Explaining the Factors that Affect Child Protective Service Caseworker's Propensity to Leave Their Job

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Introduction

The child welfare system has been in disarray over the last decade. The concerns have been noted in research, conducted by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the General Accounting Office (GAO). Graef and Hill (2000, 518) indicate that not much has been noted on the impact that Child Protective Service (CPS) staff turnover has on child welfare agency functions.

Yet, every day, agencies and organizations face the problem of having their workers quit and walk out on their jobs. CPS concern is that too many caseworkers are leaving their jobs. The problem of high turnover creates a disconnection with the organizations goals, mission, and the community. The child welfare system is a vast system of services that aid families and children.

The well being of a child, along with preservation, protection, and permanency, are the vital duties of child welfare agencies. The fact that there is a loss of caseworkers, according to CWLA and GAO, the system is dysfunctional in many aspects and not just one. This creates a sense of disillusionment for the organization as a whole and the very profession these caseworkers set out to do.

The factors that contribute to the high turnover of caseworkers continue to plague them today and have been on-going due to the lack of applicable and realistic solutions such as smaller caseloads and workload. Media awareness has affected communities and the expectations they have of caseworkers. Furthermore, expectations of caseworker's ability to protect and save lives put more pressure on them. The fact that child abuse has

been an on-going issue in our society, more and more people are becoming aware of incidents of abuse on children. This awareness has filtered into mainstream society and the expectation of child protective caseworkers has continued to increase. In order to grasp and gain a full understanding of the dilemmas that have been taking place in the child welfare system, an accurate picture of the problems need to be closely dissected. As will be further noted and discussed in the literature review section, the problems of caseworker turnover are far greater than ever imagined.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to determine what factors affect Child Protective Service caseworkers' propensity to leave their jobs within in the next 12 months. Six mitigating factors will be discussed to address the various problems caseworkers face. Caseworkers were surveyed from four Texas cities: which included Austin, New Braunfels, San Marcos, and San Antonio.

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of chapter two is to identify the mitigating problems and issues facing Child Protective Service caseworkers. In addition, the factors causing caseworkers in the child welfare system to quit are upended. The literature makes a connection between the problems, factors, and short-comings caseworkers come to grips with. The critical elements in the literature are used to formulate and develop a set of hypotheses. The conceptual framework connects the literature used to discussed and analyze the six hypotheses.

Chapter three presents the methodology used, which uses formal hypotheses as a way to present and analyze the data to be presented. It will discuss the data collection technique to be used in order to address the research in question.

The type of research method, sample, operationlization of the conceptual framework, strengths and weaknesses, and statistical method employed will be further discussed in the methodology chapter. Chapter four will focus on the results of the data collected to verify or null and void the six hypotheses developed in the research. The data will be dissected using a multiple regression analysis. Chapter five will serve as the conclusion identifying the outcomes, further things to consider, and alternative solutions, as well as future research recommendations.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents a historical overview of the issues and crisis child protective services have faced in the past 20 years. While the issues may be long and overwhelming, specific recurring factors will be further reviewed. The child abuse act and the impact it had on child protective services will be noted in the literature. Along with this, specific terms will be addressed in order to formulate a better understanding of the dilemma facing caseworker's ability to continue in their field of work.

Turnover and intent to leave will be a recurring theme throughout this chapter to highlight the importance and severity of this issue facing child protective services. Recruitment and retention issues will be addressed as well as causes and effects of burnout. All these factors will bring a better understanding of not only the impact turnover has on services provided, but on the impact turnover has continued to have on the caseworkers who continue to do the job day in and day out.

History of Caseworker Problems

"The child welfare field has long been among the most demanding and difficult vocational paths available in the human services" (Drake and Yadama 1996, 1). A GAO (1995, 2) report states that from 1983-1993 the number of foster children grew dramatically as did the services, which put foster care in crisis. The number of child abuse cases continues to be on the rise and has been a contributing problem to child welfare agencies. Reports are stating that "turnover rates for caseworkers have been increasing over the past five years and increased dramatically in 1999" (Legisweb.state.wy.us 2000, 3).

Caseworkers face the difficult challenge of performing their jobs with the available resources, as the "reports of child abuse and neglect nearly doubled, and foster care caseloads grew by two-thirds" (GAO 1995, 2). This factor alone was sufficient enough to cause a nation wide epidemic in child welfare agencies. The unexpected and overwhelming increase in the number of cases flooded agency resources and left staff unable to handle and cope with the surge as the foster care system became dangerous and over-crowded in the nation (Thoma 1998, 2). IASWR (2005, 9) indicates that "over the past decade, an array of initiatives has been launched across the country to address child welfare workforce problems." But it is evident that those initiatives have been ineffective and the problems of the child welfare workforce persist.

One important contributor to the ongoing issue is the federal government. A GAO (1995, 18) report states that federal support for child welfare services has been insufficient during the growth period. If the government continues to fail in providing support, direction, and accountability to child welfare agencies, who then will? As Thoma (1998, 3) suggests, a complete restructuring is needed in the department of social services child welfare. Any other changes will be impossible to make. Further research on intent to leave and turnover of caseworkers need to be conducted so that a better grasp of the problem can be obtained and understood.

Intent to Leave and Turnover

The issue of intent to leave and actual turnover needs to be addressed to gain a better understanding of the problem. Freund (2005, 10) states that turnover intention is an important factor in predicting turnover. This is very important for an organization that wants to evaluate the intent of its workers leaving. "One of the fundamental goals of

voluntary turnover research is to account for employee turnover" (Lambert, et al. 2001, 237). Research in the area of caseworker intent to leave and turnover continues to be a growing issue that needs to be dealt with a fine comb. "The body of literature examining retention and turnover of employees in the human services field is lacking in a number of areas, in part stemming from the very limited amount of research that has been conducted" (Barak, et al. 2001, 656). Research shows that "staff turnover has traditionally been studied with a focus on the employees' reason for termination" (Rycraft 1994, 75). This doesn't help resolve the problem when the focus is placed on termination instead of voluntary turnover.

No wonder this issue continues to be a major concern in child welfare agencies when no one seems to actually take initiative in evaluating the problem. Surely one would think that measures on intent and actual turnover would have been conducted by now. "However, no single unifying model has been developed to explain turnover among human service workers" (Barak, et al. 2001, 628). This may in fact be the more accurate way of looking at the problem to develop and propose solutions. However, the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (2005, 9) acknowledges that "additional research efforts have focused more specifically on the perceptions of workers, supervisors and administrators as to what factors impact retention, so that appropriate and effective solutions can be implemented."

While child welfare agencies continue to seek solutions to turnover and intent to leave, yet they themselves have not done enough to ensure that enough research to address the problem has been conducted. Barak, et al. (2001, 633) states that "no single system for classifying the predictors of turnover has been adopted in human service

turnover research." While solutions and research continue to fall further behind the problems of turnover continue to grow. "Another important finding is that the decision to leave one's job often follows from the intention to leave" (Barak, et. al., 2001, 655-656). "A worker's intentions to leave an organization include mere thoughts of quitting the organization (thinking of quitting), and statements by the worker that he/she actually wants to leave the organization (intent to leave)" (Freund, 2005, 9-10).

