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For Children and Families**

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RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SURVEY

Conducted September 26 – October 13, 2006

QUALITATIVE COMMENTS
ABRIDGED

Released November 16, 2006

QUALITATIVE DATA FROM RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SURVEY

September 26 – October 13, 2006

Reasons People Leave their Employment:

- * poor pay and benefits; poor job security; little to no recognition of the importance of this work from the Government; increased threat of physical violence from clients...
- * We cannot compete with the salaries being offered by other industries and larger not for profits. Workers can make more working for a fast food restaurant than what our budget allows us to pay good staff.
- * #1 reason given in all staff exit interviews for leaving - Salary and compensation
- * #2 reason given - do not believe there is a will to rectify situation within government - therefore it will not change and we should move pursue other opportunities
- * The number one reason for leaving is to make more money in a different sector, industry or with the government. The second most common reason is to return to school and finally maternity leave. *Individuals who left the agency accepted positions with higher wages, more benefits, and the possibility of upward mobility.
- * They need more money to pay bills, live a better standard of life (buy clothing, go on vacation, be able to afford to go out on dates), save for retirement, etc. -some individuals feel they are under-valued as professionals when they make much less than what government positions pay - staff have left because they are able to make twice as much in a government position, or \$10,000 more in another agency -retention of one male staff was hampered as he did not make enough to support his new family (recruitment and retention of male staff is particularly difficult) -staff in 0.5 positions or who are paid hourly cannot make ends meet -new grads who have worked with us for a year now have expertise and skill that would be marketable in the community for much more than their current salary.
- * Working in poverty, more money offered elsewhere, stepping stone job, not viewed as career jobs.
- * Health/ stress, feeling unsafe with current staffing situation.
- * The region is overwhelmed with the number of children coming into care. This agency is having difficulty recruiting qualified persons partly due to the economic environment we live with in Alberta. The second factor, and perhaps why retention is fragile, is what foster parents see as the institutionalization of their families when they take on foster care. They do not want to lose their 'familiness' by taking in foster children.
- * Hours fluctuate staff are leaving for secure hours -Pay is higher in other related fields e.g AADAC Children's Services, Corrections, Mental Health so the more experienced staff are leaving -Pay is significantly higher in unrelated fields e.g. Oil patch EMT's, Construction etc.
- * Hours of work e.g. staff wanting set day hours and weekends off. -Less stressful jobs.
- * Most staff is leaving for careers outside of children's services. Of the last 6 staff who left only 1 continued in the field. We have been quite privileged in that we have a core group of very

experienced committed staff, however we have been seeing that core group reduced. We have been very challenged in getting anyone with experience in the sector or with children at risk.

- * Almost all left for other employment either in the field or outside of the field. Some for higher pay, some for career advancement and some for other work conditions. Some staff from outside of the province have returned to their home province as the economy improves "back home".
- * inability to find child care higher pay*Maternity Leave and attending university full time
- * No affordable housing, other full time jobs and finding it too hard to maintain two positions and inadequate pay.

Comments on Levels of Remuneration

- * Our staff team asked to meet with Management to tell us of the issues they face in terms of not being able to pay their rent, accessing the food bank and working at two or more jobs.
- * Staff did not receive increases in 2006. In our employment program we have placed youth with multiple barriers to employment in higher paying jobs than the employment staff have. It will be hard to retain staff if more money is not made available to groups such as ours.
- * Unable to pay rent/ bills on current salary -Accept other employment in other higher paying field.
- * Workers being expected to work at the poverty level.
- * Salaries and benefits: leading up to and through the 2004/2005 fiscal year and ongoing, this issue (and the continued disparity between our members and public sector employees; as well as the current and growing realities of Alberta's healthy job market) seems to frame all other pertinent matters our agency is involved with.
- * We have not had a cost of living increase for three years. We are relying on one year project funding to maintain FTE's, so new staff is on contract, without any security of full time employment.
- * Employees are looking outside of the field for more pay/less hours; not enough pay for the stressful pace, crisis nature of the work, need to be on call, evening hours
- * Pay is not enough to sustain them. They are able to make more money working in unskilled jobs that they are not trained for. They felt that their skill, training and experience was not recognized by the industry in comparison to other professions.
- * Current funding does not allow for regular cost of living increases or salary increases for exceptional performance.
- * I cannot hire mature, experienced, qualified staff to work in an environment where client's presenting issues are more and more severe. MacDonald's and Dairy Queen are hiring starting at \$10 - \$12 per hour plus signing bonus. We cannot compete with this - we can't offer career advancement, (or only limited career advancement. Little or no benefits... All this means is that clients are not receiving the kind of professional support and care that they should be.
- * In our region all residential services but one are tendered out. We are competing for staff(much better pay/benefits in government) for exactly the same work in non-profits.

