

Department of Social and Health Services **DRAFT**
Children's Administration

April 4, 2013

Dear Fellow Children's Administration Employees:

This is the third quarterly Employee Survey Action Plan Progress Report submitted in follow up to the 2011 statewide [employee survey](#) and the corresponding [action plan](#) published in January 2012 .

This report provides information about our ongoing work to help improve employee work life by addressing issues identified in the 2011 employee survey. Many of you made recommendations that were realistic, attainable, and which could have a positive impact on our ability to serve children and families.

In the months that Randy Hart and I have been here, we have taken a number of steps to relieve workload: temporarily suspended the requirement to use the Family Assessment; delayed the discontinuation of the 10-day response; and revamped the policy around the use of Voluntary Placement Agreements. Through several promising Lean processes, we will be exploring more ways to address workload issues.

Both Randy and I believe it is important to manage Children's Administration through open communications, honest dialogue, and respect for others. We welcome your continued input into ways to improve practice and to better support you in meeting the needs of children and families.

~ Jennifer Strus

Children's Administration, Acting 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. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Summary of the Issue:

Survey statistics show that overall, CA staff feel that "Management" needs work. While this theme became more prevalent across all of DSHS in the most recent employee survey, the Children's Administration shows a greater decline in satisfaction regarding management. Specifically staff would like management to have a greater understanding of the nature and scope of their work, to value their work, and cultivate a work environment that is affirming, supportive, and demonstrates intolerance for unfair hiring practices, inequity, intimidation or fear-based management. In addition, staff are concerned about too many big changes in close succession, allowing for no real adjustment to one change before another one rolls out.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **The Administration made a number of changes to policy, practice, and administrative procedures in an effort to acknowledge the body of work performed by field staff and take steps to mitigate workload impact from headquarters. One such policy change implemented a numbering system for any assignments from headquarters to the field and established a typical set turn-around time of two weeks from when the assignment was sent out. Additional strategies include but are not limited to:**
 - i. **Eliminated hand counts for data.**
 - ii. **Changed requirements for Child Protective Teams endorsed by Governor Gregoire and formalized by revised Executive Order.**
 - iii. **Updated Who's Who in the CA intranet home page to clarify reporting authority. Commit to consistently updating the information.**
 - iv. **Established workgroup to help address issues related to staff out-of-state travel.**

Focus Issue: 1. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Status of planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. Update provider contracts to require electronic submission of reports; this will allow for ease of uploading and improved tracking and dissemination. Update: December, 2012, implementation began October 1, 2012.
- b. Establish consistent courtesy supervision referral and documentation process across the regions. (Policy 4430 establishes this. Will convene a workgroup to gather recommendations for making consistent across the regions. Scheduled for September 2012.) **Update: March 2013, a workgroup consisting of CA field staff and headquarters staff reviewed and made the following changes to the policy, effective October 15, 2012:**
 1. ***An expectation that the sending office will provide 24 hour notice to the receiving office when placement is emergent or urgent to allow time for a walk through***
 2. ***A dispute resolution process***
 3. ***Clarification of roles and responsibilities of the sending office, Regional Gatekeeper or designee and the receiving office***
 4. ***A new statewide Courtesy Supervision Referral Checklist (DSHS 10-459).***

Focus Issue: 1. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Status of planned strategies for future improvement:

- c. Revise structure and process for policy roll-outs to allow greater staff understanding of and offer input into policy changes. **Update: March, 2013. A workgroup consisting of headquarters staff, supervisors, and field staff convened to streamline the policy roll-outs. A survey was developed and shared with staff around the state for input/feedback. Based on the survey, headquarters updated the website with current [HQ Program Manager Contacts](#) and attached a link on the website for staff who have policy questions CAPolicy@dshs.wa.gov. The Policy Update page is being reviewed for revisions based on the feedback. The suggestions for policy roll-out are being reviewed by management.**
- d. Streamline the process and reduce the workload impact for Exceptional Cost Plans. **Update: March, 2013, the Exceptional Cost form has been drafted and revised and is being reviewed by the Deputy Regional Administrators.**
- e. Develop consistent materials packets for relative caregivers and explore communication strategies for interacting with relative caregivers. Scheduled for September 2012, and ongoing. Update: Implemented September 19, 2012
- f. Explore reinstating mileage reimbursements for providers who must travel more than 30 miles for supervised visitation. Fiscal staff are currently evaluating this possibility. **Update: March, 2013, Mileage reimbursement (over 30 miles) was made available for providers effective January 1, 2013.**

Focus Issue: 1. Disconnect Between Leadership and Field

Status of planned strategies for future improvement continued:

