

ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF SERVICES FOR  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

# ANNUAL SURVEY 2010

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MEMBERSHIP RESULTS – YOUR OVERALL  
SATISFACTION WITH THE AASCF

SUITE 258, 8330-82 AVE  
EDMONTON, AB, T6C 4E3

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# A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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RHONDA BARRACLOUGH

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Thank you to everyone who completed this survey. AASCF will be developing new strategic directions throughout the end of 2010 and early 2011. Your feedback will be used as part of the development process. Your answers assist us in developing our work plans for the next year.

Overall impressions include:

- The general membership feels that AASCF is meeting their needs. As this year progresses we will continue to speak out for increased wages and resource to agencies; provide information on the OBSD model as it progresses around the province; and continue to work on our relationship with the Ministry and the FSCD programs.
- Our communication methods seem to be reaching all members. That is good news. We will continue to refine the newsletter and information that you get to make it relevant and timely.
- AASCF is not part of government. It will speak for the membership and the needs of its members. As OBSD progresses AASCF will continue to work with the government to ensure that this model is appropriate for members. There are over 20 agencies involved in various committees and projects related to OBSD. As this is a new initiative, taking a new approach to development, it may appear that there is significant overlap, and even appear to be a confusion of boundaries from time to time, but be assured the AASCF is here as a voice for the agencies and it is your best interests that are considered first and foremost.
- We will continue to develop an excellent professional development and training plan for the next year. The caliber of trainers is increasing as we continue to search for the best people. Your feedback on training request will be considered in developing the training plan for the next year.

- While the economy appears to be slowly recovering from the economic downturn, this has not yet translated into increased resources for agencies. Generally speaking, the financial situation among agencies seems to be stagnating or deteriorating slightly.
- The workforce remains tenuous. At this time there is staff in positions, but burnout, wages and benefits remain huge issues.
- AASCF does work with other networks on issues like workforce strategies; common goals and themes within government; contracting, etc. We will make this a priority to highlight more often.
- As we develop the Learning and Research Centre we will consider doing some original research. Your feedback will be considered in future application for funding in this area.
- Leaders continue to show a remarkable degree of confidence in the future. Faced with increased challenges and a financial situation that have not improved over the past twelve months, their confidence remains essentially unchanged. AASCF echoes these thoughts and will continue to provide the services and resources it can, within its financial constraints. As we work together we can and will see improved services for vulnerable families in Alberta.

# DO YOU FIND THAT...?

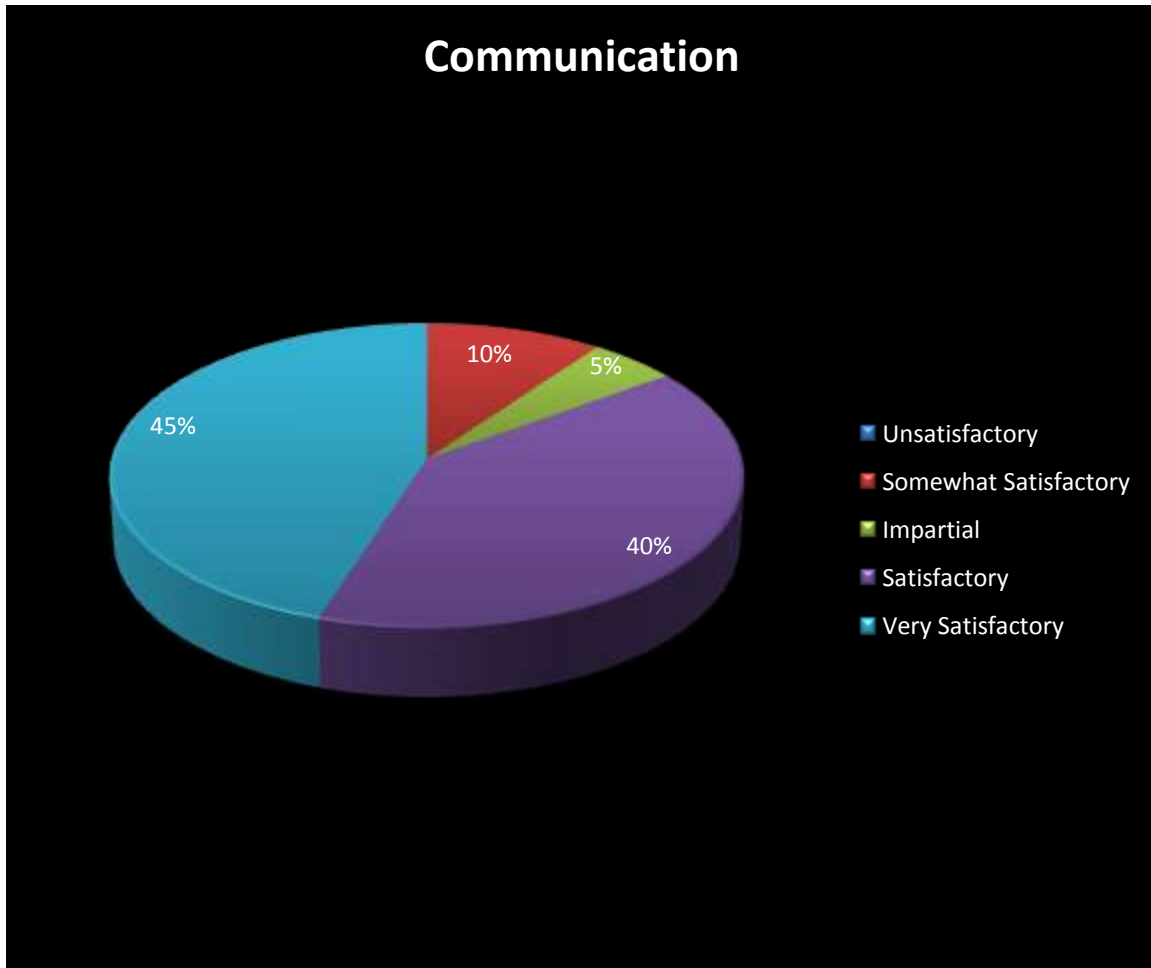
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## COMMUNICATION BY THE AASCF TO YOUR ORGANIZATION IS RELEVANT, CLEAR AND TIMELY?

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being satisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>1</sup> Numbers are based on 46 participants (percentage out of 100).

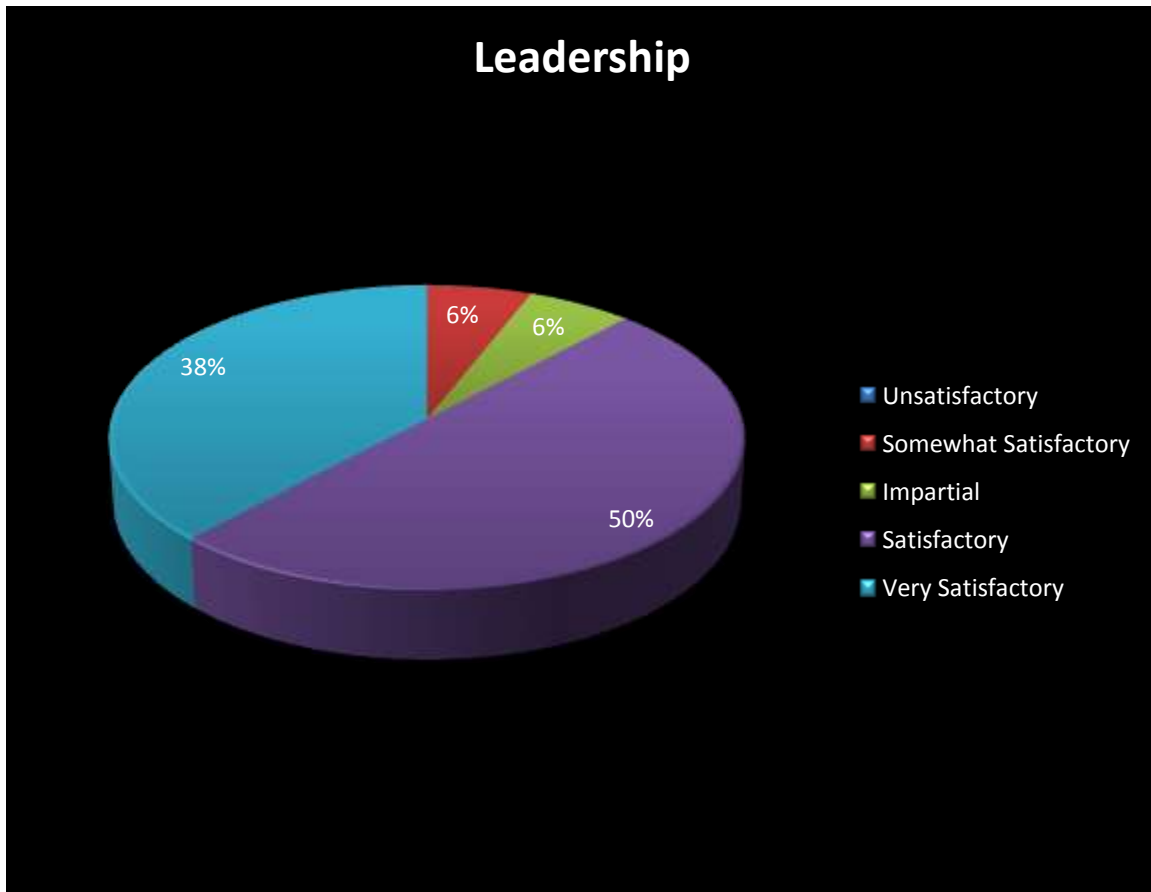
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**THE AASCF DEMONSTRATES LEADERSHIP IN THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE SECTOR?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>2</sup> Numbers are based on 46 participants (percentage out of 100).

