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A Workplace Study of Four Southern-Ontario Children's Aid Societies (FULL REPORT)

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Partnerships for Children and Families Project

**A Workplace Study of Four
Southern-Ontario Children's Aid Societies**

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SOCIAL WORK



June 2003

A Workplace Study of Four Southern-Ontario Children's Aid Societies

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**The Partnerships for Children and Families Project
Wilfrid Laurier University
June 2003**

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Executive Summary

Rationale Children's Aid Societies have experienced extensive change since the implementation of recent child welfare reforms in Ontario. Agencies are facing a number of challenges including recruiting and retaining staff, high workloads, extensive requirements for documentation and administration, and less time to serve families and children. The purpose of this study was to understand employee experiences as workers in child welfare.

Research Design A survey was distributed to employees of four children's aid societies. Completion of the survey was voluntary and all individual responses were kept confidential. Completed surveys were returned directly to researchers. Six to eight months after the distribution of the survey, employees voluntarily participated in a series of targeted focus groups. Focus groups were used to facilitate the interpretation of survey results.

Survey Results Four hundred and three surveys were completed (for a return rate of 49.3%). Forty-nine percent of employees reported low levels of intention to leave, and 12% reported strong intention to leave their organization. However, intention to leave among direct service workers was higher at 15%. Forty-six percent of all employees who responded to the survey indicated high levels of overall job satisfaction, and even among direct service workers, 42% reported high levels of overall job satisfaction. However, 43.5% of direct service workers also reported being highly emotionally exhausted. Thirty-nine percent of all employees responding to the survey reported high levels of emotional exhaustion, suggesting that high levels of stress are affecting a significant proportion of individuals working in child welfare organizations. Twenty-nine percent of all respondents scored in the high range on a scale measuring an unfeeling or impersonal response to clients; among direct service workers, 39% were high on this scale, and among direct service workers in Intake departments, 49% reported high scores in terms of an impersonal and unfeeling response to service recipients.

Focus Group & Survey Comment Results The experience of child welfare work itself was mixed. Feelings of gratification were associated with believing one's work is important and meaningful, and dissatisfaction was linked to increased documentation and less time for client contact. Employees emphasized the importance of a solid team, collegial support, and supervisory support in counterbalancing dissatisfaction with the work itself. A perception of inadequate support from the organization and a lack of resources (both within the organization and in the broader community) were identified as problems. Employees reported needing more equitable distribution of caseloads, improved communication between departments and from management, and the establishment of an agency culture that cares for the well being of all employees.

Discussion & Implications Despite experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion, almost half of all survey respondents reported being highly satisfied

with their jobs. This is an interesting paradox that warrants further study. We suspect that the paradox is related to the female dominated workforce in child welfare agencies, and the tendency of women to sacrifice their own needs for those they see as requiring care. We argue that current levels of emotional exhaustion among employees in child welfare are unacceptable. Emotional exhaustion is clearly a significant contributor to employee turnover. Policies and practices that promote a more balanced approach to the work, as well as fostering cultures that are both caring and committed to service excellence are needed.

The relatively high rates of depersonalization especially among DSWs raises concerns about the attitudes of some workers towards the families receiving child welfare services; do unfeeling and impersonal responses contribute to resistance and a lack of cooperation from some families?

Employees are very satisfied with the intellectual challenge of the work. Job satisfaction could be increased by maintaining the intellectual challenge and, at the same time, improving the “doability” of the job. Employee turnover will improve as ways are found to decrease emotional exhaustion, improve workers’ perceptions of being treated fairly, and improve job satisfaction.

Rationale/ Problem Statement

Since the implementation of Child Welfare Reforms in Ontario, particularly during the late 90's, the field of child welfare has experienced powerful forces of change. These changes have left staff in many agencies feeling extremely challenged in providing positive service environments for children and families, and with creating positive working environments that attract and retain staff.

Children's Aid Societies have experienced extensive growth in the need for staff as they work to manage large increases in service volumes, and changes in funding priorities oriented to investigation, intervention, and the placement of children in care. The challenge of recruiting and retaining staff has been complicated by the reality of very high caseloads, extensive requirements for documentation and administration, and less time to serve families and children.

Staff turnover levels in an organization are an outcome of a complex set of individual and organizational characteristics. Examining these characteristics can help identify their relationship to turnover and to other indicators of organizational health and the overall quality of the helping environment for service participants and providers.

Children's Aid Societies in Ontario¹

The children's aid society (CAS), also known as Family and Children's Services (F&CS), is a non-profit agency working in local communities to provide help and support to children and their families. Established under the authority of The Child and Family Services Act, the CAS is operated by a board of directors elected from the local community and by the membership at large. Services are funded through the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Programs and services are developed in response to the needs of children and families in the local community. F&CS is responsible for the investigation and assessment of all allegations of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect towards children and the management of a case when a child is taken into care. Other services provided by F&CS include adoption services, foster care, parenting support programs, and children and youth programs.

In the past few years, F&CS has responded to an increased volume of child protection concerns, increased admission of children into care, and a significant increase in workload for employees. From April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002 CASs in Ontario responded to a total of 219,205 calls and substitute care was provided to 28,805 children (up 32% from 1998-99).

As of September 30, 2001, there were 6,346 full-time employees working for Ontario CASs. Direct service workers account for 72% of the total staff. This is up 34% since January 1999.

¹ Information on Children's Aid Societies in Ontario was obtained from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' website: www.oacas.org.

Research Project: Partnerships for Children and Families Project

The Partnerships for Children and Families Project (PCFP) is a three-year research project (2000-2003) directed at understanding the lives and experiences of families and children who are served by children's aid societies and children's mental health services in Waterloo and Wellington regions of Ontario.

The PCFP is supported by the Community and University Research Alliance initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and is housed in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University.

The project brings together community members, professionals, and academic partners. A central aim of the PCFP is to foster improvements in existing child welfare and children's mental health policies, interventions, and systems.

The Project also is committed to understanding the experiences of employees in child welfare and children's mental health to give voice to the challenges and gratifications of working in these fields. Agency partners of the PCFP identified a concern around the level of strain their employees experience as they work to provide needed services. The ensuing research was directed at:

- Understanding the experiences of employees working in child welfare and children's mental health
- Exploring sources of job satisfaction and stress, and why employees stay with and leave these organizations
- Discovering what contributes to a satisfying and productive workplace in child welfare and children's mental health organizations

There were four children's aid societies and three children's mental health agencies that participated in the overall investigation of employee's experiences. The results reported herein, however, are specific to the four children's aid societies and do not include results from any of the participating children's mental health agencies.

The Research Design

The workplace study consisted of two elements, an employee survey and a series of focus groups held following the survey. These are described below in detail.

Employee Survey

The employee survey consisted of 254 questions (or “items”) designed to capture, as comprehensively as possible, the experience of being an employee in a children’s aid society. The survey was divided into 8 sections that grouped items by themes such as organizational culture, occupational commitment, and job satisfaction. Survey items were selected from pre-existing valid and reliable scales measuring dimensions that have been found to be related to employee turnover, as well as measures of commitment to the purpose of the organization and a variety of demographic items. Some items were modified for use with child welfare and children’s mental health service providers. For a complete list of the scales and definitions used in the employee survey, please refer to **Appendix A**.

The majority of items were answered using a Likert-type scale (e.g. strongly disagree to strongly agree) to indicate the strength of agreement with each statement. Some items required respondents to “fill in the blank” or elaborate on their response using short sentences. There was also a series of demographic questions that asked employees to indicate their age, marital status, and length of service, etc. Survey respondents could also choose to include additional written comments on a comment page provided at the end of the survey.

Procedure

All employees of participating children’s aid societies received a personally addressed envelope containing the survey, an information letter, as well as a draw ticket to enter to win a half-day at the spa. Survey packages were distributed through each agency’s internal mailing system.

Employees were instructed to complete the survey and return it directly to Wilfrid Laurier University in the postage-paid envelope provided. Employees were given a three week time period in which to return their completed surveys. Please refer to **Appendix B** for the Survey Information Letter.

Completion of the survey was completely voluntary. Employees were informed that all individual survey responses would remain confidential and that survey results would be reported in aggregate form only.

Focus Groups & Survey Comments

Approximately 6-8 months following the distribution of the employee survey, employees were asked to volunteer to participate in a series of targeted focus groups. Separate focus groups were offered for support staff, direct service workers, supervisors, and managers.

The focus groups were conducted in order to develop some context for interpreting the quantitative survey data. Analysis of the qualitative data on the survey questionnaires (i.e., comments that survey respondents wrote) contributed to the development of the questions for the focus group and were later compared to the findings from the focus group discussion. Although questions were adjusted slightly to reflect the nature of the respective groups, they were essentially the same for each focus group.

We asked about what it is like to work in the organization, what the good things and the not-so-good things about the job are, and how the work of different departments changes people's experience in the agency. Everyone was asked what changes they would make, if given the power that would make their agency a place they could see themselves working in years hence.

Discussions were taped and detailed notes were taken. Using the tapes and notes, a summary of the content of the focus groups from each participating organization was prepared. The summaries were subjected to coding which had been developed through prior agencies' analyses. For each agency analysis, new codes were added if warranted by the data. Each coding category and its sub-themes were tracked to determine whether a particular group talked about it as being of concern to themselves or to others.

A similar coding strategy was employed to extract prevalent themes from the written comments submitted by survey respondents.

Procedure

A recruitment letter was sent to all employees at each agency (See **Appendix C**). The letter instructed employees who were interested in taking part in a focus group to contact the PCFP's project manager directly. Separate discussion groups were advertised for supervisors and managers, direct service workers, and support staff at each agency. Please refer to **Appendix D** for the information letter/consent form given to focus group participants.

Survey Results

This section has been organized to provide an overview of aggregate survey responses. The survey results are divided into

- a presentation of demographic information about survey respondents as a group
- a discussion of what employees report that their agencies are doing well
- an examination of employee intention to leave, stress levels, and job satisfaction within the organizations

The report of study results was designed to be responsive to issues facing children's aid societies in Ontario, such as challenges retaining staff, employee burnout, and the nature of child welfare work. Employees' work experiences were examined from several complementary perspectives. The choice to group survey respondents by department, job position, and organizational tenure where appropriate was made to parallel organizational structure for purposes of clarity.

In preparing this report for participating children's aid societies, we assumed that managers and staff would be most interested in knowing about 1) the things that agencies are doing well, 2) employee's intentions to leave their agency, and 3) the levels of stress that employees are experiencing. The first three sections of this report address these topics. In part 3, we include direct service workers' (DSWs) replies to questions about the amount of time spent documenting their work, and the time spent in face-to-face contact with clients. The final section reports the results of a variety of measures of job satisfaction.

Return Rate

There were 403 completed surveys returned out of a total of 817 distributed surveys for a return rate of 49.3%

Although not ideal, this return rate can be considered to provide valid information about how children's aid societies' employees view themselves and their organization.

Survey Respondent Profile

Number of Completed Surveys By Department

Family Services	Intake Services	Children's Services	Administrative Services²	Legal	Total
132 (34.6%)	81 (21.3%)	84 (22.0%)	64 (16.8%)	20 (5.2%)	381 ³

Number of Completed Surveys By Position

Direct Service Worker	Support Staff	Supervisor	Management	Lawyer	Total
236 (60.8%)	80 (20.6%)	53 (13.7%)	15 (3.9%)	4 (1.0%)	388 ⁴

Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 years	37	9.3
25-30 years	84	21.0
31-39 years	114	28.5
40-49 years	96	24.0
50-59 years	63	15.8
60+ years	6	1.5

Age Range for Direct Service Workers Only	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 years	29	12.3
25-30 years	70	29.7
31-39 years	65	27.5
40-49 years	49	20.8
50-59 years	20	8.5
60+ years	3	1.3

² Includes employees from the executive office, finance and information services, and human resources and volunteer program.

³ The department could not be determined for 22 survey respondents.

⁴ The position could not be determined for 15 survey respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	330	81.9
Male	65	16.1
Did Not Respond	8	2.0

Highest Earned Degree

Highest Earned Degree	Frequency	Percentage
College diploma	42	10.4
B.A./ B.Sc.	82	20.4
B.S.W.	102	25.3
M.S.W.	86	21.3
M.A./ M.Sc.	11	2.7
Other	40	9.9
Did Not Respond	40	9.9

Highest Earned Degree For Direct Service Workers Only	Frequency	Percentage
College diploma	12	5.1
B.A./ B.Sc.	62	26.3
B.S.W.	91	38.6
M.S.W.	44	18.6
M.A./M.Sc.	7	2.9
Other	15	6.4
Did Not Respond	5	2.1

Part 1: Good News

What do employees see children's aid societies doing well?

Forty-seven percent of agency employees who responded to the survey indicated high levels of overall job satisfaction, and among direct service workers, 41% reported high levels of overall job satisfaction. An overwhelming 99% of agency staff reports that they are moderately or highly satisfied with the intellectual stimulation provided by their jobs. A majority (62%) of staff appears to be highly satisfied with the adequacy of informational resources and the competency of supervisory resources, and 72% of employees are moderately satisfied with promotion availability and process, while 18% are highly satisfied with the promotional availability associated with their jobs.

This satisfaction extends to measures assessing financial reward, where 38% of all employees reported high levels of satisfaction with salary and benefits and 59% reported moderate satisfaction with their financial rewards.

As will be evident in the findings reported below, intention to leave among employees was not as high as might have been expected. Fifty percent of employees reported low levels of intention to leave, and 12% reported a strong intention to leave their agency. Among direct service workers, 44% scored in the low range on thoughts about leaving their agency, and 15% scored in the high range on intention to leave.

Appendix A lists the four participating agencies' average scores for all the scales included in the survey. The general pattern of scores reveals moderate satisfaction with the workplace and with the work itself. Considering the tremendous pressures on child welfare organizations, these results speak to the efforts of managers and workers themselves to commit to making the workplace a good place to be, and to doing their jobs well.

Looking at the overall picture of scale scores hides important differences between people who work in different departments, are in different positions, feel radically different levels of stress, or have strong desires to leave or remain employed with their agency. The remainder of this report addresses these important differences and suggests some implications for managers of children's aid societies.

Part 2: Employee Turnover

***Are there many staff members intending to leave their agency?
Are there differences in experiences of the workplace between employees who plan to stay and those who plan to leave?***

To answer these questions, we began by classifying survey respondents by the degree to which they indicated they intended to leave their agency. We divided the scale into three categories:

Low score	1.00-2.99	1=not at all likely
Medium score	3.00-5.00	
High score	5.01-7.00	7=extremely likely

Then, we examined whether there were differences in people's intention to leave their agency depending on which department they were in or which type of position they held. The two tables below show the results of this analysis.