- * As most not for profit organizations we cannot compete with wages offered by other types of organizations. Most foundations do not pay for wages or increases if programs do not change.

Lack of Operational Cost Increases

- * Rural programs are reducing service and/or access to services due to increasing transportation costs.
- * We struggle to meet funder expectations with respect to occupancy rates.
- * We cannot meet demand for service from current clients; We cannot do any new intakes; We have had to cut the coordinator and admin positions supporting the services, as funds for these are tied directly to volume of service provided; Loss of admin dollars means less supervision of front line staff and support to families; Much time and money is wasted training staff who then leave;
- * ...several positions have been "absorbed" into the agency to provide additional funds for salary increases: this has created waiting lists for some programs.
- * ...Although the province is in an economic boom, little to no increases in funding has come to the non-profit agencies working with youth. We still have to fundraise just as much, if not more to support our programs and give our staff minimal increases in their wages.
- * ...We have had to limit access to services to first time parents so many families do not qualify for service that previously did qualify. Because of the increased number of contracts and projects, reporting requirements have increased significantly. Not being able to provide service to families in need has increased the stress on front line staff and management.
- * There is an increasing pressure/expectation that agencies fundraise to offset the cost of children's services programs. We were only getting 12% benefits for our staff and I told the Finance Manager of the CFSA that it cost us 15%. His comment was that I should just fundraise the difference. There is so much pressure on agencies to produce superior outcomes, yet our own CFSA's aren't held to the same standard. And achieving those outcomes doesn't really matter - programs are re-tendered regardless of them.
- * There is increased impact on Service Provider's ability to meet standards, and contract requirements (i.e. consistently meet caseload levels). We are highly impacted by the big picture of Alberta's employment situation. For example, there is increased competition for employees in all sectors. Not-for-profit Service Providers are at a disadvantage. This includes level of pay; working conditions; position security (CFSA's move to tender contracts has further increased employee's apprehension of staying in current positions); personal development; and ability to meet cost of living increases (For example, many employees can't afford housing and/or childcare). We are also competing against government positions and are having staff actively recruited by managers in government systems (CFSA, PDD, and HRE). Fee for service arrangements that are time limited to terms of 6 months also contribute to position insecurity. Also, awaiting the confirmation of funding for services affects continuity of service delivery and consistent employment. As a Service Provider providing services in more than one Region we

observe that the differences and interpretations of policy and remuneration for services provided contribute to employee dissatisfaction and frustration.

- * Contracts are put into place and the budget remains the same for many years with little regard to the increase in operation costs, cost of living or benefits to providing incentives for staff (Annual increments, benefits) so subsequently staff look to agencies that can provide benefits, pension plans and regular increases.
- * Chronic under funding has led to a thoroughly mismanaged system and will lead inevitably in a collapse of service provision. This is not something taken lightly or an idle threat but the lack of vision and support by the main decision makers and funders. Efforts to address the situation on a regional level and provincial level in proactive and meaningful ways have been met with dismissive statements and need to study/understand the issues. CEO's and Executive management existence should be to see potential problems and to plan for/develop strategies to address them. This has not happened.