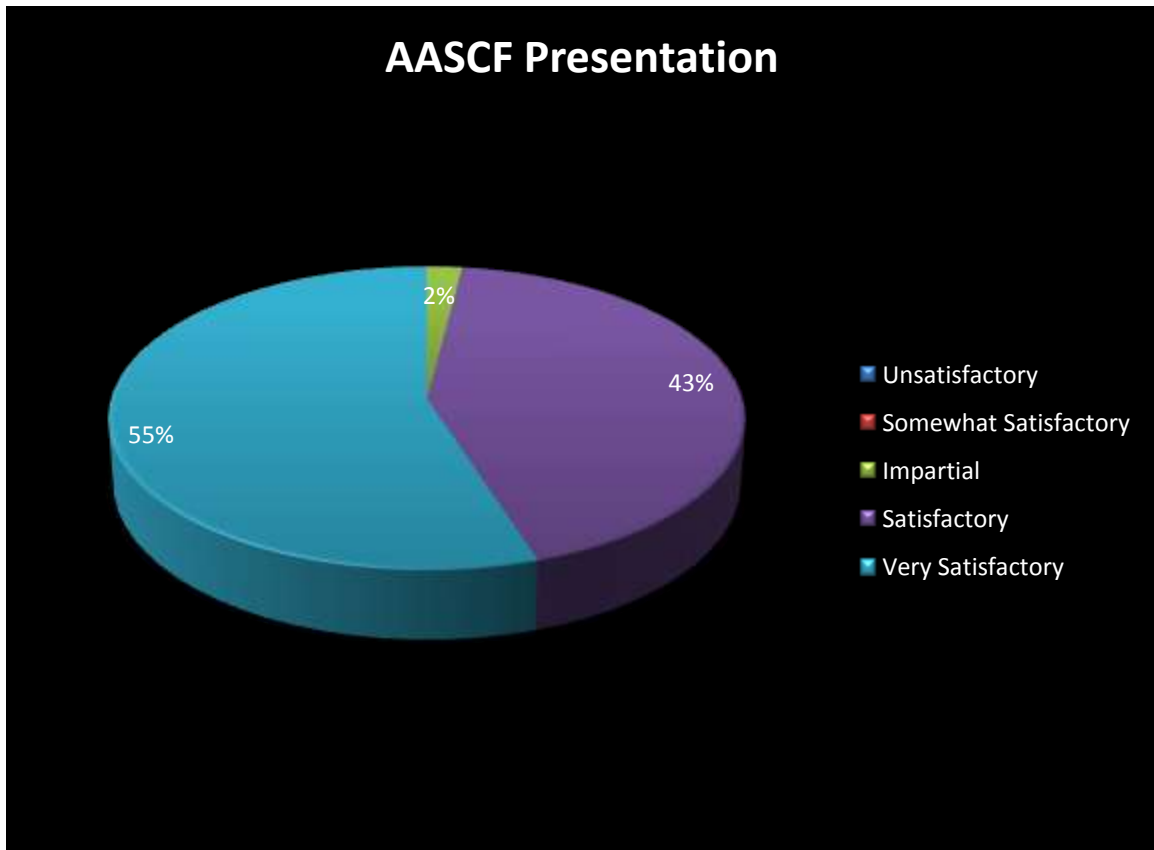
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**THE AASCF PRESENTS AND CONDUCTS ITESLF IN A POSITIVE MANNER?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>3</sup> Numbers are based on 44 participants (percentage out of 100).

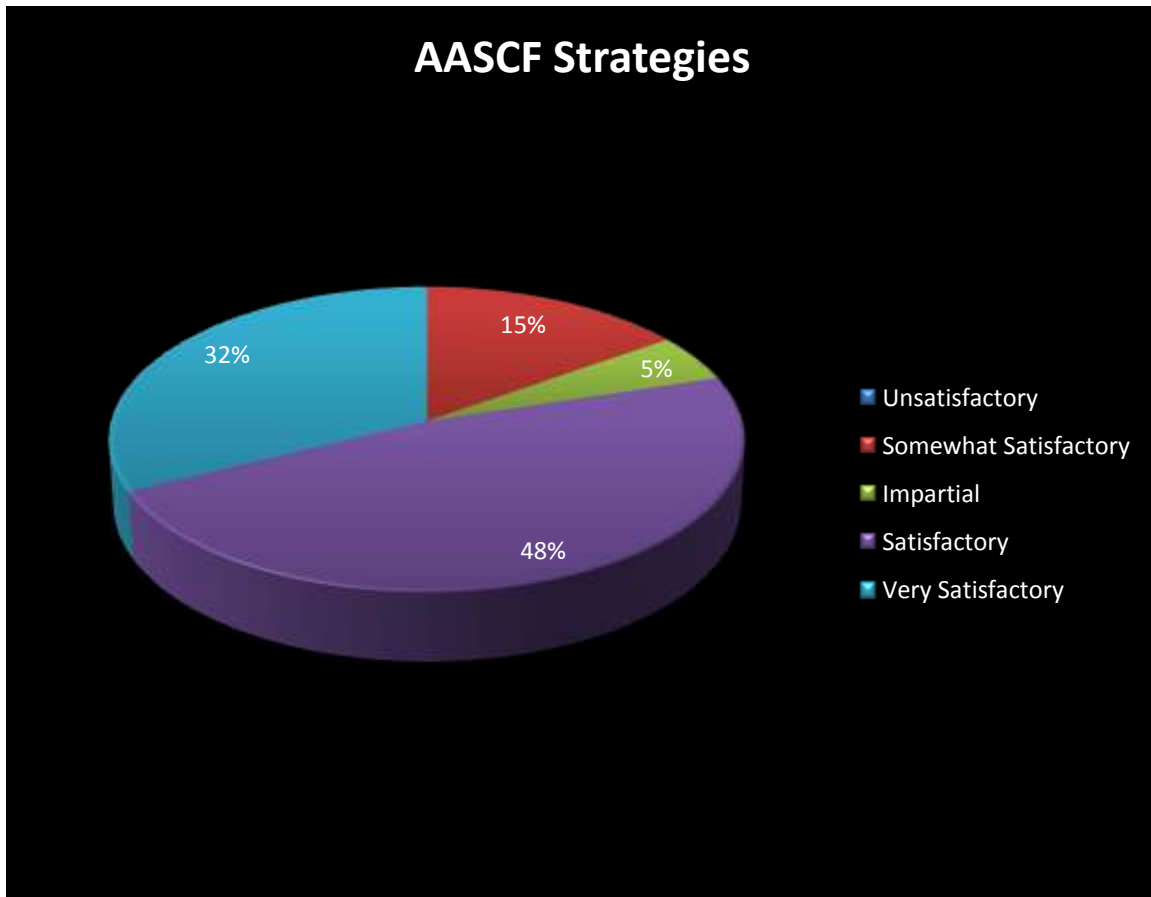
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**THE AASCF IS SUPPORTIVE AND ENABLES THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE/ENHANCE THE DELIVERY OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN ALBERTA?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>4</sup> Numbers are based on 44 participants (percentage out of 100).



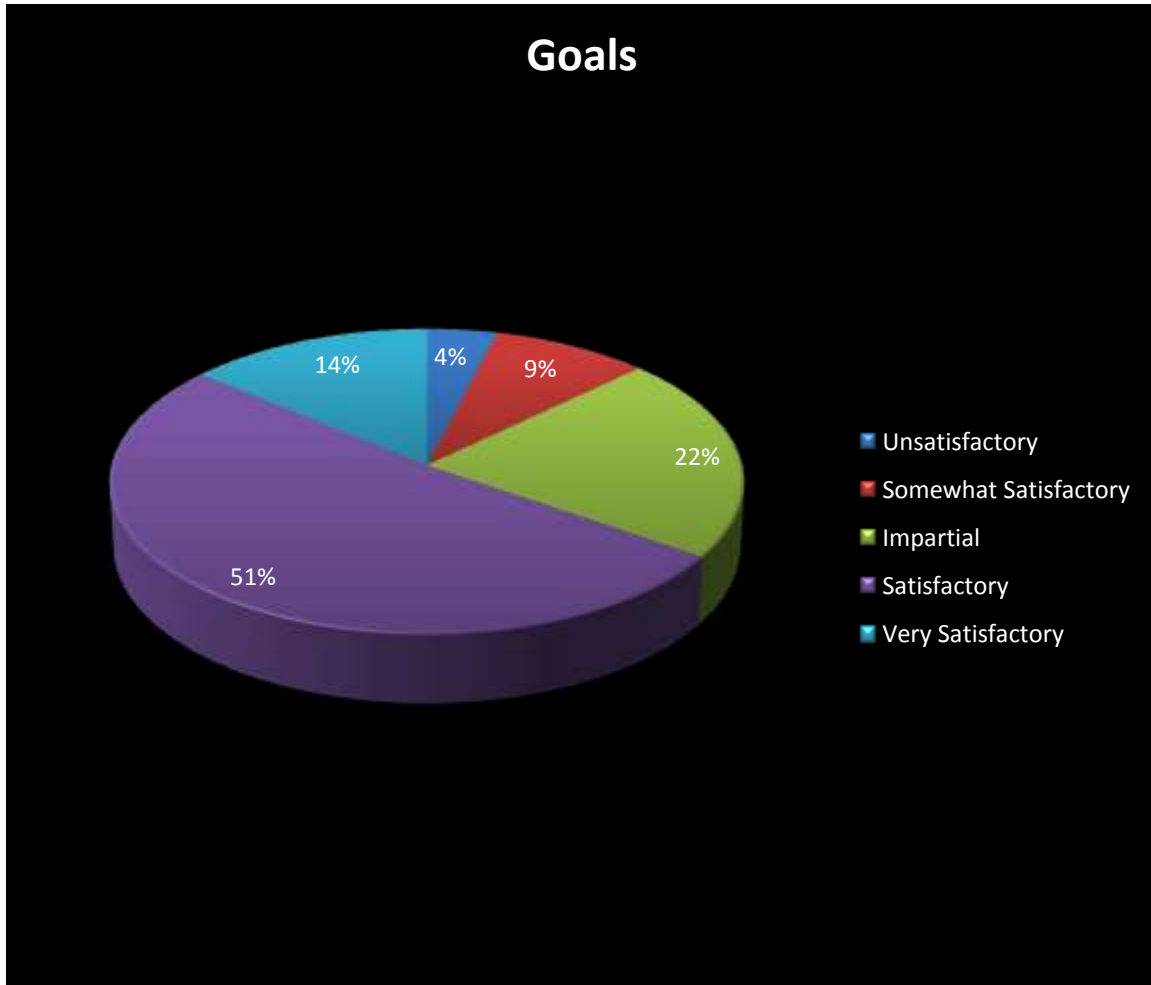
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**INVOLVEMENT WITH THE AASCF ASSISTS YOUR ORGANIZATION IN ATTAINING ITS GOALS?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>5</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>5</sup> Numbers are based on 44 participants (percentage out of 100).