Intention to Leave By Department⁵

	Intention to Leave			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	67 51.1%	46 35.1%	18 13.7%	131 100.0%
Intake	35 43.2%	34 42.0%	12 14.8%	81 100.0%
Children's Services	37 44.0%	36 42.9%	11 13.1%	84 100.0%
Administrative	36 58.1%	23 37.1%	3 4.8%	62 100.0%
Legal	13 65.0%	4 20.0%	3 15.0%	20 100.0%
Total	188 49.7%	143 37.8%	47 12.4%	378 100.0%

We see that 12% of all employees in the four agencies scored in the high category on intention to leave. Among the four agencies, high intentions to leave ranged from 6.5% to 17%. Almost 50% of all employees reported low intentions to leave their agency. Administrative employees were least likely to intend to leave, while those in the Intake and Legal areas were slightly more likely than other groups to score in the high range on intention to leave.

⁵ Where the total in any table is lower than the total number of surveys returned, it is because of some missing information on completed surveys.

When we look at the same data by the type of positions held by agency employees (see below), we see that direct service workers (DSWs) are at least twice as likely as those in other positions (except lawyers) to want to leave their agency (agency range was 6-19%). The majority of support staff, supervisors, and managerial staff are not intending to leave their organizations.

Intention to Leave By Position

	Intention to Leave			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	104 44.3%	95 40.4%	36 15.3%	235 100.0%
support staff	43 55.1%	29 37.2%	6 7.7%	78 100.0%
supervisor	34 64.2%	17 32.1%	2 3.8%	53 100.0%
management	8 53.3%	6 40.0%	1 6.7%	15 100.0%
lawyer	2 50.0%		2 50.0%	4 100.0%
Total	191 49.6%	147 38.2%	47 12.2%	385 100.0%

To learn more about DSWs' higher scores on this variable, we looked more closely at this group. When one looks at the relationship between department and intention to leave for Direct Service Workers only, we see that intention to leave is highest among DSWs in Intake. Family Services workers are most likely to have low intentions to leave; over half are in this category.

Intention to Leave by Department for Direct Service Workers Only

	Intention to Leave			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	52 51.5%	35 34.7%	14 13.9%	101 100.0%
Intake	22 37.3%	25 42.4%	12 20.3%	59 100.0%
Children's Services	26 38.8%	31 46.3%	10 14.9%	67 100.0%
Total	100 44.1%	91 40.1%	36 15.9%	227 100.0%

Intention to Leave By Organizational Tenure

To learn whether there were particular time periods during a person's career with the organization when they were more apt to want to leave, we next looked at the influence of organizational tenure on an employee's intention to leave.

	Intention to Leave			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	26 59.1%	13 29.5%	5 11.4%	44 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	25 52.1%	18 37.5%	5 10.4%	48 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	28 35.4%	37 46.8%	14 17.7%	79 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	13 54.2%	8 33.3%	3 12.5%	24 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	28 45.2%	22 35.5%	12 19.4%	62 100.0%
5 - 10 years	21 41.2%	25 49.0%	5 9.8%	51 100.0%
More than 10 years	56 64.4%	28 32.2%	3 3.4%	87 100.0%
Total	197 49.9%	151 38.2%	47 11.9%	395 100.0%

Not surprisingly, we see that longer tenured employees have less intention to leave their employers than those who have been with the agency only a few years. Those who have been with the agency between 1 and 2 years and between 2.5 and 5 years were the most likely to have strong intentions to leave. Perhaps these earlier years are those when both employee and employer assess their mutual suitability. What this data does not show, of course, is whether this is the point at which many actually leave.

Intention to Leave By Organizational Tenure for Direct Service Workers Only

Since direct service workers returned 61% of the survey questionnaires, we also looked at the relationship between tenure and this group of workers only. The pattern is similar as the table below shows. Although high intention to leave seems to be greatest among those tenured between 2.5 and 5 years, a surprisingly high proportion of DSWs in the job for less than a year are high on intention to leave.

	Intention to Leave			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	18 54.5%	10 30.3%	5 15.2%	33 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	18 51.4%	12 34.3%	5 14.3%	35 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	16 30.2%	27 50.9%	10 18.9%	53 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	8 53.3%	5 33.3%	2 13.3%	15 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	15 37.5%	16 40.0%	9 22.5%	40 100.0%
5 - 10 years	7 29.2%	14 58.3%	3 12.5%	24 100.0%
More than 10 years	22 64.7%	10 29.4%	2 5.9%	34 100.0%
Total	104 44.4%	94 40.2%	36 15.4%	234 100.0%

Turnover Intentions and Survey Scale Scores

To try to understand more about what may contribute to strong intentions to leave and similarly strong intentions not to leave, we examined in more detail those in the low and high categories on this scale. We looked for significant⁶ differences between these two groups on responses to the other survey scale scores. Both the scales on which these two groups differed significantly and those on which they did not are shown below.

High Intention to Leave – Higher on	High Intention to Leave – Lower on	No Significant Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional exhaustion ▪ Depersonalization ▪ Image violation ▪ Intention to Quit ▪ Job search – active ▪ Job search – preparatory ▪ Perceived inequitable employment relationship scale ▪ Role ambiguity ▪ Role conflict ▪ Work-family conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreeableness ▪ Conscientiousness ▪ Cultural inventory – clan, innovations ▪ Job satisfaction – overall ▪ Job satisfaction - resource adequacy, comfort, challenge, promotions ▪ Loyalty ▪ Occupational Commitment – affective, continuance, normative ▪ Organizational commitment – affective, continuance, normative ▪ Organizational trust ▪ Organizational justice – distributive, procedural, interactional ▪ Organizational support – instrumental, affective ▪ Personal accomplishment ▪ Supervisor support ▪ Work group cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy ▪ Cultural inventory – market, administrative ▪ Family-work conflict ▪ Job satisfaction –financial ▪ Union support

Here we can see that those who reported strong intentions to leave are discontent on several dimensions.

- They are more emotionally exhausted and more likely to distance themselves (depersonalization) from their clients than employees who do not have strong intentions to leave.
- They are experiencing considerable role conflict and ambiguity in their jobs.

⁶ When we say “significant differences”, we mean “significant” as judged by a statistical test of significance.

- They feel that their personal values and those of the agency do not match.
- They perceive that their work is negatively affecting their family life. They are more dissatisfied with their jobs overall, and on all job satisfaction dimensions except financially.
- They do not trust the organization and perceive the organization as treating employees unfairly. Probably related to this, they do not feel as much pride in the agency as do other employees.
- They experience less support from the organization in terms of training and assistance to do their work.
- As might be expected, they are preparing to look for another job.

Antecedents to Intention to Leave

The research literature on turnover has identified several variables as strong predictors of an individual's intention to leave an organization. The variables that are most clearly related to intention to leave were included in a further statistical analysis using multiple regression⁷. This regression shows that the variables, overall job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, continuance organizational commitment, emotional exhaustion, and image violation are all significantly related to intention to leave. Normative organizational commitment did not significantly add to the ability to predict intention to leave. Taken together, the five variables account for 53% of the variance in turnover intention. This relationship holds true when we look at those newly employed (2.5 years or less) and at longer-term employees.

Intention To Leave & Antecedents -- ALL

Variables	Whole Group		Tenure <=2.5 yrs		Tenure >2.5 yrs	
	Beta	p	Beta	p	Beta	p
Overall Job Satisfaction	-.290	.000	-.368	.000	-.195	.015
Organizational Commitment-Affective	-.213	.000	-.227	.002	-.199	.007
Organizational Commitment-Continuance	-.240	.000	-.233	.000	-.235	.000
Organizational Commitment-Normative						
Emotional Exhaustion	.191	.000	.137	.022	.261	.000
Image Violation	.205	.000	.183	.031	.218	.008
F	81.63		45.26		34.10	
Degrees of Freedom	362		177		182	
Adjusted R ²	.527		.556		.476	

When we look at DSWs alone (see below), we see that, interestingly, emotional exhaustion and image violation play a role in the turnover decisions of longer-term employees, but not in those of newer DSWs. Overall job satisfaction is not a significant factor in the intention to leave of longer-term DSWs.

Intention To Leave & Antecedents – DSWs Only

Variables	All DSWs		Tenure <=2.5 yrs		Tenure >2.5 yrs	
	Beta	p	Beta	p	Beta	p
Overall Job Satisfaction	-.311	.000	-.546	.000		
Organizational Commitment-Affective	-.243	.000	-.279	.000	-.279	.003
Organizational Commitment-Continuance	-.244	.000	-.209	.002	-.208	.006
Organizational Commitment-Normative						
Emotional Exhaustion	.180	.001			.280	.001
Image Violation	.203	.004			.383	.000
F	52.18		46.29		27.90	
Degrees of Freedom	216		125		89	
Adjusted R ²	.542		.521		.547	

⁷ Multiple regression is a statistical technique that measures the significance of the relationships of predictor (antecedent) variables to a dependent variable. The Beta value is an indicator of the relative importance of the antecedent variables; the higher the Beta, the greater the predictive value of the variable.

Later in this report, we look in detail at Emotional Exhaustion and at Job Satisfaction and other variables measured by scales included in the survey. Since Image Violation, or the perceived fit between individual and organizational values, has emerged as an important variable, both as measured by a scale in the survey and as a concept discussed by focus group members, we explored its antecedent variables.

The table below shows the results of a multiple regression using variables related to a person’s experience of the workplace and their work. Results are presented for the whole group of agencies, for DSWs alone and for newer DSWs (2.5 or fewer years tenure). Note that, for new DSWs, only three variables are significant predictors of image violation: low organizational trust, a perception of low market orientation in the agency’s culture (i.e., low service excellence and results focus), and high role ambiguity. When we look at the results for all respondents from the four agencies, we see that image violation is associated with low organizational trust, lack of cohesiveness in an individual’s work group, a low clan orientation in the organization’s culture (i.e., low emphasis on participation, teamwork, concern for people), low market orientation, high role ambiguity, and an inequitable employment relationship.

Image Violation & Antecedents

Variables	Whole Group		DSWs Only		New DSWs	
	Beta	p	Beta	P	Beta	p
Organizational Trust	-.165	.009			-.429	.000
Perceived Inequitable Employment Relationship	.202	.000	.211	.001		
Role Ambiguity	.159	.001	.139	.024	.326	.025
Work Group Cohesion	-.145	.001				
Organizational Culture – Clan	-.218	.000	-.378	.000		
Organizational Culture – Market	-.190	.000	-.241	.000	-.340	.000
F	51.44		40.09		41.25	
Degrees of Freedom	310		191		108	
Adjusted R ²	.494		.462		.528	
<u>Not Significant</u>						
Role Conflict						
Organizational Culture – Innovative						
Organizational Culture – Administrative						
Organizational Support – Affective						
Organizational Support -- Instrumental						
Organizational Justice -- Distributive						
Organizational Justice -- Procedural						
Organizational Justice – Interactional						
Supervisor Support						

Part 3: Employee Stress

What are the levels of stress, or emotional exhaustion, felt by children’s aid society employees? Do employees who differ on levels of emotional exhaustion, also differ on other experiences of the workplace?

To measure employee stress, we used the Maslach Burnout Inventory’s scale⁸ for Emotional Exhaustion (EE). Using the definitions of “low” (0-16), “moderate or medium” (17-27), and “high”(28 or over), provided by the authors for social service employees, we looked at the distribution of low, medium, and high scores by department, position, and organizational tenure.

Emotional Exhaustion by Department

	l/m/h emotional exhaustion			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	26 20.2%	50 38.8%	53 41.1%	129 100.0%
Intake	19 25.0%	22 28.9%	35 46.1%	76 100.0%
Children's Services	27 35.1%	23 29.9%	27 35.1%	77 100.0%
Administrative	30 49.2%	13 21.3%	18 29.5%	61 100.0%
Legal	3 16.7%	5 27.8%	10 55.6%	18 100.0%
Total	105 29.1%	113 31.3%	143 39.6%	361 100.0%

This table illustrates that almost 40% of all employees scored in the high range on emotional exhaustion, suggesting that a significant proportion of employees are experiencing high levels of stress. Individual agencies had between 29% and 46% of their employees in this category. This level of EE among child welfare employees is consistent with the recent research with Metro Toronto child welfare workers done by Regehr et al. (2000)⁹.

Administrative employees are most likely to report experiencing low levels of EE, and the majority of employees (56%) in legal departments report high EE. Almost half of employees in Intake (46%) also report high levels of EE.

⁸ Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. Palo Alto, CA 94303.

⁹ Regehr, C., Leslie, B., Howe, P., & Chau, S. (2000). *Stressors in child welfare practice*. Toronto: Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto and Children’s Aid Society, Toronto.

Emotional Exhaustion by Position

Turning to look at whether the positions respondents held in their agencies had an impact on their experience of EE, we see that the 3 of the 4 lawyers in the survey sample report high EE. Almost half of the managers, a third of the supervisors, 29% of support staff, as well as 44% of DSWs (agency DSW range was 29-50%) report having a high level of emotional exhaustion. Clearly, many people at every level in child welfare organizations experience being emotionally exhausted.

	l/m/h emotional exhaustion			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	53 23.7%	73 32.6%	98 43.8%	224 100.0%
support staff	27 36.5%	26 35.1%	21 28.4%	74 100.0%
supervisor	19 37.3%	15 29.4%	17 33.3%	51 100.0%
management	6 40.0%	2 13.3%	7 46.7%	15 100.0%
lawyer	1 25.0%		3 75.0%	4 100.0%
Total	106 28.8%	116 31.5%	146 39.7%	368 100.0%

Emotional Exhaustion by Department for Direct Services Workers Only

When we look more closely at departments, DSWs only, and EE, we find that workers in Children’s Services are somewhat more likely than those in Intake and Family Services to report low EE levels. Similarly, DSWs in Intake and Family Services are somewhat more likely to score in the high range on EE. However, there is no area of direct service work where the majority of employees are not moderately or highly emotionally exhausted.

	l/m/h emotional exhaustion			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	17 17.0%	38 38.0%	45 45.0%	100 100.0%
Intake	14 25.0%	17 30.4%	25 44.6%	56 100.0%
Children's Services	21 35.0%	15 25.0%	24 40.0%	60 100.0%
Total	52 24.1%	70 32.4%	94 43.5%	216 100.0%

Emotional Exhaustion by Organizational Tenure

To see whether, for example, new employees experienced more stress than those who had been working for the agency for a long time, we looked at emotional exhaustion by organizational tenure.

	l/m/h emotional exhaustion			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	15 35.7%	13 31.0%	14 33.3%	42 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	14 32.6%	18 41.9%	11 25.6%	43 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	19 24.4%	26 33.3%	33 42.3%	78 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	5 20.8%	6 25.0%	13 54.2%	24 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	15 25.0%	21 35.0%	24 40.0%	60 100.0%
5 - 10 years	10 20.8%	16 33.3%	22 45.8%	48 100.0%
More than 10 years	31 37.8%	21 25.6%	30 36.6%	82 100.0%
Total	109 28.9%	121 32.1%	147 39.0%	377 100.0%

We can see that:

- Those employees who have been with the organization between 2 and 2.5 years are most likely to report high levels of exhaustion (54%). Is this a time when some are asked to take on more responsibility? Are they expected to be experts after two years, or to mentor others for example?
- Among those who have been with the agency for less than six months, one third report high levels of emotional exhaustion, suggesting that introduction to the organization is highly stressful for many.
- The experience of EE does not diminish with tenure in the organization for a significant proportion of employees. More than one third of employees who have been with the agency for more than 10 years report high levels of EE.

