

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

2007

A Report of Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF). AASCF conducted a follow up survey at the request of the Ministry of Children and Families to review the impact of the 3% increase to salary, on recruitment and retention.



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Summary of Findings

In 2006, the Strategic Initiatives Committee (SIC) of AASCF responded to members regarding their expressed concern about what they felt was a crisis in the child and family services sector by undertaking a survey and reporting those findings to member of the Association, Ministry officials, politicians and other organizations working with children and families.

In 2007, after a 3% salary increase (retroactive to April 1, 2006) was granted by the Ministry of Children Services, AASCF was asked to survey members again to determine the impact of this increase, specifically on recruitment and retention of staff.

There was a response rate of 63.4% (2007) and 58% (2006). Both surveys were conducted with the assistance of the Canadian Outcome Research Institute (CORI), generally using the same survey questions for comparison purposes.

Results

- Responses were from members who provide services in each Child and Family Service Authority (CFSA) and 4 Delegated First Nations Authorities (DFNA).
- Vacancy rates within the member organizations is increasing 18.8% (14.8%) vacancy rate in 2007 (2006)
- In a SIX month period (June – December 2007) there has been a 19.0% rate of staff leaving their organizations.
- Organizations indicate that they are concerned about their ability to honour their contracts. In 2007, 33% have definite concerns and 34% are beginning to have concerns.
- Organizations generally do not feel that they have the ability to respond to requests from the Ministry = 86% of respondent were concerned.
- Seventy (70) % of agencies are concerned that standards are being compromised.
- Most agencies were able to give a 3% or less wage increase to staff. In some cases this was distributed as a retention bonus and not part of salary increases.
- The average amount of salary increase that organizations felt would be required to help address the current recruitment and retention crisis is between 16 -25%
- When asked if the 3% increase made a difference to the organizations ability to recruit staff the response was NO = 83% and YES = 17%
- When asked if the 3% increase made a difference to the organizations ability to retain staff the response was NO= 76% and YES= 24%

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF) members expressed concern about what they felt was a crisis in the child and family services sector related to recruitment and retention issues over the year. The Strategic Initiatives Committee (SIC) of AASCF responded to their concern and engaged the Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (CORI) to undertake a survey. The results were presented to the Ministry of Children’s Services, member agencies and others.

In January 2007, the Ministry of Children’s Services announced a 3% increase (retroactive to April 1, 2006) to the salary line of contracted agencies. The Ministry also asked the AASCF to undertake a follow-up survey to see what impact the increase had on recruitment and retention and to identify any other changes that might be occurring. Again CORI was used and a repeat of the first survey was conducted.

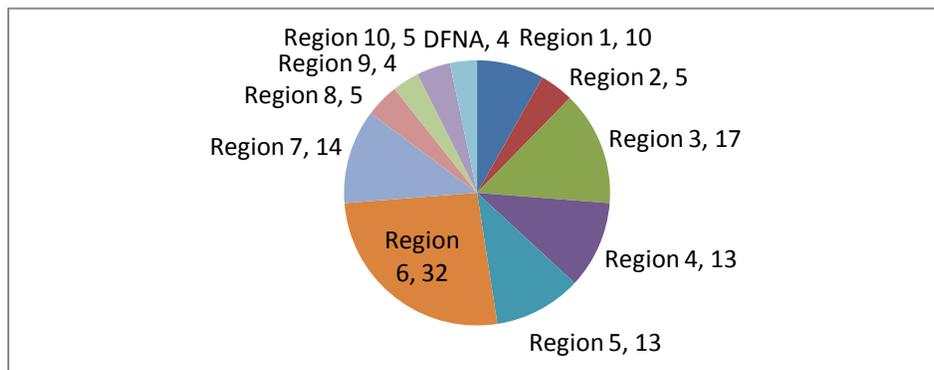
In November 2007, surveys were sent out to 101 AASCF member organizations, delivering direct service to children and families. The follow-up survey was not sent out to former members or non-members delivering direct service to children and families, although 3 agencies did respond to the survey. Of the 64 completed surveys 61 – **95.3%** was from member agencies and 3 – **4.7%** was from non-member contracted agencies. The information collected will be presented to the Board of Directors of the AASCF, the Strategic Initiatives Committee, members of the Association, Ministry officials, politicians and other organisations working with children and families.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Responses