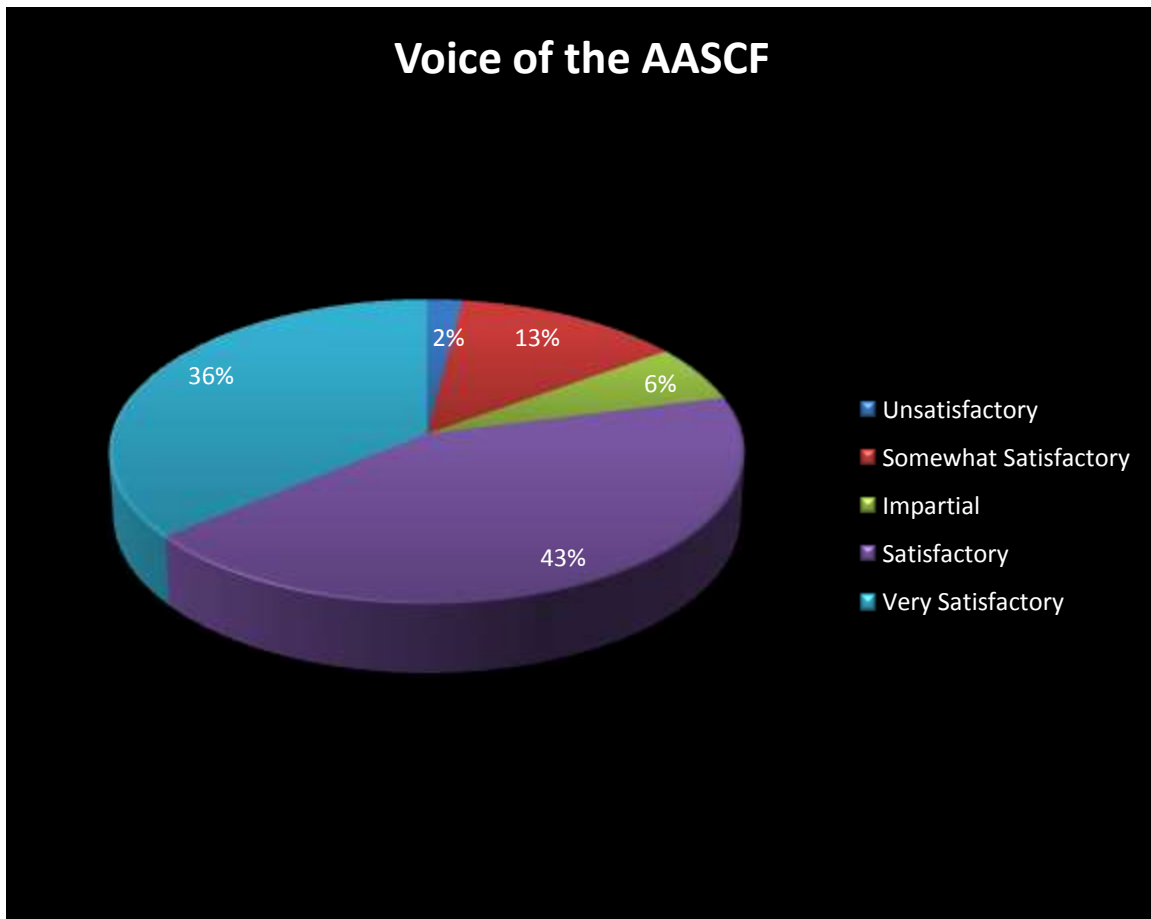
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**THE AASCF IS A STRONG VOICE FOR THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SECTOR  
IN ALBERTA?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>6</sup> Numbers are based on 45 participants (percentage out of 100).

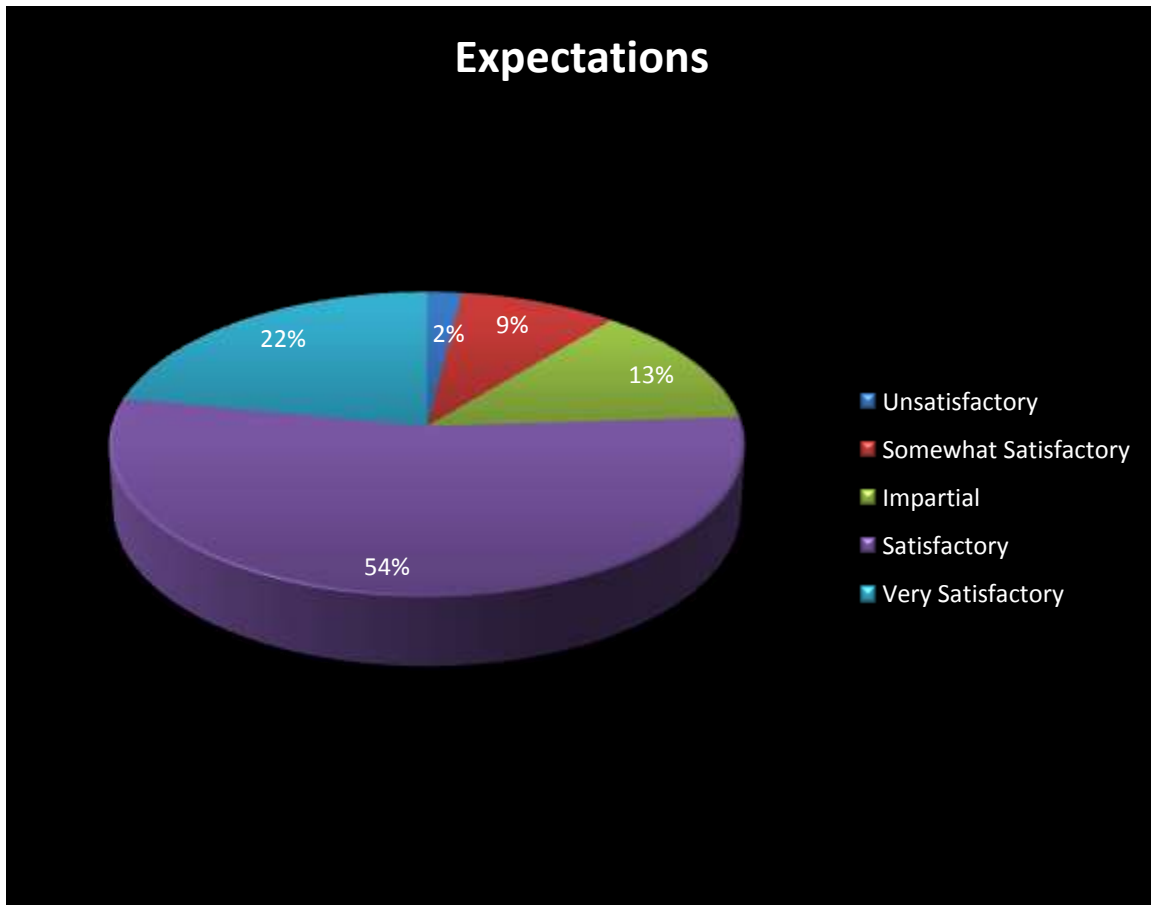
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**OVERALL, HAS THE AASCF MET OR EXCEEDED YOUR ORGANIZATION'S EXPECTATIONS?**

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Members rated their opinions on a 5-point scale for the following question. With one being unsatisfactory and five being very satisfactory.

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>7</sup> Numbers are based on 44 participants (percentage out of 100).

# COMMENTARY RESPONSES

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## A MORE IN DEPTH LOOK AT THE AASCF

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These are open-ended responses given by our members. Answers have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The AASCF is interested in surveying its own membership to assess the level of satisfaction each member organization has of the AASCF. We are also moving into a new strategic planning cycle and are interested in what you see being the priorities for the AASCF.

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**WHAT DO YOU SEE AS BEING THE STRENGTHS OF THE AASCF?**

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- The AASCF provides connections with other agencies throughout the province.
- A fountain of information for various topics, esp. conferences and other training workshops, flexibility in providing training in various cities of Alberta.
  - Increased membership, growth as an agency, and the increase in workshops offered.
  - The journal and other various resources offered to agencies are up-to-date and valuable to the industry.
  - Timely communication through e-mail and the website. Access to scholarships and other funding resources for training, school, etc.
- Knowledge of the child and family services sector and the ability to communicate this knowledge with confidence and effectively to other organizations and government agencies.
  - Serves the needs of agencies province wide. Works to ensure that all parties are treated equally.
- A great community that brings people together, advocates for change in the best interests of its members and provides a single voice for the sector without pandering to larger agencies or those with the most funding.
- The staff is friendly, knowledgeable, stable and helpful; they are always willing to provide up-to-date information. The passion Rhonda brings to her position.
- Provides a network through which knowledge, ideas, and expertise can be shared. It unifies its member organizations and provides an outlet for frustrations as well as providing a solution.
  - The neutral voice, but understanding of smaller agencies as well as larger ones.
  - Willingness to listen and offer support in order to provide the best outcome for agencies, advocacy for agency issues.
  - The dedication to its agencies, members, and ministry. The unification of all sides.
- Its rich history as an organization in Alberta
- The training and courses provided for member and other agencies and the help these sessions provide for the child and family services sector.