Emotional Exhaustion by Organizational Tenure for Direct Service Workers Only

	l/m/h emotional exhaustion			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	9 29.0%	9 29.0%	13 41.9%	31 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	7 21.9%	16 50.0%	9 28.1%	32 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	10 19.2%	17 32.7%	25 48.1%	52 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	2 13.3%	2 13.3%	11 73.3%	15 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	11 27.5%	13 32.5%	16 40.0%	40 100.0%
5 - 10 years	5 22.7%	7 31.8%	10 45.5%	22 100.0%
More than 10 years	9 29.0%	9 29.0%	13 41.9%	31 100.0%
Total	53 23.8%	73 32.7%	97 43.5%	223 100.0%

When we examine the relationship between level of EE and tenure in the organization for direct service workers only we see the following:

- 42% of DSWs who have been working at the agency less than 6 months report high levels of emotional exhaustion.
- EE seems to decrease somewhat for DSWs who have been with the agency longer than six months, but rises again, and between 2 and 2.5 years the largest proportion (73%) of Direct Service Workers are highly emotionally exhausted.
- 42% of DSWs with more than 10 years of experience in the agency are highly emotionally exhausted. Is the cumulative experience of working in child welfare inevitably this draining? How effective can people be in their work with others when they are highly stressed especially if this continues over many years?

Emotional Exhaustion and Survey Scale Levels

We next looked for significant differences in how levels of emotional exhaustion (EE) were related to individuals' perceptions of themselves and their workplace as measured by the other survey scales. The greatest number of significant differences between people at different levels of emotional exhaustion occurred between those who reported low levels of emotional exhaustion and those who reported high levels. These are shown in the next table.

High on Emotional Exhaustion, Higher on:	High on Emotional Exhaustion, Lower on:	No Significant Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depersonalization ▪ Family-work conflict ▪ Image violation ▪ Intention to leave ▪ Intention to quit – time ▪ Job search – active ▪ Job search – preparatory ▪ Perceived inequitable employment relationship scale ▪ Role conflict ▪ Role ambiguity ▪ Work-family conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreeableness ▪ Autonomy ▪ Conscientiousness ▪ Cultural inventory –clan, innovation, administrative ▪ Job satisfaction – comfort, challenge, financial reward, resource adequacy, promotions ▪ Job satisfaction -- overall ▪ Loyalty ▪ Occupational commitment – affective ▪ Organizational commitment – affective, normative, continuance ▪ Organizational justice – distributive, procedural, interactional ▪ Organizational support – affective, instrumental ▪ Organizational trust ▪ Personal accomplishment ▪ Supervisor support ▪ Work group cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural inventory –market ▪ Occupational commitment – continuance, normative ▪ Union support

These findings can, perhaps, be understood best if they are put in the context of theories about what contributes to emotional exhaustion. We attempt to do this in the following section.

Antecedents to Emotional Exhaustion

Researchers have studied many variables that might be seen as antecedents to emotional exhaustion. These include variables related to aspects of the person themselves, of the job, and about the organization¹⁰. Antecedents that researchers identified include role conflict, role ambiguity, perception of inequity in the employment relationship, a perception of a lack of fairness in the process and outcomes of organizational decisions, lack of supervisor support, client interaction time, professional tenure, and personal agreeableness.

To examine the impact of these antecedents, we again used multiple regression. We first looked at the relationship between EE and the variables within each category of antecedent variables (i.e., personal, job, and organizational variables). Then we selected only those variables that were significant antecedents within each category and used them in our final set of regressions. These latter results are presented in the table below for the whole group of respondents, for DSWs, and for DSWs relatively new to their agency (2.5 years or less).

As you can see, for the whole group of respondents, an inequitable employment relationship, a perception of lack of fairness in the outcomes of employment decisions (organizational justice – distributive) role conflict, the “doability” of the job, and the personality characteristic, agreeableness, are all significant contributors to EE. Role ambiguity, tenure in one's profession, amount of client contact time, and perceptions of the fairness of processes of organizational decisions (organizational justice – procedural) were not significant.

For DSWs, agreeableness was not significant, and for new DSWs, only role conflict and the perceived fairness of the outcomes of organizational decisions were significantly related to EE.

¹⁰ For a review of this research see: Stalker, C. & Harvey, C. (2002) *Professional Burnout in Social Service Organizations: A Review of Theory, Research and Prevention*. Waterloo, ON: Partnerships for Children and Families Project, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Emotional Exhaustion & Antecedents

Variables	Whole Group		DSWs Only		New DSWs	
	Beta	p	Beta	p	Beta	p
Perceived Inequitable Employment Relationship	.257	.000	.211	.003		
Organizational Justice -- Distributive	-.156	.016	-.203	.018	-.411	.000
Organizational Justice -- Procedural						
Role Conflict	.237	.000	.216	.001	.340	.000
Role Ambiguity						
Job Satisfaction – Comfort (“Doability”)	-.124	.033	-.239	.003		
Client Contact Time						
Agreeableness	-.138	.002				
Tenure in Profession						
F	57.07		41.61		35.76	
Degrees of Freedom	333		183		110	
Adjusted R ²	.457		.470		.387	

The theory about stress and burnout suggests that high levels of depersonalization (distancing oneself from one’s clients), high levels of work-family conflict, low levels of job satisfaction (all areas), intention to leave, and preparation for job search are seen as consequences of high emotional exhaustion. It is likely that a vicious circle develops, whereby, for example, job stressors such as role conflict or perception of injustice lead to employee stress, which contributes to family conflict, which in turn may contribute to more emotional exhaustion, and more family conflict.

These results raise a number of questions and concerns. How are these employees with high EE coping? How is this level of stress affecting the clients the agency serves? Is it possible to intervene early in the employee’s tenure with the agency in a way that would reduce high levels of EE at later stages? Is this high level of stress manifesting itself in high levels of illness, absenteeism, or disability claims? Are agency role models, i.e., managers and long-tenured employees, inadvertently "saying" that high EE is just part of the job?

Whether low levels of a sense of personal accomplishment are causes of emotional exhaustion or consequences is unclear. It is likely that at least for some employees increased depersonalization and distancing from clients contributes to a lower sense of personal accomplishment. Maslach et al. state that when both EE and depersonalization are high and personal accomplishment is low, burnout exists. We will look at the incidence of burnout below, but examine both depersonalization and personal accomplishment levels in the participating child welfare agencies first.

Depersonalization

The depersonalization scale contained in the Maslach Burnout Inventory measures "an unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one’s

service”¹¹. Over 29% of respondents report high depersonalization, or distancing themselves from the agency's clients.

The table below shows high, medium, and low levels of depersonalization by department. Intake employees indicated the highest levels of depersonalization, with 42% reporting high depersonalization. Administrative and legal employees had the lowest rates of high depersonalization, followed by children's services and family services employees.

Department & Depersonalization

	l/m/h Depersonalization			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	47 37.3%	40 31.7%	39 31.0%	126 100.0%
Intake	19 24.7%	26 33.8%	32 41.6%	77 100.0%
Children's Services	36 46.8%	21 27.3%	20 26.0%	77 100.0%
Administrative	35 59.3%	14 23.7%	10 16.9%	59 100.0%
Legal	9 56.3%	4 25.0%	3 18.8%	16 100.0%
Total	146 41.1%	105 29.6%	104 29.3%	355 100.0%

When we look at the positions employees hold and depersonalization, we see that 37% of DSWs report high depersonalization. Twenty percent of support staff, 19% of supervisors, and 13% of management also highly depersonalize their contact with agency clients, as does one of the four lawyers in our sample. Low depersonalization was reported by 60% of supervisors, 54% of support staff, 40% of managers, and 33% of DSWs.

¹¹ Maslach et al., 1996, p. 4

Position & Depersonalization

	l/m/h Depersonalization			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	73 33.0%	67 30.3%	81 36.7%	221 100.0%
support staff	38 54.3%	18 25.7%	14 20.0%	70 100.0%
supervisor	31 59.6%	11 21.2%	10 19.2%	52 100.0%
management	6 40.0%	7 46.7%	2 13.3%	15 100.0%
lawyer	1 25.0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	4 100.0%
Total	149 41.2%	105 29.0%	108 29.8%	362 100.0%

When we look only at the people who have the most contact with child welfare clients, the direct service workers, we see that 49% of Intake workers, those who have the initial contact with the agency's clients, highly depersonalize this relationship. High depersonalization is also evident among 33% of Family Services workers and 28% of Children's Services workers. What does this mean for a worker's ability to engage a client and encourage a mutually respectful working relationship?

DSWs Only: Department & Depersonalization

	l/m/h Depersonalization			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	35 36.1%	30 30.9%	32 33.0%	97 100.0%
Intake	9 15.8%	20 35.1%	28 49.1%	57 100.0%
Children's Services	26 43.3%	17 28.3%	17 28.3%	60 100.0%
Total	70 32.7%	67 31.3%	77 36.0%	214 100.0%

When we look at the relationship between depersonalization and tenure in the organization for DSWs, we see a familiar pattern. Over 40% of those DSWs just beginning their child welfare work depersonalize their client relationships. Does this indicate that new workers are being encouraged to be impersonal and unfeeling in their interactions with clients? These high levels of depersonalization diminish subsequently, peak at the 2-2.5 year mark, and then diminish again; however, over 36% of long-term DSWs acknowledge distancing themselves from their clients. These proportions of DSWs in the high range of

depersonalization do not bode well for the quality of service to the clients they serve.

DSWs Only: Organizational Tenure & Depersonalization

	l/m/h Depersonalization			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	11 36.7%	6 20.0%	13 43.3%	30 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	12 40.0%	12 40.0%	6 20.0%	30 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	11 21.6%	22 43.1%	18 35.3%	51 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	3 21.4%	2 14.3%	9 64.3%	14 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	14 35.9%	10 25.6%	15 38.5%	39 100.0%
5 - 10 years	7 30.4%	9 39.1%	7 30.4%	23 100.0%
More than 10 years	15 45.5%	6 18.2%	12 36.4%	33 100.0%
Total	73 33.2%	67 30.5%	80 36.4%	220 100.0%

Personal Accomplishment

The third component of Maslach's Burnout Inventory is Personal Accomplishment (PA). This scale “assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people”¹².

Exactly half of the employees who responded to the workplace survey reported high levels of PA, and another 33% report moderate levels. The majority (61%) of Children's Services employees experience high personal accomplishment, as do 49% of Administrative and Intake employees, 46% of Family Services workers, and 44% of Legal department staff.

Just over 16% of respondents report experiencing low PA. Only 7% of Children's Services workers are in this category, but over a quarter of Administrative employees feel little sense of accomplishment.

¹² Maslach et al., 1996, p. 4

Department & Personal Accomplishment

	l/m/h personal accomplishment			Total
	low	medium	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	21 17.5%	44 36.7%	55 45.8%	120 100.0%
Intake	12 16.2%	26 35.1%	36 48.6%	74 100.0%
Children's Services	5 6.8%	24 32.4%	45 60.8%	74 100.0%
Corporate	15 26.3%	14 24.6%	28 49.1%	57 100.0%
Legal	3 18.8%	6 37.5%	7 43.8%	16 100.0%
Total	56 16.4%	114 33.4%	171 50.1%	341 100.0%

Supervisors are the group that have the highest level of high PA (67.4%); support staff the lowest (44.1%), with the exception of the small group of lawyers.

Position & Personal Accomplishment

	l/m/h personal accomplishment			Total
	low	medium	high	
direct service worker	34 15.7%	76 35.2%	106 49.1%	216 100.0%
support staff	19 27.9%	19 27.9%	30 44.1%	68 100.0%
supervisor	2 4.3%	13 28.3%	31 67.4%	46 100.0%
management	2 14.3%	5 35.7%	7 50.0%	14 100.0%
lawyer	1 25.0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	4 100.0%
Total	58 16.7%	115 33.0%	175 50.3%	348 100.0%

When we look at DSWs only, we see that Children's Services workers are most likely to experience high PA and least likely to feel low personal accomplishment. Intake workers have the lowest levels of PA (19%), followed by Family Services workers (18%).

DSWs Only: Department & Personal Accomplishment

	l/m/h personal accomplishment			Total
	low	medium	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	17 18.1%	34 36.2%	43 45.7%	94 100.0%
Intake	11 19.3%	22 38.6%	24 42.1%	57 100.0%
Children's Services	4 6.9%	19 32.8%	35 60.3%	58 100.0%
Total	32 15.3%	75 35.9%	102 48.8%	209 100.0%

The relationship between tenure and PA for DSWs is shown below. Note that the majority of DSWs between 2-2.5 years of employment experience only moderate PA. At each other stage of organizational tenure, at least 44% of DSWs report a high sense of personal accomplishment.

DSWs Only: Organizational Tenure & Personal Accomplishment

	l/m/h personal accomplishment			Total
	low	medium	high	
.5 year or less	4 13.3%	11 36.7%	15 50.0%	30 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	4 12.5%	14 43.8%	14 43.8%	32 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	9 18.8%	16 33.3%	23 47.9%	48 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	3 20.0%	10 66.7%	2 13.3%	15 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	6 16.2%	12 32.4%	19 51.4%	37 100.0%
5 - 10 years	3 13.6%	6 27.3%	13 59.1%	22 100.0%
More than 10 years	5 16.1%	7 22.6%	19 61.3%	31 100.0%
Total	34 15.8%	76 35.3%	105 48.8%	215 100.0%

Burnout

As mentioned earlier, burnout is defined by Maslach et al. as the simultaneous experience of low personal accomplishment, high emotional exhaustion, and high depersonalization. Nineteen survey respondents, or 4.7% of all respondents, were burned out using this definition. As the tables below show, most were DSWs (78.9%) and 15.8% were support staff. One supervisor was also burned out.