Question 1:

The first question related to respondents identifying the regions in which they operated programs. The responses were:

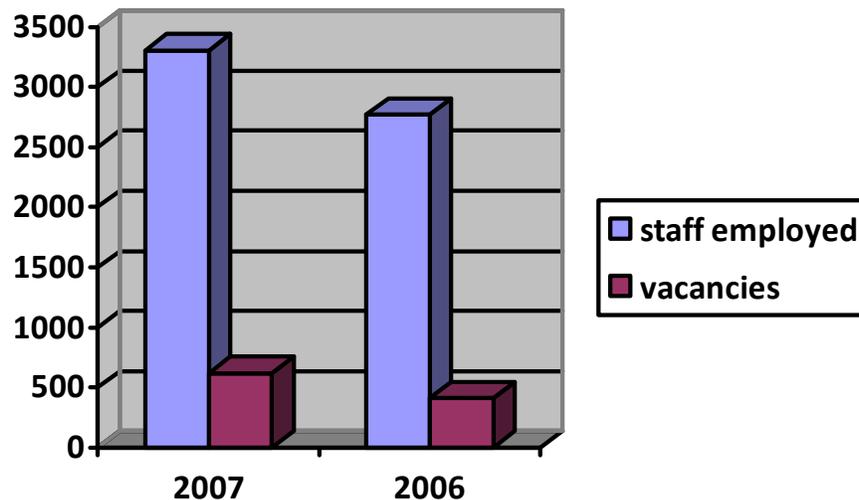


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Questions 2-7:

These 6 questions related to the number of staff organisations employ and the number of vacancies currently existing in the organisation.

Question 2 and 3 asked about the number of current positions in an organisation's child and family services program and the number of vacancies in those programs. Of the responses to these 2 questions there were **3,305** (2,774)¹ staff employed with **620** (412) current vacancies – **18.8%** (14.8%).



Question 4 and 5 asked organisations how many staff was employed in programs, other than child and family services programs, and the current number of vacancies. Of the responses to these two questions there were **3,057** (2,828) staff employed with **362** (334) current vacancies – **11.84%** (11.8%).

Question 6 and 7 asked organisations, where they could not separate program staff, how many they employed and the current number of vacancies. Of the responses to these two questions there were **89** (320) staff employed with **8** (45) current vacancies – **8%** (14%).

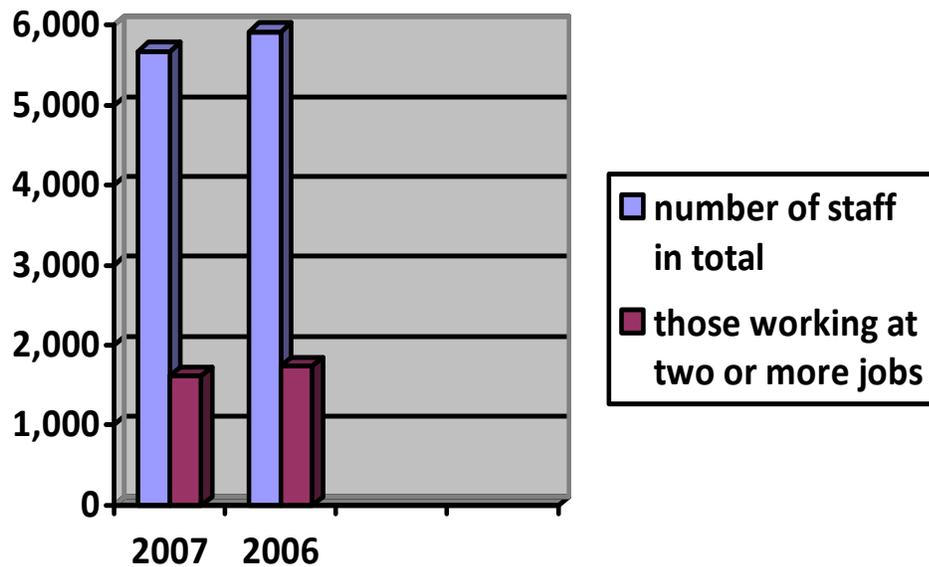
Questions 8 & 9:

The next two questions related to the experiences organisations had with staff turnover and staff experiences working in other employment.

