



RETENTION

Madden, E.E., Scannapieco, M., & Painter, K. (2014). An examination of retention and length of employment among public child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 4, 37-44.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

- This journal article highlights findings of a ten-year study examining the personal and organizational factors that impact length of employment and retention of child welfare caseworkers, and offers workplace interventions and strategies to move toward achieving a more stable workforce.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The findings of this study suggest that a mixture of personal and organizational factors influence the length of time that caseworkers remained with the agency:

| Personal Factors Influencing Retention | Organizational Factors Influencing Retention |
|--|---|
| Self-efficacy | Manageable workload |
| Gender | Supervisory and peer support |
| Child welfare experience | Supervision that fosters learning |
| Job satisfaction | Training that relates to the position |
| Commitment to the child welfare field | Professional development and career advancement opportunities |
| Effective education/preparation | Commitment to the organization |

Personal Characteristics

- Males were more likely to leave the child welfare agency than females, yet retention strategies for this population have not been adequately addressed by research.
- Caseworkers with a degree in social work and/or recipients of Title IV-E stipends were more likely to remain employed.

Organizational Factors

- Organizational supports (e.g., educational opportunities, promotional and career opportunities, and organizational resources) were found to be the strongest predictor of retention.
- Caseworkers placed in desirable job positions based on their stated preferences were 1.27 times more likely to remain with the agency.

Strategies

- Focus retention efforts during the first year or two of employment when caseworkers are learning their position and are in need of the most support from the organization.
- Give priority to current caseworkers when more desirable positions becomes available within the agency and refine the initial recruitment process so that candidates best suited to specific positions within the agency can be identified.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Decades of high turnover statistics suggest that it is no longer feasible to ask caseworkers to commit long-term to agencies without the expectation of reasonable incentives and stronger organizational support for retention. Child welfare administrators must use innovative and promising strategies to demonstrate organizational support for caseworkers, and in turn, foster their commitment to the agency for the long term.