Burnout & Position

	Frequency	Percent
direct service worker	15	78.9
support staff	3	15.8
supervisor	1	5.3
Total	19	100.0

There are some burned out employees in every department. The higher representation of burnout in the direct services areas, of course, reflects the high proportion of DSWs who were burned out.

Burnout & Department

	Frequency	Percent
Family Services/Ongoing	7	41.2
Intake	6	35.3
Children's Services	2	11.8
Corporate	2	11.8
Total	17	100.0

Employees with varying years of tenure are burned out. New employees, as well as those with long tenure experience burnout.

Burnout & Tenure

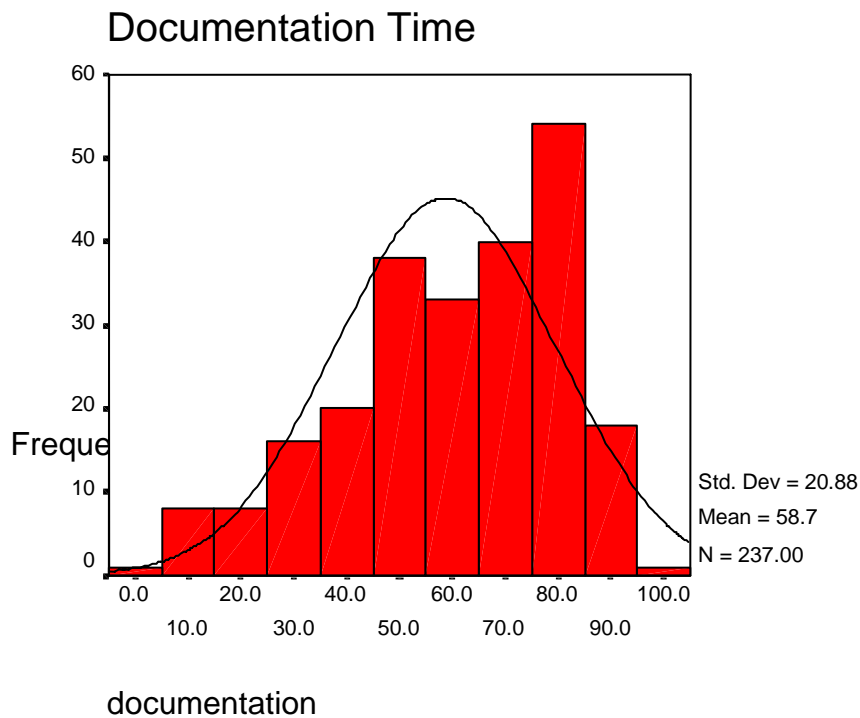
	Frequency	Percent
.5 year or less	3	15.8
.5 - 1 year	1	5.3
1 year - 2 years	6	31.6
2 years - 2.5 years	2	10.5
2.5 years - 5 years	3	15.8
5 - 10 years	3	15.8
More than 10 years	1	5.3
Total	19	100.0

Time Spent on Documentation and Face-to-Face Interaction with Clients

One area where we have heard repeated expressions of concern is about how much time direct service workers are spending on recording at the expense of time spent in face-to-face contact with clients. We included in the survey two questions specifically for direct service workers about these issues.

In response to the question, “*What percentage of your time do you spend in documenting your work?*” we received the following replies from DSWs:

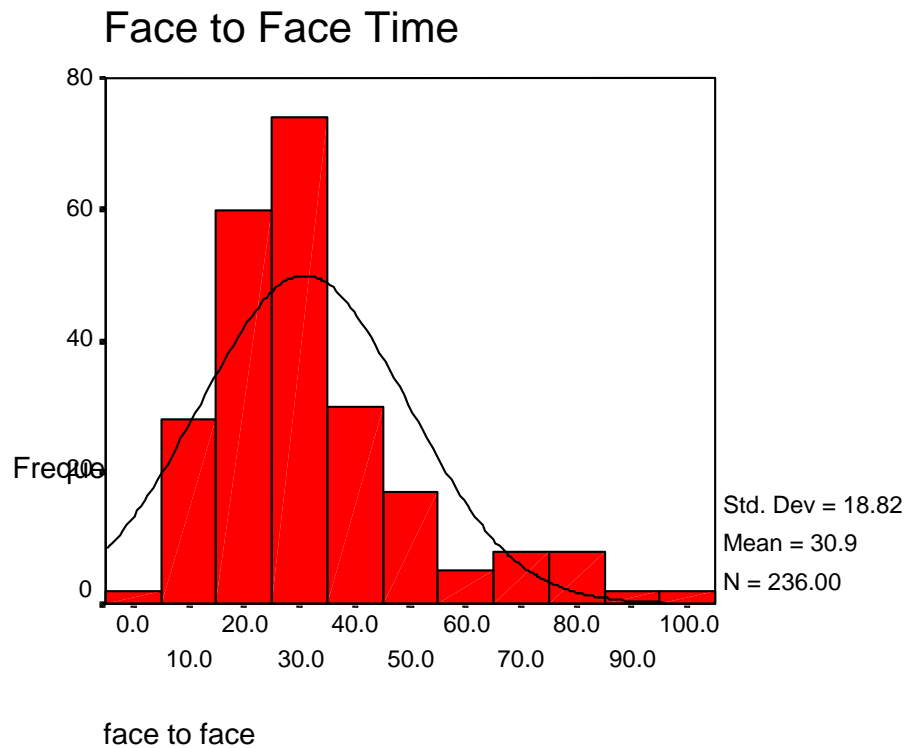
% Of Time Spent Documenting Work	Proportion of Workers (Number)
Less than 20%	5.1% (12)
20-50%	33.3% (79)
51-80%	53.6% (127)
More than 80%	8.0% (19)



Almost 62% of DSWs are spending more than half of their time documenting their work.

In response to the question, “*What percentage of your time do you spend in face to face contact with service recipients?*” we received the following replies:

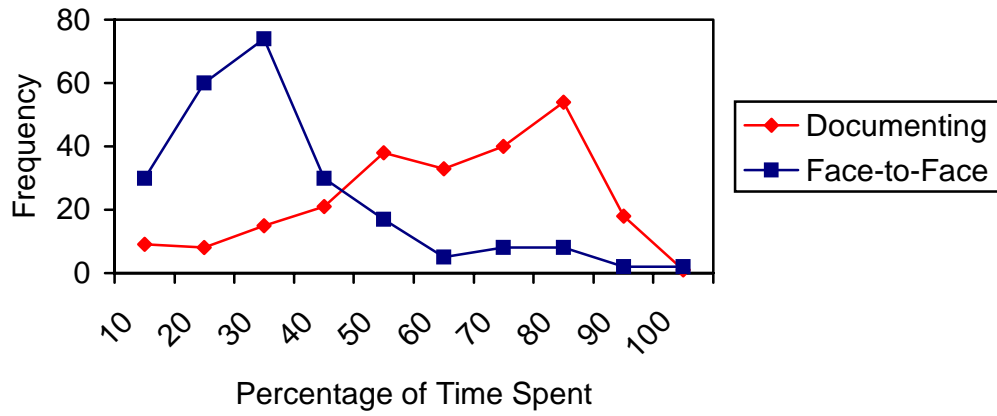
% Of Time Spent in Face to Face Contact with Clients	Proportion of Workers (Number)
Less than 20%	18.6% (44)
20-50%	70.8% (167)
51-80%	8.9% (21)
More than 80%	1.7% (4)



Only 10.6% of DSWs are spending more than half of their time in face-to-face contact with clients.

The graph below also illustrates how DSWs allocate their direct service time.

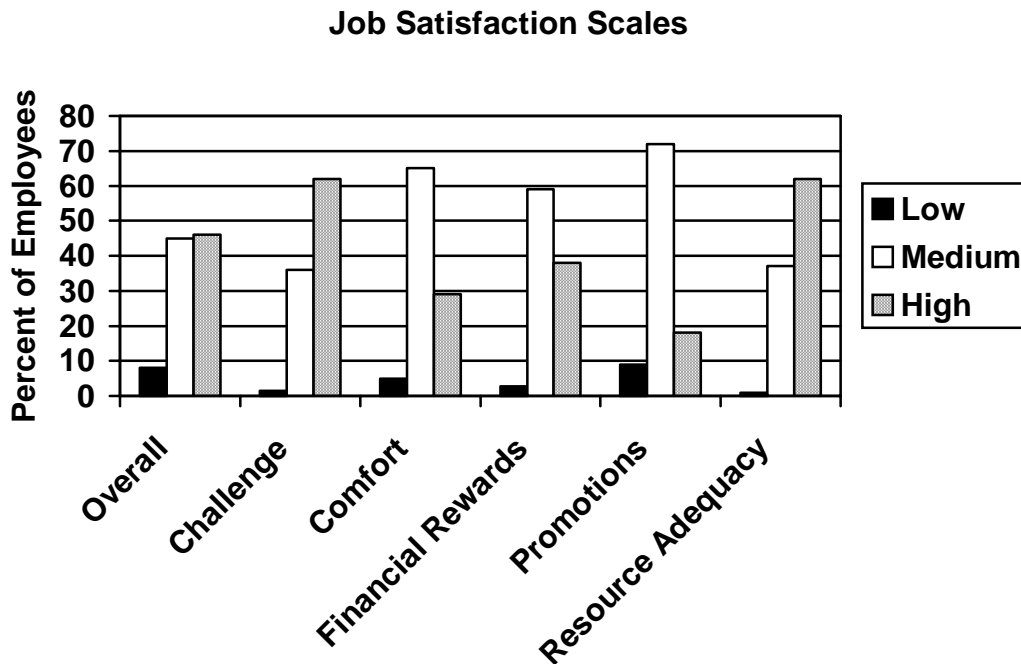
Time Spent in Documentation and Face-to-Face Contact with Clients



Part 4: Job Satisfaction

Are people satisfied in their jobs? Why or why not?

Let's begin the answers to these questions by looking at each of the job satisfaction scale responses. The graph below shows the percentage of low, medium, and high scores on each of the six job satisfaction scales.



The graph shows that the majority of employees are either highly or moderately satisfied with their jobs overall; employees are especially well satisfied with the intellectual challenge offered by their jobs and with the adequacy of informational and supervisory resources. Most employees are only moderately satisfied with the “doability” (comfort) of their jobs, the financial rewards, and the process and availability of promotions.

As in earlier parts of this report, we examined job satisfaction results by department, position held, and organizational tenure. The first set of tables to follow shows these results for overall job satisfaction.

Overall Job Satisfaction – By Department

This scale measures overall job satisfaction. It ranged from 1 to 3.2, and has been divided into low, medium, and high categories.

Low score	0.00 to 1.73
Medium score	1.74 to 2.47
High score	2.48 to 3.20

	l/m/h overall job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	11 8.3%	67 50.8%	54 40.9%	132 100.0%
Intake	4 4.9%	39 48.1%	38 46.9%	81 100.0%
Children's Services	8 9.5%	37 44.0%	39 46.4%	84 100.0%
Administrative	5 7.8%	24 37.5%	35 54.7%	64 100.0%
Legal	2 10.0%	7 35.0%	11 55.0%	20 100.0%
Total	30 7.9%	174 45.7%	177 46.5%	381 100.0%

Forty-seven percent of all respondents are highly satisfied with their jobs overall. The proportion of highly satisfied employees ranged from 43 to 58% at the participating agencies. Legal and Administrative department employees are most likely to be highly satisfied; Family Services workers are least likely to be in this category. Only 8% of employees report low job satisfaction. However, as the next table indicates, two-thirds of those employees are DSWs.

Overall Job Satisfaction –By Position

	l/m/h overall job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	22 9.3%	116 49.2%	98 41.5%	236 100.0%
support staff	6 7.5%	33 41.3%	41 51.3%	80 100.0%
supervisor	1 1.9%	24 45.3%	28 52.8%	53 100.0%
management	1 6.7%	3 20.0%	11 73.3%	15 100.0%
lawyer	1 25.0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	4 100.0%
Total	31 8.0%	178 45.9%	179 46.1%	388 100.0%

Managers are most likely to be highly satisfied, with 73% of those respondents in that category. Over half of supervisors and support workers are also highly satisfied. Lawyers themselves are least likely to be highly satisfied.

Overall Job Satisfaction – By Department for DSWs Only

The next table looks only at DSWs. Levels of high job satisfaction among DSWs are somewhat lower than the average with 42% indicating high overall job satisfaction (agency range: 35-54%). Family Services workers are least likely to report high job satisfaction; however, Children’s Services workers are more likely to have low overall job satisfaction ratings. Intake workers are least likely to report low job satisfaction and the most likely of all DSWs to be highly satisfied with their jobs overall.

	l/m/h overall job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	9 8.8%	55 53.9%	38 37.3%	102 100.0%
Intake	4 6.8%	27 45.8%	28 47.5%	59 100.0%
Children's Services	8 11.9%	29 43.3%	30 44.8%	67 100.0%
Total	21 9.2%	111 48.7%	96 42.1%	228 100.0%

Overall Job Satisfaction – By Organizational Tenure

When we examine the impact of organizational tenure on overall job satisfaction (see next table) we see that most new employees tend to be highly satisfied. This high satisfaction diminishes after the first year of employment, rises again between 2.5 and 5 years, falls off between 5 and 10 years, and then rises to 48% of long-tenured staff who are highly satisfied. This pattern raises the question of whether some time periods in a person's career with an agency are less satisfying as they struggle with increased or different responsibilities or with issues of long-term commitment to an organization.

	l/m/h overall job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	4 9.1%	14 31.8%	26 59.1%	44 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	2 4.2%	21 43.8%	25 52.1%	48 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	7 8.9%	41 51.9%	31 39.2%	79 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	3 12.0%	12 48.0%	10 40.0%	25 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	3 4.8%	29 46.8%	30 48.4%	62 100.0%
5 - 10 years	4 7.8%	27 52.9%	20 39.2%	51 100.0%
More than 10 years	8 9.1%	37 42.0%	43 48.9%	88 100.0%
Total	31 7.8%	181 45.6%	185 46.6%	397 100.0%

Overall Job Satisfaction – By Organizational Tenure for DSWs Only

The next table suggests that, for Direct Service Workers, overall job satisfaction may drop considerably in the period of tenure between one and 2.5 years, but then increases again for the group who stays with the agency for more than 2.5 years. Interestingly, compared to all employees, the few DSWs who have been with their agency for more than 10 years are much less likely to be highly satisfied with their jobs. Only 34% of DSWs with more than 10 years tenure are highly satisfied compared to 49% of the total group of long-term employees as shown in the previous table. Seventeen percent of long-tenured DSWs are dissatisfied with their jobs, while 9% of all employees are in this category.

	l/m/h overall job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	3 9.1%	12 36.4%	18 54.5%	33 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	1 2.9%	17 48.6%	17 48.6%	35 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	6 11.3%	31 58.5%	16 30.2%	53 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	3 20.0%	7 46.7%	5 33.3%	15 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	2 5.0%	19 47.5%	19 47.5%	40 100.0%
5 - 10 years	1 4.2%	12 50.0%	11 45.8%	24 100.0%
More than 10 years	6 17.1%	17 48.6%	12 34.3%	35 100.0%
Total	22 9.4%	115 48.9%	98 41.7%	235 100.0%

Job Satisfaction – Challenge

The next set of tables reviews the survey results for the job satisfaction -- challenge scale. This scale is designed to assess satisfaction with the intellectual stimulation of the work. Overall, about 62% of respondents find their jobs highly satisfying on this dimension. One might question whether high scores on this scale may indicate that the job is challenging in a negative way. One of the scale's questions was *"The problems I am expected to solve are challenging enough"*, which might lead us to think, "Oh, yes, really challenging – impossible!" However, other questions were, "The work is interesting" and "I am given a chance to do the things I do best". It seems that the scale is truly about the positive aspects of challenge and that this is actually a source of job satisfaction for most agency employees.