- g. Reduce or combine the number of required case staffings. ***Update: March, 2013, the number of staffings a supervisor is required to attend has been reduced. Policy update dated, Dec. 7, 2012 reflects:***
- ***CPT's and 30 day staffings do not need to be held if an FTDM has occurred***
 - ***CHET results are shared at the next scheduled staffing following the completion of the CHET screen and do not require a separate staffing***
 - ***A flexible timeframe for holding Permanent Planning Staffing to meet local court timeframes (4-6 months, 9-11 months)***
 - ***Removing the requirement that a supervisor attend an FTDM***
- g. Have Skype available in more field offices. Currently exploring technology needs to make Skype more widely available. Update: December, 2012, statewide implementation began in August, 2012. Each region is currently in the process of implementing this. Most offices now have the ability to Skype.
- h. Increase webinar training and bring more training to local offices to reduce travel time. Update: This is ongoing and CA is partnering with the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence to assist webinar training in an effort to reduce time and costs associated with travel.

Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Summary of the Issue

While employees acknowledge that the Administration has engaged in increased communication, field staff are requesting more timely communication before changes are made.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Continue to hold statewide communications committee meetings monthly or every-other-month and usher recommendations for improved communications through to leadership.**
- b. **Exploring a process for streamlining requests for communications support.**
- c. **DSHS hired a Deputy Director of Public Affairs who will have the primary responsibility for communications to press and media.**
- d. **Distributed highlights after monthly Union Management Communications Committee meetings jointly drafted and signed by Denise Revels Robinson and Sherri-Ann Burke, Labor Advocate from the Washington Federation of State Employees.**
- e. **Began utilizing the Good News site to recognize children and families and as a place of recognition for staff as well.**

Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. Continue to hold statewide communications committee meetings monthly to every-other-month and usher recommendations for improved communications through to leadership. Explore development of a committee charter to formalize committee objectives and improve quality and accountability in administration communications. Update: November 2012, the Communications Committee met 09/20, 10/18, and 11/15/12 and began drafting a charter. **Update: March, 2013, Communications Unit staff are re-evaluating the interest in, commitment to, purpose and benefits of the Statewide Communication Committee and will have a specific strategy for either formalizing the structure and purpose of the committee or disbanding it and exploring alternative audience engagement strategies by May 2013.**
- b. Partnering with DSHS Public Affairs to explore the use of new media including Facebook and Twitter to disseminate critical information quickly. Update: November 2012, DSHS Public Affairs in consultation with Children's Administration drafted a social media policy that remains under review. DSHS is moving forward with developing both Face Book and Twitter and has launched pilot sites for both social media platforms. Thomas Shapley, Senior Director of Public Affairs offered a presentation about new media at the December 6 DSHS Extended Leadership Team meeting and a follow-up message with the presentation PowerPoint was distributed to DSHS leadership later that week. On December 17 and on December 20, messages went out to all DSHS staff about emergency information available on Facebook and Twitter. **Update: March, 2013, the Office of Public affairs continues moving forward with design and application of social media platforms for DSHS and administrations. A Children's Administration Facebook page remains in development.**

Focus Issue: 2. Communication

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. Currently exploring regional and headquarters all staff meetings to have face-to-face conversations about issues of importance, Administration-wide within fiscal resources available. Update: December 2012, historically the Administration hosted periodic in-person all-staff meetings; however, limits on travel have made in-person gatherings difficult. Children's Administration has implemented videoconferencing through Headquarters in six regional sites and over the past several months. DSHS now has 13 sites around the state. Although not an exact replication of in-person meetings, this technology offers the opportunity for colleagues to see and speak with one another while practicing good stewardship of state resources.
- b. Developing new comprehensive Children's Administration communications plan for known annual events, regularly occurring activities, and major initiatives. Update: The new plan is scheduled for submission to the statewide communications workgroup in January 2013 as well as to the new Children's Administration Assistant Secretary in February 2013. **Update: March, 2013, Statewide communications plan is under revision to incorporate new leadership and agency structure.**

Focus Issue: 3. Resources

Summary of the Issue

Employees feel strongly that in addition to having to perform stellar work with fewer staff, they often feel they lack the basic tools and resources necessary to complete their jobs. Specifically lack of access to agency vehicles and widespread breakdown of computers, copiers, and faxes is hindering work.

