

Economic Services Administration

Addressing Employee Concerns



Thank you for your input. We are committed to addressing the suggestions and concerns we heard.

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts about your job, work environment and our organization through the DSHS Employee Survey. We take your opinions and honesty seriously. Your participation in the employee survey, focus groups, and other opportunities to provide input is crucial to the success of ESA. The ESA leadership Team has carefully reviewed the results and concerns raised in the 2009 Employee Survey, and we know that we have work to do.

Based on your feedback, we have identified five main focus areas for the next year: (1) provide opportunities for input on decisions affecting my work; (2) provide meaningful feedback on performance and hold people accountable for their work; (3) provide opportunities for growth and development; (4) build confidence in decisions made by leaders within the organization; and (5) when possible, take actions to address staffing and workload issues.

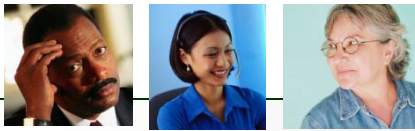
What we commit to do in each of these areas is described in this Survey Action Plan.

In carrying out the plan, we will hold firm to the key values of our organization: providing quality customer service; empowering and supporting staff; valuing our partners; being good stewards; and pursuing innovation and continuous improvements.

– Troy Hutson, Assistant Secretary

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Introduction

The 2009 employee survey included 21 questions for all DSHS employees and 13 questions for ESA employees only. Our action plan is based on analysis of responses to all 33 questions.

- ESA received over 2,900 responses (71% of all ESA staff) and 4,800 comments.
- ESA scores were at or above the DSHS average on 12 of the 21 “all DSHS” questions.
- Overall ESA showed significant improvement in 4 areas compared to the last survey. Although there is still room for improvement, staff generally feel better about:

	2006	2007	2009
• Supervisor treats me with dignity and respect	82%	80%	83%
• Support for a diverse workforce	n/a	63%	66%
• People are treated fairly, without discrimination	68%	70%	74%
• Objecting hiring and promotional practices are followed	n/a	51%	54%

New this year was an opportunity for employees to choose three core values most often modeled by DSHS staff and experienced by co-workers and partners. The top three core values were:

- Customer Service (53.5% of respondents)
- Serving Individuals and Families (52%)
- Collaboration and Teamwork (29.2%)

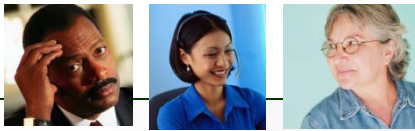


This Year's Focus

2009 Employee Survey Action Plan

Three principles guided ESA's efforts to respond to this staff survey:

- Commit to continuous improvement. Continue the work that supports action plan items from the last survey and build on those improvements with new action plans.
- Continue to seek staff input to gain a better understanding of this year's survey results and comments to help us develop targeted responses and strategies. Division-level follow-up surveys helped refine issues of most interest to staff to ensure meaningful action plans.
- Incorporate key elements of the survey action plan into ESA's Business Plan.



This Year's Focus

2009 Employee Survey Action Plan

Although the strengths and opportunities for improvement from the survey were similar across ESA, individual results for each division identified slight variations in key focus areas. As a result, this year ESA took a different approach and each division developed an action plan designed to address specific issues of concern. Because each of those plans is unique, based on the feedback from staff, the following ESA plan includes only highlights of each division plan. Full plans will be posted on the ESA Staff Survey SharePoint site.

Several focus areas emerged from follow-up conversations with staff:

- *Provide opportunities for input on decisions affecting work*
- *Provide meaningful feedback on performance and hold people accountable for their work*
- *Provide opportunities for growth and development*
- *Build confidence in decisions made by leaders within the organization*
- *When possible, take actions to address staffing and workload issues*



Focus Issue: *Provide opportunities for input on decisions affecting my work*

Issue Summary

The survey comments indicate that some staff hold the opinion that there is a lack of transparency in decision-making. Furthermore, some noted that ESA would benefit from soliciting more input from line staff prior to making decisions, especially in those areas that affect the daily work of ESA employees. To address this issue, it will be important to demonstrate that management hears, values and considers staff input.

I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

Staff Comments:

"I think headquarters need to seek more input from field staff and office that are doing well when they are making major changes...."

"I would like to see a better way for employees to share good ideas..."

What We're Already Doing

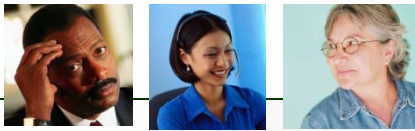
- Workgroups, involving staff at all levels, to redesign critical business processes in all divisions
- Staff participation from throughout the organization in WSQA and Baldrige applications (which identify issues of concern and help to develop improvements)
- All-staff communications to provide updates on issues of concern and solicit input/feedback
- Participation in the Department's Cost Saving/Improvement program



Focus Issue, cont. : *Provide opportunities for input on decisions affecting my work*

Our Plan

- Convene workgroups to research, analyze and make recommendations in areas systematically targeted for process improvement
- Ask staff how Management can best support them and what tools are needed to implement decisions
- Incorporate formal and informal feedback sessions, such as Conversation Cafes and surveys
- Provide thorough explanations of issues and share data
- Provide feedback to staff regarding suggestions/ideas
- Follow-up with staff after decisions and processes are implemented to:
 - Determine what worked and what didn't
 - Identify opportunities and strategies for improvement



Focus Issue: *Provide meaningful feedback on performance and hold people accountable for their work*

My supervisor holds me and my co-workers accountable for performance

My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information about my performance

Staff Comments:

"I would like to see a return to individual accountability..."

"The main change I would like to see in my workplace is that supervisors need to hold every employee to the same accountability..."

