persons in a chain of command sending out the same e-mail.

Use FamLink communication templates or similar effective template as a model to be institutionalized statewide.

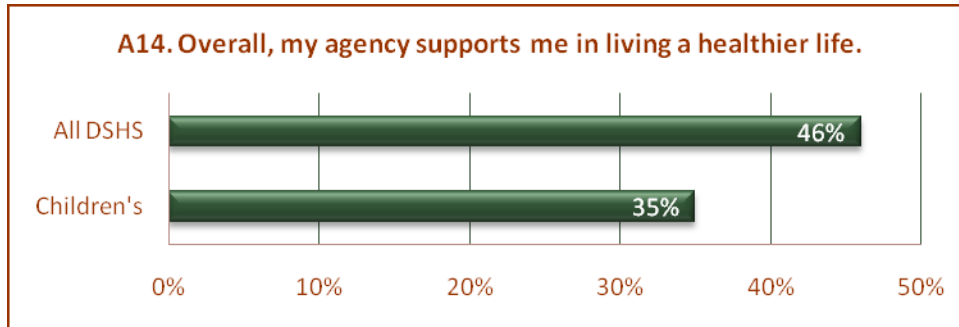
- Be clear as to exactly what staff need to do as a result of policy changes, updates, etc. shared via e-mail
- Communicate about loss of intranet search feature ; invest in search feature upgrade.
- Intra and internet need to be easily navigable, relevant ,and updated regularly
- Mandate that appointing authorities or their designees announce staff changes, comings and goings, and duties to all people in work unit, division, or building.

i. Communications staff will develop a communications template about staff entries and exits.

- Tell the success stories , be more vigilant about good news - communication committee to draft stories –clarify submission protocols

“Open Communication from the TOP, it is getting better with the change in administration.”

Focus Issue: 3. Employee Self Care and Wellness



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, only 35 percent found that the agency supports them in living a healthier life. This measure received the lowest score of the survey.

Summary of the Issue

With economic impacts and staff reductions, staff are charged with more work and less support. Moreover, the work we do is complex and stressful. We are asked to do a great deal with limitations on employee recognition. Upper management tend to model excess work and limited self care and this expectation transfers to staff.

What we're already doing

- Allow some personnel to take flexible schedules
- Allow some teleworking

"I would like to have one day in a week to work at home."

Focus Issue: 3. Employee Self Care and Wellness

Our plan for the coming year

- Freeze or slow down new initiatives. Need to integrate one new initiative before rolling out another. Allow time for institutionalizing new initiatives.
- Flex schedules and flex work locations are subjectively permitted. Examine policy and establish CA guidelines for management and staff for the utilization of flexible schedules. Request must be in writing and response is in writing. (Shift in culture). Examine existing protocols.
- Employees are not encouraged to maintain a healthy work/life balance. The Administration must support work/life balance and openly support self-care and family-care.
- Model healthy conduct
- Utilize wellness programs
- Long term goal – on site child care for staff
- Acknowledge complexity of work
- Employee recognition (formal and informal); provide supervisors and managers with suggestions for free recognition, utilize formal recognition within Department guidelines.
- Value employees
- Encourage/allow for organizational development activities, team building retreats/workshops, all staff events, these events increase learning, build camaraderie and relationships and boost morale.

Focus Issue: 4. Management Ethics, Conduct and practice; management leadership and accountability

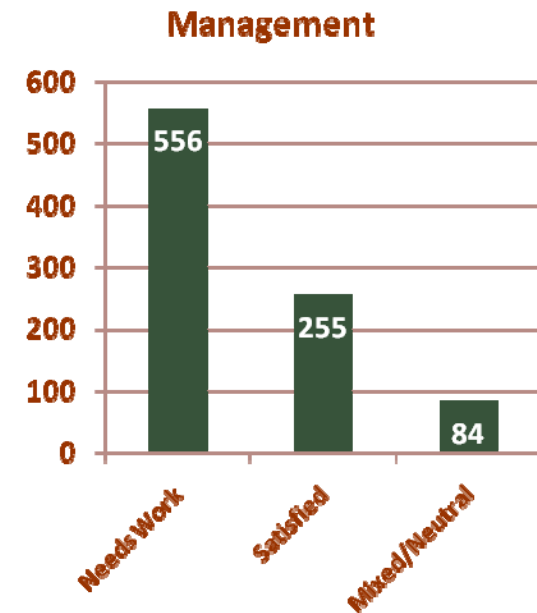
Summary of the Issue

There is emphasis upon employee accountability, demonstrable competency and measurable outcomes for children and families. There does not appear to be the same emphasis upon supervisory, management, and upper leadership accountability and competency measurement.

What we're already doing

- Upper leadership is accountable to the Governor and legislature
- Supervisors are required to have performance appraisals
- For direct field supervisors, there is Supervisor Academy

“More honesty, transparency, and respect for the hard work done. More recognition. Less fear of retaliation by management.”



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, 895 specifically commented on management. 556 stated that management needs improvement, 255 were satisfied with management and 84 had mixed reactions or were neutral.