Impact of Recruitment and Retention Issues

- * 1) Staff burnout is causing the quality of services to decrease as staff are dealing with increased stress. 2) Loss of resources to children/families as the skills and knowledge are lost when experienced staff leave. 3) Staff are burning out much quicker upon returning from breaks/leaves. 4) Have to hire very "green" staff who are only able to provide minimal support/resources due to the steep learning curve
- * The current HR situation is causing our organization to spend a large amount of time on recruitment and training. No longer is the expectation that staff will be with our organization for five years. The reality is that staff will only be involved in our organization for 2 or less years. Our sector needs to develop a capacity in the entire area of HR. The living wage is important but it is not just about wages. At issue is the entire HR cycle. The impact on our services is that existing staff are having to take on additional shifts and responsibilities to meet the needs of our children and youth. In the short term this is fine but if this trend continues it may cause hardships for our organization
- * increased in workload for existing staff resulting in increased sick time and no one to replace due to staff shortage...managers filling in on night shifts...risk of losing managers to CHR where the situation is better ie at least gets paid a respectful wage... moral is low...staff tired of hearing that ED is trying to increase wages but increases never are at the expected compensation rate relative to inflation concern on reduction of service; have had to cap numbers due to staff shortage...children have not received service due to being turned away due to staff shortage... Boards frustrated with the poor response from government on wage, salaries, operational dollars...volunteers having to put in effort to lobby on our behalf...not really why Board members signed up. Concerned about retention of Board members... Volunteers put in position to compensate for staff shortages...volunteer numbers down this fall...too much pressure on volunteers who came to play with children and don't need stress of our HR issues
- * Increased workload and need to cover off on open shifts in residential programs is resulting in higher rates of stress and burnout. Wait time for securing appropriate certification when hiring

new employees is further complicating the recruitment issue. In addition there are fewer qualified applicants responding to job vacancies, have to speed up the selection process in order to avoid losing applicants to alternative offers. Further, in an effort to retain employees, non-profit organizations typically offer excellent supervision, training opportunities and other benefits that cannot be offered due to scheduling and staff crises. I would say that we are currently experiencing a staffing crisis. It is very difficult to recruit and retain qualified employees given the current job market. Employees who are working within many of the programs are currently looking elsewhere for employment in positions that may be similar or may not be but that offer better wages, and benefits packages. As a non-profit organization, we cannot compete. While there may be many enticing and creative HR practices that are engaged to recruit and retain employees, the bottom line is that if the employee has to work two to three jobs to pay the bills it makes more sense for them to go somewhere where they can regain work-life balance. The non-profit sector cannot compete with the profit sector and there are major discrepancies even between funding sources (eg. Children's Services programs pay more than shelter and transitional housing programs) making it even more challenging to retain employees within different programs in the same organization. We have posted three times to fill full time positions in a variety of mediums. To date, we have received approximately 12-15 resumes and of those very few hold qualifications necessary to fulfill the roles and responsibilities to effectively provide service provision to our target group. The impact is two fold: if one cannot find a suitable candidate to fulfill the designated role will result in the team experiencing more stress and burnout and potentially more resignations. On the other hand, if resorting to hiring someone with qualifications not suitable to the position, both service users and the team will be greatly impacted which ultimately could have a macro level impact especially if other agencies/programs are facing similar circumstances in providing the services needed. On the other hand if a suitable candidate is secured what would be the retention of this candidate with our current economy and the pay that we are able to offer?

Effect of Re-tendering on Stability in the Field

- * I have said to our CFSA's - "how would you like to have your jobs tendered every three years? Or only receive cost of living increases or salary increases with the Ministry comes up with the money? Without exception they would not work in that environment. So why is it okay for them to expect agencies to do it? Perhaps the Ministry should look at outcomes of their own services areas - I am sure there are a number of qualified, competent agencies that could deliver those services with far better outcomes at a much lower cost. There is a fine line between being a good partner and a door mat. Sufficient resources provided in a supportive and collaborative environment can only enhance services to children and families - agencies are an essential component and need to be recognized as such. We have a pool of casual/relief staff from which we provide fee for service and emergency work for the CFSA. But the Authority also maintains

their own wage pool, so they are in competition with us. What few staff are available for this work tend to go to the Authority because they will make \$7 to \$10 more an hour. (Their hourly rate only includes wages and benefits while ours includes wages, benefits, training, supervision, payroll, insurance, etc.) They want responsive, high quality services with exemplary outcomes. Then they maintain systems that reduce our capacity to deliver. Lastly, the directives that come out from the Ministry head office may not play out very well in the smaller regions. For example, tendering in our region would be a futile exercise as there are not a lot of agencies to compete - and those of us that are here "specialize" in services so we have not been overlapping. The work that is involved for an agency to submit a tender is so onerous that I am hearing some say they are not even going to bother.