Job Satisfaction – Challenge By Department

	l/m/h challenge job satisfaction			Total
	low	medium	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	4 3.1%	47 36.2%	79 60.8%	130 100.0%
Intake		34 43.0%	45 57.0%	79 100.0%
Children's Services	1 1.2%	24 28.9%	58 69.9%	83 100.0%
Administrative		21 33.3%	42 66.7%	63 100.0%
Legal		10 50.0%	10 50.0%	20 100.0%
Total	5 1.3%	136 36.3%	234 62.4%	375 100.0%

Employees in Children's Services and Administration reported the most satisfaction with the challenge involved in their jobs, and employees in the Legal departments had the lowest proportion of employees reporting high satisfaction with this dimension. However, at least half of the employees in each area report high satisfaction with the challenge their jobs provide.

Job Satisfaction - Challenge By Position

	l/m/h challenge job satisfaction			Total
	low	medium	high	
direct service worker	3 1.3%	92 39.7%	137 59.1%	232 100.0%
support staff	1 1.3%	34 43.6%	43 55.1%	78 100.0%
supervisor	1 1.9%	10 18.9%	42 79.2%	53 100.0%
management		2 13.3%	13 86.7%	15 100.0%
lawyer		2 50.0%	2 50.0%	4 100.0%
Total	5 1.3%	140 36.6%	237 62.0%	382 100.0%

The table above indicates that managers and supervisors report the most satisfaction with the challenge in their job, and lawyers and support workers report the least satisfaction with this dimension.

Job Satisfaction – Challenge By Department for DSWs Only

	l/m/h challenge job satisfaction			Total
	low	medium	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	2 2.0%	43 42.6%	56 55.4%	101 100.0%
Intake		24 42.1%	33 57.9%	57 100.0%
Children's Services	1 1.5%	21 31.8%	44 66.7%	66 100.0%
Total	3 1.3%	88 39.3%	133 59.4%	224 100.0%

We see that among DSWs, a somewhat larger proportion of those in Children's Services report more satisfaction with the challenge in their work and satisfaction with this dimension is relatively high among all DSWs.

Job Satisfaction – Challenge by Organizational Tenure

	l/m/h challenge job satisfaction			Total
	low	medium	high	
.5 year or less		13 29.5%	31 70.5%	44 100.0%
.5 - 1 year		20 41.7%	28 58.3%	48 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	2 2.6%	36 46.8%	39 50.6%	77 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	1 4.3%	9 39.1%	13 56.5%	23 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	1 1.6%	28 45.9%	32 52.5%	61 100.0%
5 - 10 years	1 2.0%	19 37.3%	31 60.8%	51 100.0%
More than 10 years		21 24.1%	66 75.9%	87 100.0%
Total	5 1.3%	146 37.3%	240 61.4%	391 100.0%

Examining the relationship between organizational tenure and job satisfaction – challenge, we see that the introduction to the agency is a highly satisfying time for new staff. As well, long-tenured staff also find the challenge in their work highly satisfying. People who have worked for the agency for 1-2 years and 2.5 – 5 years report lower levels of high satisfaction. However, even during these periods, over half of the employees in the cohort are highly satisfied with this dimension of their jobs.

Job Satisfaction - Comfort

This scale, the job satisfaction - comfort scale, has to do with the perceived "doability" of the job and the next series of tables examines this scale. Most employees reported their jobs as moderately "doable", with only 5% reporting low satisfaction with the "doability". The scale assesses satisfaction with the physical context of the work including setting, hours and workload.

Job Satisfaction – Comfort By Department

	l/m/h job sat comfort			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	8 6.1%	89 67.4%	35 26.5%	132 100.0%
Intake	4 5.0%	62 77.5%	14 17.5%	80 100.0%
Children's Services	5 6.0%	57 68.7%	21 25.3%	83 100.0%
Administrative	1 1.6%	29 45.3%	34 53.1%	64 100.0%
Legal	2 10.0%	12 60.0%	6 30.0%	20 100.0%
Total	20 5.3%	249 65.7%	110 29.0%	379 100.0%

Employees in Administration reported the most satisfaction with this aspect of their jobs. Those employees in Intake are the least likely to report high satisfaction with the "doability" of their jobs.

Job Satisfaction –Comfort By Position

	l/m/h job sat comfort			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	16 6.8%	166 70.9%	52 22.2%	234 100.0%
support staff		38 47.5%	42 52.5%	80 100.0%
supervisor	1 1.9%	38 71.7%	14 26.4%	53 100.0%
management	1 6.7%	12 80.0%	2 13.3%	15 100.0%
lawyer	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	1 25.0%	4 100.0%
Total	20 5.2%	255 66.1%	111 28.8%	386 100.0%

Sixteen employees in direct service worker positions and four additional employees in other positions are the only ones who report low levels of satisfaction with the “doability” of their jobs. Support staff are most likely to report high levels of satisfaction with the “doability” of their jobs.

Job Satisfaction – Comfort By Department for DSWs Only

	l/m/h job sat comfort			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	7 6.9%	70 68.6%	25 24.5%	102 100.0%
Intake	4 6.9%	45 77.6%	9 15.5%	58 100.0%
Children's Services	5 7.6%	44 66.7%	17 25.8%	66 100.0%
Total	16 7.1%	159 70.4%	51 22.6%	226 100.0%

The table above shows that among DSWs those in Intake are least likely to rate the “doability” of the job as highly satisfying.

Job Satisfaction –Comfort By Organizational Tenure

	l/m/h job sat comfort			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less		29 65.9%	15 34.1%	44 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	1 2.1%	31 64.6%	16 33.3%	48 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	4 5.1%	54 68.4%	21 26.6%	79 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	4 16.0%	13 52.0%	8 32.0%	25 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	6 9.8%	42 68.9%	13 21.3%	61 100.0%
5 - 10 years	3 5.9%	42 82.4%	6 11.8%	51 100.0%
More than 10 years	3 3.4%	48 55.2%	36 41.4%	87 100.0%
Total	21 5.3%	259 65.6%	115 29.1%	395 100.0%

The table above shows that, overall, employees with 10 or more years of tenure were most likely to report high levels of satisfaction with the “doability” of the job.

Job Satisfaction –Comfort By Organizational Tenure for DSWs Only

	l/m/h job sat comfort			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less		25 75.8%	8 24.2%	33 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	1 2.9%	26 74.3%	8 22.9%	35 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	2 3.8%	41 77.4%	10 18.9%	53 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	4 26.7%	10 66.7%	1 6.7%	15 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	5 12.8%	24 61.5%	10 25.6%	39 100.0%
5 - 10 years	2 8.3%	19 79.2%	3 12.5%	24 100.0%
More than 10 years	2 5.9%	20 58.8%	12 35.3%	34 100.0%
Total	16 6.9%	165 70.8%	52 22.3%	233 100.0%

The table above illustrates that in the first six months of employment, direct service workers reported medium to high satisfaction with the “doability” of their jobs. For the group who had been with the agency between 2 and 2.5 years, over a quarter rated their satisfaction with the “doability” of the job as low. Even those with more than 10 years of tenure were more likely to rate satisfaction with the “doability” of the job as moderate rather than high.

Job Satisfaction – Financial Rewards

Financial reward was the only aspect of job satisfaction not associated with either high turnover intention or high emotional exhaustion. Only 3% of employees report low levels of satisfaction with the financial rewards offered by their agency and 38% of all employees are highly satisfied. This scale assesses employees' satisfaction with pay, benefits and job security.

Job Satisfaction – Financial Rewards By Department

	l/m/h financial reward job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	3 2.4%	77 60.6%	47 37.0%	127 100.0%
Intake		54 66.7%	27 33.3%	81 100.0%
Children's Services	5 6.3%	42 52.5%	33 41.3%	80 100.0%
Administrative	2 3.3%	32 53.3%	26 43.3%	60 100.0%
Legal		12 63.2%	7 36.8%	19 100.0%
Total	10 2.7%	217 59.1%	140 38.1%	367 100.0%

Employees in Administration and Children's Services are the most likely to report high satisfaction with salary, benefits and job security, while those in Intake departments are the least likely to report high satisfaction with this dimension.

Job Satisfaction – Financial Rewards By Position

Employees in managerial positions are more likely than those in other positions to report that they are highly satisfied with their salary and benefits. DSWs have the smallest proportion of employees that are highly satisfied with this dimension.

	l/m/h financial reward job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	6 2.6%	145 63.0%	79 34.3%	230 100.0%
support staff	2 2.6%	46 59.7%	29 37.7%	77 100.0%
supervisor	1 2.0%	23 46.9%	25 51.0%	49 100.0%
management	1 7.1%	4 28.6%	9 64.3%	14 100.0%
lawyer		4 100.0%		4 100.0%
Total	10 2.7%	222 59.4%	142 38.0%	374 100.0%

Job Satisfaction – Financial Rewards By Organizational Tenure

	l/m/h financial reward job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	1 2.4%	23 54.8%	18 42.9%	42 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	1 2.1%	33 70.2%	13 27.7%	47 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	4 5.1%	47 60.3%	27 34.6%	78 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	3 13.0%	12 52.2%	8 34.8%	23 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years		43 70.5%	18 29.5%	61 100.0%
5 - 10 years	2 4.2%	25 52.1%	21 43.8%	48 100.0%
More than 10 years	1 1.2%	46 53.5%	39 45.3%	86 100.0%
Total	12 3.1%	229 59.5%	144 37.4%	385 100.0%

Those with more than five years with the agency, and those with less than six months tenure are most satisfied with the financial reward. The reason for the sharp drop in levels of high satisfaction with salary and benefits in the group who were with the agency between six months and one year is not clear. The group who had tenure between one and two years again shows relatively high levels of job satisfaction with salary and benefits.

Job Satisfaction – Promotions

Turning to how staff members regard their satisfaction with promotion availability and process in the agency, the vast majority (72%) is only moderately satisfied. Eighteen percent are highly satisfied and 10% are not satisfied.

Job Satisfaction – Promotions By Department

	l/m/h promotions job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing	13 11.0%	81 68.6%	24 20.3%	118 100.0%
Intake	5 6.3%	64 81.0%	10 12.7%	79 100.0%
Children's Services	8 10.3%	53 67.9%	17 21.8%	78 100.0%
Administrative	6 10.5%	39 68.4%	12 21.1%	57 100.0%
Legal	2 11.1%	15 83.3%	1 5.6%	18 100.0%
Total	34 9.7%	252 72.0%	64 18.3%	350 100.0%

Legal and Intake employees are least likely to report high satisfaction with promotional availability and process.

Job Satisfaction – Promotions By Position

	l/m/h promotions job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	21 9.5%	164 74.5%	35 15.9%	220 100.0%
support staff	9 12.3%	56 76.7%	8 11.0%	73 100.0%
supervisor	3 6.4%	26 55.3%	18 38.3%	47 100.0%
management		10 71.4%	4 28.6%	14 100.0%
lawyer	1 33.3%	2 66.7%		3 100.0%
Total	34 9.5%	258 72.3%	65 18.2%	357 100.0%

As would be expected, employees in supervisory and managerial positions have the highest levels of satisfaction with availability and process of promotions. Support workers are the least likely to report high levels of satisfaction with promotion availability and process.

Job Satisfaction – Promotions By Organizational Tenure

	l/m/h promotions job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less	1 2.7%	29 78.4%	7 18.9%	37 100.0%
.5 - 1 year	1 2.3%	34 77.3%	9 20.5%	44 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	7 9.6%	56 76.7%	10 13.7%	73 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	4 17.4%	15 65.2%	4 17.4%	23 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years	9 15.3%	46 78.0%	4 6.8%	59 100.0%
5 - 10 years	7 14.6%	30 62.5%	11 22.9%	48 100.0%
More than 10 years	7 8.3%	57 67.9%	20 23.8%	84 100.0%
Total	36 9.8%	267 72.6%	65 17.7%	368 100.0%

The table above indicates that those who had been with the agency 2.5—5 years were more likely to be dissatisfied with promotion availability and process. This may be associated with having been passed over or to having become impatient

with their career progress. Those who had been with the agency a year or less and more than five years were more likely to report being highly satisfied with this dimension.

Job Satisfaction – Resource Adequacy

This scale measures satisfaction with the information provided to do the job, and also with the perceived competence of supervisory resources provided by the organization.

Job Satisfaction – Resource Adequacy By Department

	l/m/h resource adequacy job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
Family Services/Ongoing		45 35.4%	82 64.6%	127 100.0%
Intake		33 41.8%	46 58.2%	79 100.0%
Children's Services	1 1.3%	29 36.3%	50 62.5%	80 100.0%
Administrative	1 1.7%	20 34.5%	37 63.8%	58 100.0%
Legal		8 40.0%	12 60.0%	20 100.0%
Total	2 .5%	135 37.1%	227 62.4%	364 100.0%

62% of all employees reported high satisfaction with informational and supervisory resources, and 37% were moderately satisfied. Differences between employees in different departments were small on this dimension.

Job Satisfaction – Resource Adequacy By Position

	l/m/h resource adequacy job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
direct service worker	1 .4%	97 42.4%	131 57.2%	229 100.0%
support staff	1 1.4%	25 33.8%	48 64.9%	74 100.0%
supervisor		9 18.0%	41 82.0%	50 100.0%
management		5 35.7%	9 64.3%	14 100.0%
lawyer		2 50.0%	2 50.0%	4 100.0%
Total	2 .5%	138 37.2%	231 62.3%	371 100.0%

The table above shows that, compared to employees in other positions, supervisors are the most satisfied with informational and supervisory resources.