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**WHAT DO YOU SEE AS BEING THE WEAKNESS OF THE AASCF?**

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- Lack of resources or attention given to children who are special needs within Alberta.
  - Focus is centralized on child welfare and advocacy when there is more the sector has to offer.
  - Lack of focus on family support and early childhood development and intervention. Need to work more with other sectors including: FSCD, OBSD, etc.
- Lack of funding.
  - Leads to less needs being met for members, lack of voice with the government associations and its members.
  - Not enough time to do everything on the agenda, difficulty with a small office and lack of funding to meet needs of members and agenda.
  - Leads to a lack of accessibility and not all agencies can utilize AASCF resources (this may also be included in pandering to larger agencies).
- Pandering to the larger agencies.
  - So many members it is difficult to achieve one voice as agencies are in disagreement about what needs are most relevant and important.
  - Government involvement with the AASCF is too high and this can sometimes make the AASCF seem like an extension of the Ministry rather than a separate organization.
  - Don't pay attention to non-mandated family services. Lack of support for agencies who are in difficulty or those who express more in-depth needs.
- Lack of leadership.
  - There is no agreement on key issues and very little seems to be accomplished, topics can be divergent in membership agencies.
  - Lack of voice and communication on certain issues such as OBSD and FSCD. Not representing that voice within the agency, lack of attention or knowledge of resource centres (not many questions are geared towards this topic).
  - Not utilizing our power and voice with larger agencies and government to have a greater impact on the child and family services sector.

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**PLEASE INDICATE IF THERE ARE AREAS (INTERNALLY OR EXTERNALLY, RELATIVE TO OUR MANDATE) WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE AASCF PROVIDE MORE FOCUS?**

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- More advocating for children with special needs.
- More information and updates on different sector resources.
  - Outcomes measures, OBSD.
  - Lack of information on prevention outcomes.
- Connection to the government and organizations.
  - Diversification of funding to all government and agencies.
  - Lack of development in research areas.
  - Connection to the public and raising awareness of what the sector does in Alberta and bringing this to the attention of the Ministry.
- Advocacy for government funding, ministries, and smaller organizations.
- Lack of focus.
  - Not enough focus on other areas of the industry outside of child and family services.
- Updated membership database.
  - Allow current members to refer other organizations to the AASCF.
  - Provide greater access to resources and training programs for non-members.
  - Increase awareness of AASCF existence within Alberta.
- Continue to advocate and speak on working conditions, issues and compensation.
- Develop future service delivery improvement and service innovation.
- Tackle the issues of suitable, affordable housing as it is a huge concern in many cities around Alberta.

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**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING HAS BEEN A FOCUS FOR THE AASCF OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS. ARE THERE ANY TRAINING OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AREAS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE US TO FOCUS ON?**

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- Leadership.
  - Expand knowledge of leadership staff and allow new front-line workers to develop the necessary leadership skills to succeed in the industry.
  - FASD training for front-line staff. Keeping up with the volume of turnovers within the industry.
- Immigration law and policies as it applies to refugees who are trying to access services.
- Workshops on how to deal with severe or extreme behavior in children.
- Management skills and training.
- IT.
- Administrative skills (RFP training).
- Providing more workshops around Calgary and other surrounding areas to increase accessibility and attendance.
- Brain development and learning.
- Domestic violence.
  - More of a focus on male treatment programs, child resiliency and family counseling.
- Greater volumes of information and greater access to this information.
  - Expansion of the journal, more information on OBSD outcomes and agendas.
  - Focus on impacts rather than outcomes and outputs, the endings and how-to's.
  - Design and publication of research needs to be modified and more accessible.
- Most participants liked the range of topics offered, but felt that speakers could be stronger at the conferences and workshops.



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**DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT (E.G. REGARDING AASCF OPERATIONS)?**

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- The amount of information on the newsletter and website is overwhelming.
- More representation for rural organizations.
- Define relationship with Children's Services – what are you to the organization?
- Does the AASCF have the necessary resources to make the political impact they desire?
- Ensuring that agencies who have a mandate to offer specific training and workshops for Aboriginal people are held accountable for that training.
- Work together with AHVNA, FASD service networks, Alberta CAPC CPNP coalition.
- Find more money, don't be afraid to seek out government assistance for funding as the AASCF provides a service to Alberta. This will lead to greater opportunity for research, operations.
- Cost of events – price of event should correspond to quality of event and service.
- Less frequent meetings with more relevant content.
- Public education.

# CURRENT SITUATION

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## INTRODUCTION

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This part of the survey is similar to the one completed in the last few years. We want to make sure that we have a good picture of the sector when we are working with the Ministry and others as it relates to workforce issues. We are asking you about your current situation in order to determine what the staffing situation currently is. We will use this data as we continue to advocate for increased funds to close the historical gap and address operational costs. Please note that this information will be kept confidential; we will only be providing the aggregate amount when reporting.

Please be aware that any questions pertaining to financial status of our members have been kept strictly confidential and to protect our members has been omitted from this report to respect everyone's privacy.

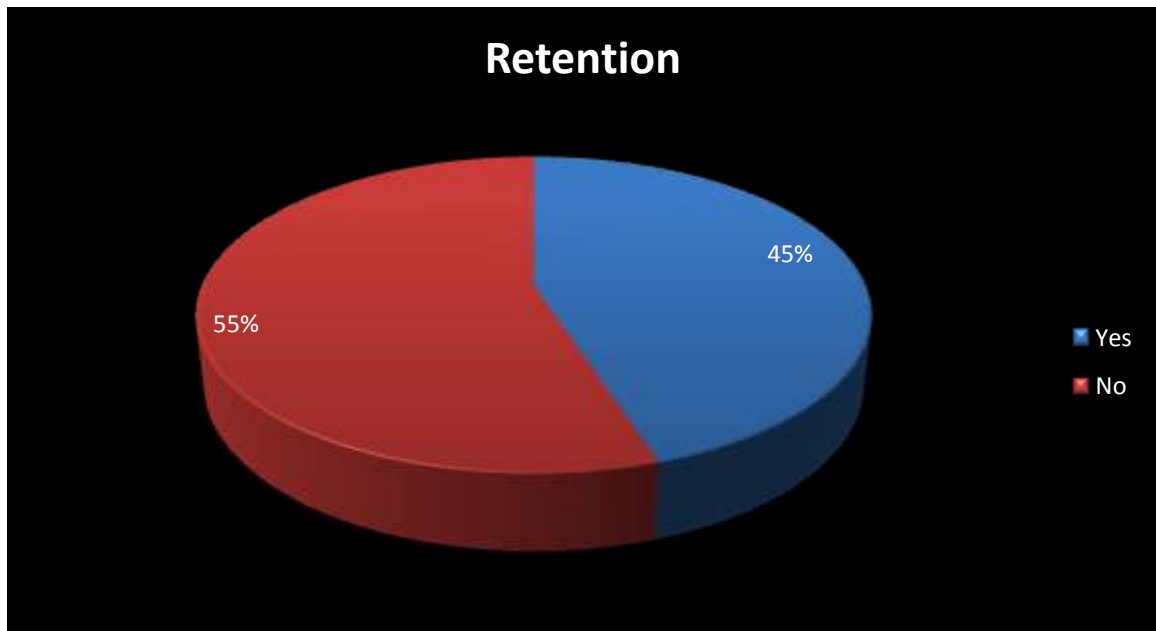
# RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT TIMEFRAME 2009-2010

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HAS THE RECENT ECONOMIC RECOVERY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR  
ABILITY TO RETAIN STAFF? IF SO, HOW?

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<sup>8</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



- Decrease in turnover.
  - Increased stability results in less turnover, job security allows for less reluctance to leave position.
- Stagnation of salaries, little room for advancement.
  - Staff are overworked and underpaid which results in job dissatisfaction, search for alternative career paths.
- Lack of funding and resources (wages are too low to attract long-term and qualified staff).
  - More movement of internal staff to other positions within agency as there is no money to hire external people.
- Not seeing economic recovery, but there has been little impact in various organizations.

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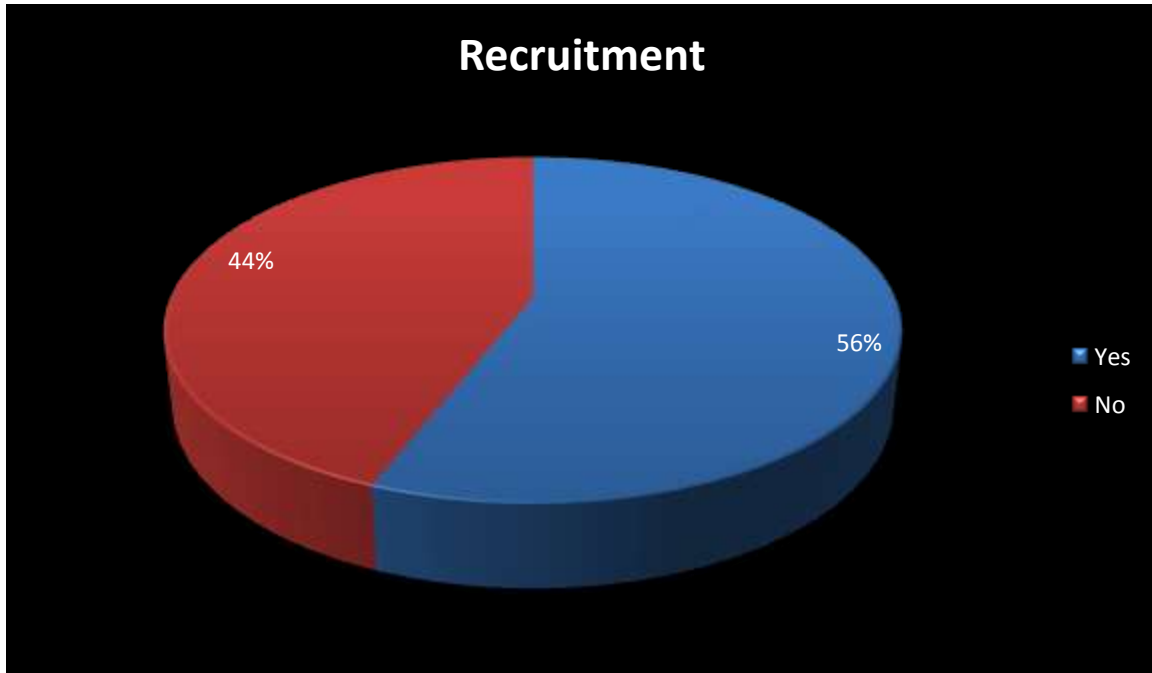
<sup>8</sup> Numbers are based on 45 participants (percentage out of 100).