- * In our region all the residential contracts were terminated and tendered out. Once that announcement was made, we had 7 staff resignations (out of 21). Staff felt they needed to go work in areas with better job security. Once the tenders were announced, an additional 2 staff resigned. We lost 42% of our staff before the new services commenced. This created a huge challenge for us to maintain the old services in light of the demoralizing process of re-tendering.
- * The vast majority of agencies are lean, hardworking, responsive, collaborative and HONEST. We are responsibly managing our contract funds, staff and resources and tracking outcomes and striving to improve services. The Auditor General said ONE means of improving the management of contracts is to re-tender on a regular basis. Some CFSA's have adopted that as gospel, rather than addressing their own internal deficiencies in terms of contract management. And they are oblivious of the impact re-tendering has - creating a competitive and adversarial environment amongst agencies, rather than a resourceful, collaborative one; the interruption/change in service to provision to clients' the uncertainty it creates in this industry, resulting in skilled and dedicated staff leaving due to uncertainty; a clear message that if agencies want to be in the game they have better keep their costs low (when 80% of our costs are staffing, we have to do that by not offering cost of living increases or moving people up the salary grid - what incentive is there for them to stay with us?) The tendering process really isn't tendering. If a tender is put out for paving the government does not call them in and tentatively award it but ask for reduction in prices, eliminate what they perceive as non-essential costs; total accounting of all expenses and a refund on monies not spent. What other tendering process involves such high degrees of micromanagement!!! I agree that we all need to be conducting our business appropriately, but the government cannot apply those practices carte blanche across to the delivery of services to children and families without some adjustments/considerations.

Impact on Services/Returning Contracts

- * A disproportionate amount of our resources (staff time, dollars) is focused on maintaining and retaining a staffing structure that fulfills our contractual obligations. ...This affects our agency and member agencies; abilities to provide the optimum continuity and expertise re: programming for the children/youth and families serviced.
- * These employees would be greatly missed because of the wealth of experience and knowledge they would be taking with them. Newer staff would be unable to benefit from the same

knowledge. We would be constantly recruiting new staff members, which makes it difficult to maintain smooth day to day operations.

- * Staff have to work at two or more jobs to survive. They are exhausted and know the quality of their work with clients is deteriorating. They have been very clear that although they want to continue to work in this field and with our agency many cannot afford to do so. Services to clients are suffering as we are unable to fill some positions.
- * In addition to the identified 12 openings we have, we have had 5 additional employees approach us disclosing that they will be leaving their employment within the next 3 months. We are significantly concerned that this number will rise even higher. It may mean if trend continues, of the actually turning back of certain contracts and closing programs. Minimally there is a huge “risk management” factor – not being able to provide for the safety of our clients and/or our staff in certain programs (residential primarily).
- * If staff shortages happen again at our agency, then yes, we will not be able to provide support to as many families and children. We will have to implement a waiting list and, in turn the families and or the children suffer. In June, we had staff shortages. Every one of my staff, including myself, stretched ourselves further to honour our contracts, then we implemented a waiting list which took six weeks to clear up. It was very stressful to our program.
- * Our biggest concern is in our group homes. Children are presenting with more complex problems and new staff do not always know how to handle them.
- * Client service is impacted. We struggle to meet funder expectations with respect to occupancy rates. Hiring costs are escalating. Employees who remain are experiencing higher levels of stress as they attempt to "fill in the gaps".
- * ...and it is the families who suffer due to the lack of qualified staff and other funding.
- * Staff working overtime, extra time to do recruitment; significant retraining costs (financial and human resources); decrease in staff morale; quality of service decline due to inability to sustain, retain the workforce;
- * The current impact is showing itself by means of having less experienced staff on board thus poorer service delivery awarded to clients. Lack of resources and lack of ability to provide specific services to meet specific needs, care is becoming generic.
- * Considerable resources are spent on advertisements, interviews and training of successful candidates. Other than draining limited resources from direct service delivery, insufficient and inadequate staffing will result in the closing programs.
- * The impacts to quality and continuous care for clients from staff leaving include interruption of services, potential for clients to not connect with new workers, frustration for clients who now have to share their stories and issues with someone new and frustration at having to create a new relationship with this new worker.
- * there has been a significant impact to programming for young dads as the population of male workers in the field is slim; recruiting to these positions is difficult without low salaries. As a result, clients have been without workers for several months at a time.

