



INFORMATION PACKET

# HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONS

## How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

A high rate of workforce turnover is common in the child welfare field. High turnover affects not only the agency, primarily through higher costs, but also the children and families the agency serves. Not all turnover is preventable, but agencies can be aware of the factors that are predictive of high turnover and implement strategies to mitigate those factors.

### Why retention matters

Investing in the child welfare workforce is an essential activity of any child welfare agency,<sup>1</sup> “because a well-trained, highly skilled, well-resourced and appropriately deployed workforce is foundational to a child welfare agency’s ability to achieve best outcomes for the vulnerable children, youth and families it serves. The workforce is the agency’s public face. ...The actions of the workforce are what stakeholders use most to judge an agency’s competence and effectiveness.”<sup>2</sup>

### Turnover rates

Annual turnover rates below 10–12 percent are considered optimal or healthy.<sup>3,4</sup> For the past 15 years, child welfare turnover rates have been estimated at 20–40 percent.<sup>5,6,7</sup> The available data currently reflect an estimated national



# How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

average turnover rate of approximately 30 percent (with individual agency rates as high as 65 percent and as low as 6 percent). Even higher average rates of turnover have been noted among child welfare trainees: 46–54 percent.<sup>8,9</sup> The table in the appendix provides a snapshot of current turnover rates in 33 child welfare agencies.

## Turnover predictors and costs

A meta-analysis of 22 studies identified 36 variables that most affected caseworkers' intention to leave<sup>10</sup> (see chart below).

High workloads that accompany high caseloads have been associated with high turnover, given their impact on caseworkers' levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction,<sup>11,12,13</sup> and on key casework functions, including:

- Timeliness, continuity, and quality of service delivery;
- Family engagement and relationship-building; and,
- Safety and permanency outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and families.

High workloads can have a domino effect: staff burnout and stress lead to staff attrition that can result in decreased worker-family contact and failure to meet

professional standards for investigation response and completion; case plan completion and updates, and service provision; as well as increased time to permanency, rates of maltreatment recurrence, and the number of foster care placements and re-entries into foster care.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

## High caseloads and workloads

High caseloads and workloads reflect an array of direct and indirect costs:<sup>14</sup>

- Direct costs related to overtime, worker separation, and hiring/training new staff
- Indirect costs for other workers (increased paperwork and case management, emotional exhaustion, supervisors redirecting time to providing direct service)
- Cost of processing changes in placement (staff meetings, new reports, identifying and placing a child in new placement, paperwork)
- Cost of increased time in foster care (whether a group or family home) as a result of reduced permanency and decreased chances of reunification
- Cost of recurrence of abuse and neglect, including the cost of investigation(s) and foster care placement(s)

**LOW EFFECT**

- Racial group
- Gender
- Social work degree
- Other degrees
- Caseload size
- Spouse/other support

**MODERATE EFFECT**

- Age
- Tenure
- Education level
- Job demand
- Coping
- Autonomy
- Financial reward
- Co-worker support
- Professionalism
- Salary
- Career development
- Worker self-efficacy

**MEDIUM EFFECT**

- Well-being
- Safety concerns
- Depersonalization
- Role conflict
- Inclusion
- Role ambiguity
- Organizational support
- Perceptions of fairness
- Organizational culture
- Policy
- Supervisor support
- Professional commitment
- Organizational climate
- Human caring