Our efforts to date:

- a. Reviewed OFM Policy 12.20.35 that allows the Secretary to authorize transportation from office to residence for several reasons, including safety of employee and convenience to the agency, exploring establishing protocols for application of this policy where appropriate. Update: **March, 2013, Fiscal has written a proposed policy that will be presented to the DSHS Accounting Policy Management Board(APMB). If adopted, DSHS will then have a written policy in place for the agency and its employees to follow.**
- b. Requested and received input from regions regarding need for additional vehicles. Prepared request for additional state vehicles for regional offices as part of the budget process. Update: December 2012, the agency has put together a packet requesting additional vehicles for appropriate field offices. **Update: March 2013, Fiscal is attempting to obtain additional vehicles from the state motor pool using current resources.**
- c. Assessing the replacement of aging equipment which is no longer under lease nor covered by warranty due to its age, scheduled completion of assessment is September 30, 2012. Update: December 2012. Information Technology has conducted a survey of computer needs. **Update: March 2013, Assessment Completed, final numbers submitted as part of an acquisition package.**

Focus Issue: 3. Resources

Our efforts to date continued:

- d. Based on the identified needs of staff, CA is seeking funding to purchase computers and will assist in assigning and delivering the appropriate equipment to employees. Update: December, 2012, the agency has put together a packet requesting funding for purchasing and equipping staff with appropriate computers. ***Update, March 2013, an acquisition package is part of the current budget being developed by the legislature. Secretary Quigley was briefed on the situation and has given his support. Funding would be available July 1st.***
- e. Added “resources” subject as an agenda item for discussion with Field Office staff by our three Fiscal Program Evaluation Managers. Update: Fiscal Performance Evaluation Managers (Fiscal PEMs) continue to travel to field offices quarterly and include equipment needs and concerns as part of the “resources” discussion agenda.
- f. Through routine visits to the Field Offices by our Fiscal Program Evaluation Managers, we have provided the opportunity for direct feed back regarding resource concerns. Update: Fiscal PEMs continue to travel to all Field Offices quarterly to provide opportunity for direct feedback regarding resource concerns and to share information and obtain feedback, concerns and answer questions.

Focus Issue: 3. Resources

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. Establish written guidance regarding situations that would warrant employees keeping an official vehicle overnight at their residence in conjunction with official business. **Update: Fiscal staff are working to define the business need as it applies to the Children's Administration objective of safeguarding child safety and when the use of a vehicle involves transporting a child. Procedural language is in development and should be in place prior to the March 2012 progress report.**
- b. Using our routine visits to Field Offices, we will ask for input regarding copiers, cell phones, cameras, and any other equipment, as to their reliability, usefulness and need. Responses will be consolidated for Management consideration and future action plan. **Update: Fiscal PEMs continue to travel to all Field Offices quarterly to provide opportunity for direct feedback regarding resource concerns and to share information and obtain feedback, concerns and answer questions.**
- c. We will continue to emphasize to field staff that while resources are limited, we will prioritize resources to support field personnel in keeping children safe and families stable. We will also emphasize that Management must be informed when there are resource, material, or equipment needs.

Focus Issue: 4. FamLink

Summary of the Issue

Staff continue to express concern over the capacity of FamLink to serve as an effective case management tool.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Secured list of FamLink related comments from the employee survey**

Planned strategies for future improvement:

- a. **Catalogue employee survey comments into specific subject areas**
- b. **Review the subject areas of the comments for themes or practice/policy specific issues**
- c. **Create FamLink survey based on the comments**
- d. **Create staff communication to support staff training needs identified in the survey comments**
- e. **Through Union Management Communication Meetings, continue to work to identify and prioritize FamLink modifications to support field staff.**

Focus Issue: 5. Immediate Supervisors/Supervisor's Support

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.

Our efforts to date:

- a. **Implemented the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, a professional development training system with the University of Washington Seattle School of Social Work, University of Washington Tacoma Social Work Program, the Eastern Washington University, Partners for Our Children, and Children's Administration to enhance training for staff and supervisors at regional training hubs.**

Planned strategies for future improvement:

Explore opportunities for increased in-person communications and camaraderie-building activities both in local offices and throughout the state.

1. Communications added a link on the CA Intranet for easy access to submit Good News Stories.
2. A Supervisor Tip Sheet for employee appreciation has been created and is in the review process. When approved, it will be sent to all supervisors, AAs, Deputy RAs and RAs. ***Update: March, 2013, the Supervisor Tip sheet was sent to the RA's and Deputy RA's on 12/19/2012 as an assignment to share with all supervisors in their region.***
3. Organizational charts are updated on a monthly basis by HQ's staff.

Contact Information

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEE SURVEY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

For more information about the 2011 employee survey, the action plan, or this report please contact:

Marianne K. Ozmun 360/902-7928

Marianne.Ozmun@dshs.wa.gov

Stacy Winokur 360/902-8019

Stacy.Winokur@dshs.wa.gov

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

cacommunications@dshs.wa.gov