Appendix B – Background and Methods

The first DSHS-wide employee survey. In 2000, Secretary Dennis Braddock and the DSHS staff created the DSHS Balanced ScoreCard as a framework for strategic planning and performance measurement. DSHS management recognizes that a focus on staff well-being and professional growth is vital to ensuring quality service to agency clients. Therefore, the Balanced ScoreCard included a number of goals and measures pertaining to employee satisfaction, skills, training, and use of outcome data. In order to gather the information necessary to measure these goals, Secretary Braddock and the DSHS Cabinet directed the implementation of the first DSHS employee survey. The survey was based on the standard Washington State Department of Personnel Employee Survey with additional questions based on the DSHS Balanced ScoreCard.[1] It was conducted by the Department of Personnel and DSHS' Research and Data Analysis Division. Of the 3,100 randomly selected employees, 75 percent (2,300) completed the survey.

Although this first survey successfully met the need for agency-wide information, many of the individual programs within DSHS still conducted separate employee surveys to meet their needs for program-specific and workgroup-specific information, and to extend the survey analysis to the division, region, and office level. The administration of surveys at two different levels not only duplicated effort, but also required some employees to complete two nearly identical surveys.

A new plan: The "rolling" survey. In order to reduce redundancy, decrease costs, and increase efficiency, DSHS Management decided that future employee surveys would address both agency-wide and programmatic needs. The DSHS-wide survey presented in this report is a result of that decision. It is the compilation of a series of program-level surveys conducted between October 2002 and July 2004. Each of the program-level surveys included all the questions required for the DSHS-wide survey, plus additional questions tailored to meet individual program needs.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

As part of the new survey plan, each DSHS program was given a choice between three agencies to conduct the survey: (1) Department of Personnel (DOP) – the traditional administrator of the Washington State Employee Surveys; (2) the survey section of the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA), assisted by the DSHS Information System Services Division (ISSD); or (3) the program's internal resources. Two of the programs (Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) conducted the survey before the internet survey program developed by RDA and ISSD was finalized, so they asked DOP to administer the survey. Medical Assistance Administration conducted their own survey using internal information technology resources. All other programs chose to have RDA administer the survey.

All surveys were primarily available on the internet and were designed to ensure the anonymity of each respondent. Internet surveys administered through RDA were electronically submitted to DSHS through an anonymous portal, so that no one could identify the source of a particular set of responses. Surveys were also available in hard copy for employees without computer access or for those who felt more comfortable submitting a paper survey. Survey data from all sources were sent to the RDA survey section to be combined in the master file used to create this report.

SAMPLING PLAN AND SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

Each program was also given the choice of whether to administer the survey to a random sample of employees or to all employees. Most programs chose to give all employees the opportunity to complete the survey. This 100 percent distribution produced enough responses to allow the analysis of survey results at the division, region, and office level.[2] The Economic Services Administration chose to conduct a random sample survey because they were also conducting an administration-wide series of short, focused employee surveys.

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[1] Balanced ScoreCard indicators are marked in the survey report with this icon: **BSC**

[2] Both DOP and RDA will not produce reports in cases where the number of employees in a work group is so small as to compromise employee anonymity.

To ensure a representative sample from ESA, RDA utilized a number of measures to attain a high response rate. They drew a random sample of 500 names from a personnel list of all ESA employees. An email address was located for each selected employee. Each employee received an initial email letter inviting him or her to participate in the survey. They were asked to inform RDA when they had completed the survey (notification was separate from the anonymous survey). Sample members who did not inform RDA that they had completed the survey received up to three email reminders and a phone call. In this process, 25 sample members were identified as being unavailable throughout the survey period – because of retirement, termination of state service, long-term illness, extended leave, or military deployment. Of the 475 remaining eligible sample members, 456 completed the survey (a 96 percent response rate).

With consultation from RDA, each of the other programs designed their own procedures to distribute and publicize surveys to all their employees. Typically, these measures included email to each individual, periodic email reminders, reminders distributed through supervisory channels, notices in program websites and newsletters, and paper surveys distributed to those without computer access.