Job Satisfaction – Resource Adequacy By Organizational Tenure

	l/m/h resource adequacy job satisfaction			Total
	low	med	high	
.5 year or less		10 22.7%	34 77.3%	44 100.0%
.5 - 1 year		17 36.2%	30 63.8%	47 100.0%
1 year - 2 years	1 1.3%	34 44.2%	42 54.5%	77 100.0%
2 years - 2.5 years	1 4.3%	9 39.1%	13 56.5%	23 100.0%
2.5 years - 5 years		24 42.1%	33 57.9%	57 100.0%
5 - 10 years		20 42.6%	27 57.4%	47 100.0%
More than 10 years		25 29.8%	59 70.2%	84 100.0%
Total	2 .5%	139 36.7%	238 62.8%	379 100.0%

New employees and long-tenured employees are most satisfied with these resources.

Levels of Job Satisfaction – Overall

We examined the relationships between the job satisfaction scales and all other survey scales. Below is the summary of the significant differences on the other scales found between those who score high and those who score low on the overall job satisfaction scale. The pattern is very similar for the remaining aspects of job satisfaction, so those tables are not repeated here.

Notice that some of the scales that are about the job itself are significantly related to job satisfaction in the expected directions. That is, high job satisfaction is related to lower role ambiguity and lower role conflict. High job satisfaction is also significantly related to other results of the employment experience, such as lower emotional exhaustion, lower intention to leave, less image violation, and higher organizational commitment.

High Job Satisfaction -- Overall, Higher on These Scales	High Job Satisfaction -- Overall, Lower on These Scales	No Significant Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreeableness ▪ Autonomy ▪ Job satisfaction – challenge, comfort, promotions, and resource adequacy ▪ Loyalty ▪ Occupational commitment – affective and normative ▪ Organizational commitment – affective and normative ▪ Organizational culture – market, clan, innovation and administrative ▪ Organizational justice – distributive, procedural, and interactional ▪ Organizational Support - instrumental and affective ▪ Organizational trust ▪ Personal Accomplishment ▪ Supervisor support ▪ Work group cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depersonalization ▪ Emotional exhaustion ▪ Image violation ▪ Intention to Leave ▪ Intention to Quit ▪ Job Search- Active ▪ Job search – preparatory ▪ Perceived inequitable employment ▪ Role ambiguity ▪ Role conflict ▪ Work-family conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conscientiousness ▪ Family-work conflict ▪ Job Satisfaction – financial reward ▪ Occupational commitment – continuance ▪ Organizational commitment – continuance ▪ Union support

Antecedents to Overall Job Satisfaction

To examine the relationship among aspects of job satisfaction, personal accomplishment, organizational tenure, and overall job satisfaction, we again use multiple regression. The table below shows that having a sense of personal accomplishment and a challenging, "doable" job adequately supported by competent supervisory and informational resources leads to overall job satisfaction. Financial reward and promotions are not significantly related to overall job satisfaction. For DSWs, being relatively new at the job is also associated with overall job satisfaction.

Overall Job Satisfaction & Antecedents

Variables	Whole Group		DSWs Only	
	Beta	p	Beta	p
Challenge	.375	.000	.345	.000
Comfort ("Doability")	.185	.000	.225	.001
Resource Adequacy	.149	.006	.143	.035
Financial Reward				
Promotions				
Personal Accomplishment	.111	.022	.131	.035
Tenure			-.152	.008
F	45.45		26.03	
Degrees of Freedom	314		188	
Adjusted R ²	.362		.400	

Focus Group and Survey Comment Results

In total, 13 focus groups were conducted across the four participating child welfare agencies. Four focus groups with direct service workers (one at each agency), three supervisor focus groups, three administrative staff focus groups, and three focus groups with upper management were conducted.

In general, the survey data was consistent with the focus group data. Notes from the focus groups were subjected to coding in order to extract themes that were then grouped. At the broadest level, the categories of themes that emerged from discussion and comments on the survey questionnaires were:

- The nature of the work itself
- The way the work is structured
- What helps to make it a good place to work
- What is not helping
- What is needed to make it a place one would want to keep working in

These themes line up closely with the focus group questions, reflecting the framework that the questions imposed on the discussions. Please refer to **Appendix F** for a list of focus group questions. Within the broad categories, however, there were sub-themes that reflect the participants' own experiences, perceptions and ideas.

Following are the sub-categories under each of the broader themes:

The work itself

Perceptions and feelings about the work are very mixed. Some employees see the work as challenging, interesting, worthwhile, rewarding and gratifying. Gratification was connected to believing that one's work is important and conducive to positive change for clients.

Some employees find the work highly stressful, unsatisfying and not what they had expected. This is related in large part to the volume of work and the fact that there is more documentation than client contact and in-depth social work for many workers. It is also related to the perception that many families are difficult and angry, and that workers see little change over time for some clients.

The predictable struggle to reconcile the "policing" element with the "social work" element of child welfare is strongly in evidence, though it appears to be intensified by current policies and practices both within and beyond the agencies.

Comments indicate that there is too little time and too few community resources available to do meaningful social work that will help families. Employees worry about the effects on clients of the way child welfare services are currently structured. Community-based workers say their jobs allow for more prevention-oriented service despite caseloads, and for seeing that one is having a positive effect.

The current emphasis on standardized risk assessment, documentation, court preparation and funding dilemmas appears to have changed the way many employees experience the work. This emphasis limits the scope of their work and affects the way they see their role.

The nature of child welfare work has exposed employees to attitudes within the court system and the broader community that they experience as devaluing their role.

In addition to concerns about risks to the safety of children, there are concerns about the responsibilities and liabilities entailed in trying to manage these risks.

The way the work is structured

The “doability” of the job appears to be the main issue, although to varying degrees in different agencies.

Related to “doability” among direct service workers are issues primarily of: adequate training, size of caseload, amount of documentation, timelines, and expectations that exceed the number of hours available (hence, overtime issues). For managers, “doability” issues are sometimes related to the difficulty of taking action on larger organizational issues because of the need to deal with immediate crises and operational matters.

The “non-doability” of the work is stressful and contributes to people feeling limited in their roles.

Employees have varying experiences of how their work is structured. For example, some workers like the *flexibility* that Intake affords them; others said that there is *too little structure* in Intake for any but the most organized workers.

What helps to make it a good place to work

Broad consensus on the value of the team, collegial support, and supervisory support is evident. These are especially important because of the risk, stress, liability, and potentially high visibility associated with the work. Where these supports are experienced as strongly positive, the dissatisfactions and concerns

related to the work itself and the structure of the work seem to be counterbalanced or outweighed.

Within each agency, restructuring has been experienced by some as positive, and by others as negative, apparently depending on department and/or position.

Supervisors appreciate the *opportunities for training and promotions*.

Having a stable core of qualified, experienced front line workers who are suited to child welfare work was mentioned as very important. However, the definition of what constitutes a well-qualified or suitable worker varies.

Maintaining a *balanced life* and having boundaries in place between work and one's personal life help to make the work itself more manageable.

Some feel that changing jobs within the agency periodically is helpful.

Among workers, supervisors and managers, a sense of strong agency purpose and values that are congruent with their own is seen as helping to make the stresses and challenges worthwhile.

What isn't helping

Inadequate support and inadequate resources are the two very prevalent problems identified.

Inadequate support by the organization takes a number of different forms: inadequate case-focused supervision (related to amount, quality and focus), lack of validation and trust when difficult situations or problems arise, and feeling devalued. Recognition and feeling valued are also related to financial remuneration and promotional practices.

Given the perceptions of risk and hard work that are devalued by many clients and by courts and the community, it makes sense that feeling valued and supported within the organization would be of paramount importance.

Inadequate resources are a problem within agencies (staffing levels, caseloads, lack of time to work with clients) and in broader communities (funds and services available to support families).

Many employees have experienced difficulties when their agency has undertaken major restructuring or expansion. The resulting changes and increased turnover have been disruptive. For example, some mentioned inadequate communication about court processes and organizational processes during the times of transition.

Workers feel that supervisors and senior management do not always demonstrate the *leadership*, especially in planning and team building, which workers feel is crucial to their success and satisfaction in the job. This is consistent with senior management's own comments about the lack of time to do the kind of debriefing and planning that they see as necessary, and reflections upon how little "real change" or "progress" has actually resulted from the many changes that have been implemented. Senior managers expressed awareness of the dilemma that workers face as a result of competing demands and experience similar dilemmas themselves.

What's needed

- Good supervision and managerial support.
- Strong sense of team.
- Lower caseloads for new workers and complete training prior to assuming a caseload.
- More qualified and experienced workers and supervisors leading to more staff, hired more selectively, and better retention.
- More social work, less paper work.
- Better service to clients meaning more direct contact with clients, and within that contact
 - more orientation towards strengths and empowerment of families
 - permanent planning for children within allotted time
 - less adversarial processes.
- More equitable distribution of caseloads and capping of caseloads.
- Wishes for regular supervision and team meetings, and the need to prepare workers well for the jobs they do. The latter includes initial training prior to beginning work and educating workers adequately about the available resources in the community.
- More proactive, effective leadership at all management levels, rather than a reactive, crisis-oriented way of operating.
- Increasing and improving communication between departments and from management to workers.
- Fair and consistent regulation/management of flextime, overtime, and compensatory time.

- Up-to-date technology.
- A number of wishes for change were aimed at establishing cultures of caring for the well being of all employees within agencies.
- Even where there is satisfaction with starting salaries, workers wanted a salary structure that is fairer as workers gain experience and status in the agency.
- Workers want to know the agency is advocating with the ministry for changes and/or working with community partners to develop additional resources.

Discussion

We began our study of workers' experience of the workplace in Children's Aid Societies knowing that the implementation of Child Welfare Reforms in Ontario initiated strong forces for change within the child welfare system and within each child welfare agency. Funding priorities more oriented to investigation, intervention, and the placement of children in care led to high growth in the number of staff required to manage large increases in service volumes. High caseloads, extensive requirements for documentation and administration, and less time to serve families and children resulted. In many agencies, staff felt extremely challenged in providing positive service environments for children and families, and agency managers found it more difficult to sustain the positive working environments that attract and retain staff.

Our focus in this study has been to understand the complex set of individual and organizational characteristics that contribute to staff turnover, to other indicators of organizational health, and to the overall quality of the helping environment for service participants and providers. Using the workplace survey results and the comments of both survey respondents and focus group members, we looked in particular at what might predict or be related to an employee's intention to leave their agency, to experience high levels of burnout or emotional exhaustion, and to be satisfied with her or his job.

As noted earlier, most survey respondents were satisfied with their jobs: indeed, almost 47% were highly satisfied and only 8% were dissatisfied. These very positive numbers are juxtaposed with the over 12% of respondents who indicated they intended to leave their agencies, and the astonishing 40% who reported high levels of emotional exhaustion. How can these figures be reconciled?

Perhaps our most striking finding is that despite high levels of EE, satisfaction with the nature of the work itself is quite high. For example, among those direct service workers who were highly emotionally exhausted, just 18% reported low overall job satisfaction and 20% were highly satisfied. This experience of being both highly satisfied and highly emotionally exhausted was indicated in qualitative data as well. How can people who are working so hard and feeling so emotionally burdened be satisfied with their jobs?

We speculate that, at least to some extent, this is explained by the research literature that suggests that social workers as a group are strongly motivated to give of themselves in order to help others. This is supported by the literature on women's roles in the helping professions (e. g., Baines, Evans, & Neysmith¹³; Callahan¹⁴), and child welfare is certainly a woman-dominated field at the front-

¹³ Baines, C., Evans, P., & Neysmith, S. (Eds.) (1991). *Women's caring: Feminist perspectives on social welfare*. Toronto: McClelland Stewart.

¹⁴ Callahan, M. (1993). Feminist approaches: Women recreate child welfare. In B. Wharf (Ed.) *Rethinking child welfare in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc.

line level. People attracted to child welfare – especially those who stay beyond the initial two years – may be individuals who are particularly altruistic. In the qualitative data there were numerous references to the importance of helping children, and in light of the many statements about the community's lack of appreciation for this important work, there may be a certain sense of personal mission for some workers that keeps them feeling good about their work.

In addition, there are indications in the quantitative data that suggest that a norm of high emotional exhaustion dominates child welfare agencies. Recall that 47% of managers and 37% of all long-tenured employees (42% of DSWs in this category) reported high levels of EE. This pattern shows that agency leaders and their longest term employees seem to have a high tolerance for high EE so that being emotionally drained becomes accepted as simply a part of the job.

As for the experience of high overall job satisfaction, some specific aspects of job satisfaction clearly contribute to this. The regression results indicate that a sense of personal accomplishment, satisfaction with the intellectual challenges provided by the job, feeling that the job is "doable", and having adequate supports in terms of informational resources and competent supervisors are important determinants of overall job satisfaction. Their presence in an agency makes a difference for employees, perhaps helping to counter the heavy emotional burden they also experience.

While satisfaction with financial rewards and the availability of promotions are not significant determinants of overall job satisfaction, these can be elements of dissatisfaction. For example, there is a prevalent theme in the qualitative data about DSWs feeling undervalued, particularly in light of the high expectations that workers place upon themselves. Being valued has to do, in part, with a sense of fairness in financial remuneration and promotions, and both these aspects were not highly satisfying for some DSWs. Dissatisfaction with both financial rewards and promotions, when analyzed by organizational tenure, predictably shows that once people reach the point where promotion might reasonably be expected, the level of dissatisfaction jumps.

When we examined the antecedents of emotional exhaustion among the personal, job, and organizational variables measured in the survey, we found that one personal, and two each of the job and organizational variables were significant antecedents to emotional exhaustion. Low agreeableness, or a low tendency to be cooperative, non-critical, and sympathetic towards others was an antecedent of EE among the whole group of survey respondents. This finding indicates that those individuals who are competitive, judgmental, and egocentric may not be well suited to work in child welfare agencies since they are more likely to experience high EE. This personality feature was not a significant predictor of EE when DSWs alone were examined, perhaps signaling that there is not a lot of variance in agreeableness among DSWs.

The two job characteristics that emerged as antecedents to emotional exhaustion were high role conflict and low satisfaction with the perceived "doability" of the job. These variables were significant predictors of EE for all respondents as well as for DSWs alone. Role conflict has been shown by other researchers to be an antecedent of emotional exhaustion and finding oneself in a position where the workload is persistently excessive is a logical precursor to stress. Role ambiguity, or not having clear responsibilities, has often been found to be an antecedent to emotional exhaustion, but that was not the case among our respondents. Levels of role ambiguity were fairly low overall in our sample (2.87 on a 7-point scale), indicating that most respondents felt that their responsibilities were clear, although they perceived incompatible messages about how these should be carried out (role conflict).