**HIGH EFFECT**

- Stress
- Emotional exhaustion
- Organizational commitment
- Job satisfaction





# How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR CONSIDERATION

ESSENTIAL COMPONENT	RELATED STRATEGIES	JURISDICTIONAL APPROACHES AND EXAMPLES
8. <i>Training and Developing the Team</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive training system that includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Assessment of training needs</li> <li>» Agency-wide training plan with staff learning plans</li> <li>» Robust catalog (pre-service, new worker, in service)</li> <li>» Benchmarks and policies for number of courses/ hours completed</li> <li>» Learning Management System</li> <li>» Multi-modal opportunities (eLearning, blended classroom, video/webinar, tools/job aids)</li> <li>» Simulations to support real world application</li> <li>» Trainer assessment and quality improvement</li> <li>» Evaluation of satisfaction, knowledge gain and impact</li> <li>» Specialized certificate programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Simulation Labs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Training Competencies</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">University-Agency Partnerships to Support Transfer of Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Data Fellows</a></li> </ul>
9. <i>Managing and Supervising Effectively</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manageable supervisor-to-staff ratios</li> <li>• Supervisory competency model</li> <li>• Supervisory/managerial pre-service training or leadership academy</li> <li>• Peer mentoring/coaching committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Supervisory Development</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Solution-Based Casework Coaching</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mentoring Committee</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Supervisory Ratios</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Leadership Academy</a></li> </ul>
10. <i>Nurturing a Healthy Agency Climate and Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validated climate/culture assessments to better understand workforce and organizational issues</li> <li>• Design teams with staff at all levels to identify and implement local retention solutions</li> <li>• Data dashboard or website to showcase impacts/outcomes</li> <li>• ChildStat to debrief casework and remedy agency barriers</li> <li>• Stay Interviews</li> <li>• Staff recognition/appreciation events and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Trauma-Informed Culture</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Design Teams</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ChildStat</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Data Portal</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Racial Equity</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Safety Culture Survey</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessing Safety Culture</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Stay Interviews</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Employee Recognition</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Staff Rewards</a></li> </ul>

## Appendix

It is important to consider the figures in this appendix with the following caveat: all child welfare agencies do not define or capture attrition data in the same fashion. Some agency figures reflect both preventable (voluntary resignation) as well as non-preventable (termination, retirement, layoff, relocation, etc.) turnover, while others distinguish between the two. Some agencies include both internal (promotion, moving from one unit to another within the agency, or moving to another agency within a county) as well as external (leaving the agency turnover), while others differentiate between these various types.



# How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

## SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT TURNOVER RATES

JURISDICTION	RELATED RESOURCES	TURNOVER RATE
Alaska	<a href="http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/CFSR.pdf">http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/CFSR.pdf</a>	34%
Arizona	<a href="https://www.azauditor.gov/sites/default/files/17-111_Report.pdf">https://www.azauditor.gov/sites/default/files/17-111_Report.pdf</a>	28.7%
Arkansas	<a href="http://dhs-staging.ark.org/images/uploads/newsroom/MovingBeyondCrisisDCFSReport.pdf">http://dhs-staging.ark.org/images/uploads/newsroom/MovingBeyondCrisisDCFSReport.pdf</a>	32%
California	<a href="http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/CalSWEC/turnover_2011.pdf">http://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/CalSWEC/turnover_2011.pdf</a>	6.1% (external); 33% change in assignments (internal & external)
Colorado	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/03/25/lawmakers-pitch-fix-child-welfare-caseworker-crisis/99580524/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/03/25/lawmakers-pitch-fix-child-welfare-caseworker-crisis/99580524/</a>	Larimer County: 43%
Delaware	<a href="https://kids.delaware.gov/pdfs_archive/fs/fs-cfsp-apsr-2017.pdf">https://kids.delaware.gov/pdfs_archive/fs/fs-cfsp-apsr-2017.pdf</a>	34%
Florida	<a href="https://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childwelfare/docs/2015LMRs/CPI%20and%20CPI%20Supervisor%20Workforce%20LMR.pdf">https://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childwelfare/docs/2015LMRs/CPI%20and%20CPI%20Supervisor%20Workforce%20LMR.pdf</a>	30.48%
Georgia	<a href="https://gbpi.org/2017/overview-2018-fiscal-year-budget-human-services/">https://gbpi.org/2017/overview-2018-fiscal-year-budget-human-services/</a>	32%
Idaho	<a href="https://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/when-things-go-right-in-idaho-foster-care/Content?oid=3212037">https://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/when-things-go-right-in-idaho-foster-care/Content?oid=3212037</a>	17%
Illinois	<a href="http://www.wandtv.com/story/34985208/child-welfare-providers-face-retention-problems">http://www.wandtv.com/story/34985208/child-welfare-providers-face-retention-problems</a>	40% (Private providers account for 85%)

(continued)



