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Organizational Change Process

DIVISION OF MILWAUKEE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Exploration of Needs

The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) worked with the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) to conduct a needs assessment. A variety of information was explored to learn about the current workforce and the agency's workforce practices, including 1) recruitment, hiring, and retention metrics and processes, 2) organizational culture and climate, and 3) other workforce processes and initiatives, such as onboarding, mentoring, supervision, performance management, and employee recognition. More specifically, four major types of information were considered: 1) objective data from various agency databases and reports; 2) subjective perceptions of staff and supervisors, gathered through surveys and focus groups; 3) expertise and input of the project steering committee; and 4) QIC-WD team expertise and feedback. The goal was to identify areas of need within DMCPS that could be addressed through a workforce intervention that also met a set of QIC-WD criteria.

Identification of Priority Needs/Relevant Findings

One of the surveys that the QIC-WD administered was the [Organizational Social Context \(OSC\) Measure](#), which assesses organizational culture and climate. Broadly speaking, culture refers to shared expectations and norms that characterize and direct behavior in the workplace, and climate refers to shared employee perceptions regarding how their work environment impacts their psychological well-being and functioning ([Glisson et al., 2012](#)). Organizational culture and climate are important because they are associated with a variety of important employee, organizational, and client outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational

commitment, attitudes toward evidence-based practice, turnover, provision of mental health treatment and child welfare services, and child and youth psychosocial functioning (e.g., [Aarons et al., 2012](#); [Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006](#); [Glisson & Green, 2006](#); [Glisson & Green, 2011](#); [Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998](#)).

Ninety-eight frontline staff and supervisors completed the OSC, which represented a response rate of 83%. The results showed opportunities for improvement in both culture and climate, in all six dimensions of culture and climate measured by the OSC: proficiency, resistance, rigidity, engagement, functionality, and stress, which fell outside of the normal range.

Subsequent focus groups among staff, as well as [root cause analysis](#) discussions with the steering committee, provided further detail about the dynamics and underlying factors that contributed to the OSC scores. Four worker focus groups and two supervisor focus groups were conducted to support the needs assessment process. Groups were asked:

- 1) What makes you stay at DMCPS?
- 2) In what ways have your job expectations been met or not met? How might unmet expectations affect worker retention/turnover at DMCPS?
- 3) What do you see as the primary sources of your stress at work? What could the agency do to mitigate or help you manage this stress?
- 4) When a critical incident occurs, what support does DMCPS provide you to cope with the incident? What other types of support or resources would be helpful?
- 5) How do informal leaders influence organizational culture and climate, and how the work of the agency is accomplished?

- 6) In your opinion, what are some of the main reasons that workers leave DMCPs? If you left the agency, would you be inclined to fill out an exit survey? Why or why not?
- 7) On the topic of worker retention, if you could provide one piece of advice or feedback to DMCPs leadership what would it be?
- 8) DMCPs will be selecting an intervention to implement and test to improve workforce outcomes? What advice do you have around installing the selected intervention?

Similar themes emerged in the focus groups and root cause analysis discussions with the steering committee. Ultimately, organizational culture and climate was identified as the optimal issue to target through the QIC-WD project. Though there were other areas identified as potential needs, many did not present good opportunities for intervention. For example, though there was interest in reconsidering the minimum qualifications and the hiring process, aspects of those were governed, in part, by state policy and statute, so they were not sufficiently amenable to change through this project.

Intervention Selection

The QIC-WD identified four alternative interventions to offer DMCPs to address organizational culture and climate: 1) Availability, Responsiveness, and Continuity (ARC; [Hemmelgarn & Glisson, 2018](#)), 2) Trauma Resilient Communities (TRC; [Crossnore Communities for Children, n.d.](#)), 3) Competing Values Approach (CVA; [Cameron & Quinn, 2011](#)), and 4) Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work (CREW; [Osatuke et al., 2013](#)). Purveyors of the ARC and TRC interventions gave virtual presentations to the steering committee prior to the selection meeting; the QIC-WD team presented similar information on CVA and CREW as purveyors were not available to do so. Following these preliminary presentations, the QIC-WD engaged the steering committee in a decision-making

process that involved discussion and live rating of each of the four interventions. The QIC-WD team and the steering committee considered the fit of each option with the following QIC-WD criteria: 1) alignment with agency need, 2) level of existing evidence of effectiveness, 3) applicability to other agencies' needs and circumstances, 4) scope and magnitude, relative to agency and QIC-WD capacity, 5) evaluation potential, 6) contribution to a diverse array of interventions across QIC-WD sites, and 6) agreeable to both the agency and the QIC-WD. Ratings showed CREW to be most widely preferred, followed by TRC, CVA, and ARC. However, when asked to rank their preference of interventions among the four possible interventions using the same survey software, CREW was identified as first, followed by ARC. After reviewing the results, the DMCPs Administrator detected concerns among frontline staff about choosing CREW and then re-opened the conversation amongst the steering committee members. Frontline staff indicated that their perspective was not sufficiently represented and that they preferred an intervention that gave frontline staff greater voice and input into agency operations, that encouraged collaboration between frontline staff and leadership, and that would have an external consultant supporting implementation as an accountability mechanism. After further discussion, the DMCPs Administrator put forward a recommendation that ARC would be the agency's preferred [intervention](#), because it was more strongly favored by frontline staff. This was discussed by the [Implementation Team](#) members who agreed, changing the selection from CREW to ARC. Compared to CREW, which focuses more heavily on behavior change among frontline teams, ARC better involves management, addresses overall organizational functioning, and systematically involves frontline staff in addressing challenges in the organization. In addition, because ARC was developed to improve organizational culture and climate as specifically as measured by the OSC, ARC aligned most tightly with the needs that were identified through the OSC.