CHALLENGES

Definitions. One of the biggest challenges in formulating a survey for the entire agency – or even a single division within the agency – is to provide an adequate avenue for employees to address various levels of management, in a relatively short survey with questions that are relevant to all. There are a great variety of management structures within DSHS. Some employees have a management chain that includes team leaders, supervisors, office chiefs, area managers, regional managers, division directors, executive leadership team and assistant secretaries. Others talk of the nursing supervisor or director of nursing, or the kitchen manager. The DSHS employee survey deals with these multiple management structures by following the lead of the time-tested DOP employee survey: Almost all employees have an immediate manager or supervisor; so the survey asks about "my manager/supervisor." Almost all employees are aware of some level of senior management; so the survey asks about "senior managers." Survey respondents who want to distinguish more precisely between other levels of management must do so in the narrative comments.

Throughout the number of years the Washington State Employee Survey has been used, DOP has usually asked each program to provide a definition of "senior manager." The 2000 random sample DSHS employee survey utilized a very general definition of senior management: "Senior Managers – Includes the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of DSHS, the Assistant Secretaries, and the Division Directors." As the current survey was tailored to individual programs, each program formulated a definition of senior management in accordance with that program's management structure and the most pressing needs for information.[3] The definitional changes between 2000 and 2004 were more responsive to the individual programs' information needs and better reflected the management structure most common within that program. However, these definitional changes made it more difficult to compare results of the 2000 survey to the current survey. The wording of the each question did not change, but, in many cases, the definition of senior management did change.

This solution to the problem of defining management did not please all survey respondents. While a number of respondents used the narrative comments to further describe the differences between management levels, a few complained about the lack of ability to make distinctions between management levels:

"I think the survey should break down management in a way that greater separates local, regional, and state."

"My answers 1-59 relate to my immediate supervisor, who is great in a sub-section. They would be greatly different if they responded to higher-level management. I think this survey does a huge injustice as it lacks clarity re: Who we are assessing."

"First I would like a survey that does not center exclusively on my immediate supervisor – she does a wonderful job – the problem is in the management that has either never carried a caseload or did so long ago and has obviously forgotten how time consuming it is."

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[3] For example, the definition of senior manager used in the ADSA Long Term Care survey was: "Assistant Secretary, Division Directors and Deputies, Regional Administrators and Office Chiefs." Some DSHS organizations, like Management Services Administration (MSA), are composed of disparate divisions with different management structures. Because there was no one, definitive management structure, MSA did not define senior management, allowing each employee to choose his/her own definition.

The other concept that seemed to require a definition was: "Workgroup." Most of the surveys defined workgroup as: "yourself and your colleagues that report to the same supervisor." None of the survey respondents reported any difficulty determining who was a part of their workgroup.

Growing pains – Coordination of a new survey process. Anyone instituting a new and complex process can be expected to experience some "glitches." The process of adding standardized DSHS questions to all program-level employee surveys and customizing surveys for each program using new technology was no exception. A number of small problems cropped up in the process of conducting the first DSHS-wide rolling employee survey. Two of the early surveys (MAA and DDD) did not ask all of the DSHS questions. A technical problem kept some of the online answers to a few of the mental health survey questions from being stored in the database. A number of employees who work in the Aging and Disabilities Services Administration's Home and Community Services program incorrectly indicated that they worked in "Home and Community Programs." While these anomalies in the data are a concern for the individual programs, they are small enough to make little difference in the analysis of the large file that combined results from all of the department's surveys.

Incorporating Department of Personnel data. The very helpful survey staff at Department of Personnel, Scott Turner and Lori Wells, have assisted with DSHS employee surveys for years; they assisted as possible in this report. The 2000 DSHS-wide employee survey and many of the individual program surveys were conducted using Department of Personnel resources for forms and data collection. However, in the summer of 2002, DOP changed their survey methodology and stopped storing survey data in the standard manner used for sophisticated statistical analysis. The new data storage method makes any sort of multivariate analysis impossible. This change at DOP, along with new technology that made it easier for DSHS to conduct truly anonymous surveys, stimulated DSHS to look for a better, less expensive and more statistics-friendly platform for the employee surveys.

The DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division, along with the Information System Services Division, is now able to offer a survey methodology that stores data in a standard format. In the long run, use of this methodology will result in a rich research database of employee satisfaction data and will save money for DSHS programs. However, two of the surveys incorporated into the master file for this survey, those from Division of Developmental Disabilities and from Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, were conducted by DOP before the DSHS surveys were available. Data from these two surveys could only be incorporated into the DSHS employee survey master file in aggregate form. Because of these data limitations, it was not possible to use multivariate analysis techniques in preparing this report. The tables and analyses in this report are primarily based on univariate analysis.

