WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

These three journal articles highlight the findings of research exploring influences on recruitment and retention of public and private child welfare employees and the effect of worker commitment to their agency and the field. The studies offer suggestions of innovative methods to improve workforce retention.

- Child welfare workers in public agencies are found to have higher levels of commitment, higher pay rates, and take the job because of pay, benefits, and advancement.

- Child welfare workers in private agencies are found to have lower levels of commitment, lower pay, and the majority report taking the job because it was the only one available.

- Workers of color are found to have lower levels of commitment to the agency and the field.

- Graduates of specialized child welfare BSW programs are more likely to stay for 2 years of service, but may leave after 4 years or once they feel that the job is mastered.

- BSW graduates are more likely to engage in best practices, be more confident and prepared to do child welfare work, and actually do a better job than those without a BSW.

*Limitations: sampling and data collection, including a small sample; lack of longitudinal data; threats to internal validity.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Improving employee retention can benefit a child welfare agency financially, increase morale, and improve quality of service delivery. Greater emphasis should be placed on creating positive work environments and improving the quality of the workforce in a given agency.

There are benefits to preparing students through specialized child welfare BSW programs. Agencies should also develop more rigorous supervisor selection, preparation, and management processes, with extensive ongoing training and education.

Agencies might consider restructuring frontline child welfare practices by dividing labor into clinical aspects and administrative tasks and assigning separate staff accordingly.