¹ The bracketed figures or percentages represent figures from the 2006 Recruitment and Retention survey

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Question 8 asked about how many staff within an organisation was working at two or more jobs. Those responding indicated that, of their **5,676** (5,922) staff **1,610** (1,742) worked at two or more jobs – **28.4%** (29.4%).



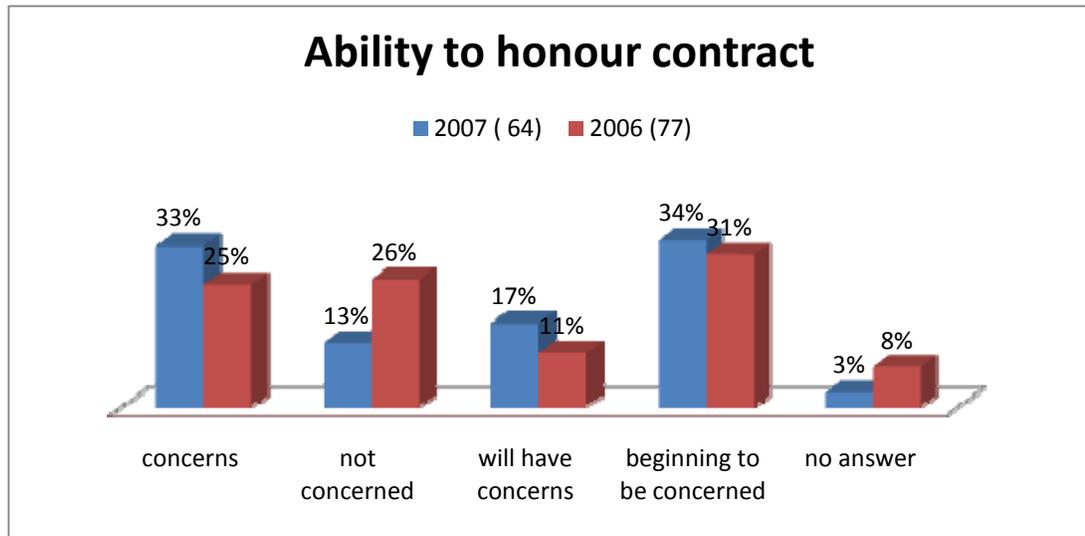
Question 9 asked how many staff had left over the last **SIX** months. Of the responses received organisations indicated that **1,221** (1,163) staff had left over that period -**19.0%** (19.6%).

Questions 10-12:

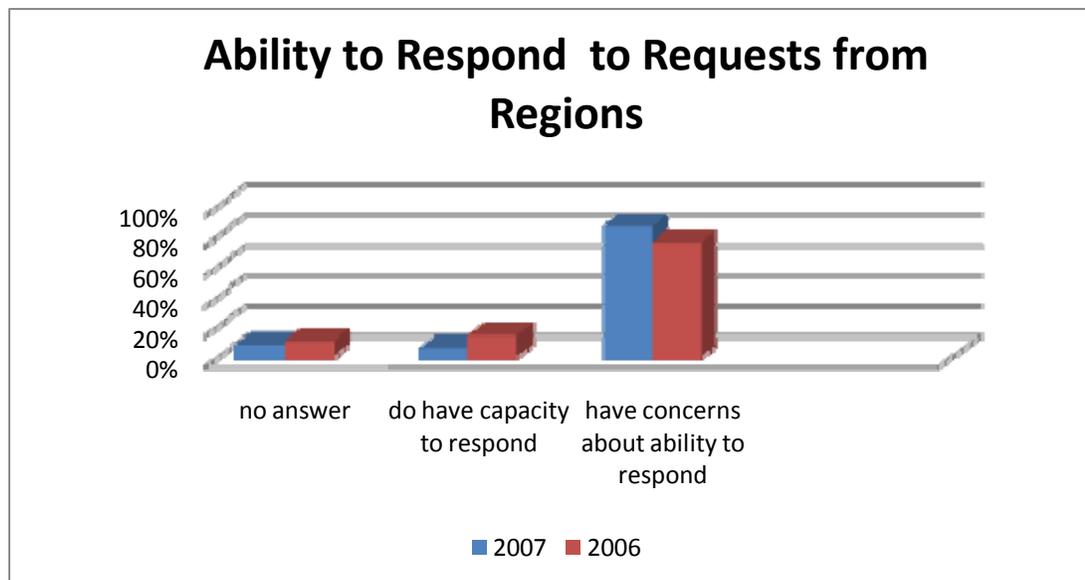
The next three questions related to organisation's ability to provide services.