Freund (2005, 9-10) states that the worker has to follow these steps before he actually leaves the organization in order to be able to show actual intent as oppose to just leaving. "The next best method is to measure a variable that consistently and immediately proceeds voluntary employee turnover, namely intention" (Lambert, et al. 2001, 237).

So by doing research on intent, "it is more practical to ask employees of their intentions to quit in a cross-sectional study than actually to track them down via a longitudinal study to see is they have left or to conduct a retrospective study and risk hindsight biases" (Barak, et al. 2001, 630). This should be very helpful to child welfare agencies and those seeking to conduct research on intent to leave in their various organizations and departments.

Lambert, et al. (2001, 237) indicates that a person's ability to act out a certain behavior can be measured by studying that person's intentions to act out that behavior. It is always so much easier to study subjects in the here and now as oppose to later. Lambert, et al. (2001, 237) also states that intent to stay or leave your job is closely tied to voluntary turnover. But one cannot forget that with intention and turnover, there are many factors that play a part in that decision.

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"Future research needs to examine the strongest turnover predictors simultaneously in order to determine their relationships to one another and to discover their mediating and moderating influences" (Barak, et al. 2001, 656). One factor or piece of the puzzle alone does not even begin to scratch the surface of actual intention to quit. "Additionally, the relationship between intentions to leave and actual turnover in the human services field merits further examination, since intention, to leave alone accounts for only a portion of actual turnover" (Barak, et al. 2001, 656).

If the child welfare system sees this as an issue and knows that it is an issue, then what is being done about it and more importantly why isn't it being addressed. Good caseworkers are leaving not only the job, but the field all together. Hellman (1997, 677) states that "the voluntary turnover of desirable employees is generally considered detrimental to the organization, both in replacement costs and work disruption." This is very vital to organizations as it develops and creates a revolving door of problems within departments across the nation.

The CWLA (2006, 1) states that a shortage of staff affects agencies in every department. Every department in child welfare services is connected and linked in one form or fashion. CWLA (2006, 2) also indicates that if the workforce is not maintained the foundation crumbles. It is evident that agencies across the United States have faced similar situations and failures due to the inadequate response of the federal and state government. "In future research, more attention should be given to the direct and indirect influences of variables on intention to quit as opposed to the actual act of turnover" (Lambert, et al. 2001, 237).

While it is not very clear what the variables are due to lack of research, seeking answers further develops a sense of how such issues of turnover can be avoided. This only strengthens child welfare systems across the nation to redefine who they are and what it is they stand for in the eyes of their community. "If the precursors to intentions to quit are better understood, the employer could possibly institute changes to affect this intention" (Lambert, et al. 2001, 237).

Child Abuse Act

Reform came in the early seventies which set in motion a great disservice and injustice to those already in the profession. The passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 led to the increase of child abuse reports. Due to lack of resources and staff, states rushed to meet the demands by reducing qualifications (CWLA 2002, 2). This created an influx in the child welfare services of poorly qualified and uneducated people. "In the wake of this deprofessionalization, agencies began to structure child welfare work differently, attempting to reduce its complexity and make it possible for people with fewer qualifications to adequately perform required tasks" (CWLA 2002, 2).

With expectations and standards lowered, services, outcomes, and quality took a major hit. The increase in child abuse cases also brought about an additional burden. "The number of reports of abuse and neglect and the number of children removed from home and placed in foster care for their protection have grown alarmingly" (GAO 1995, 5). Child welfare services grew not just in the number of foster children but also due to the complex needs and problems of families and children (GAO 1995, 2).

This overwhelmed many child welfare agencies who were ill prepared to deal with the influx of reports and cases. Whatever reform was done later was not very successful either. CWLA (2002, 2) indicated that reform in the 80's and 90's lacked attention to workforce quality and quantity. The burden of responsibility was passed from the states to the local courts handling the cases. This only burdened the system even more, making the child welfare system problematic.

The center of attention became the courts and review panels, making the child welfare system one of decreased autonomy, delicate regimentation, and amplified documentation (CWLA 2002, 2). Caseworkers, as a result, were poorly educated, poorly trained, and heavily inundated with more responsibilities than they ever imagined. To this date because of the poor leadership in being able to effectively develop reform within the state governments, more children are entering foster care than in the past two decades (GAO 1995, 7).

Term Burnout

Daley (1979, 375) states that burnout is known as the inability to deal with stress on the job that results in demoralization, frustration, and reduced efficiency. Burnout can also be redefined "as a reaction to job related stress that fluctuates with intensity and duration of the stress itself" (Daley 1979, 375). This term plays a vital role on how caseworkers develop, manifest, and deal with burnout in the child welfare system. This one term can make the difference between staying in the field and quitting.

Causes of Burnout

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981, 100) turnover, malingering, and low morale are a major factor in job burnout. Due to the pressures of the job, stress, and long hours, caseworkers can soon find themselves burnt out. With the amount of work and responsibilities that they have, caseworkers are rarely able to find down time. This can be very detrimental to their health as exhaustion and burnout are soon to set in. Caseworkers deal with people everyday and are a major part of their responsibilities. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 99) note that chronic stress can lead to burnout when working with people under stressful and tense situations.

Most of the stress for caseworkers can come from the clients they serve and the added demands placed on them. Before they even know it, caseworkers can find themselves burnt out. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 99) state that "burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind." While it can be easy to confuse exhaustion with burnout, the two are connected to one another.

While some may not think that two are separate from one another, emotional exhaustion is closely tied in with burnout syndrome (Maslach and Jackson 1981, 99). Whether or not burnout is a contributing factor to turnover in the child welfare system, it is actually a very good indicator of what may lie ahead. There may be other more important factors and causes of turnover for caseworkers that burnout may not even appear to be a factor. "However, burnout stands out as an important predictor of both intention to leave and turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human service professions but not in most other areas (with the exception of nursing)" (Barak, et

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al. 2001, 653). To address burnout the factors that cause it have to be evaluated and recognized. Bernotavicz (2000, 6) provides several reasons for why caseworkers burnout: They are not able to meet the demands of the job, have high caseloads, low morale due to administrative expectations and pressures, and lack of sufficient resources in communities to make realistic case plans.

Daley (1979, 376) and Maslach and Jackson (1981, 100) also have some additional causes of burnout in caseworkers: they are unable to achieve goals, have uncomfortable working conditions, have to deal with reconciling incompatible demands, and unclear roles. It soon becomes clear how fast and easy one can become exhausted when the expectations, work environment, and lack of resources to do the job are affecting caseworkers. Caseworkers wear many hats and have to take on many roles to function as caseworkers in the community.

"The individual worker is asked to perform the roles of resource broker, arbitrator, case manger, therapist, and investigator, but the last two roles are basically contradictory. With role ambiguity stimulating doubt about how to behave at any particular moment and irreconcilable demands being pressed by various groups, the worker undoubtedly experiences considerable stress" (Daley 1979, 377). When caseworkers are pressured by their own expectations and the organization, the amount of stress and pressure can break them.