RESPONSE RATES

Response rates varied among the various DSHS programs. Response rates for each program are discussed on page 4 of the main report, and are included in the table on page B-4 in this appendix. In general, it was more difficult to obtain responses from large institutions and from widespread field workers. As discussed in the previous section on "Sampling Plan and Survey Distribution" in this appendix, the Economic Services Administration survey was distributed to a random sample of ESA employees, and special measures were taken to ensure high response rates. Surveys for all other programs were sent to all employees within the program.

WEIGHTING AND ANALYSIS

Data from the entire series of employee surveys were combined into a master file for analysis. In order to form an accurate picture of all DSHS employees, each program's responses were weighted so that the number of responses from that program reflects that program's share of total DSHS employees. For example, 7 percent of all DSHS employees work for JRA, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration. For DSHS-wide analyses, the 702 responses from JRA were weighted so that they comprised 7 percent of the total survey responses. The weighting scheme for all programs is shown in the table on page B-4 in this appendix. The main report displays bar charts showing findings for questions relating to key areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. On page 17 of the main report there is

also a chart showing the percent of employees responding favorably[4] to each survey question, with questions ranked from high to low. A detailed report of all responses to each question, as well as the average responses for each of the question categories traditionally used in DOP reports can be found at Appendix A at the end of the main report.

The results from this current employee survey were compared to the results of the 2000 random sample employee survey. A chart showing the largest changes can be found on page 18 of the main report. Appendix C contains a detailed table listing the changes from the 2000 survey for each question and question category. The 2000 survey results used in this table are also based on weighted data. In an attempt to compare DSHS results to other state agencies, Appendix D shows a table comparing the DSHS survey to all employee surveys conducted by DOP in 2004. A note at the top of this table explains that the DOP data are not weighted by agency size and also notes other limitations to the DOP data.

To analyze the narrative comments, RDA used a coding process to identify major themes in all of these comments. Researchers read each comment and identified the major themes. The codes were stored in a database and weighted before analysis. The chart on page 19 of the main report shows the major groupings of themes. Appendix E shows a more detailed analysis of narrative comment themes. Appendix F gives the definitions that were used by the researchers when assigning codes.

Employee Survey Response Rates

ADMINISTRATION / Program	Number Employees in Program	Percent All DSHS Employees in Program	Number Completed Surveys	Weight	Response Rate	Start Date	End Date	Conducted by
AGING & DISABILITY SVCS ADMINISTRATION								
Long Term Care	1,164	7%	884	1.317	75.9%	5/18/04	7/12/04	RDA
Division of Development Disabilities	3,033	17%	1,673	1.813	55.2%	1/03	3/03	DOP
CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION	2,544	14%	939	2.709	36.9%	2/10/04	2/27/04	RDA
ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	4,644	26%	456*	9.759	96%*	5/11/04	7/12/04	RDA
EXECUTIVE OFFICES	345	2%	225	1.533	65.2%	4/6/04	5/7/04	RDA
FINANCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	239	1%	194	1.232	81.2%	12/9/03	12/19/03	RDA
HEALTH & REHAB SVCS ADMINISTRATION								
Division of Alcohol & Substance Abuse	93	1%	82	1.134	88.2%	12/2/03	12/15/03	RDA
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	348	2%	284	1.225	81.6%	4/03	4/03	DOP
Mental Health Division	2,851	16%	1183	2.410	41.5%	5/10/04	7/30/04	RDA
Office of Deaf & Hard of Hearing	11	0%	10	1.100	90.9%	4/6/04	5/7/04	RDA
JUVENILE REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION	1,238	7%	702	1.764	56.7%	5/18/04	7/13/04	RDA
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION	935	5%	397	2.355	42.5%	10/04	10/04	MAA
MANAGEMENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	416	2%	362	1.149	87.0%	3/9/04	3/26/04	RDA
TOTAL	**17,861**	**100%**	**7,391**		**64%***	**10/02**	**7/04**	

* The Economic Services Administration was given to a random sample of 475 employees. All other programs gave 100% of employees the opportunity to take the survey. The agency response rate was computed after weighting the sample from ESA proportionally with the rest of the agency.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Any questions about survey methodology or analysis can be addressed to Dr. Nancy Raiha at 360-902-7667 or raihank@dshs.wa.gov.

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[4] An answer of "Always or Almost Always" or "Usually" was considered a positive response.