Question 10 asked that, given the recent increase in salaries of workers in January 2007 do you still have concerns about being able to honour your contracts. Of the 64 responses 2 (6) - **3%** (7.6%) chose not to answer, 8 (20) – **12.6%** (25.6%) did not have concerns and 54 (52) – **84.4** (66.6%) did have concerns.

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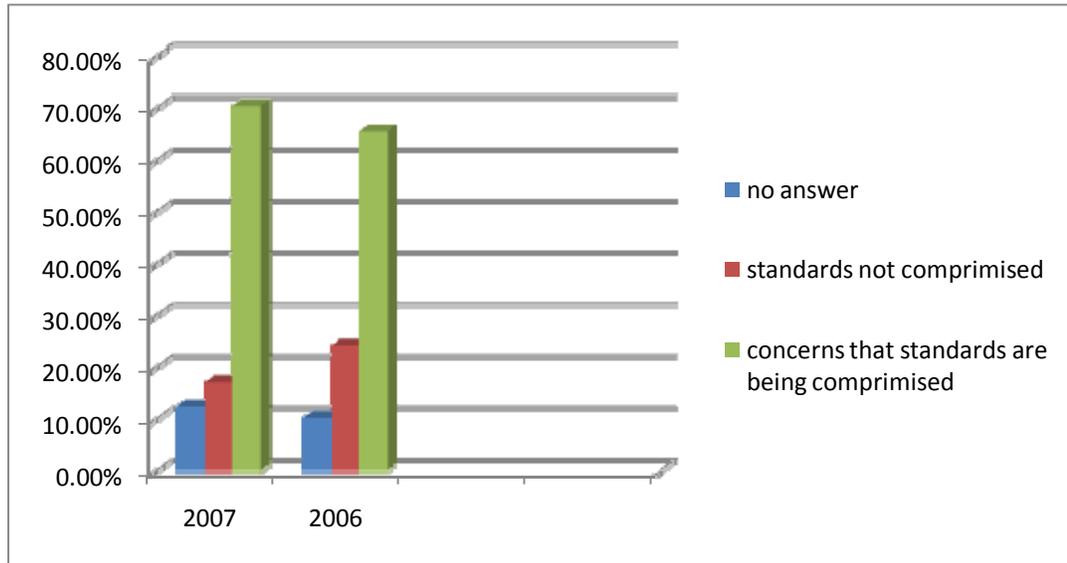
Question 11 asked that, given the recent increase in salaries of workers in January 2007, do you feel you have the capacity to respond to requests from regions to provide them with additional services. Of the 64 responses **5 (8) - 8% (10.2%)** chose not to answer, **4 (11) - 6% (14.1%)** did have the capacity to respond and **55 (59) - 86% (75.6%)** did have concerns about being able to respond to requests for additional services.



Question 12 asked that, given the increase in salaries of workers in January 2007, do you believe your standards of care might still be compromised. Of the 64 responses **8 (8) - 12.5% (10.25%)** chose not to answer, **11 (19) - 17% (24.35%)** did not believe standards of care were ever compromised and **45 (51) - 70.5% (65.4%)** did have concerns that standards of care were being compromised.

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Standards



Question 13:

This question related to the average annual salary payment for specific job titles within organisations. Organisation's responding did not employ people working in all these positions and filled out the survey based only on their own position titles. Statistics were not able to be compared to the previous survey so have not been included at this time.