Two fairness variables emerged as significant organizational-level antecedents to emotional exhaustion. Perceptions of a lack of fairness in the outcomes of employment decisions and in the employment relationship itself are related to high EE. Thus, a sense of giving more than one receives and feeling resentful about one's level of rewards and responsibilities contributed to child welfare workers feeling emotional exhausted. These findings are consistent with previous research on EE.

For new DSWs (2.5 years or less agency tenure), only high role conflict and perceptions of low distributive justice were significant antecedents of high EE. These DSWs may be spending many hours trying to determine to whom they should be paying most attention about how to do their jobs, and then feeling that the rewards do not justify these efforts.

The high levels of depersonalization found among all employees (30%) and particularly among DSWs (37%) are also a concern. We wonder how trusting, respectful relationships can possibly be formed under those conditions. How can one work effectively with clients when the helping relationship is so distant? Does an impersonal and unfeeling attitude toward clients contribute to adversarial relationships that are more likely to require court intervention?

Image violation measures the fit between an individual's goals and values and those of their employer. It is a significant antecedent to a person's intention to leave an organization and we examined its significant predictor variables. Two features of organizational culture, one, the emphasis on participation, teamwork, and concern for people, and the other, a focus on service excellence and results, were significant antecedents. This finding indicates that employees generally, and DSWs particularly, expect to find both these characteristics in their organizations, and experience image violation when they do not. Child welfare employees also expect their employer to behave with integrity, treat them fairly, and clearly define job responsibilities. They expect a friendly and cohesive group of colleagues as well. Again, when these valued expectations are not met, employees experience image violation and are more likely to want to leave their employer.

For new DSWs, a perceived lack of organizational integrity, unclear responsibilities, and a low emphasis on service excellence are particularly salient antecedents to a sense of image violation.

High image violation, high emotional exhaustion, low job satisfaction, low affective organizational commitment (feelings of wanting to stay with the organization), and low continuance organizational commitment (feelings of needing to stay and needing to avoid the costs of leaving) are all significant antecedents to high intentions to leave the organization in this sample of child welfare workers. This is true for all employees regardless of their tenure in the agency and for DSWs alone. These variables have all been identified in previous research as significant predictors of intentions to leave an organization.¹⁵ Normative organizational commitment (a feeling that one ought to stay) is also usually a significant antecedent, but interestingly did not emerge as such in this group, perhaps because of little variability in this characteristic among child welfare workers.

The relationships among these antecedents to intention to leave an organization, to their individual, job, and organizational antecedents, and to actual turnover are depicted in Figure 1. This figure summarizes much of our discussion. We have looked at particular antecedents to emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and image violation. While we have not examined predictors of organizational commitment, the literature on commitment shows that some variables that we have already mentioned are also significant antecedents to commitment. For example, organizational trust, fairness, and equitable employment relationships are typical organizational commitment antecedents.

Our results indicate a relationship between organizational tenure and several job attitudes and these relationships are particularly strong for DSWs. For example, the job satisfaction regression results showed that newer DSWs are likely to be more satisfied. Furthermore, viewing the results of overall job satisfaction by organizational tenure, the newest employees (less than half a year) were the most satisfied. Emotional exhaustion peaked for all employees between 2 and 2.5 years (73% of DSWs in that group were high on EE!). This high level of EE in such a large proportion of a sub-group is statistically linked to high intention to leave. Turnover intentions sharply diminished for all employees and for DSWs after five years of employment and were highest at the 1-2 and 2.5-5 year periods.

Presumably, those who are highly dissatisfied and intend to leave do actually leave. They may be individuals who had not been committed to child welfare work in the first place. They may also be those who employees referred to in the qualitative data as not being well suited to this kind of work. Suitability, in the

¹⁵ Harvey, C. & Stalker, C. (2003). *Understanding and Preventing Employee Turnover*. Waterloo, ON: Partnerships for Children and Families Project, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University.

eyes of employees, has to do with both personal qualities and strengths in relation to both the demands of the work and also to coping capacities and strategies.

In the focus groups (at all employee levels) and in the survey comments, numerous references were made to the need for a stable core of experienced, qualified front-line workers. The lack of sufficient experienced workers makes everyone's job more difficult. In discussing retention problems, some supervisors and managers offered a useful insight: the first two years (approximately) of the front-line worker's job acts as a kind of "seasoning" period, during which DSWs have a great deal to learn and develop their own ways of managing their heavy workloads. Those who stay on usually have the ability, at that point, to direct more energy and attention to the clinical aspects of their jobs and have probably begun to develop coping strategies.

One could speculate, therefore, that at roughly the two-year point, anyone who was not initially committed to child welfare work or who was not able/willing to cope with the significant challenges of the job, leaves. Those who stay may be more satisfied with their jobs because the nature of the work and their ability to manage the job has improved for them.

Two other things may happen at around the point where DSWs are considered to be "experienced". They may be hoping for promotion or transfer to a preferred department, they may achieve the promotion or desired transfer and they may – whether they succeed in these or not -- be given increased responsibility. Thus, job satisfaction may rise for some. For others, (e.g., those denied a promotion or lateral transfer) feelings about the organization may become more negative. Some workers, who were not upset about how they themselves have been treated, said that their feelings about the organization took a downturn when they saw valued colleagues being treated in a way they perceived as unfair.

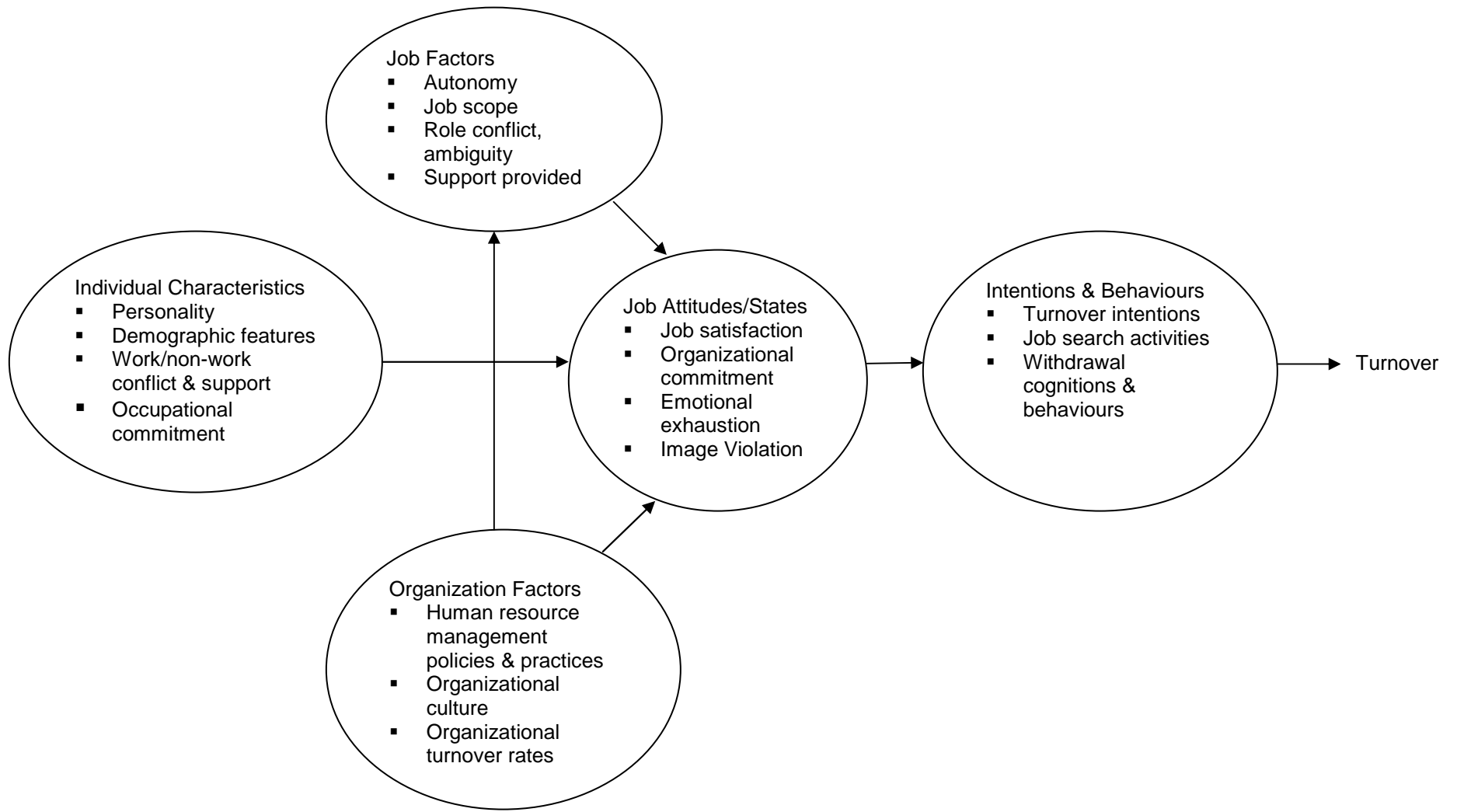
We have spent some time in this discussion focusing on rather difficult issues such as high emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave the organization, but, it is important to recognize that many individuals working in child welfare are long tenured and highly satisfied. Almost half of all the employees who have worked in their agency more than ten years are highly satisfied; 76% are highly satisfied with the intellectual challenge of their jobs; over 60% do not feel highly emotionally exhausted and only 3% intend to leave their agency. Even when we look at DSWs with 10 or more years tenure, we see that 34% are highly satisfied with their jobs overall, 58% are not highly emotionally exhausted, and only 6% are thinking a lot about leaving the agency. Clearly, something is going well for these individuals. They have apparently found the fit that has eluded some others. The qualitative data shows this too; we noted that many employees find the work worthwhile and gratifying. We can learn as much from these positive experiences as from the more negative ones.

It must be acknowledged that there are limitations to any study like this one. We need to keep these in mind when drawing conclusions about what the results might mean. For example, we do not know if the individuals who responded to the survey or participated in the focus group are in some way different from employees who did not respond. The survey response rate (49%) is lower than would be ideal. And, this is a cross-sectional study that is a snapshot at one point in time rather than a study that follows a group of people over a long period of time. For example, we do not know if the experience of individuals currently in the first year of employment is identical to the first year experiences of people now approaching their fifth year. On the other hand, the results do reflect the experiences of a significant proportion of the agencies' employees at this time, and are therefore deserving of attention.

Many of the issues raised in this report will not be new to the readers. Aware that many of these issues are complex and not easily resolved, we next address some implications of these findings for managers of child welfare agencies.

Figure 1

A Simplified Model of Voluntary Turnover



Implications

The pervasiveness of high levels of emotional exhaustion among child welfare employees is unacceptable. It is important for managers to reduce the perceived normalcy of emotional exhaustion by demonstrating behaviours that are congruent with more balance between work and other aspects of one's life. In addition to modeling work-life balance, managers must create policies and practices that reinforce this balance and a caring culture. As suggested by agency employees themselves, what's needed in this regard includes consistent regulation of flextime, overtime, and compensatory time, as well as equitable distribution of caseloads and capping caseloads. Also, specific training for new workers about how to manage a caseload and the documentation demands that go with that might be helpful. These types of efforts will have an impact on the job's "doability".

New DSWs also need even more attention than is currently provided about managing the competing role demands within their jobs. Here, training and regular supervision are especially important. Helping workers recognize the small gains their clients make can enhance low levels of personal accomplishment.

The high levels of depersonalization among employees also need to be addressed. Can supervisors and managers, who tend to have lower levels of depersonalization, share a caring view of the agency's clients, encouraging a helping relationship that itself is characteristic of the agency's overall caring culture?

To counter perceptions of a deficit in the reciprocity relationship between employees and their agencies and of a lack of fairness in the outcomes of employment decisions, managers might communicate more clearly how and why decisions are made. There may also be opportunities to examine and revise promotion policies and salary structures. More managerial and supervisory attention to demonstrating appreciation for a job well done and for just how difficult it is to do a good job may also reduce perceptions of an inequitable employment relationship and again enhance personal accomplishment.

It is also important to maintain high levels of overall job satisfaction as a counterbalance to the emotional demands of the job. Intellectually interesting work supported by adequate resources is crucial and employees generally felt very satisfied with those aspects. How can more employees become more highly satisfied? Again, we suggest this might be achieved by looking at increasing the "doability" of the job, as well as by reviewing policies regarding promotions (can more lateral opportunities be introduced and be made attractive?), encouraging supervisors and others to provide non-financial rewards (e.g. recognition, appreciation), and by reviewing salaries (more rewards for experience?).

Agencies that cultivate a caring and a service excellence culture are less likely to have employees who experience incongruence with their own values and goals. We mentioned some actions above that can enhance a culture of caring. Emphasizing a service excellence culture can result from proactive leadership. For example, working with the Ministry and community partners for adequate supports, selecting expert and caring supervisors, and making sure they have time to engage in regular supervision are concrete, proactive actions. Transparent decisions and a lot, an awful lot, of communication all the time also build these cultures and trust in the organization at the same time.

All these actions sum to creating a workplace in which people commit themselves to staying -- they are challenged, but not overwhelmed, satisfied but not complacent, and feel that they are doing work that they, their leaders, and their community value.

In this section, we have suggested a number of strategies that managers might consider in their efforts to improve the work experience of employees within their particular agencies. We do think, however, that it is legitimate to ask whether it is possible to reduce the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and intention to leave that this study has revealed solely through changes under the control of agency managers. We wonder whether the “image violation” that is a significant predictor of intention to leave is, at least to some extent, related to the current approach to child welfare in Ontario. Many individuals trained in social work find the present approach to child welfare disturbing. The strong emphasis on risk assessment and protection of the child, coupled with the minimal interest and resources directed towards the well-being of parents and families, is seen by many as short-sighted, and ultimately harmful to children. The emphasis on investigation of parents rather than on an assessment of what parents need followed by a societal commitment to providing the support that parents need is very troubling.

Some of the comments in focus groups reflected awareness that many of the problems are not so much at the agency level, but rather at a Ministry and ideological level. Workers point to the need to spend more time documenting risk assessments and preparing court briefs, leaving less time for relationship building and work with parents. Many agency managers have also expressed considerable concern about the direction of child welfare policy. Recent discussions suggest the current system, predicated on a narrow focus of child protection, is reaching its breaking point. The number of children in care in Ontario has increased by 40% over the last six years. Of the 52 children’s aid societies in Ontario, all but two are facing significant financial strain as they carry escalating expenditures associated with foster care and salaries¹⁶.