- * We may have to turn in our contract to run a shelter as we are unable to find house-parents and need to move to awake night staff. If we are unable to obtain a funding increase for this we will return our contract.
- * Staffing for child and family services has been in crisis for several years and is not rapidly improving. Standards of child care have been SEVERELY compromised. Low income families receive lowest standard of care.
- * We will be meeting with the Regional authorities to explore options around revising contracts or closing contracts. We are losing the depth of staff capabilities in programs. Recent diploma grads are becoming senior staff in less than 6 months due to turnover instead of capability. This sector is losing and has lost significant capacity in leadership. The changing of service provision that the government has advocated in order that we work differently with children and families and communities is in jeopardy. There may be no staff to provide the services that the government is mandated to provide.
- * We have already had to temporarily close a residential program for three months earlier this year due to shortage of manpower. There are presently three new tenders issued for three new residential facilities in our region. This will require approx. 24 new positions to be recruited adding a further strain on our agencies in this region.

Impact on Staff

- * High levels of stress and burnout. We currently have 4 staff on medical/stress leave at this time. Average has been 1 or less per year in previous 5 years.
- * Reduced capacity, heightened level of turnover, higher stressors, greater WCB claims, burn out, compromised service delivery, instability, functioning from a crisis management position
- * Employees who remain are experiencing higher levels of stress as they attempt to "fill in the gaps".
- * Currently staff are overtaxed. Amount of overtime paid is high; most staff have 'maxed' their sick time; staff are anxious and worried about where relief staff will come from. Supervisory time and tasks are becoming unbearable. It is nearly impossible to free up staff to do their mandatory training and participate in professional development.
- * Our staff is getting run down, tired of retraining and losing people. Currently it does not affect the quality of our services
- * Staff burning out due to extra shifts. Staff morale low when they see the agencies difficulty in recruiting to open positions. Staff often working at 2 to 4 ratio are mostly working a 1 to 4 ratio.
- * The situation is precarious in that we manage to patch together just enough most of the time. There are times when management and other staff are expected to do jobs out of their job description. Morale and culture can contribute to increased frequency of "stress leave" situations which of course exasperates the problem.

Issues of Contracts/Contracting

- * This impending crisis is now for some and coming for others. The problem begins with the we-them mentality that exists between ministry/authority staff and the private sector. It is played out through an adversarial contracting process that is laden with value judgments that help nobody and expressly doesn't expect to fund on a cost recovery basis for the non-profit sector that is compelled to re-invest in children and families. Government should concern itself with monitoring and ensuring quality programs only and let the "experts" in program delivery (the private sector) do so with their full support. They are often concerned about being ripped off by agencies but they already have too many checks and balances to make the right decisions.(licensing, contracts, standards etc.) For-profit agencies have no business delivering services in this sector, but that is not to say there are not bad nonprofits. There are also bad government departments, agencies etc that operate inefficiently. Let's start working together in a mutually supportive manner that keeps the well being of children and families paramount. Nice to be asked!!!

Pressure of Hiring

- * It has been very difficult to find staffing to fill all the positions. At the management level we have had to spend a far greater amount of time and energy recruiting and training staff.
- * Can't find staff to hire. -Hiring process takes 3-4 weeks to hire, because we have to wait for criminal record check and CYIM. This process takes too long. -Not enough employees in Alberta for this field.
- * Current compensation levels are such that folks do not apply. Two recent provincial and national job postings got a total of three responses- two of which were qualified. Once compensation was clarified the candidates respectfully declined.
- * ... my office staff are using too much time hiring and training and have less time for improvement of services. We never get ahead or have any breathing room, another big reason people are looking for other careers.

Amount of Additional Training Required

- * The resources that are eaten by having to recruit, train and provide orientation to new employees is practically a full time position in itself. Relationships with clients are difficult to maintain and build when having to introduce new staff, so that puts any type of breakthroughs back a few steps.
- * It is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified and competent staff when we do not have the ability to offer competitive wages. The current impact is that more supervisory hours are needed to support the staff we are able to hire, meaning other operational requirements of organizations are negatively impacted.

- * Our training budgets are proving to be inadequate with high rates of turnover requiring perpetual retraining of basics mandatory training. Too much staff time of supervisors and managers is being spent recruiting and training and just trying to keep shifts covered.