Question 14:

Question 14 related to the percentage increase agencies were able to give to each staff position.

Part-Time Wages

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
19%	63%	15%	3%	0%

Child and Youth Care Counsellor

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
6%	69%	13%	6%	6%

Senior Child and Youth Care Counsellor

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
8%	60%	24%	4%	4%

In Home Counsellor

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
17%	58%	17%	0%	8%

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In Home Family Support Worker

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
19%	63%	18%	0%	0%

Home Visitor

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
17%	56%	22%	0%	5%

Crisis Intervention Worker

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
0%	80%	10%	0%	10%

Foster Care Worker

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
20%	75%	0%	5%	0%

Early Childhood Educator

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
12%	63%	25%	0%	0%

Overnight Staff/Housekeep

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
12%	76%	12%	0%	0%

Social Worker

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
0%	88%	6%	6%	0%

Rehabilitation Practitioner (Disability)

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
75%	25%	0%	0%	0%

Addictions Counsellor

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

Child and Youth Worker

Less than 3%	3%	4-6%	7-9%	10%+
0%	72%	22%	0%	6%

Question 15 and 16:

Survey question 15 asked what percentage of salary increase do you think would be required to help address your current recruitment difficulties, if you have any?

Under 10%	11-15%	16-20%	21-25%	26%+
8%	26%	33%	25%	8%

Survey question 16 asked what percentage of salary increase do you think would be required to help address your current retention difficulties, if you have any?

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Under 10%	11-15%	16-20%	21-25%	26%+
10%	24%	33%	25%	8%

Questions 17 - 20:

Survey Question 17 asked if the 3% increase received in January 2007 from Children's Services made a difference to their ability to recruit staff.

Yes – 17%

No - 83%

Survey Question 18 asked if the 3% increase received in January 2007 from Children's Services made a difference to their ability to retain staff.

Yes – 24%

No - 76%

Questions 19 and 20 included a narrative section and a summary of results are included:

Question 19: What additional support is needed (other than financial) to help improve your ability to recruit staff?

- Increased public knowledge of issues facing this sector, training opportunities, attempts to encourage more individuals to enter this field(i.e. increase information to students that may be interested in entering this field, working more collaboratively between post secondary, agencies and the regions).
- Infrastructure costs – i.e. travel costs and benefits have not had any increases. Professional development also is a good incentive to retain staff.
- Job stability – Re-tendering is forcing great staff to look elsewhere. They feel they are being punished in some way
- Financial limitations are the only barrier. The agency continues to promote flexibility in work hours and works hard to foster a healthy and positive workplace environment. This helps to some degree with staff retention but many of our staff is women (including single moms) and they have been impacted financially due to the economy. They have had to make employment decisions to ensure they can provide for their families.
- At this point, there is nothing other than substantial and ongoing salary increased that will assist in either the retention or recruitment of staff. As an agency, we offer a wide range of benefits, incentives, appreciation, etc. All of these things are necessary but without salary increases they are not sufficient.

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Question 20: What additional support is needed (other than financial) to help you improve your ability to retain staff?

- It is difficult to keep people in a job when the possibility is that the job will not be there in a year. Contracts longer than one year, most people need to know their job is viable over the long term.
- Recognition and openness to supportive ideas that work with staff – i.e. program reviews/retreats, bonuses, improved benefit plans, work load, etc. – Currently, these are not supported by our contract and can often be shunned.
- Respect from other areas of the sector namely case workers and Regional staff.
- Better benefits and a pension plan.
- More information/involvement from AASCF.
- Mutual understanding and better collaboration among Regional Authority/staff and the partner agencies.
- No cost workshops, continuous access to related information, on-going information on new retention strategies, acknowledgment of employees in newsletters, agencies membership newsletters, etc. Networking with other agencies sharing resources, ideas, and successes. It would be wonderful to find out what strategies than others that other sectors are using to be able to recruit and retain staff.
- Provide opportunities for agencies to train and grow staff; providing training sessions, seminars; working collaboratively with regions to address issues/concerns facing agencies to avoid staff feeling overwhelmed; enhance placement of children in appropriate placements where staff are adequately training and knowledgeable on how to work with the child or youth.