One has to be able to balance out those stressors in order to maintain ones energy. "The conflict between organizational conditions (e.g., high caseloads) and workers' own professional expectations may lead employees to keep up with their very demanding work commitments at the expense of their own emotional health, with high levels of

burnout as a result" (Barak, et al. 2001, 653). "The attributes of burnout, especially

emotional exhaustion, and role overload/conflict and stress all are negative factors that

lessen retention and increase the likelihood of turnover. While emotional exhaustion,

stress and overload may be characteristics of the worker, those attributes often occur due

to the work environment" (IASWR, 2005, 4 and IASWR, 2005*, 2).

Effects of Burnout on Caseworkers

It is has hard to determine what kinds of effects burnout has on caseworkers, but

the most obvious answer would be turnover. Burnout can destroy and demoralize

employee's passion and dedication. "The effects of the pressure they experience can be

seen in high rates of turnover and decreased effectiveness among workers, which are

commonly regarded as the manifestations of what has been termed burnout" (Daley 1979,

375). Burnout does not affect an organization per se, but rather manifests itself on the

actual people who do the job.

Burnout affects people in different ways as well as people are able to deal with

burnout out differently. Daley (1979, 376) states that when caseworkers are exhausted,

they are unable to manage stress related to work and develop anxiety. This truly affects

how they do their work and how they are able to deal with clients. Maslach and Jackson

(1981, 99) indicate that negative and cynical attitudes and the way caseworkers deal with

and view their clients are closely tied in with burnout syndrome.

Caseworkers often become ineffective and are not able to think clearly when on

the job. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 99) also state that another aspect of burnout

syndrome is that of viewing oneself in a negative manner, especially when dealing with

their clients. Burned out workers isolate themselves and feel like no one cares about their

issues (Daley 1979, 379). Caseworkers feel this way, because they are unable to seek support for the stress related issues. They are so down on themselves that they do not see any value in trying to fix the situation. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 99) indicate that "workers feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their accomplishments on the job." This can make if very difficult for caseworkers to find anything even remotely satisfying about the work they do.

There are ways to defeat burnout out they might not be so simple. Job burnout is an individual phenomenon. No one single solution will solve the issues of burnout for workers (Daley 1979, 379). Daley (1979, 379) recommends that personal stress management needs to be used and practiced in order to help reduce burnout. But this is only one avenue and additional remedies and solutions need to be incorporated that may not be so tangible.

For many caseworkers, reaching burnout is the last straw and usually tends to lead to turnover. If this holds true then "burnout among such workers represents an opportunity for them to be counseled to leave the profession" (Daley 1979, 379). "If workers become emotionally detached from their jobs, the commitment needed to remediate job-related stress may no longer be forthcoming from them" (Daley 1979, 379).

Factors Affecting Turnover

There is research available that has been able to identify the variables and factors that affect turnover in child welfare agencies. While some factors themselves may be a trigger to turnover, it is not clear which of those factors themselves strongly affects turnover more than the others. Barak, et al. (2001, 625) states that "it finds that burnout,

job dissatisfaction, availability of employment alternatives, low organizational and professional commitment, stress, and lack of social support are the strongest predictors of turnover or intention to leave." The CWLA recognizes some current workforce issues as being contributors to turnover amongst child welfare caseworkers.

Issues such as lack of resources for clients, insufficient training, inadequate financial compensation, safety and liability concerns, and poor physical and organizational working conditions are said to be a few (CWLA 2002, 1). Bernotavicz (2000, 2) breaks it down even further stating that personal factors such as values, expectations, and education play a role. Work factors would be duties, nature of the work, lack of sense of culture, balance of people, work, paperwork, workload, and caseload concerns.

The last important variable would be the agency itself such as work environment, structuring of work, organizational climate, supervision, opportunity and resources for professional development and training. One would think that if the issues are evident and known, that there would be immediate sanctions, resources, and recommendations to rectify them. But that has not been the case as most of the problems have persisted with little to no change. CWLA (2002, 1) indicates that "in the past decade these issues have not improved, and some have worsened." The factors seem to be all related to work environment, caseload, and pay.

These are problems that the organization and not the individual have control over. Drake and Yadama (1996, 1), GAO (1995, 19) Thoma (1998, 2) and legisweb.state.wy.us (2000, 6) concur that "inadequate pay, difficult working conditions, lack of recognition, chronic stress, overwork, and other negative job characteristics have led to a continuing

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crises in child welfare worker retention." This type of environment can manifest itself in the organization creating a sense of hopelessness and often times creates a vicious cycle that never seems to end. Sao.state.tx.us (1994) really brings this point home by stating that "Child protective services caseworkers are burdened with heavy caseloads which can lead to increased job stress, burnout, and high turnover.

The vacancies created by caseworker turnover have resulted in increased workload for the remaining caseworkers, less experienced caseworkers assuming increased responsibilities, and higher costs to train new caseworkers." This is way more than any worker could handle, in this given situation. Caseworkers will work hard to be able to provide the safety for the well being of a child, but the burden placed on them is unimaginable.

Therefore, workload and pay are not the only factors that contribute to turnover, funds and resources that are lacking in the child welfare system also aide in this cycle of turnover. There is great pressure to meet the added demands in the child welfare system. Increase in caseloads have caused more spending from federal, state, and local government for foster care, leaving less for child welfare services. "As a result, states have found it difficult to ensure that child welfare services are sufficiently funded to meet the needs.

Other resources constraints have included problems recruiting and retaining caseworkers" (GAO 1995, 15). Chapmond (2004, 1) and GAO (1995, 19) state that "if funds are not appropriated, current caseload sizes could not be maintained. Higher caseloads would result in employee burnout and high turnover.

High turnover leads to more training costs and further impacts caseloads, ultimately resulting in significant child safety issues." Another contributor that is less likely to be tied to the direct work caseworkers do is the public's perception of them. CWLA (2002, 3) states that a poor image of case workers and child welfare agencies affects morale and the ability to hire and keep qualified staff.

It is a difficult job already and being surrounded by a negative community you are trying to help can be very discouraging. "Lack of respect is shown in the attitudes of the public and the other professionals with whom child welfare staff must work each day" (CWLA 2002, 3). The media and the public portray caseworkers as enforcers of the state who come and take children away from their families. Yet they are the same people scrutinizing workers when a child dies.

There are so many demands placed on caseworkers as well as limitations that cause them to seek employment elsewhere (Rycraft 1994, 75). While all these factors play a vital role in turnover amongst caseworkers, further research needs to be conducted on which factors are bigger contributors of turnover in child welfare agencies. Some studies speculate on different reasons, but an in-depth analysis needs to be conducted and have the variables measured against one another to see what those reasons are. According to GAO (2003, 11) most caseworkers severed their employment due to low salaries and high caseloads.

Quality Services

Caseworkers are the heart and soul of the child welfare system. "Their commitment to the protection of children and the strengthening of families runs deep; it is a steadfast and abiding dedication that precludes any serious consideration of other

employment" (Rycraft 1994, 77). Caseworkers have a mission and goal. They want to protect families and children in society. "They also hold a sense of pride in their jobs, recognize and accept the responsibilities and mandates, and are fervently committed to the safety and protection of children" (Rycraft 2001, 1). But this soon fades out as burnout, stress, and frustration begins to sink in. Over time, caseworkers begin to lose motivation, desire, and hope.