Issue Summary

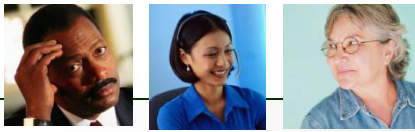
The survey indicated a desire for managers to hold both the individual and co-workers accountable for performance and to provide meaningful performance feedback to allow improvement. Staff come to work committed to the mission with a desire to do a good job, but become discouraged when there is a perception that performance expectations do not appear to be consistent.

What We're Already Doing

- Working with managers to improve timeliness of Performance Development Plans, using a reminder system
- Establishing clear, consistent performance expectations for all workers

Our Plan

- Encourage supervisors to hold regular one-on-one meetings with staff to provide periodic and on-going performance feedback
- Improve the supervisory reminder system to notify managers one-to-two months in advance of upcoming evaluation deadlines
- Implement a plan for improvement that incorporates staff feedback, then conduct regular check-ins with staff, managers, and supervisors
- Incorporate results and future expectations into the performance measurements/evaluation system



Focus Issue: Provide opportunities for growth and development

ESA's efforts to assist in my career development have encouraged me to grow

Staff Comments:

"I would like to see trainings offered again..."

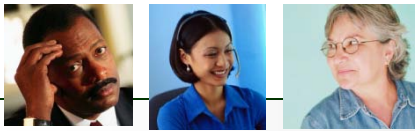
"The opportunity to learn and grow and mentor with others."

Issue Summary

Staff like and appreciate the opportunity to gain knowledge, develop skills and to contribute to ESA's goals. But some staff believe that there are limited chances to take on new responsibilities and leadership roles, particularly in those areas that emphasize their particular interests and talents. To some extent this seems to be a function of the current economic environment which has led to decreased staff coupled with increased customer need. Workload has increased and staff feel that there is little time to devote to learning, growth and self-improvement.

What We're Already Doing

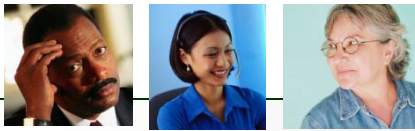
- Providing developmental job opportunities to staff for special projects and to fill vacancies when permanent hiring is not possible
- Offering mentoring with supervisors and managers throughout the organization
- Providing "learning" opportunities through participation in projects and workgroups, such as the Baldrige application process and transforming government workgroups



Focus Issue, cont. : *Provide opportunities for growth and development*

Our Plan

- Create additional opportunities for developmental job assignments that allow staff to learn new skills and be exposed to other parts of the organization
- Encourage staff to complete on-line training using the DSHS Learning Management Center and seek out no-cost training opportunities for staff (e.g., free webinars or training provided in other DSHS administrations)
- Establish a professional development library for staff
- Encourage job shadowing, including inviting staff to attend management team meetings
- Encourage supervisors to hold regular one-on-one meetings with staff to provide periodic and ongoing performance feedback.
- Cooperatively develop and implement a plan to cover the work when employees are pursuing growth opportunities.



Focus Issue: Build confidence in decisions made by leaders within the organization

Issue Summary

The comments provided by staff ranged from a feeling that line staff are not heard to a perception of a lack of connection between headquarters and the field, especially as it relates to the balance of current workload and additional duties, responsibilities and projects. Transparent, two-way communication is critical to ensuring that the decision process is not only fair, equitable and supports ESA's strategic long term interests, but is perceived by staff in that way.

I have confidence in the decisions made by leaders at my office/region/division

Staff Comments:

"More communication on budget and personnel decisions to validate that decisions are made in a equitable and consistent manner by ESA managers."

"More and better communication."

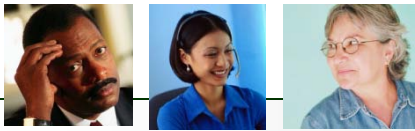
"More information up front about changes in the office and budget reductions information."

What We're Already Doing

- Regular information sharing through iESA and all-staff communication
- Opportunities to ask questions directly of ESA management through mechanisms such as "ask Troy"

Action Steps

- Share with staff how and when their ideas are incorporated, demonstrating that input is valued, considered, and appreciated
- Accept responsibility for decisions and be willing to change when change is necessary
- Enhance communication methods and tools for staff to help them get the information they need more effectively
- Encourage staff to review and comment on ESA's Business Plans
- Encourage and demonstrate transparency in communications and conduct



Focus Issue: When possible, take actions to address staffing and workload issues

Issue Summary

Affects several of the staff survey questions

The follow-up surveys indicated significant concerns about staffing and workload issues resulting from the State's current economic situation. Staff are under increasing pressure to meet performance expectations and provide quality customer service for more clients with fewer resources.

Staff Comments:

"Better atmosphere/morale."

"Having more people to do the job without the stress we are feeling."

"More streamlined processes, taking out redundancies, simplifying the process for clients and ourselves."

What We're Already Doing

- Examining staffing models and moving more resources to "front line" work
- Continue business process re-engineering efforts to streamline work wherever possible
- Examine existing communication forums where staff can provide input about workload issues and submit recommendations for change/improvement/efficiencies

Our Plan

- Partner with co-located staff to share resources and build capacity
- Implement Regional Business Centers to streamline work previously done in regional/local offices
- Clearly communicate the ways in which we are actively working to place more staff on the front lines and appropriately reduce management positions
- Implement tele-working where possible to ease strain on staff
- Continue work on process improvement and standardization throughout the organization
- Use employee focus groups to gather input to decision-making on new policies and processes that positively impact workload demands
- Find ways to eliminate redundant and non-value added procedures
- Increase emphasis on wellness activities to promote a healthy work culture for staff