

Caseworker Retention: How Does It Impact The Dependency System?

Caseworker Retention Workgroup Co-Chairs:

Honorable Linda R. Cordaro, *Court of Common Pleas of Fayette County*
Shara B. Saveikis, *Administrator, Westmoreland County Children's Bureau*

State Roundtable concern: Not just an Agency issue

- ❖ Testimony provided by new caseworkers lacks necessary thoroughness
- ❖ Service provision described by new caseworkers lacks creativity and comprehensive knowledge of available services
- ❖ Children and parents have to tell very personal information repeatedly as caseworkers change...more trauma and delay
- ❖ All of the above directly impacts findings and orders that judges are legally required to make...safe, timely permanency for children.

Child Welfare Caseworker Retention: A State Roundtable Focus

In 2015, the Pennsylvania State Roundtable convened the Caseworker Retention Workgroup

- Statewide Concern expressed through Leadership Roundtables
- Examine local, statewide and national research
- Impacts Court, County Agency, State, Children and Families
- Workgroup Membership includes 20 counties, who collectively oversee 70% of Pennsylvania's children in out of home care

Caseworker Retention in Child Welfare: Why is it Important to the Court?

- Judicial findings and orders are made exclusively on the evidence presented during hearings – experienced workers tend to provide more comprehensive information
- Frustration with lack of “new” information/Judge feeling they know the case better than the caseworker

Caseworker Retention in Child Welfare: Why is it Important to the Court?

- Increased continuances because a newer worker is at mandatory training or not yet familiar enough with the case to testify
- Less creative solutions to family problems resulting in longer services or services not best suited for the family
- More children in placement, more time to safe permanency, larger court dockets, more county costs.

Caseworker Retention directly impacts child permanency

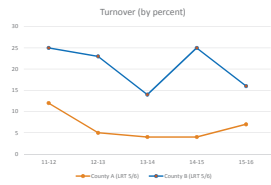
➔ Impact on Permanency Outcomes

Milwaukee study: (Flower, McDonald, & Sumski, 2005)

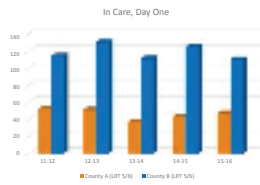
Number of Caseworkers	Likelihood of Achieving Permanency
1	74.5%
2	17.5%
3 or more	5.2% - 1%

Like-Size County Comparison
 High Turnover = Higher Placements
 Lower Turnover = Lower Placements

TURNOVER COMPARISON



ENTRIES INTO PLACEMENT COMPARISON



Caseworker Retention directly impacts
 child permanency

“The **timeline train** ----- it goes regardless of what isn’t working with the system or where the causes for the delay are coming from”

~~Parent formerly in the system

Caseworker Retention in Child Welfare:
 Why is it Important to the Agency?

- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-Being
- Stability of Workforce and Budget

Caseworker Retention directly impacts child safety

- A highly-skilled child welfare workforce is necessary to meet the complex and critical needs of the children and families it serves
- Child Safety: Research shows correlation between frequency of contact with a child and their safety (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2006)
- Have a less experienced worker responsible for the safety of a child
- May result in a delay in reacting or overreacting

Caseworker Retention directly impacts child well-being

- Identifying the best suitable placement initially and preserving stability throughout
- Impacts service delivery (American Public Human Services Association, 2005) – required reasonable efforts findings of court which can directly impact federal funding
- Details may leave when the caseworker leaves
- A child and family has to develop new relationships and build trust with each new caseworker

Caseworker Retention in Child Welfare: Average Cost of Placement

- Child Placement has a range of costs depending on the level of care needed:
 - ❖ Shelter Center (\$150-\$700/day)
 - ❖ County foster care (\$20-\$50/day)
 - ❖ Provider/purchased foster care (\$50-\$150/day)
 - ❖ Residential care (\$128-\$300/day)
- A child in care one day longer than needed is costly to the child's well-being and the County budget

The Cost of Turnover

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) estimates the cost of turnover to be 1/3 of an employee's annual salary (cashing out benefits, training cost, recruitment cost, and other related cost).

Turnover cost in 4 counties within the current PA study (Westmoreland, Greene, Erie, Bucks)

County	2015-2016 Starting Salary	2015-2016 Lost investment with turnover of one Caseworker	2015-2016 Number of Caseworkers who left the agency	2015-2016 Total Turnover Cost For 2015-16
Westmoreland	\$38,863.50	\$10,469.22	7	\$73,284.54
Greene	\$34,216	\$7,323.86	15	\$109,857.90
Erie	\$33,910	\$14,734.77	9	\$132,612.93
Bucks	\$44,791	\$33,760.98	12	\$405,132.00

Knowledge Needed...

- Does my county have a child welfare caseworker turnover problem? What is our rate of caseworker turnover? Is there an obvious trend?
- What does caseworker turnover cost us?
- What are we currently doing to address the problem? Is it working?
- What else can we do? How can we measure if it works?

Caseworkers stay in their jobs when they feel like they are able to make an impact on the lives of children and families ~ Stay Interview 2016



Caseworker
Retention
matters to
Dependency.....



....and to the
children in your
County