"Current and former caseworkers say this increases stress, affects morale, and can compromise the quality of the casework" (Legisweb.state.wy.us 2000, 5). The children are not the problem, but more the workload and organizational commitment/environment that continue to work against them. One has to consider the pros and cons of the productivity, self-efficacy, and rewards in order to determine if they will continue their employment or not. The priority is and should be to the safety of abused and neglected children and their best interest. The sad part of this is that the more experienced better trained caseworkers are quitting and the lives of children rest on less experienced workers. Rookies shouldn't be allowed to make those calls (Thoma 1998, 6).

The important part of all this is the services that caseworkers provide to the community as a whole. "Staff shortages, high caseloads, and worker turnover were factors impeding progress toward the achievement of federal safety and permanency outcomes" (GAO 2003, 19). This is how organizations across the nation get evaluated and measured. The communities at large along with federal and state governments want to know one thing are you meeting the needs of the families and children you serve?

There is great pressure to meet the added demands in the child welfare system (GAO 1995, 15). These demands and expectations are crucial to the organization as it is their sole purpose to provide relief, security, safety, and comfort to the families and children in need. "High employee turnover has grave implications for the quality, consistency, and stability of services provided to the other people who use child welfare and social work services" (Barak, et al. 2001, 626).

Caseworkers are unable to conduct visits necessary to determine the child's safety and make good decisions to ensure a safe and stable home due to high turnover rates. GAO (2003, 20) and Strayhorn (2004, 147) indicate that with large workloads and caseloads, turnover rates affects caseworkers from being able to conduct their visits. This ensures that they are conducted in a quality manner. Permanency is a huge part of the child protective services organization.

"High turnover rates and staff shortages leave remaining staff with insufficient time to conduct the types of home visits necessary to assess children's safety and to make well-supported decisions to ensure safe and stable permanent placements" (GAO 2003, 3). Staff shortages and lack of trust between child and caseworker creates disorganization and disrupts services due to turnover (CWLA ND, 1). Caseworkers easily miss information and overlook important details when overwhelmed by the amount of pressure put on them.

Thoma (1998, 5) indicates that overlooking evidence due to caseloads and not having sufficient services hurts families. "When they assume responsibility for cases as a result of worker turnover, their own caseloads increase and their ability to ensure the safety of the children whose cases they assume is limited" (GAO 2003, 20). Cases get

reassigned, transferred from worker to worker as staff transfers or resigns. Children

rarely see their workers, if at all (Thoma 1998, 2). Lack of transition is a very common

issue in Texas where workers get assigned, place kids in foster home, and then never go

back to visit the children. They either quit or transfer and the cases get reassigned. Since

not much has been done to address such issues,

"Child welfare agencies continue to experience high levels of case worker

turnover, resulting in repeated changes of caseworkers for children and families, a lack of

continuity in services and planning, and poor outcomes for children and families"

(CWLA 2006, 3). If the safety and well being of children are at stake then services need

to be provided regardless of cost.

"High turnover overburdens the system, guaranteeing that caseloads remain high

and interfering with the caseworkers' most important responsibility to ensure through

regular visits that foster children receive the help they need" (Strayhorn 2004, 148). One

disruption in the organization can have consequential effects and create even more

serious problems further on down the road that can't be seen now.

Cost and time are two critical factors that hurt agencies from providing efficient

services to their clients due to staff turnover. The quality of care provided to those in

need is reduced or interrupted. GAO (1995, 11) indicates that "Children are also entering

care from families more troubled than in the past and with greater emotional, behavioral,

and medical needs. Such families today more than often face economic hardship,

substance abuse, homelessness, mental, or physical illness, or the imprisonment of a

family member."

Hardships alone can create gaps in services provided when clients, families, and children are not being provided with the resources, solutions, and support they need. CWLA (2006, 1) and Thoma (1998, 3) reiterate that a shortage of a stable workforce has a greater effect than any other effect on the child welfare system meeting the needs of children and families. Services are the heart and soul of child welfare services it cannot be compromised at any level. But by having caseworkers quitting and turnover increasing, one has to step outside the box to see what is causing this trend.

Child protective services need to provide numerous services at a quality level (Liederman 1993, 3). What needs to be further evaluated is the type of impact and its severity on child welfare services. GAO (2003, 19) states that to what extent those outcomes are affected is not known. Even more alarming is how caseworker turnover affects child welfare services. Graef and Hill (2000, 518) conclude that not much has been noted on the impact that Child Protective Services staff turnover has on child welfare agency functions.

Caseworkers are the engine of child protective services and their turnover affects the services of the organization. "Staffing shortages and high caseloads have had detrimental effects on their abilities to make well-supported and timely decisions regarding children's safety" (GAO 2003, 20). As shortages continue to rise and caseloads increase, the safety and well-being of children will continue to be at risk..

Recruitment and Retention Issues

There needs to be a focus on recruitment and selection of new child protective service caseworkers (Graef and Hill 2000, 530). Documentation states that "Difficulty with recruitment and retention of public child welfare caseworkers is not a new

phenomenon" (Rycraft 1994, 75 and GAO 2003, 33). A few surveys have been conducted on this very specific issue that show and indicate just how severe the problem has gotten. "National survey data confirm that both state and private child welfare agencies are experiencing similar challenges recruiting and retaining qualified caseworkers" (GAO 2003, 5).

Recruitment and retention issues continue to plague child welfare agencies. "For instance, turnover of child welfare staff-which affects both recruitment and retention efforts-has been estimated at between 30 percent and 40 percent annually nationwide, with the average tenure for child welfare workers being less than 2 years" (GAO 2003, 5). It is evident that recruitment and retention shortages continue to spate child welfare agencies as the cases continue to grow. The focus needs to be on implementation of redefined alternatives and solutions of the entire child welfare system. "By many accounts, hiring standards continue ever to diminish.

Faced with low pay, increasing caseloads, the high stress of helping allegedly abused children, and confronted by criticism from the public when a child dies, qualified candidates are often avoiding the job" (Thoma 1998, 4). The shortages of caseworkers continue to grow worse. This shortage has firmly set itself in child welfare agencies as "nationwide, state and county social services agencies continue to report difficulties in both the recruitment and retention of public child welfare workers. As service demands placed on the child welfare system continue to increase, the need for an experienced and competent work force becomes imperative" (Rycraft 1994, 75).

As new caseworkers are being hired, twice as many experienced caseworkers are leaving. It is evident that something is wrong in child welfare agencies. Recruitment and retention problems are believed to be a combination of organizational factors and personal factors that should be addressed simultaneously in order to develop successful hiring and retention strategies, suggesting that there are no "quick fixes" or "magic bullets" to address these concerns" (IASWR 2005, 10).

GAO (2003, 3) and GAO (2003, 14) reaffirms that the factors that affect hiring and recruiting new staff into the child welfare field are the high caseloads, administrative burdens, limited supervision, and insufficient training. While the causes have been noted on what is affecting child welfare turnover, the focus now needs to be on what is being done to retain and recruit new caseworkers. "90 percent of states reported difficulty recruiting and retaining caseworkers" (GAO 1995, 18). While this trend is wide spread and the problem appears to be similar, the solutions need to be mirrored as well.