Focus Issue: 4. Management Ethics, Conduct and practice; management leadership and accountability

Our plan for the coming year

- Require management to attend annual Ethics in Public Service -- EEB 101 Training to refresh information about ethical issues that can sometimes challenge staff and supervisors.
- Upper management will shadow field staff; Once a month AA/RA participate in a social worker "ride-along allowing them to recognize workload issues , builds rapport, cultivate relationships with staff and clients.
- Employ job rotations. Allows for skill building, cross training, job coverage in the event of absences, better understanding of the scope of CA work.
- Build a leadership website featuring cues to management requirements and concerns such as: January is mandated reporters month, Feb. is cultural competency month, March all performance evaluations due, etc.
- Institutionalize a positive culture through daily or weekly e-mail pop-ups and other strategies.
- All program managers, supervisors and above must be required to attend supervisor academy.
- Regional and HQ program managers and upper leadership need immersion experience to better understand the experiences of clients and social workers. This is especially important for those members of middle management who have no prior direct service delivery experience.
- Standardize and require leadership and management training.
- Hold leadership accountable (360 degree evaluations on everyone)
- Leadership mentoring for promotion and hiring (formal and informal).
- Look at restoring the DSHS mentoring program.
- Use informal resources to teach, train, coach, mentor (volunteers, retirees, etc.)

Focus Issue: 5. History, Institutional knowledge

Summary of the Issue

Children's Administration personnel have a wealth of knowledge and experience that literally walks out the door whenever a staff member retires or moves to another agency. We lack any sort of system for tracking institutional knowledge or for archiving systematic changes that impact how business is done. CA needs a method for insuring knowledge transfer and for archiving major changes to policy, practice, and systems.

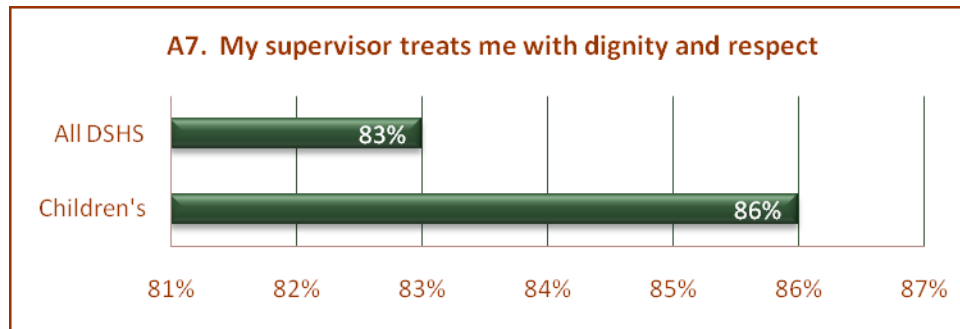
What we're already doing

- DSHS is working with Management Operations Document Imaging System to scan and archive 21,000 boxes of hardcopy records within the next 14 months.

Our plan for the coming year

- Determine if this issue is strongly elevated in the all staff survey as a stand-alone issue or if it has arisen as the result of other issues related to staff orientation, training, knowledge transfer, etc.
- Set up a team that archives and maintains all agency history.
- Moving toward electronic archiving.
- Examine staff exit interviewing and include knowledge transfer questions.
- Make sure staff know about records retention and expungement – develop 1-page cheat sheet.

Focus Issue: 6. Immediate Supervisors/supervisor's support



Of the 2,301 CA employees who took the survey, 86 percent reported that their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect.

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.

What we're already doing

- Many work units and supervisors have positive working relationships and high productivity.
- Offices find ways to recognize and reward staff.

"I like that my supervisor trusts her employees to do their job and that the work environment is very flexible and understanding of employees' needs."

Focus Issue: 6. Immediate Supervisors/supervisor's support: New commitment

Our plan for the coming year

- Do one-page cheat sheet for supervisors regarding free/cost-effective ways to acknowledge and appreciate staff.
- Reinstitute Honor of one award (Lonnie Locke originator). Utilize electronic nomination and post winner online.
- Local level – posting of honor of one; print certificates read the reasons in all staff meetings.
- Develop an integrated data report with performance measures by unit – that workers and supervisors can access
- Use consistent terminology in policies. Agree on terms that have statewide use and standardize those terms agency-wide.
- Address performance, conduct, behavior or problem employees, do not simply reassign.
- Clarify roles; purpose of probationary period; staff retention expectations
- Empower, support, mentor, coach, skill build.
- Identify a “go-to” expert in each office/region for HR activities.

Other important issues

These are also important issues

Staff Safety:

Staff safety questions were added to the employee survey several years ago as the result of several incidents involving injury to CA employees in the course of executing their job duties. The action planning workgroup did not find any measurable responses to the staff safety questions and concluded that this may be the result of the vagueness of the questions.

It was recommended that the safety questions themselves be reevaluated prior to the distribution of the next survey, as the current questions do not adequately assess staff safety.

FamLink:

More than 11 percent of the respondents to the 2009 staff survey expressed some level of concern with FamLink. Those concerns ranged from staff simply acknowledging that there is a learning curve with the new system to the system being perceived as inhibiting social work practice.

Action planning committee members acknowledged that there seems to be something of a FamLink culture shift in that historically it was taboo to bring up concerns or issues with FamLink where now it is more openly encouraged.

FamLink staff recognize there are ongoing issues with the system and are working to address them.

FamLink staff are interested in looking at how they address issues as they move forward.

There were some non-negotiables when we procured FamLink (we bought a "box" and with that came limitations – perhaps this was never made clear to staff; some thought FamLink was going to solve all our problems).

We need to honestly acknowledge the challenges with FamLink.

We need to acknowledge staff concerns and validate that those concerns are being heard.

We must communicate that changes are being made daily to improve the functionality of FamLink.

Contact Information

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEE SURVEY ACTION PLAN

For more information about the 2009 employee survey or this action plan, please contact:

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To offer solution-focused recommendations about how we might continue to improve work life and subsequent outcomes for children and families, please contact:

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