

Background

- Social workers face a particularly high risk of burnout, which may impact the Louisiana child welfare system's service quality.
- The Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) has been grappling with an alarming surge in attrition and burnout.
- The complexity of ensuring retention in child and family services has been exacerbated by the impact of the global pandemic (Peinado, M., & Anderson, K. N., 2020)

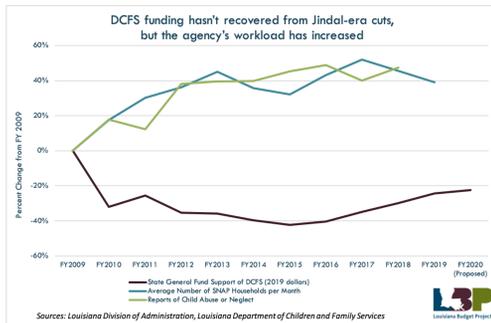


Figure 1. Change in DCFS Funding from 2008 to 2020 as compared to SNAP Household number and Child abuse/neglect reports

Study Objective:

This study by the LSUHSC Infant Team seeks to elucidate the underpinnings of job dissatisfaction among DCFS workers in Louisiana.

Methods

Survey Distribution and Participation:

- A voluntary anonymous survey was distributed to Louisiana DCFS employees from 2022 to 2023.
- 498 employees provided insights into their job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing.

Data Collection:

- Data consisted of 42 questions related to perceptions of training, role demand, work-life balance, and emotional boundaries via short-form responses.
- In this project, three questions were analyzed utilizing the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method outlined by Hill et al. 2012.

Survey Results

DCFS & Training (319 Responses)

Q: What sort of trainings do you feel you needed? Or currently need?

Most Common Themes:	Number of Occurrences:	Subcategories of Theme:
Proactive Forms of Training	68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on Guidance • In-field Training • One-on-one Training
DCFS Administrative Tasks	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software Training • Forms & Paperwork
Position-Specific Training	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Worker Training • Understanding Roles
Client Interaction Training	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationships • Conflict Resolution • Safety and Risk Factors
Training related to Well-being	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress Management • Workload Management • Self-care

Table 1. Analyzed responses from Q3; includes the top five most common themes and their subcategories. Responses classified as miscellaneous (not relevant) were excluded.

"We need more hands-on training. Truthfully, those new worker trainings teach us absolutely nothing. They only focus on CPS and their work. It does not prepare you for the work DCFS entails."

- Respondent 73 on Proactive Training

"No training in the software FATS or TIPS to do my job!! Forms were thrown our way and we were expected to figure them out."

- Respondent 110 on DCFS Administrative Tasks

"Position specific training. New worker orientation training of 3 weeks is a very misleading training that teaches little about my job duties"

- Respondent 32 on Position Specific Training

Employee Retention (368 Responses)

Q: What would entice you to want to remain on staff longer?

Most Common Themes:	Number of Occurrences:	Subcategories of Theme:
Increased Compensation and Benefits	197	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Increase • Overtime Pay • Increased Benefits
Work-Life Balance	74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manageable Case Loads • Increased Time Off • Schedule Flexibility
A Supportive Environment	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling Supported & Appreciated • Being Treated with Respect
Supportive Management	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Treatment from Management • Support & Communication from Management
Enhanced Workplace Resources	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper Staffing • State Vehicles/Transportation

Table 2. Analyzed responses from Q20; includes the top five most common themes and their subcategories. Responses classified as miscellaneous (not relevant) were excluded.

"higher pay, real overtime, real pay working after 5 pm, weekends, and holidays"

- Respondent 143 on Increased Compensation and Benefits

"I have no idea. We are all burned out here. It gets worse day by day. Client's needs are first and we as workers cancel doctor appointments because we have so many obligations and we put our health at risk."

- Respondent 224 on Work-Life Balance

"I just want to be appreciated. Truly. Mean what you say and say what you mean. Actions speak louder than words."

- Respondent 87 on A Supportive Environment

DCFS & COVID-19 (174 Responses)

Q: COVID has changed the way we work in many ways. Which changes would you not want to keep?

Most Common Themes:	Number of Occurrences:	Subcategories of Theme:
Online Meetings and Trainings	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive Online Meetings • Zoom • Remote Trainings
Working From Home	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote work
In-person Working Requirements during COVID-19	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in-office
Covid Sanitation Policies	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks • Social Isolation
Covid Working Policies	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-logs • Additional work

Table 3. Analyzed responses from Q22; includes the top five most common themes and their subcategories. Responses classified as miscellaneous (not relevant) were excluded.

"I do not like conference calls when everyone is in the office and can speak in person. When on a teleconference, you do not have the full attention of the supervisor or other workers often times"

- Respondent 111 on Online Meetings and Trainings

"I prefer working from the office. COVID did not improve anything for me workwise"

- Respondent 249 on Working From Home

"Maybe offer a few days that we could work from home. Doing my work from home was peaceful."

- Respondent 87 on In-person Working Requirements

Discussion

Employee Training:

- Predominant themes convey a notable perception of inadequate training for newcomers in the department for their specific role.
- Employees often feel ill-equipped, engendering stress and dissatisfaction.

Employee Retention:

- Financial support and a sense of work-life balances are key aspect contributing to employee retention.
- Perception of administrative and environmental support are critical factors contributing to employee morale.

DCFS during COVID-19:

- Online meetups via zoom seem to be a source of dissatisfaction in their inconvenience and frequency.
- While some employees wished to avoid remote work, others preferred to work remotely.

Conclusion

- The findings illuminate an urgent necessity for reevaluation and reform within the DCFS's training and work practices.
- Considerations should be in place for a multidimensional strategy that addresses training, emotional support, employee pay, and workload management to bolster both the welfare and proficiency of the workforce.

References

Hill, C. E. (Ed.) (2012). Consensual qualitative research: A practical resource for investigating social science phenomena. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Peinado, M., & Anderson, K. N. (2020). Reducing social worker burnout during COVID-19. *International Social Work*, 63(6), 757-760.