"Child welfare agencies need to identify and implement effective strategies to recruit and retain well-qualified staff that has the knowledge, skills, and commitment to provide services to our nation's most vulnerable children and families" (IASWR 2005, 1 and IASWR 2005, 1). Some agencies are very quick to come up with one part of the solution by either offering more money or hiring a large amount of specialized workers to alleviate the workload. GAO (2003, 32) indicates that states are using hiring or signing bonuses as well as compensation packages to fill vacant positions.

This may work at first, but once workers begin to feel the strain of the workload and fall into the same pits as the tenured staff, they too soon fall victim to the system. Carrying large caseloads and having to work long hours begins to take a toll on these new

caseworkers that they too soon begin to leave. Where the problem lies is in the area of utilizing national resources to help mediate the problems of child welfare agencies. "Health and Human Services currently has not targeted retention and recruitment as priority issues, however, because the federal government has no requirements concerning staffing and case management, and states have made few requests of HHS's national resources centers for assistance with child welfare staff recruitment and retention" (GAO 2003, 4).

Yet these are the same agencies in the child welfare system complaining of not having adequate staff, resources, and caseworkers to provide a service that is so desperately needed. How is it ever going to get better and how are the trends of turnover going to get resolved if it is apparent that no one seems to be making an effort? So much focus is put on recruiting workers and not enough attention is put on retaining workers. There needs to be a surmountable amount of effort focused on improving the work environment and workload placed on caseworkers (ISAWR 2005, 9).

"Child welfare agencies have implemented various workforce practices-including training partnerships, accreditation, and enhanced supervision-to improve recruitment and retention" (GAO 2003, 4). While accreditation may appear to be a good tool for child welfare agencies, they are merely public relation tactics to enhance an organizations ability to obtain new clients, especially in private organizations where clients mean dollars. Accreditation would be helpful if the standards and recommendations were followed.

"Meeting accreditation standards of lower caseloads, reduced supervision-to-staff ratios, and increased emphasis on professional credentials has improved the agency's attractiveness to applicants and enhanced worker morale and performances-two factors critical to retention" (GAO 2003, 4 and GAO 2003, 24). If this is true, then why do problems persist and why do caseworkers continue to quit? There has got to be more effective and efficient solutions to retention and recruitment proviso the problem of turnover is to improve. There is no clear solution or one remedy alone that can solve the issues of turnover and retention.

"Any agency that implements just one strategy (e.g., reducing direct-service worker caseload but not improving supervision and agency supports, or hiring staff with professional commitment to the job) will probably not be very successful in the long run" (IASWR 2005, 5 and IASWR 2005, 3). But that is what has been happening all along by developing and implementing short term solutions that aggravate the situation even more. "To avoid hiring decisions that may later result in turnover or poor performance, some agencies have begun to develop hiring competencies, use more realistic portrayals of an agency's mission, and offer recruitment bonuses" (GAO 2003, 31).

It is obvious in Texas that despite offering a $5,000 bonus to newly hired caseworkers, more workers are leaving. This $5,000 bonus does not seem to be working because, they are only working on one part of the problem instead of the entire problem. Graef and Hill (2003, 531) suggest the use of advanced screening measures to avoid high cost of turnover using an organizational psychologist or an expert in the area of personal selection.

Other recommendations suggested by GAO (2003, 33) include HHS using its annual discretionary grant program to promote targeted research on the effectiveness of perceived promising practices and using their program improvement plans to address the caseload, training, and staffing issues. Child welfare agencies want to focus on early intervention as recruitment and retention methods deal with turnover before it happens and money is spent. "One county in Texas are attempting to maintain new hire pools-reserves of newly hired trained caseworkers-in order to fill vacancies quickly with competent and well prepared- staff" (GAO 2003, 31).

How fast are caseworkers walking out and how many? It is easy to deplete your reserves and it could be difficult to maintain sufficient reserves if recruitment is low. Another factor to consider is how many caseworkers in the reserves are waiting or deciding to leave before even starting once they see all the work that is required? Graef and Hill (2000, 519) suggest that the first step is to look at ways to improve hiring, training, and retention of caseworkers. More specifically, child welfare agencies honed in on retention within the organization.

Child welfare agencies felt that if they focused on workers currently in the field or profession "an examination of employee retention could identify the positive aspects of employees' tenure as well as negative aspects of the employment environment" (Rycraft 1994, 76). But the problem with this is that you are focusing on one aspect of the problem and not the complete picture. While you may be developing ways to keep workers in the field, it does not address how to recruit new workers to build up the organization.

In essence, agencies began ignoring recruitment in order to shift their focus on retention as "they called for a refocus on staffing problems that would place emphasis on those who stay to enhance their satisfaction rather than on those who leave and their reasons for termination" (Rycraft 1994, 76). Still, another alternative could be that the focus needs to be personal factors that could influence and change the perception and the environment of the organization.

IASWR (2005, 3) lists several positive personal factors that influence retention which include professional commitment to children and families, previous work experience, education, job satisfaction, efficacy, and personal characteristics (age, bilingual). But these alternatives are still not enough to make an impact on the various factors that continue to destroy the image of child welfare agencies as turnover persists.

Recruitment and retention come at a price but to what amount is unknown. When the impact can be estimated, "the determination of the financial impact of turnover on the organization should logically lead to a discussion on the reasons for turnover and strategies for reducing the preventable incidents of staff turnover" (Graef and Hill 2000, 528).

If agencies were aware of the needed changes across the board and knew the financial impact affecting the organization, a more comprehensive plan and solution could be implemented to could bring about quick change. "The organizations efforts to determine turnover costs lead to the development of methods to manage the controllable aspects of these costs, such as job redesign, improved recruitment and selection process, or changes in compensation practices" (Graef and Hill 2000, 520).

Caseloads in Child Welfare Organizations

Recommended Caseload

Most child welfare organizations have an informal set of standards and recommendations about the size of the caseloads their caseworkers should have. The sad thing is that the standards and recommendations are rarely ever followed or mentioned. Standards and regulations are supposed to be used as exactly that, a guide, by which an organization adheres to so that their caseworkers do not become overwhelmed. If recommendations are just that, to recommend, then what's the point in having them. It is amazing how an organization or agency can break and ignore its own regulation. Several organizations exist that can provide appropriate standards and regulations that would be justified in any agency to ensure that needs of their families and children are met.

The Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (COA) also sets standards and regulations that agencies can implement, but realistically very few adhere to them by exceeding the maximum amount allowed for caseloads (GAO 2003, 1). Both GAO (1995, 19) and Liederman (1993, 2) indicate that caseworkers are carrying up to 100 cases per worker, above the 25 recommended by the national association of social workers. How are caseworkers supposed to be effective and efficient in their duties with that many cases, not to mention the amount of chaos that can be created from the lack of formality?

Few efforts have been made to address caseload sizes even though national workload standards have been developed (CWLA 2006, 3). Considering most of them come from other social organizations, reform and sanctions need to come from the federal government. GAO (2003, 1) states that there are no national workforce principles

set by the federal government. However, the CWLA has developed regulations regarding caseload levels and staff qualifications that can be implemented and utilized by other agencies. How effective are those standards and who is responsible to ensuring that those standards are being adhered to is unknown.