In addition to serious questions about the financial sustainability of the current child welfare system, we would argue that considerable costs are being exacted

¹⁶ Ontario’s children’s aid societies face severe cash crunch, debt. (2003, January 28). The Record.

from its employees. Ultimately, the cumulative effect of high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among direct service workers at the “front line” impacts service delivery and the child’s and family’s experience of child welfare services. Indeed, other investigations of the efficacy of the child welfare system from the client’s perspective by the Partnerships for Children and Families Project illuminate serious gaps in the quality of services and service delivery¹⁷.

Consequently, in addition to the ideas we have offered to agency managers about ways they might improve the experience of employees, we are encouraging a serious review of the current approach to service delivery so that, to the importance of protecting the child, we add the provision of genuine help to the child’s parents when they come to the attention of Children’s Aid Societies.

¹⁷ For a complete listing of research reports addressing child welfare services from the client’s perspective, please visit www.wlu.ca/pcfproject.

Appendix A: Survey Scale Definitions and Sample Mean Scores

Scale	Sample Average N=403 ¹⁸	Scale's Range
Agreeableness <i>Personal tendency to be cooperative, non-critical, and sympathetic toward others versus competitive, judgmental, and egocentric.</i>	5.78	1-7
Autonomy <i>The perceived degree of flexibility to organize and control one's work.</i>	5.26	1-7
Conscientiousness <i>Personal tendency to be organized, to set goals, and work towards them versus unsystematic, scattered, and easily interrupted.</i>	5.59	1-7
Image Violation <i>"Image violations occur when an individual's values, goals, and strategies for goal attainment do not fit with those of the employing organization." (Lee et al., 1999, p. 451)</i>	2.90	1-7
Intention to Leave <i>Thoughts and determinations to leave the organization.</i>	3.10	1-7
Intention to Quit <i>Perceived probability of remaining in the organization over periods of three months to two years.</i>	2.17	1-7
Job Satisfaction -- Overall <i>A measure of overall satisfaction with one's job.</i>	2.44	1-3.2
Job Satisfaction –Comfort <i>Satisfaction with the physical context of the work, including setting, hours, and workload.</i>	2.76	1-4

¹⁸ This total includes the four participating children's aid societies.

Scale	Sample Average N=403¹⁸	Scale's Range
Job Satisfaction --Challenge <i>Satisfaction with the intellectual stimulation of the work.</i>	3.18	1-4
Job Satisfaction –Financial Rewards <i>Satisfaction with pay, benefits, and job security.</i>	2.99	1-4
Job Satisfaction --Promotions <i>Satisfaction with promotion availability and process.</i>	2.64	1-4
Job Satisfaction –Resource Adequacy <i>Satisfaction with the information provided to do the job and with the perceived competence of supervisory resources.</i>	3.26	1-4
Job Search –Active <i>Applied, talked to, interviewed with a prospective employer.</i>	1.35	1-5
Job Search –Preparatory <i>Talked with friends, read ads, revised résumé in preparation to leave.</i>	2.29	1-5
Loyalty <i>“Active behaviours that demonstrate pride in and support for the organization” (Niehoff et al. 2001, p. 96).</i>	5.14	1-7
Maslach Burnout Inventory –Depersonalization <i>“Measures an unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one’s service” (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 4).</i>	7.75	0-24
Maslach Burnout Inventory –Emotional Exhaustion <i>“Assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work” (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 4).</i>	24.08	0-54

Scale	Sample Average N=403¹⁸	Scale's Range
Maslach Burnout Inventory –Personal Accomplishment <i>“Assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people” (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 4).</i>	36.01	0-48
Occupational Commitment –Affective <i>Positive feeling about the occupation itself creating a desire to remain in it (want to stay).</i>	4.04	1-5
Occupational Commitment –Continuance <i>Recognition of the costs of leaving the occupation (have to stay).</i>	3.27	1-5
Occupational Commitment –Normative <i>Feelings of obligation to stay (ought to stay).</i>	2.77	1-5
Organizational Commitment –Affective <i>Positive feeling about the organization itself creating a desire to remain in it (want to stay).</i>	4.37	1-7
Organizational Commitment –Continuance <i>Recognition of the costs of leaving the organization (have to stay).</i>	3.78	1-7
Organizational Commitment –Normative <i>Feelings of obligation to stay (ought to stay).</i>	3.81	1-7
Organizational Culture –Administrative <i>Organization “is characterized by a formalized and structured place to work. (Cameron and Quinn, 1999, p. 34).</i>	4.44	1-7

Scale	Sample Average N=403 ¹⁸	Scale's Range
Organizational Culture –Clan <i>Organization “is typified by a friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves” (Cameron and Quinn, 1999, p. 38).</i>	4.19	1-7
Organizational Culture –Innovation <i>Organization “is characterized by a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative workplace” (Cameron and Quinn, 1999, p. 40).</i>	3.77	1-7
Organizational Culture –Market <i>“Organization is a results-oriented workplace” where its stakeholders define results (Cameron and Quinn, 1999, p. 36).</i>	4.62	1-7
Organizational Justice –Distributive <i>Measures the fairness of the outcomes (e.g., rewards, workloads) of organizational decisions.</i>	4.48	1-7
Organizational Justice –Interactional <i>Measures the fairness of the treatment an employee receives during the process of applying organizational decisions.</i>	5.77	1-7
Organizational Justice –Procedural <i>Measures the fairness of the procedures through which the organization makes decisions affecting employees.</i>	4.02	1-7
Organizational Trust <i>“...One’s expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another’s future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one’s interests.” (Robinson, 1996, p. 576)</i>	4.97	1-7
Perceived Inequitable Employment Relationship <i>Perception that one gives to the organization more than one gets back.</i>	4.44	1-7

Scale	Sample Average N=403¹⁸	Scale's Range
Perceived Organizational Support –Affective <i>Organization meets one's needs for recognition, praise, and approval.</i>	4.53	1-7
Perceived Organizational Support –Instrumental <i>Organization meets one's needs for training and assistance to do the work.</i>	4.27	1-7
Role Ambiguity <i>The job's responsibilities and expectations are unclear versus clear.</i>	2.87	1-7
Role Conflict <i>The job is subject to competing demands and expectations.</i>	4.00	1-7
Supervisor Support <i>"...a set of activities and practices of managers (supervisors) that give power, control, and authority to subordinates" (Niehoff et al. 2001, p. 96).</i>	5.10	1-7
Union Support <i>Union demonstrates concern for its members.</i>	4.83	1-7
Work-family Conflict <i>"The general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities" (Netemeyer et al. 1996, p. 401).</i>	4.01	1-7
Family-Work Conflict <i>"The general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the family interfere with performing work-related responsibilities" (Netemeyer et al., 1996, p. 401).</i>	2.43	1-7
Work Group Cohesion <i>A measure of supportive, cooperative work group relationships.</i>	5.28	1-7

Appendix B: Survey Information Letter

PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PROJECT Wilfrid Laurier University Workplace Survey Information Letter

You are invited to participate in a survey as part of a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences as workers in child welfare and children's mental health. We want to help you voice both the challenges and rewards of your work, explore sources of job satisfaction and stress, and discuss why employees stay with and leave their jobs in child welfare and children's mental health.

Your contribution to this study will help to discover what plays a role in creating a satisfying and productive workplace in child welfare and children's mental health organizations, so that, ultimately, agencies can better meet the needs of the children and families they serve.

If you agree to participate in the study, the survey will take about 30-45 minutes of your time. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with if you do not wish to. And, you can withdraw from the study at any time. You can still let us use the information you have shared with us, or you can choose to have your information destroyed.

Once you complete the survey, please return it to us in the postage-paid envelope provided. Don't forget to return your draw ticket!

You may enter the draw for a Spa Treat at Langdon Hall in Cambridge (valued at \$190) whether you return a completed survey or not. Just return the ticket to us at WLU in the envelope provided.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Whether or not you agree to take part in the study, your employment at (insert name of organization) will not be affected. All information you share with the researchers is anonymous. The information will not be used to identify you in any way. And, (insert name of organization) will not have access to the information you share with us.

You will notice that there is a code on your survey. This code allows researchers to follow your job movement over a two-year period. Every six months we will ask your employer for an updated list of current employees. We will request this information for all employees whether or not they completed the survey. This process will ensure that your employer will not know if you, in particular, have completed the survey. The list linking your code and your name is stored in a locked cabinet at WLU and is accessible only to the research staff. No one besides the research team will know that you are in the study. So, no one at (insert name of organization) will know whether or not you have agreed to take part in the study.

We will provide feedback to each organization on the results of the survey in that organization and, where necessary, make some suggestions to improve the organization's helping environment. Again, you will not be identified in any way in this report.

The study is being conducted by researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph, and McMaster University. There are 9 researchers on the Research Team, who have all been sworn to secrecy. So, any information that is shared with the researchers will be kept confidential. If you would like more information about the Research Team, we can give you a list of the researchers' names and information on how to contact them.

Everyone who takes part in the study will have the chance to receive information and updates on the project, if they are interested. If you would like to receive this information, we will need to keep your name and address. But, your name and address will not be connected with any information you share with us. We hope that information from our study will be ready to send out to you in the summer of 2002.

Participating in the survey may be helpful in letting you express your thoughts and feelings. However, if you find any of the questions upsetting and need someone to talk to, or if you have any questions about the study itself, you can call any of the numbers we have provided. These phone numbers are listed on the attached Contact Information Sheet. For your information, this research study has been reviewed and approved by the WLU Research Ethics Board.

Appendix C: Focus Group Recruitment Letter

To: All Staff

Subject: The Workplace Survey

Some of you may recall completing a workplace survey in (insert date) from Wilfrid Laurier University (and there was one lucky employee who won a half day at the Langdon Hall spa!). Thanks to the (insert %) of employees who took part in the survey, researchers were able to collect a lot of valuable information about what it's like to work at (insert name of organization).

As a follow-up to the survey, you are invited to take part in a discussion group around the interpretation of survey results. These informal discussion groups will be a place where you can safely share your views on the challenges and rewards of working in child welfare, your work environment, etc.

Your contribution to this study will help to discover what contributes to a satisfying and productive workplace in child welfare!

- You DO NOT have to have completed the employee survey to participate in a discussion group.
- Separate groups will be hosted for
 - a) direct service workers
 - b) clerical staff
 - c) supervisors
 - d) managers
- Discussion groups will be about 2 hours long.
- Discussion groups will be conveniently located at the agency (and munchies will be provided).
- Any information you share in the discussion groups will not be used to identify you in any way.

**Take this opportunity to share your views on working in child welfare...
sign up today!**

Please contact Karen Frensch, at Wilfrid Laurier University (partnerships@wlu.ca or 884-0710 ext.3636) on or before (insert date).

Your participation will be kept confidential by researchers.

Appendix D: Focus Group Information Letter and Consent Form

Partnerships for Children and Families Project Wilfrid Laurier University Information Letter and Consent Form (Focus Group Participant)

You are invited to participate in a focus group as part of a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences as workers in child welfare and children's mental health. We want to help you voice both the challenges and rewards of your work, explore sources of job satisfaction and stress, and discuss why employees stay with and leave their jobs in child welfare and children's mental health.

Your contribution to this study will help to discover what plays a role in creating a satisfying and productive workplace in child welfare and children's mental health organizations, so that, ultimately, agencies can better meet the needs of the children and families they serve.

If you agree to participate in the study, the focus group will take about 2 hours of your time. The facilitator will ask you some general questions. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with if you do not wish to. And, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

Whether or not you agree to take part in the study, your employment at (insert name of organization) will not be affected. If you withdraw from the focus group before we are done, you can still let us use the information you have shared with us, or you can choose to have your information destroyed.

All information you share with the facilitator/researcher is confidential. Information you share will be held in the strictest of confidence by researchers. As well, all focus group members will be urged to treat the information as confidential; however, we cannot make that promise on behalf of other focus group members. You will receive a copy of the information shared at the focus group session and will have an opportunity to review your comments for inclusion in our study. We will remove any identifying information (such as your name) from our records of the focus group. You will not be referred to by name in the transcript – participants will be identified as Participant1, Participant2, and so on.

We would like to audiotape the focus group to make sure all of the information you share with us is recorded. One of the facilitators will also be taking notes during the discussion. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked cabinet at the university. Only research team members will have access to these tapes. The tapes will be erased within a year of the focus group.

We may want to quote some of the information you share with us in our research reports. By including quotes in our reports, we will be able to better describe the day-to-day work lives of those who work in child welfare and children's mental health. If one or more of your comments are chosen for inclusion in our report, you will be given the opportunity to decide whether or not you would like to have these comments included in our reports. Including comments in our reports will be done in a fashion that does not identify you in any way. You are also protected by the fact that no one besides the research team and your co-participants will know that you are in the study. So, no one else at (insert name of organization) will know whether or not you have agreed to take part in the study, unless you give us permission to tell them or you tell them yourself.

The study is being carried out by researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph, and McMaster University. There are 8 researchers on the Research Team, who have all been sworn to secrecy. So, any information that is shared with the researchers will be kept confidential. If you would like more information about the Research Team, we can give you a list of the researchers' names and information on how to contact them.

Everyone who takes part in the study will have the chance to receive information and updates on the project, if they are interested. If you would like to receive this information, we will need to keep your name and address. But, your name and address will not be connected with any information you share with us in the focus group. If you do not want to receive any other project information, we will erase your name and address from our files as soon as we have sent your focus group transcript to you. We hope that information from our study will be ready to send out to you in the summer of 2002.

Participating in the focus group may be helpful in letting you express your thoughts and feelings. However, if you find any of the questions upsetting and need someone to talk to, or if you have any questions about the study itself, you can call any of the numbers we have provided. These are listed on the attached Contact Information Sheet. For your information, this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University.

1. I have read and understand the information given to me.

___ YES ___ NO

2. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ YES ___ NO

3. I understand that as a participant in this group

- there are no right or wrong answers
- I am free not to respond to certain questions;
- any audio tape or written transcripts which are made will not identify individuals; and
- my participation is strictly voluntary.

Participant's Signature

Date

Facilitator's Signature

Date

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

1. What was it that made you take a job in child welfare at this agency?

(Probes)

Is it what you thought it would be?

What is it that makes it a good fit/not a good fit?

2. Tell me about what it's like to work here.

(Probes)

What is it that makes you feel good about working here? Why do people stay? What's good about working here?

What is it that makes it hard to work here? What are some of the challenges or more difficult aspects of working here? Why do people leave?

3. Do you think that *where* one works in the agency makes a difference to the kind of work experience one has? If yes, how does where one works in the agency affect the kind of work experience one has?
4. If you had the power to change some things (say, two or three) that would keep you working here, what would they be?

SOCIAL WORK



Partnerships for Children and Families Project

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