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HAS THE RECENT ECONOMIC RECOVERY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR  
ABILITY TO RECRUIT STAFF? IF SO, HOW?

---

<sup>9</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



- Government agencies offer stiff competition for non-for-profit as they provide better wages and benefits, hard to recruit staff.
- There are more people looking for work and able to hire more, but still a lack of qualified professionals.
  - More applications are coming in and some agencies have seen a rise in the number of qualified applicants or stiffer competition for a position between recruits.
- Able to fill jobs more quickly and increase in the number of responses to advertisements.
- Cost of living expenses affect the number of people who choose the non-profit sector, hard to maintain a way of life when wages are not influx with standard of living.
- Fewer vacant positions at any given time – difficult to hire and recruit.

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<sup>9</sup> Numbers are based on 43 participants (percentage out of 100).

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**WHAT STAFF MANAGEMENT CONCERNS HAVE YOU REALIZED OR NOTICED AS A RESULT OF THE LAST YEAR OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES? (I.E. SUPERVISORS THAT ARE VERY INEXPERIENCED, INEXPERIENCED STAFF, MORE/LESS SICK DAYS, ETC).**

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- Reduction in benefits with little to no salary increases to compensate.
  - Competitive salaries are not offered as a means of recruiting staff.
  - Staff were hired during the economic crisis that were under qualified and now can't be replaced with better suited staff. More need to supervise staff.
- Turnover affects continuity of services offered and consistency of service.
- Loss of priority funding for Aboriginal supports.
- Burnout seems to be occurring more regularly as there have been decreasing numbers in hiring staff.
  - Employees are overworked and get less vacation time.
  - Often employees are working with more than one program and in more than one position to fill the gaps left by the economic crisis.
    - Can't find people to fill these positions due to low wages.
    - Lack of experience in people applying makes a difference.
  - However, some staff are willing to go the extra mile to weather the crisis and have been understanding of the situation. This results in friendlier atmosphere.
- Generational differences are occurring as more staff retire and a newer generation is being hired.
  - Lack of training and experience. Reluctance of employees to seek out opportunity or lack of funding to provide opportunity.
- Inexperienced managers.
  - Results in lack of communication with HR issues.
  - Employee needs are not being addressed or met.
- Too many changes are occurring too quickly and it is hard for the industry to keep up. New service delivery model (OBSD) – long term staff is finding it hard to deliver service.

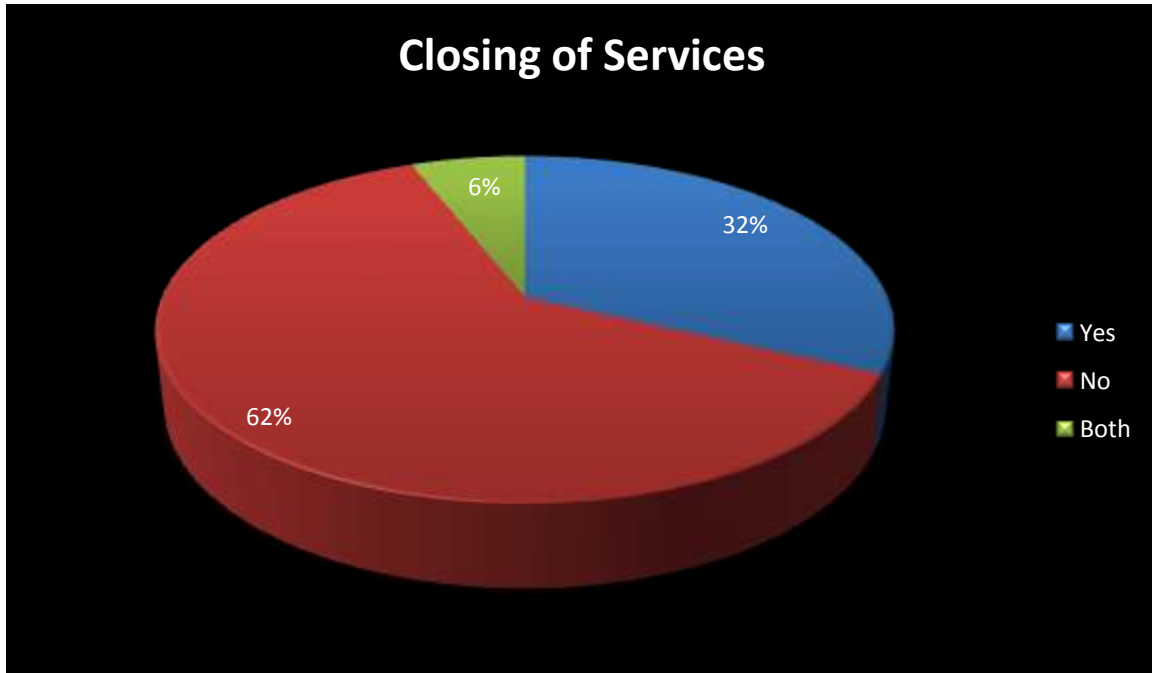
# PROGRAM STATUS

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**DURING THE PAST 18 MONTHS (JAN 2009 – JUNE 2010) HAS YOUR AGENCY CLOSED SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?**

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<sup>10</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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## WHAT TYPE OF PROGRAM WAS AFFECTED?

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- Residential treatment, in-home care,
- Educational programs.
- Direct Services

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## HOW LONG WERE YOU CLOSED?

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- Most reported a permanent closure, but some were only closed for a 3-6 month period (about a 70/30 split).

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<sup>10</sup> Number based on 43 participants (percentage out of 100).

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**HOW MANY CHILDREN WERE AFFECTED?**

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- Less than 10 – 13% of participants.
- Between 10 and 20 – 26% of participants.
- Between 20 and 50 – 26% of participants.
- Undetermined – 22% of participants.

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**DESCRIBE THE REASON FOR THE CLOSURE:**

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- Other services were closed resulting in a lack of participation in other programs.
- Lack of experienced staff (funding for staff to work in the programs or services).
- Lack of participation from province.
- Staff left for other opportunities and were unable to fill the necessary positions.
  - Increased need for number of staff.

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**HOW WAS THE CLOSURE RESOLVED?**

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- Other services provided programs to help with community gap.
- Support fewer families to cope with staff adjustments.
- Many say it has yet to be resolved.
- Searching for other sources of funding.
- Looking for other staff to fill positions.
- Working collaboratively with other regions to offer support and other sources of programs and funding.

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**TYPE OF PROGRAM CLOSED ON A PERMANENT BASIS:**

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Answers are the same as the question above. Please refer to the above pages for a more in-depth analysis.

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**TYPE OF PROGRAM THAT WAS CAPPED OR REDUCED SERVICES TO CHILDREN:**

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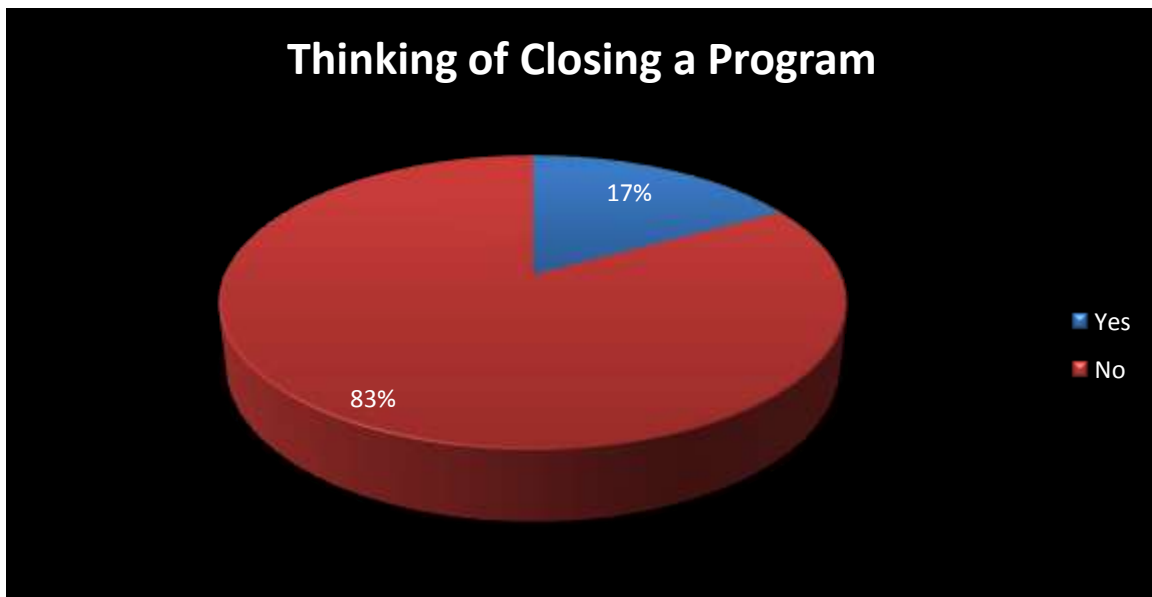
Answers are the same as the question above. Please refer to the above pages for a more in-depth analysis.