The Impact on the Future if Recruitment and Retention Issue is not Addressed

- * Programs will close; more and more staff will be assaulted; and this sector will suffer; fewer beds will be available and fewer people will be prepared to work in this sector. What are we saying, THE FUTURE IS NOW!
- * The future impact is that the clients will no longer have the confidence in an already unstable system that is meant to assist them with their needs. We lose the ability to effectively provide realistic goals for our clients.
- * When organizations have no options but to hire someone with only minimal suitability, it places organizations, boards and ultimately clients at risk. I don't believe it will be too long before we start to read about the negative impacts when staff who are below standards begin to make decisions regarding the care of clients.
- * The crisis of recruitment and selection of employees will impact our ability to build capacity within our agency to serve more children with healthy adults in their lives. Time and resources will be spent on the recruitment and selection and the orientation and training of new staff instead of focusing those funds on direct service to children and families. Non-profits will be competing for employees within their industry at a different level than they have ever experienced and if their Human Resources systems are not in place they will quickly fall out of being competitive to attracting new employees. Not being able to attract qualified employees will be a detriment to an agency and may result in cut back of services or closures.
- * Smaller agencies will be more affected as their salaries and benefits tend to be less than larger agencies - perhaps they will have to shut down - and larger agencies will not be able to take on increased numbers of youth in need. Marginally-qualified people will be serving/treating high needs youth - quality of service will be impacted. Fewer people will enter the field and there will be a brain drain. People who may consider joining the sector or who are currently in the field will view the sector as not valued, not professional and they will either stay or to leave for something that is valued or pays a better living wage. A larger gap (than already exists) between the regional authority/government reality and the reality of contracted services will culminate in resentment (the haves and have not's). Fewer people who are committed and feel valued to look after very difficult kids (they are a special group that deserves appreciation). The operating environment will become increasingly unstable - poor wages will create turnover problems; re-tendering will create job insecurity. Kids will react to people leaving them and feel as if they are not valued. This will usually manifest itself through violence, other acting out, running, which actually requires more time and attention. Higher and unrealistic expectations from Funders as populations and problems increase.
- * More clients will be looking for services than we can offer. It will be difficult to expand programs with limited funds and staff.

- * Contracts may not be renewed; programs may need to be closed; needs of clients will not be met; more stress on families who are going without service; client's discouraged due to inconsistent workers
- * Programs will be significantly marginalized beginning with crisis based programs. These are the least desirable for workers due to stresses, pay, and intermittent hours. The irony is that the more other programs become marginalized due to staffing shortages the more they rely on crisis resources. Eventually this will mean that our service sector will experience the same delays as others are experiencing (e.g. food services) Additionally, the poor salaries in the area of services to children with disabilities is leading to the utilization of crisis/emergent services that would not normally serve these populations. This is due to their staffing incapacities to develop the necessary programs. I predict that because of these stresses there will be little or no wiggle room in the system in about another 3-6 months.
- * I believe that the future does not look bright for our agency if this crisis continues as the work with families is needed. Our small program may need to close due to staffing issues.
- * All these issues have been building for a number of years. Programs are having to close. WE are continually asked for more information to justify and inform about our existing services - there is a lot of busy work but not too many concrete changes. There is a willingness to do something different and to create better systems. We need the people to do it - it is all about people, this job of service to others.
- * 1) Children and families will not have access to quality care but will be "warehoused". 2) Services will be scaled back to very basic care and/or eliminated.
- * There will be serious situations with regards to the breakdown of care and as a result both clients and staff will be subject to more risk.
- * The industry will become less credible and many good staff will not consider this industry as a career option for themselves.
- * We attended a local job fair and for the first time in their history 6 non-profits were recruiting. We were competing with companies like Halliburton, the federal government and other multi-nationals.
- * Our Sector along with funders need to work together to develop a plan on how we will deal with the HR issues around recruitment and retention. If solutions are not found then in the end it will be children, youth and families that will be at risk. Our agency will continue to look at ways to recruit and retain staff but it will continue to be a challenge. It will mean that we will need to find innovative ways to deliver our programs
- * Impacts to future service delivery include the agencies inability to respond to the numbers of people (clients) that we have helped in past years. Currently we serve approximately 120 clients in the two home visiting/outreach programs at any given time and approximately 900 individuals per year. If the agency cuts/absorbs positions or cuts programming and puts that money into salaries for existing staff, it will result in decreased numbers of clients served and decreased options for service delivery (family, individual, groups, in-home support, community outreach). (If the agency does not find a strategy to increase salaries, the quality of services may decrease with less qualified staff: this would not be our chosen solution.) -the agencies credibility

potentially decreases as staffing resources diminish and as time is taken from community capacity building to tend to staff recruitment and retention. As a result, fewer community agencies are provided with support and information to deal with the target population of the agency and fewer individuals are supported in the larger community. -community impacts as a result of agencies closing or programs discontinuing include an increase in the number of people living in dysfunctional or unsafe environments and decreased ability to advocate for societies most vulnerable individuals. These societal impacts will influence service delivery in our agency as the need for essential supports and advocacy increase (thus increasing time spent on these issues), our ability to meet other needs decreases.