# How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

## SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT TURNOVER RATES

JURISDICTION	RELATED RESOURCES	TURNOVER RATE
Indiana	<a href="https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2015/10/08/dcs-high-caseloads-lack-support-fuel-case-manager-exodus/73591516/">https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2015/10/08/dcs-high-caseloads-lack-support-fuel-case-manager-exodus/73591516/</a>	24%
Iowa	<a href="http://www.scottadvconsult.com/summary-of-government-oversight-hearing-on-child-welfare-june-5-2017/">http://www.scottadvconsult.com/summary-of-government-oversight-hearing-on-child-welfare-june-5-2017/</a>	17%
Kansas	<a href="http://kcur.org/post/about-quarter-social-workers-kansas-agency-children-and-families-left-2015#stream/0">http://kcur.org/post/about-quarter-social-workers-kansas-agency-children-and-families-left-2015#stream/0</a>	24.4%
Kentucky	<a href="http://www.governing.com/columns/smart-mgmt/gov-social-workers-turnover.html">http://www.governing.com/columns/smart-mgmt/gov-social-workers-turnover.html</a>	33%
Louisiana	<a href="http://www.wafb.com/story/36129785/audit-finds-high-caseloads-staff-turnover-hinder-dcfs-foster-care-program">http://www.wafb.com/story/36129785/audit-finds-high-caseloads-staff-turnover-hinder-dcfs-foster-care-program</a>	
Missouri	<a href="https://dss.mo.gov/cd/cfsplan/2015-2019/2015-2019-child-family-service-plan.pdf">https://dss.mo.gov/cd/cfsplan/2015-2019/2015-2019-child-family-service-plan.pdf</a>	29%
Montana	<a href="https://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/ProtectMontanaKids/PMK%20Commission%20Final%20Report%2005-31-16.pdf">https://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/ProtectMontanaKids/PMK%20Commission%20Final%20Report%2005-31-16.pdf</a>	54.4%
Nebraska	<a href="http://www.ketv.com/article/nebraska-chosen-to-test-child-welfare-workforce-strategies/12774153">http://www.ketv.com/article/nebraska-chosen-to-test-child-welfare-workforce-strategies/12774153</a>	32%
Nevada	<a href="http://dcfs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dcfsnv.gov/content/Tips/Reports/APSR%202012%20FINAL.pdf">http://dcfs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dcfsnv.gov/content/Tips/Reports/APSR%202012%20FINAL.pdf</a>	Clark County: 65% Washoe County: 27.63%
New Jersey	<a href="http://www.nj.gov/dcf/childdata/exitplan/NJ.DCF.Workforce.Report_2015-2016.pdf">http://www.nj.gov/dcf/childdata/exitplan/NJ.DCF.Workforce.Report_2015-2016.pdf</a>	6.97%
New Mexico	<a href="https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LFC/Documents/Early_Childhood_And_Education/Hearing%20Brief%20-%20Child%20Protective%20Services%20-%20September%202017.pdf">https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LFC/Documents/Early_Childhood_And_Education/Hearing%20Brief%20-%20Child%20Protective%20Services%20-%20September%202017.pdf</a>	25%
New York	<a href="http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/annual-report/documents/2016_annual%20report.pdf">http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/annual-report/documents/2016_annual%20report.pdf</a>	30%
North Carolina	<a href="http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:_eEVZV6sH9o-J:ncacdss.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/NC-Statewide-CPS-Evaluation-02-26-16.pdf+&amp;cd=1&amp;hl=en&amp;ct=clnk&amp;gl=us#26">http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:_eEVZV6sH9o-J:ncacdss.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/NC-Statewide-CPS-Evaluation-02-26-16.pdf+&amp;cd=1&amp;hl=en&amp;ct=clnk&amp;gl=us#26</a>	28%

(continued)