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**ARE YOU CURRENTLY THINKING OF CLOSING A PROGRAM?**

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<sup>11</sup>Please refer to footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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**IF YES, DESCRIBE WHY AND WHAT TYPE OF PROGRAM**

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- Adult day program, cultural support program, intensive treatment, and residential care.
  - Lack of funding, lack of staff, lack of training provided

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**DESCRIBE WHAT MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT THE CLOSURE:**

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- Fundraising, reducing program cost, assessing needs and addressing those most in need, finding other sources of staffing support, getting creative with the hiring process.

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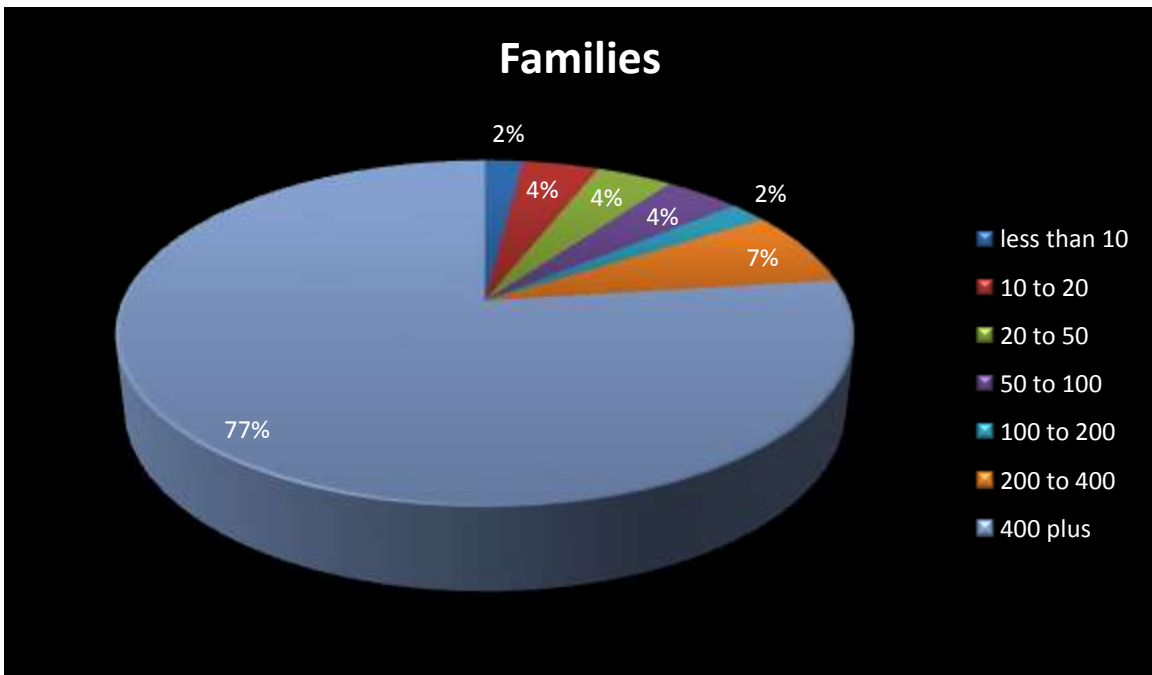
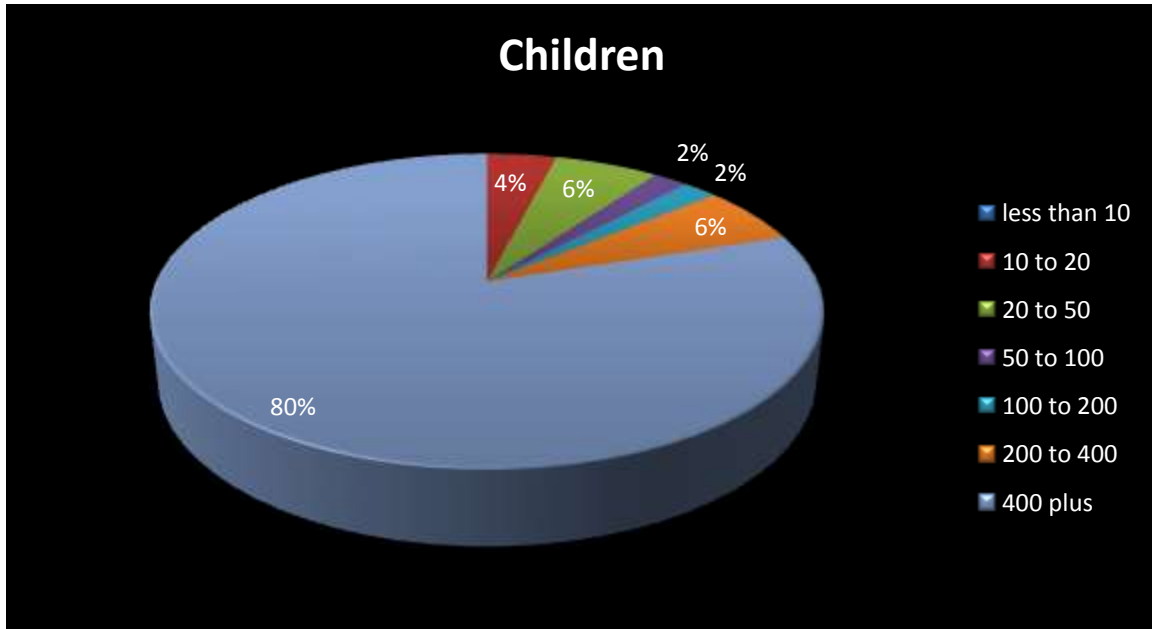
<sup>11</sup> Numbers are based on 36 participants (percentage out of 100).



# DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND/OR FAMILIES SERVED IN THE LAST 18 MONTHS (JANUARY 2009 – JUNE 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the charts.



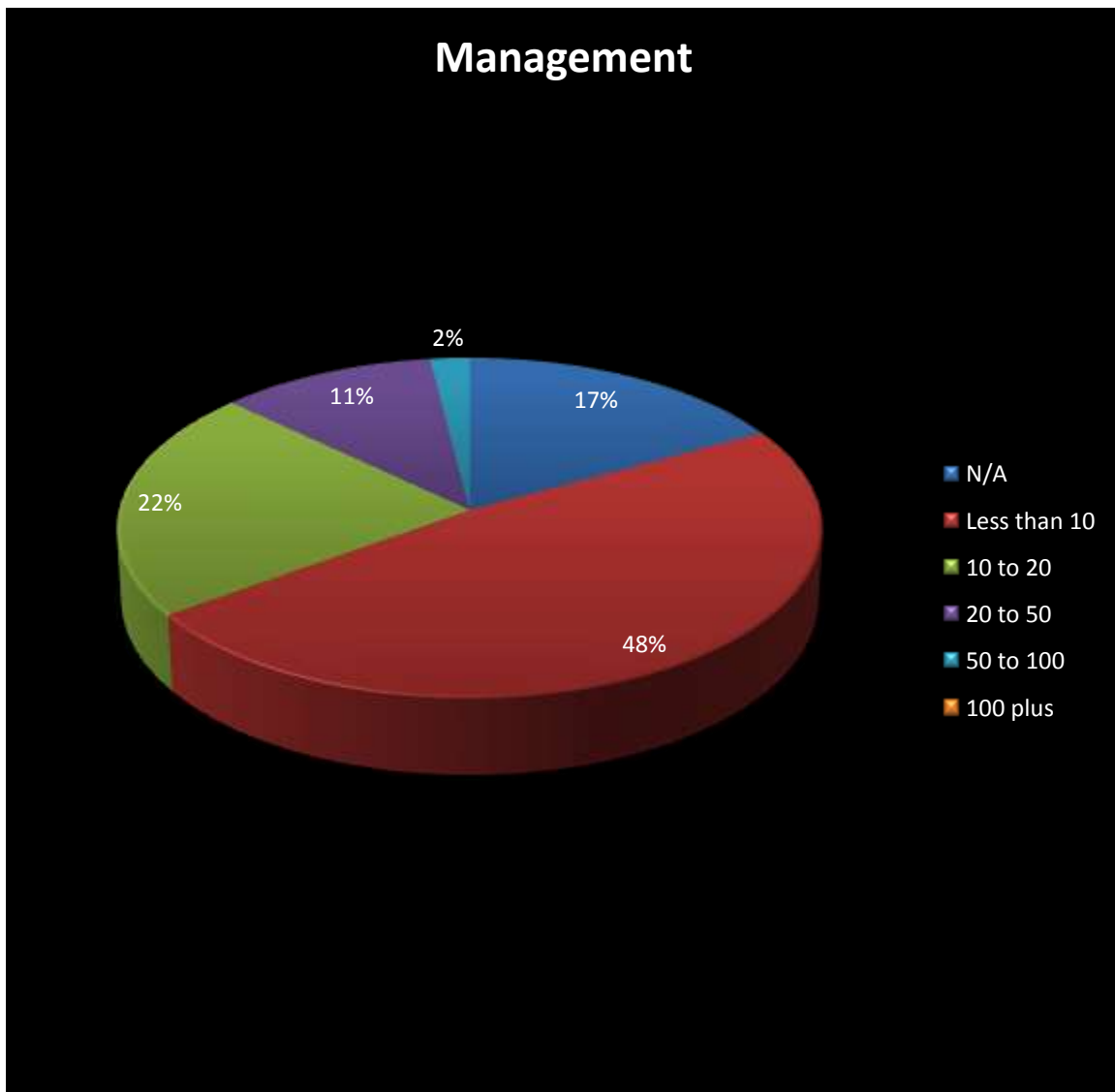
<sup>12</sup> Numbers are based on 43 participants (percentage out of 100).