- * Long term impact could erode our social support system. Communities asked to do more for complex children. There will be less standards and increasing social problems. Less qualified staff and decreased quality of service. No leaders for tomorrow....
- * Standards of care are not going to improve until more people see child and family services as a well-paying professional career with good benefits. Services are becoming more elite in clientele - those who can afford higher fees can pay for higher salaries for better-trained staff.

What has been working for some.

- * Our current economic status is definitely impacting on our ability to attract quality people to the field. One of the perks I know would be appreciated is the opportunity for staff to further their formal education while employed. If the province had a scholarship or bursary program for agencies to help their staff access, this might be an incentive to keep staff as well as build skills with staff. We also need to be able to attract and retain staff with competitive salaries AND benefits, this includes increasing travel compensation.
- * We have begun to review salaries and reduce the number of positions in order to be more competitive. Our child care educators are leaving because of low wages and our inability to assure them sufficient hours. We have an overly generous benefits plan and that has helped with less turnover than some agencies however we now have trouble supporting it. Lack of management experience (basically people were promoted because they stayed longer) has meant that we do not have skill sets necessary to effectively manage HR issues nor can we afford local training.
- * We do not have difficulty keeping staff because: Salary is excellent with excellent benefits and retirement, staff are experienced and mature so they do not require micromanaging, staff is involved in the programming process through meaningful participation on committee's and education opportunities for career upgrading.
- * We will begin to lose staff to other positions because we have been unable to provide salary increases to our home visitors for at least 4 years. We have tried to maintain staff by offering flexible hours, benefits, extra vacation time, etc. We are struggling as well with rising benefit costs.

Other Comments

- * Staff recruitment and retention are not the only crisis we're facing. Hand in hand with this is the bed shortage, there are not enough beds in the system, not in foster care, group care, or residential. AND the authority wants us to brainstorm ways of dealing with the crisis!.
- * The other issue is the ability of Colleges to produce mature capable students for the field. The marks are what get them into the college but age is important when working with clients who are 16 and 17
- * The three major issues that I see with the current FCSS system is that the funding formula means that smaller communities have very limited funds in which to support local programs and services, despite the fact that we face the same systemic issues as larger centres (family violence, drugs, bullying, etc.) This is especially true in rural centres. Finally, I am concerned that local FCSS staff often use the funding provided to 'deliver services' rather than support established organizations who have the 'trained' staff in place. They are often duplicating services or impacting on the mandates of local organizations making it appear that we are the ones duplicating services. This also means that there is less FCSS dollars left in the pot to support local initiatives and services.
- * Although our salaries may appear to be slightly high, this is due to the fact that we have been fortunate in retaining long term employees. Many of our employees have been with our agency for over 10 years. We anticipate the average salary will decrease as more employees resign their employment and we are forced to lower our academic standards for employment.
- * We have a total of 204 positions in our agency with 14 vacancies. We believe all of our work is "children and family services" - even facilities. If we do not have the support we cannot do quality work. It would be difficult to pull out only those staff/programs funded by Children and Family Services as some programs are dually funded and assignment of money is mostly arbitrary to the individuals. Also there are internal transfers that would result in an inaccurate count for determining this as a separate number.
- * Never before have staff members been so vocal and so concerned about the field. We believe they are very sincere and very serious about their concerns and warnings that they may leave the field entirely.
- * The future of children and families is at stake, as is the future of communities. If services to support children continue to erode, the price will be paid in higher costs as these children become adults and end up costing the government more in rehabilitative and correctional costs. The personal impact on children will have immeasurable moral and ethical implications.
- * It is also important to look at best practices in the entire area of recruitment and retention. I believe that it is important to relay to our funders that the two of us need to work together to look at a creative solutions.
- * All our new hires are graduates of our program from prior years. As such, finding new staff is not difficult. Our staffing model is to hire our graduates, and train and educate them.