# How does turnover affect outcomes and what can be done to address retention?

- 1 National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (n.d.) *Why the workforce matters* [Issue brief]. Retrieved from [http://ncwwi.org/files/Why\\_the\\_Workforce\\_Matters.pdf](http://ncwwi.org/files/Why_the_Workforce_Matters.pdf)
- 2 American Public Human Services Association. (2010). *Workforce guidance*. Retrieved from [http://www.aphsa.org/content/dam/aphsa/PPCWG/Reflective%20thinking%20guide/Workforce/Workforce%20Guidance%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.aphsa.org/content/dam/aphsa/PPCWG/Reflective%20thinking%20guide/Workforce/Workforce%20Guidance%20(1).pdf)
- 3 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *10 practices: A child welfare leader's desk guide to building a high-performing agency*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-10Practicespart1-2015.pdf>
- 4 Gallant, M. (2013). *Does your organization have a healthy employee turnover rate*. [SABA Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.halogensoftware.com/blog/does-your-organization-have-healthy-employee-turnover>
- 5 U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2003). *HHS could play a greater role in helping child welfare agencies recruit and retain staff* (GAO-03-357). Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-03-357>
- 6 American Public Human Services Association. (2005). *Report from the 2004 child welfare workforce survey, state agency findings*. Retrieved from <http://www.theprofessionalmatrix.com/docs/WorkforceReport2005.pdf>
- 7 National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2011). *Child welfare workforce demographics (2000–2010): Snapshot of the frontline child welfare caseworker*. Retrieved from [http://ncwwi.org/files/Workforce\\_Demographic\\_Trends\\_May2011.pdf](http://ncwwi.org/files/Workforce_Demographic_Trends_May2011.pdf)
- 8 West Virginia Legislative Auditor, Performance Evaluation & Research Division. (2013). *Agency review: Bureau for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services* (Report No. PE 13-03-539). Retrieved from [http://www.legis.state.wv.us/joint/perd/perdrep/ChildFam\\_8\\_2013.pdf](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/joint/perd/perdrep/ChildFam_8_2013.pdf)
- 9 Chang, J. (2017). *State child protection agency halts hiring, citing drop in turnovers*. Austin American-Statesman. Retrieved from <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/state-child-protection-agency-halts-hiring-citing-drop-turnovers/MvbWAlpPp5jMUpEQaOrbSM/>
- 10 Kim, H. & Kao, D. (2014). A meta-analysis of turnover intention predictors among US child welfare workers. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 47, 214–223.
- 11 Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). *Caseload and workload management*. State Managers Series [Issue brief]. Retrieved from [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case\\_work\\_management.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case_work_management.pdf)
- 12 Children's Research Center (2009). *Agency workforce estimation: Simple steps for improving child safety and permanency*. FOCUS: Retrieved from [http://www.nccglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdf/focus09\\_agency\\_workforce\\_estimation.pdf](http://www.nccglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/focus09_agency_workforce_estimation.pdf)
- 13 Social Work Policy Institute. (2010). *High caseloads: How do they impact delivery of health and human services?* Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/r2p-cw-caseload-swpi-1-10.pdf>
- 14 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). (2016). *Cost savings from reasonable child welfare workloads* [Issue brief]. Retrieved from: [https://ncwwi.org/files/Job\\_Analysis\\_\\_Position\\_Requirements/Cost\\_Savings\\_from\\_Reasonable\\_Child\\_Welfare\\_Workloads.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Job_Analysis__Position_Requirements/Cost_Savings_from_Reasonable_Child_Welfare_Workloads.pdf)
- 15 CPS Human Resource Services. (2006). *The turnover toolkit: A guide to understanding and reducing employee turnover: Tool 1: Calculating the cost of employee turnover* [Excerpted chapter]. Retrieved from: [http://ncwwi.org/files/Retention/Calculating\\_the\\_cost\\_of\\_Employee\\_Turnover.pdf](http://ncwwi.org/files/Retention/Calculating_the_cost_of_Employee_Turnover.pdf)
- 16 Patel, D., McClure, M., Phillips, S., & Booker, D. (2017). *Child protective services workforce analysis and recommendations*. (Texas Association for the Protection of Children issue brief). Retrieved from: [http://ncwwi.org/files/Retention/Child\\_Protective\\_Services\\_Workforce\\_Analysis\\_and\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://ncwwi.org/files/Retention/Child_Protective_Services_Workforce_Analysis_and_Recommendations.pdf)
- 17 AFSCME. (2016). *Cost Savings from Reasonable Child Welfare Workloads*. Retrieved from [https://ncwwi.org/files/Job\\_Analysis\\_\\_Position\\_Requirements/Cost\\_Savings\\_from\\_Reasonable\\_Child\\_Welfare\\_Workloads.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Job_Analysis__Position_Requirements/Cost_Savings_from_Reasonable_Child_Welfare_Workloads.pdf)
- 18 Munson, S. (2016). *NJ DCF workforce report: A commitment to child welfare excellence through comprehensive workforce & leadership development*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers School of Social Work, Institute for Families. Retrieved from [http://www.nj.gov/dcf/childdata/exitplan/NJ.DCF.Workforce.Report\\_2015-2016.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf/childdata/exitplan/NJ.DCF.Workforce.Report_2015-2016.pdf)
- 19 Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). *Caseload and workload management*. State Managers Series [Issue brief]. Retrieved from [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case\\_work\\_management.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case_work_management.pdf)
- 20 State of Colorado, House Bill 17-1283. (2017). *An act concerning the creation of a task force to examine workforce resiliency in the child welfare system*. Retrieved from [https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017A/bills/2017a\\_1283\\_signed.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017A/bills/2017a_1283_signed.pdf)

**P** 800.228.3559

**P** 206.282.7300

**F** 206.282.3555

casey.org | KMResources@casey.org