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**TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF IN ORGANIZATION (IF FULLY STAFFED):**

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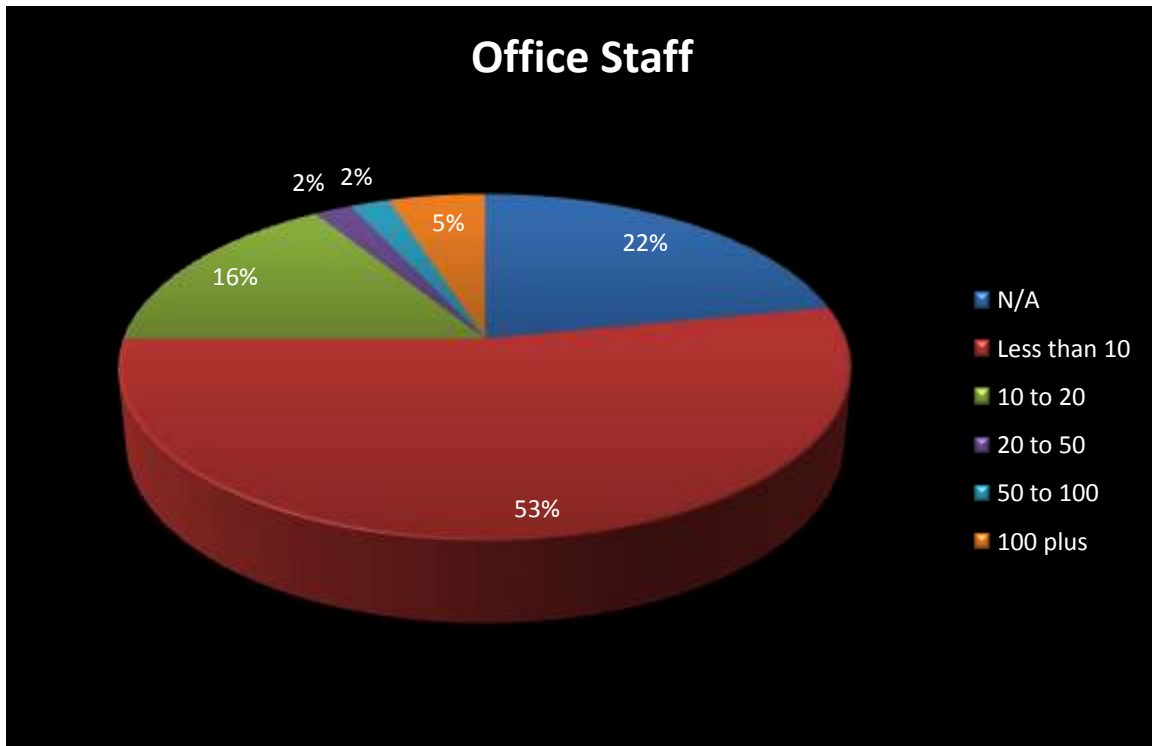
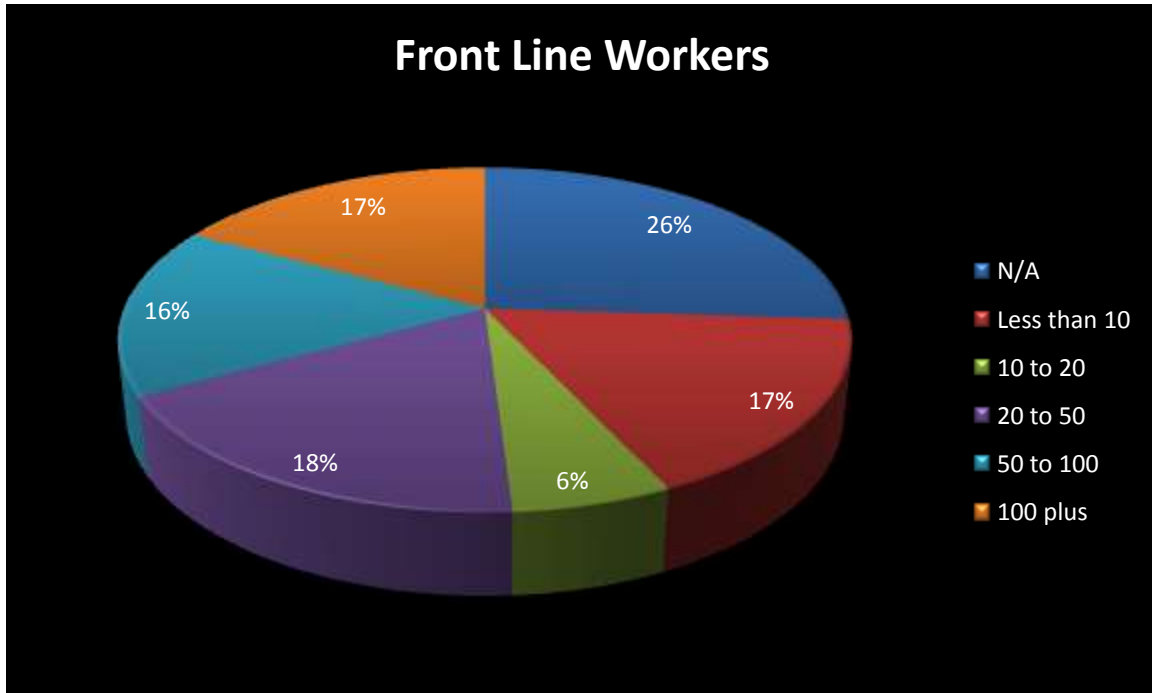
<sup>13</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>13</sup> Numbers are based on 43 participants (percentage out of 100).

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the charts.



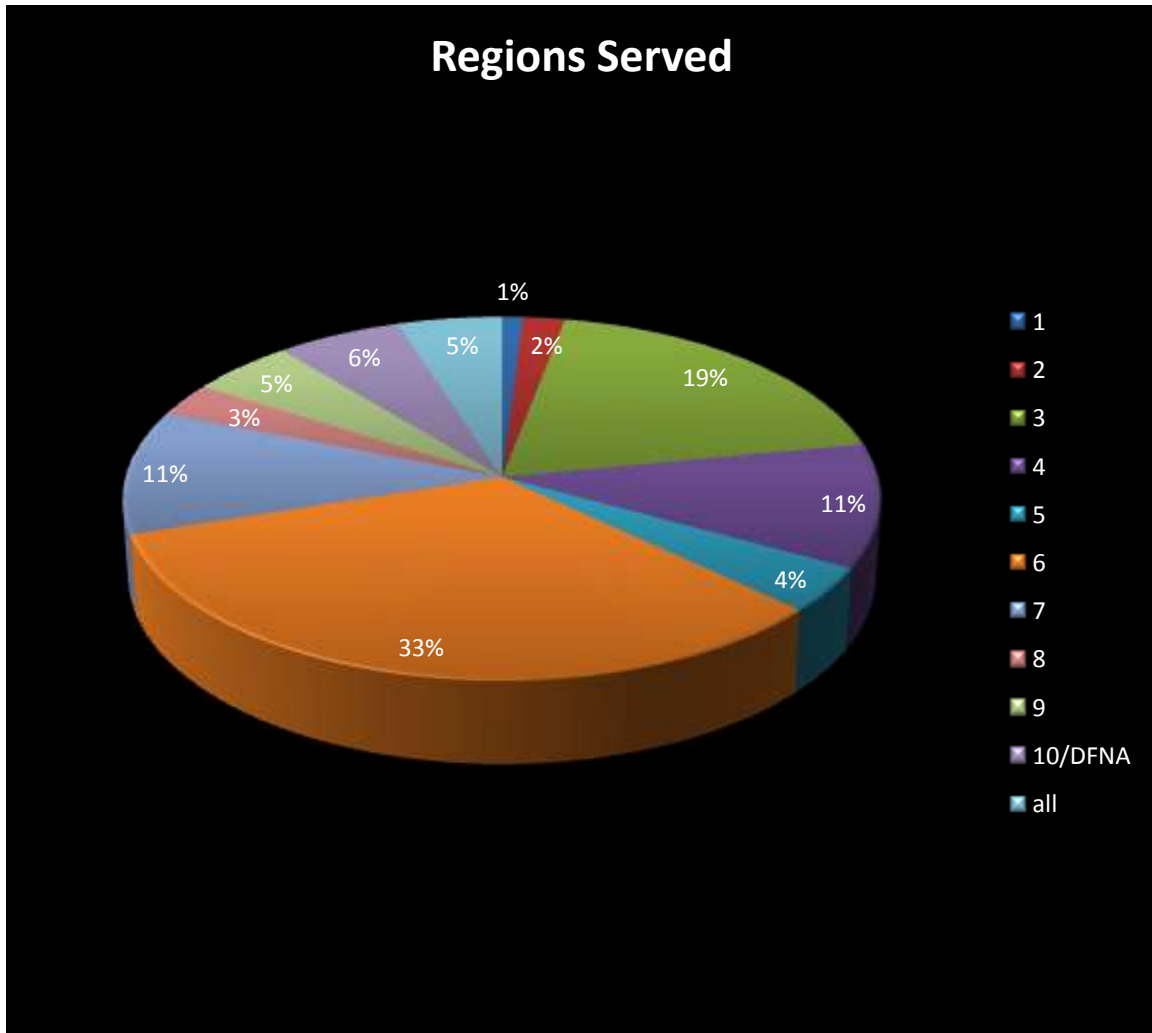
<sup>14</sup> Numbers are based on 43 participants (percentage out of 100) – these are continued from the previous question.

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WHAT REGIONS DO YOU PROVIDE SERVICE TO?