QUALITATIVE DISCUSSIONS:

(Other issues identified and general comments)

- FSCD workers did not receive an increase in Region 4. Therefore there was no difference in recruitment levels.
- In our area, we have the competition of oilfield based jobs and corporations. Home Depot just opened and their starting wages are \$16/hr. My front line starting wage is \$11.03/hr.
- When a staff can go down the street and start at the government agency in an on-call position for \$21.50/hr why would they move to a community agency.
- There is such a significant gap that the 3% (although appreciated), was not significant to make a difference to attract staff. We have recruited and interviewed staff who would have accepted positions had the salary been higher.
- Of the vacant positions I surprisingly have people interested in the position that may be working elsewhere or outside the field and would be qualified but they cannot take the pay cut to do the work we do.
- The total amount received was too small to apply to wages so staff received bonuses based on the hours worked in the previous year. They were happy to

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- receive them but even the bonuses could not address the inadequate wages they were receiving.
- The 3% was given retroactive so it is actually a cost of living increase for 2006, as a result, they have not had a cost of living increase for 2007. The consumer index for the last 2 years in Alberta has been between 5-6% so that means just to stay with the inflation rate we need the increase to be current to the year it is in and to be equal to the rate of inflation.
 - Those staff that did receive a 3% increase indicated that it was not enough. A number of staff received retro-increases and then left.
 - We had 3 people resign, who were also the last 3 hired. One was hired by the government as a social worker at double the salary, the other moved because she couldn't afford the increases in housing/rents on her salary and the other had other reasons.
 - Staff is insulted by a province who has so much money and invests so little in repairing the sector. 3% on a wage of \$16/hr does not amount to very much - \$20 per week. That's not enough to entice very many people to stay with a job. There are not many contracts being currently renegotiated at a 3% increase.
 - Many staff held out hoping for significant and ongoing salary increases. When they found out that they were receiving only 3% and that there was no longer term planning, many staff then chose to leave.
 - Several staff has left since the salary adjustment in January due to financial commitments and current salaries that were not sufficient to make ends meet for them. With escalating inflation for cost of living in Edmonton over the past year, many staff that previously was able to live on their increased salary is now having difficulty due to rent and food cost increases. The gap between non-profit and other sectors remains to such a degree that anything less than a 10% increase is not likely going to make a difference in terms of retention.
 - We are still experiencing staff turnover. I do believe it is still tied directly to wages. Nothing has been addressed on the area of benefits. There has been little or no increase. This needs to be addressed. Our current benefit plan is good but it is not what it could be when you compared it to the other sectors.
 - These are critical areas to be addressed- importance of addressing the issues now and with effective measures that are impactful. Honestly the increase given was not well received when staff learned of comparable jobs in government getting more raises – this discrepancy is not just.
 - We need to invest in our people in order to sustain the sector and services. Greater collaboration between agencies is sharing information about wages and funding agreements so that accurate data can be analyzed and a consistent & unified strategy is developed to create sector sustainability.
 - Within this region, we have gone through a number of re-tendering of contracts which also has an impact on an agency's ability to recruit and retain staff. During any retendering period, there is a significant level of increased anxiety throughout the region for a significant period of time from when the retender is announced until the contracts are awarded and started. Naturally, this has

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impact on staff working in these areas and I have noticed that changes due to contracts or changes in service delivery have impacted the staff. Starting to see trend where staff within our agency and other agencies are leaving the field of children care service altogether.

CONCLUSIONS:

- Between 2006 and 2007 the vacancy rate of staff has increased significantly
- Decreased ability to meet standards may increase risk to children and families
- Decreased ability to honour contracts
- Inconsistent application by Regions of 3% salary annualized adjustment
- A 3% increase doesn't significantly assist with recruitment and/or retention
- There is a need for an infusion of money for salary increases generally between 16- 26%. AASCF recommends a minimum of 20% salary increases.
- There remains a crisis of Human Capital in the Child and Family services sector

There remains a **vital** need for a solution!