"CWLA suggests that caseloads not exceed 12 to 15 children per caseworker, and COA suggests that caseloads not exceed 18 children per caseworker" (CWLA 2006, 2; Liederman 1993, 2; GAO 2003, 14; and .Socialworkers.org 2003, 1). But there is more than just a limit when dealing with caseloads as many organizations and welfare agencies lack the sufficient staff to manage them. Here lies the problem.

When turnover is high, cases get transferred from one person to another until cases begin to overburden the system making it difficult to manage them. In my opinion, so many tasks and not enough time in the day, work piles up making it hard to catch up. The large caseloads force caseworkers to do less case management. "All they do is push paper, and they are lucky if they can do that" (Liederman 1993, 2).

CWLA recommends that national caseload standards and federal resources be developed and provided to aide the child welfare system (CWLA ND, 1). By mandating child welfare services to implement and follow those guidelines set, improvements could be made retaining and recruiting more caseworkers. Funding should also be a condition of the policy for the child welfare system.

If standards are not being met, funding should be cut on CPS. But "the effect has been to further constrain resources for preventive and rehabilitative child welfare services that offer some promise of containing growth in foster care caseloads" (GAO 1995, 3). This obviously has not worked when caseworker's cases are still above an average

caseload. "Systemic improvements in managing child welfare, such as accreditation and the enhancement of supervisor skills, help alleviate worker stress by improving the working environment" (GAO 2003, 28).

But accreditation only helps if you follow the recommendations provided. It defeats the purpose of having accreditation when it looks good on paper and not in real practice. "According to state officials and CWLA staff, accreditation facilitates high-quality service delivery, in part, because it requires reasonable caseloads and reduces the number of staff supervisors must oversee" (GAO 2003, 28).

"According to a state official in Texas, the state's child welfare agency has no plans to pursue accreditation because caseloads-though recently reduced-are still well above COA's standard, and the agency is currently struggling with staff turnover and high vacancy rates" (GAO 2003, 30). There should be incentives to states that meet or exceed the national welfare caseload standards (CWLA, 2006, 1). Following the standards regarding caseloads and supervision set by COA has helped improve applicants to the field and increased employee morale and performances.

Case Overload

Across the nation caseworkers are trying to maintain their decorum by working hard on their cases. The problem is that there are just too many cases to work on. "Caseworkers handled double the number of cases recommended by independent child welfare organizations" (GAO 2003, 11). Socialworkers.org (2003, 1) states that the average caseloads are between 24 and 31, but the range is anywhere from 10 to 100 per worker.

While the average may not seem too bad, the focus should be on those caseworkers whose caseload is well above the average. This is a huge factor in turnover as caseloads rise, stress and burnout set as caseworkers become overwhelmed. Bernotavicz (2000, 7) states that when caseworkers who are good at their job are successful, but when caseloads increase the work gets harder to do.

"In one urban Texas region, for example, caseworkers told us that new hires are typically assigned between 40 and 60 cases within their first 3 months on the job" (GAO 2003, 18). This is unheard of, especially when most of the workers coming into the field are young college graduates. With issues such as a lack of caseworkers, it is no wonder caseworkers then become overwhelmed and dissatisfied, and they begin contemplating going elsewhere.

Bernotavicz (2000, 8) indicates that when workers become frustrated, they either resign or transfer. Due to lack of staff, this has affected the number of cases being assigned to other workers making them unmanageable (GAO 2003, 14). No one wants to go into to a job knowing that no matter what they do, they will not be able to feel like they accomplished or got something done.

 Caseworkers want to know they are making a difference and the only way to do that is by being able to manage your caseloads and by providing quality services. GAO (2003, 15) states that caseworkers usually leave for jobs that require less time and energy as opposed to having to deal with their high caseloads.

No wonder there is an issue with turnover, retention, and recruitment. If the problem is not addressed, how can CPS then expect for potential hires to come into the field. Bernotavicz (2000, 8) recommends that caseloads be reduced, additional duties be

delegated to case aides, increased clerical support, and reduced paperwork. It is

imperative that national workload standards need to address and achieve desired

caseloads (CWLA, 2006, 3). With high caseloads, it is expected that it will increase the

likelihood of caseworkers wanting to leave their job.

Pay in the Child Welfare System

Comparison

Pay is always a sensitive issue in any line of work. While it may be true that most

caseworkers may not be in this career field for the money, they are underpaid. It is not

hard to find caseworkers who compare their salaries to salaries in other professions.

Often, caseworkers express that they should have chosen another career had they known

what they were up against.

GAO (2003, 12) states that both public and private agencies have struggled to

provide competitive salaries in comparison to other similar occupations as well as

provide suitable training. "Researchers point out that salaries in all areas of child welfare

tend to be lower than in other jobs of comparable difficulty" (CWLA 2002, 3).

Every employee wants to be able to spend time with his/her family and have a

social life. They want to know that they are valued and appreciated by the work that they

do, but the pay they make shows that they are not a priority. GAO (2003, 3) and

Socialworkers.org (2003, 1) show that many caseworkers often leave for higher paying

and less stressful positions in other fields such as education. As a result, caseworkers in

Texas usually leave to take on teaching jobs.

Teaching is much more appealing in the sense that teachers have a better work schedule, work shorter hours, have holidays and summers off as well as better pay GAO (2003, 15). Social workers and teachers are two different jobs, but both play an important part in children's lives. Yet, teachers are often better paid, work less throughout the year, and have less stress involved in their work. Something is terribly wrong with this picture. Education is important but so are the lives of abused and neglected children. The disparity in pay, work schedule, and stress shows the lack of support social workers get as professionals.

"One county official in Texas said that teachers now earn starting salaries of about $37,000 while entry level caseworkers earn about $28,000 annually, a difference of about 32 percent" (GAO 2003, 11). Private agencies may actually have more standards, guidelines, and regulations to follow, but the pay is significantly lower than the public pay for the same kind of work.

The comparison between public and private agencies is important to note in this research. Public agencies pay better salaries than private, but both public and private agencies have retention issues (GAO 2003, 3). With salaries varying across professions with similar functions, no wonder caseworkers are leaving. It is apparent that salaries need to be reflective of work expected of caseworkers. No wonder turnover continues to be an issue, and more caseworkers choose other fields that tend to pay higher wages and provide safer and predicable work environments (GAO 2003, 11).

"The positive effect of financial rewards on job satisfaction is consistent with the fact that American workers are socialized in a capitalistic society where money, benefits, and security are generally sought after and many times are used to gauge the importance

or worth of a person" (Lambert, et al. 2001, 244). For caseworkers this may or may not be true, but caseworkers do seek to get compensated appropriately for their work. Caseworkers are viewed as highly skilled professionals but are not paid like highly skilled professionals.

"The issue of compensation must not be overlooked as low salaries and paltry benefits erode the strength of the staffing base and demean the professional image of the child welfare practice" (Rycraft 1994, 79). "Furthermore, according to public agency caseworkers in Texas, their salaries do not reflect the risks to personal safety they face as part of their work" (GAO 2003, 13). "Other states also report significant wage disparities within the child welfare profession" (GAO 2003, 12).

With salary being an issue and a factor in the child welfare system, workers are seeking other professions that pay better and suit their needs. With salaries having a significant impact on turnover, better pay needs to be provided to caseworkers. "Low salaries, in particular, hinder agencies' ability to attract potential child welfare workers and to retain those already in the field" (GAO 2003, 3).