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<sup>15</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



**Please note that many of our members serve multiple regions (answers are based on the best percentage of the total numbers of answers).**

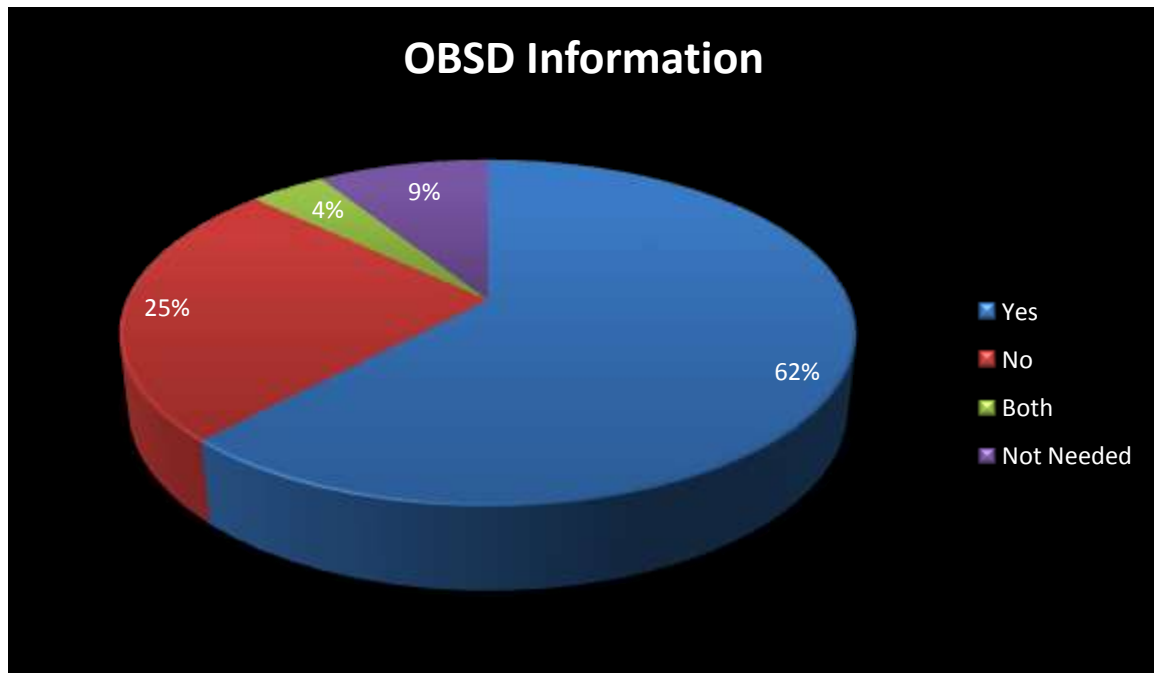
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<sup>15</sup> Number based on 45 participants (percentage out of 100).

# OUTCOME BASED SERVICE DELIVERY (OBSD)

DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ON OBSD? WHAT DO YOU NEED IF NOT?

<sup>16</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



- Information on timelines are needed – agencies are struggling on how to move forward and understanding what the current template is.
  - Information about what is going with the OBSD on a monthly basis, even to advise if there is nothing new happening.
  - Keep agencies apprised of the situation.
- Lack of information on the amount/type of data that needs to be collected.
- Lack of information on the progress and the future of OBSD. Where is the process at?
- Lack of clarity due to the ever-changing information – keep the agencies more informed.
- More information on the reporting expectations and computing programs for smaller agencies.

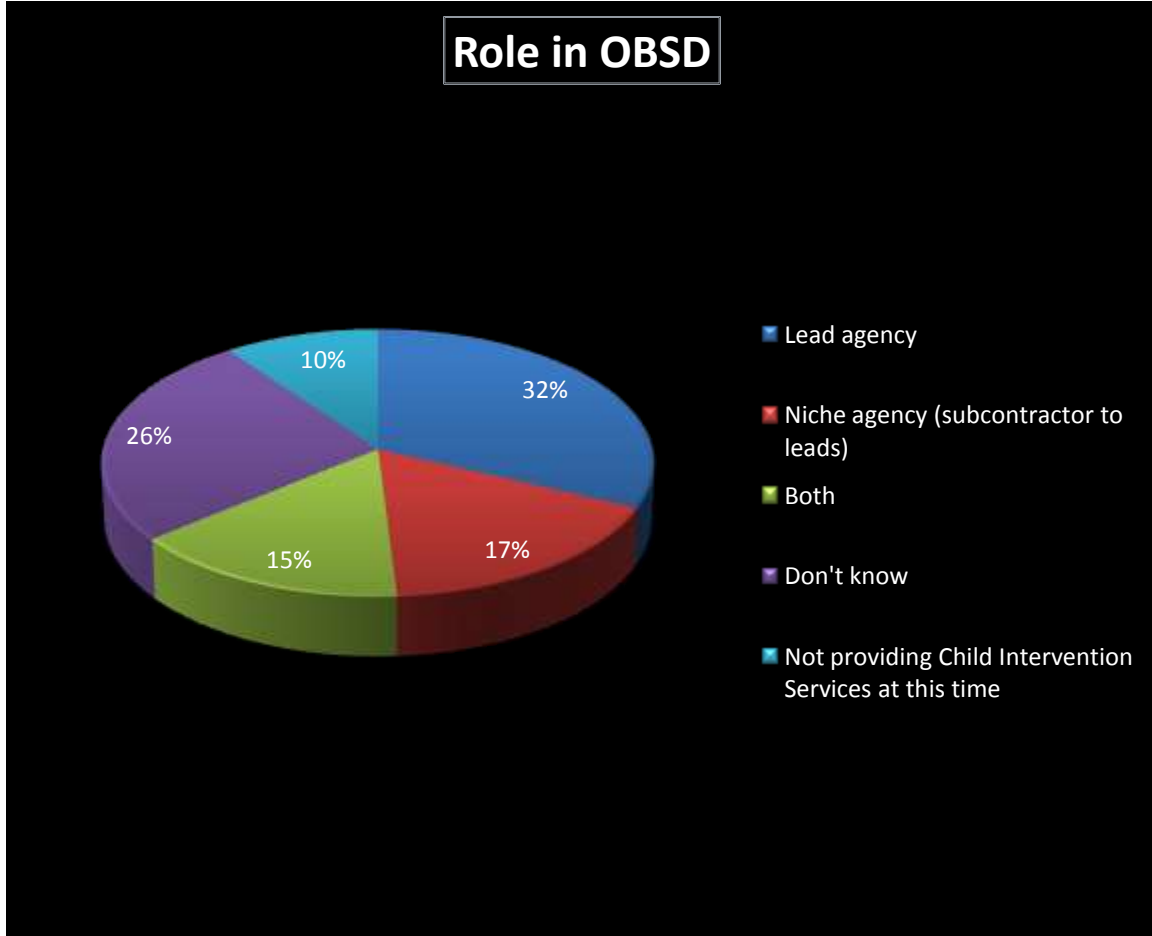
<sup>16</sup> Numbers based on 41 participants (percentage out of 100).

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**WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK YOUR AGENCY WILL PLAY IN OBSD SERVICE DELIVERY?**

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<sup>17</sup> Please refer to the footnote for an explanation of the chart.



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<sup>17</sup> Numbers based on 45 participants (percentage out of 100).

# RESEARCH

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Learning and Research Centre is considering applying for funding to do a research project. To date we have been able to design the following research questions. Please consider these and let us know which you think is of the most interest to you.

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## QUESTION ONE

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### **Identifying Best Practices for High Risk Youth**

- A) How can personal and professional practice knowledge increase our understanding of early predictors of high risk activity and best practice to address high risk behaviours.
  - a. For high-risk youth, when did they first see their situations becoming more problematic for themselves and for the professionals involved with them? What would have been the most useful for them during their time in care?
  - b. For non-high-risk youth, what predictors of high-risk activity would they identify from their knowledge of their peers? What was most useful in supporting them to not enter high-risk activities?
  - c. For Child and Youth Care Workers, what are early predictors of high-risk youth and what were examples of success in their work with high-risk youth?

### **Identifying Best Practices for Different Cultures in Child Welfare**

- B) How can children in foster and group care in Alberta expand our understanding of what the best factors would be for supporting their community and cultural beliefs and values?
  - a. What cultural and community factors do youth in foster or group care identify that contributed to their involvement with the child welfare system?
  - b. What are the ways that young people can identify that their culture and community were valued and maintained while in group or foster care in Alberta?
  - c. What are alternative ways that their culture and community could be strengthened while in foster or group care in Alberta?

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WHAT DID MEMBERS PREFER IN REGARDS TO QUESTION ONE?

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- For question one (total of 40 participants answered, percentage out of 100).
  - 47 percent voted for A.
  - 30 percent voted for B.
  - 13 percent voted for C.
  - And, 6 percent voted for all of the answers (research question on the whole).
  
- For question 2 (Total out of 40 participants answered, percentage out of 100).
  - 20 percent voted for A.
  - 35 percent voted for B.
  - 35 percent voted for C.
  - And, 9 percent voted for all the answers (research question on the whole).
  
- Out of the missing percentages for each question:
  - 5 percent voted for neither question as they believed there was already too much information on the subject.



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ANY OTHER SUGGESTED RESEARCH TOPICS/QUESTIONS?

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- Successful management strategies for implementing and monitoring evidence based approaches.
- Evidence based practices for all types of services.
- Research into rural based delivery – as well as strategies to support parents.
- Focus on all aspects of care and culture.
  - Don't specifically focus on minorities and forget to include the dominant culture.
  - More of a focus on residential and rural applications/approach.
- Focus on OBSD as there has been a shift in attention towards this movement of late.
  - Should we be looking at more aboriginal specific questions given the needs mentioned in OBSD.
- How do attachment based programs (such as Parent-Child Mother Goose) used with parents and infants and toddlers help to create healthier, more resilient children??
- Follow up on James Anglin research.
- Affects of domestic violence on children and youth, how best to support the healing?
- Significant issues facing children and youth in families experiencing family violence and how best to support children and youth.