Salaries need to be consistent with that of other similar professions. If salaries are not being provided at a suitable level other options need to be set in place. If it is of any consolation, "one should not underestimate the effect of periodic merit raises and promotions on employees' motivation" (Daley 1979, 378).

Workload and Administrative Burdens

Expectations

Caseworkers not only manage cases, but perform other tasks. Multi-tasking gives a whole new meaning to the word caseworker. Caseworkers not only look out for the best interest of children and make visits to homes, but they also perform administrative work, filing, attend court hearings, staffings, and respond to emergencies.

Workload significantly influences how much caseworkers value their job, especially when burnt out. Workload is closely tied in with job satisfaction and burnout. Having high caseloads, large amounts of paper work, court hearings, and added clerical work takes time away from the children needing services and reduces job satisfaction (CWLA 2002, 5).

"These workers inevitably spend evenings and weekends trying to complete what is basically an open-minded job. They put in large amounts of over-time and soon approach exhaustion, only to become frustrated by the additional tasks that demand their attention" (Daley 1979, 376). Flex-time and days off may help, but it only causes caseworkers to fall further behind as the work mounts. Supervisors, hardly ever help out with the workload. The work duties pile up as caseworkers essentially become consumed by their work duties.

"Workers frequently refer with disdain to the inordinate amount of paperwork they have to complete and to the fact that they have to "chauffeur" clients around, and they often complain about the number of irrelevant meetings they have to attend" (Daley 1979, 377).

With caseloads overwhelming caseworkers already, having additional responsibilities and duties can really frustrate, overwhelm, and tire them out very quickly. "Many caseworkers find that they cannot cope with heavy workloads and the emotionally intense nature of the work" (Strayhorn 2004, 148).

"The continuous cycle of turnover in many CPS work units means that operating understaffed has become the norm, rather than the exception" (Graef and Hill 2000, 518). With turnover comes added responsibilities on those left behind to bear the grunt of the work. As this cycle continues, the workload falls on others until they too soon find that they can no longer cope with the demands of the job.

"Faced with constant demands and responsibilities, even the most dedicated and committed employee experiences periods of decreased energy and drive" (Rycraft 1994, 77). Legisweb.state.wy.us (2000, 9) recommends that more focus on working conditions and workload needs to be closely examined to fix the problem.

Without any set of standards and guidelines to follow, caseworkers essentially handle about as much as one can in a given day. Often a lot of the duties and expectations go unmet putting more and more children and families at risk. "The child welfare league of America (CWLA) recommends that each staff develop its own workload standard specific to the tasks and activities expected of caseworkers" (Legisweb.state.wy.us 2000, 9).

Duties

Child welfare agencies have very little control over work intake and often have their workers with three to four times the amount of cases recommended by CWLA standards and voluminous paperwork as the norm (CWLA 2002, 2 and GAO 2003, 3).

A factor that plays a huge part in workload and duties is the amount of cases one has. At any given moment your workload can double, even triple, due to caseloads. With that said, caseloads may be manageable one year and out of control the next (CWLA 2002, 2).

The amount of court hearings, visits, phone calls, meetings, trainings, and emergencies can easily consume any normal individual. With so many duties placed on caseworkers and unpredictability, this causes turnover to be high and recruitment to be low. Other factors cited were complex cases and related administrative requirements like paper work and case documentation (GAO 2003, 3 and Socialworkers.org 2003, 1).

Paper work still has to get done on top of all other duties. Caseworkers can easily find themselves working late evenings to try and complete their documentation. All this is done with no extra pay and no additional support. If the work is not done, the caseworker begins to develop a negative reputation for not being able to complete tasks or provide adequate services. Daley (1979, 376) states that many choose to leave the field by this point rather than gain a negative reputation for poor service. Caseworkers can easily put in over 50 hours a week trying to manage and stay on top of their work responsibilities.

Another issue is that the "working hours must be flexible enough to meet the mandates of the agency, accommodate the needs of clientele, and protect the private lives of caseworkers" (Rycraft 1994, 79). Caseworkers can find themselves neglecting their families and spending less time at home or having a social life. Many continue to put up with the workload and the status quo. Those who stay fall into what is known as the resistance stage. Caseworkers view their clients as cases and are cynical. This goes on

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until they finally choose to leave as their final option. Some transfer within the agency while most others quit (Daley 1979, 376).

Supervisory Support of Caseworkers

Role of Supervisor

"In studies that include staff interviews, supportive supervision is the most commonly cited variable related to turnover and retention" (CWLA 2002, 4). "The supervisor is in a pivotal position to provide a base of support, consultation and guidance, as well as setting the tone for the work unit" (Rycraft 2001, 1). Caseworkers, especially those with little experience or new to the job, rely on supervisors to provide support and guidance. Supervision is very important in being able to make a job bearable and feasible.

"The importance of supervision in developing professional socialization, improving staff morale, increasing job satisfaction, and decreasing job turnover is well documented in administration, management, and social work literature" (Rycraft, 1994, 78). Without it, caseworkers would not be able to fully function on their and ensure that their needs are being met. "Agency and supervisory support can mitigate the stress of the job and the workload" (GAO 2003, 17).

The role of the supervisor has many facets. "The primary role of supervisors is to help caseworkers perform these functions, thereby meeting the needs of families and carrying out the agency's mission" (GAO 2003, 6). Supervisors are not only there to ensure that the work gets done. "The supervisor is the person who best understands the responsibilities of and the demands made on the caseworker, backs up decisions and casework activities, and advocates for both caseworkers and clients" (Rycraft 1994, 78).

This is what helps caseworkers get through each day especially when dealing with difficult clients, situations, and stress. If supervisors aren't available to their staff, there is no way of being able to provide resources to help them manage.

"Although challenging, two critical functions of child welfare supervisors are to recognize and respond to the needs and concerns of caseworkers and to provide them with direction and guidance" (GAO 2003, 17). Some additional supervisory functions are as follow but not limited to: assigning cases, monitoring caseworkers' progress in achieving desired outcomes, providing feedback to caseworkers in order to help develop their skills, supporting the emotional needs of caseworkers, analyzing and addressing problems, making decisions about cases, and provide assistance to caseworkers by taking on some of their cases (GAO 2003, 6).

But many times such is not the case as supervisors may not be readily available as they have their own workload and duties to perform. Aside from work, supervisors manage and deal with workers differently, not guaranteeing that one will be supportive versus one who likes to micromanage. "Although the caseworkers sought supervision in different ways and for different reasons, their use of supervision was for the most part based on a consultant and guidance model rather than an instructive and monitoring model" (Rycraft 1994, 78).

No one likes to be micromanaged when doing their jobs. You have supervisors to make difficult decisions, but in the line of social work, supervisors are really there to provide encouragement and support. The last thing an overwhelmed and overworked caseworker needs is someone telling them what to do and how to do it. Supervisors often mistake their roles for authoritative positions rather than

supportive ones. The roles of supervisors are usually reflective of what caseworkers want and expect of them. The duties and expectations were then developed when "supervision was addressed by identifying the specific attributes of a supervisor desired by the caseworker" (Rycraft 1994, 76).

Supervision has a purpose and role in the child welfare system, but it is very easy to lose sight of what that purpose is. "The supervisor makes a considerable difference in the caseworkers' abilities to manage the demands and responsibilities of the workload. Unquestionably, the supervisor strongly influences the caseworkers' decisions to continue employment with the organization" (Rycraft 1994, 78). Supervisors do have their faults, however. Supervisors being too busy or being inaccessible can frustrate staff, affect morale, and create inefficiency (GAO 2003, 17).

Supervisors may not have the necessary skills or qualifications to do the job. As often as caseworkers are leaving, so are supervisors. This creates voids in the child welfare system that then needs to be filled. Those filling the positions may not have sufficient experience. Some major elements lacking are quality supervision and on-the-job training. Recently promoted supervisors are often unable to meet and handle the demands of the job (GAO 2003, 3). "Furthermore, one Texas state official told us that because of high turnover, caseworkers with only 3 years of experience are commonly promoted to supervisory positions" (GAO 2003, 17).

When faced with such high turnover, someone has to fill the spot and often times it falls on the remaining workers to pick up the slack and carry on. GAO (2003, 17) indicates that this has created some additional issues in the child protective services. Some supervisors feel unprepared for the job duties, which have caused complaints from

the caseworkers they supervise. Caseworkers feel they are poorly managed and supported. Bernotavicz (2000, 7) states that supervisors are less available due to workload and unit size. With supervisors and caseworkers being flooded by workloads and caseloads it is very easy to neglect the true functions as supervisors.

"Without adequate supervision, caseworkers may lack direction in their efforts and become lost in the maze of demands and responsibilities inherent in child welfare practice" (Rycraft 1994, 79). This essentially leads to turnover in the child welfare system. Supervisors serve a valuable purpose and role in the child welfare system. They aide caseworkers in feeling supported, providing feedback, and offering their expertise on specific matters. They ensure that caseworkers will continue to feel motivated enough to continue doing the work they do.

This affects turnover in a positive way by retaining workers who might have gotten up and left. "Studies find that workers who remain in public child welfare report significantly higher levels of support from work peers in terms of listening to work-related problems and helping workers to get their jobs done. Workers who remain also believe that their supervisors are willing to listen to work-related problems and can be relied on when things get tough at work" (Barak, et al. 2001, 632).

This would be great if every supervisor was the same and if every situation, agency and organization had the same problems. Such is not the case since supervisors just as much as caseworkers are quitting and leaving the field of social work. Better hiring standards, procedures, and promotion practices need to be implemented to ensure that appropriate qualified staff fill the role as supervisors. "Accessibility, knowledge, leadership, and support are attributes identified as desirable qualities in a supervisor,

reflecting a combination of personality traits and developed skills" (Rycraft 1994, 79). "Additionally, programs that improve supervision through leadership development and specific mentoring relationships appear to aid in staff decision making and reduce staff's case management related stress" (GAO 2003, 4).

These recommendations help to avoid hiring poorly qualified supervisors. Even with the best training and best intentions in promoting a caseworker with experience and knowledge it may be difficult to determine what the outcome may be. "Too often, exemplary caseworkers are brought into supervision only to find themselves ill suited for the tasks and responsibilities of the job" (Rycraft 1994, 79).

This means that the selection process has to be closely monitored and revised to ensure that the person fits the job. The "appointment of supervisory staff requires a well-defined selection process, along with ongoing training and a clear delineation of supervisory responsibilities" (Rycraft 1994, 79). In order to focus in on those who truly are qualified and capable of doing the job they must some how be identified to guarantee that the pool of candidates will be the best available.

In order to do this the "selection procedures must be developed that allow for the identification of those people most suitable for the responsibilities of supervision" (Rycraft 1994, 79). "Otherwise, the agency fails to render the guidance and support necessary for caseworkers to continue employment" (Rycraft 1994, 79).

Strategies for Supervisors to Use

The negative effects of burnout can be seen on workers when tension and stress continue for a long period of time or reaches critical levels (Daley 1979, 376). Daley (1979, 376) suggests that rewards and down time help workers replenish their energy before they burnout.

But this is very unrealistic and difficult to do when caseworkers are met with deadlines, have no one to take over their responsibilities, and lack the support they need. With caseworkers, the work left behind stays there until caseworkers return. Daley (1979, 376) also suggests that it is very important to remove the worker from the sources of stress such as taking time off or reassigning them to less stressful duties.

Being able to improve the attitudes of caseworkers can be reflective on the type of work they do and the service they provide to their clients. Supervisor's posses' tangible skills and knowledge of the work they do in order to be able to provide leadership and solutions to their staff: "These include being accessible, being knowledgeable of the system and of casework practice, possessing management and leadership skills, and above all else being supportive" (Rycraft 1994, 78).

Apart from great leadership skills more importantly are the solutions and suggestions that supervisors provide to their caseworkers to make their work manageable. Strategies that can be used by supervisors are required timeouts, time away from work, support, peer group support, and rotation of job duties (Daley 1979, 377). Of course the down side to rotating jobs is that caseworkers may not want to give up the jobs with less pressure or may take longer to recoup from their stress.

Additional suggestions are escaping phone calls and bad news by having

supervisor take calls and emergencies, providing time in office with no distractions,

having interaction with co-workers, and flexing out on tough days (Daley 1979, 378).

Again, it is very important to reiterate how difficult it is for workers to take time off from

work when they have so much to do and so little time to do it in. But if supervisors can

provide avenues, resources, and show effort above all that they care, it can make the

difference between staying and quitting.

<div align="center">**Organizational Commitment**</div>

Job Satisfaction amongst Caseworkers

According to Lambert, et al. (2001, 234) the best performance measure one can

use in predicting employee behavior is job satisfaction. Caseworkers can easily find

themselves hating their job when lack of resources and support are available. Job

satisfaction is key to caseworkers on whether they choose to leave or stay. The

dissatisfaction of ones job does not happen over night. It develops due to other work

related issues and then manifest into dissatisfaction of the job itself. Once a caseworker

develops dissatisfaction with their job, it is very unlikely that they will stick around and

contemplate leaving the organization.

Hellman (1997, 681) and Lambert, et al. (2001, 246) indicate that turnover as a

variable is important on how it is tied to employee behavior and the impact it has on the

organization. "Psychological explanations for turnover posit that individual perceptions

and attitudes about work conditions lead to behavioral outcomes" (Barak, et al. 2001,

628). This could not be further from the truth as employees build up the thoughts of

leaving their jobs as the feelings of resentment, hopelessness, and dissatisfaction sets in.

Caseworkers have a tremendous of amount of stress that not only affects their work, but also their personal lives. "Attitudes people have about their jobs affect their personal lives as well as their work performance, the organization where they are employed, and their clients" (Koeske, et al. 1994, 2).

Job satisfaction is closely tied to job stress, intention to quit, and turnover in the workforce (Barak, et al. 2001, 631; Koeske, et al. 1994, 2; and Lambert, et al. 2001, 234). Employees will not stay on the job if they do not feel passion about the work they do. "Results suggest that in order for employees to remain on the job, they need to feel a sense of satisfaction from the work that they do and a sense of commitment to the organization or the population served by it" (Barak, et al. 2001, 653).

It is very easy to lose hope amongst caseworkers when they do not get a sense of appreciation and value from the work that they do. If such is the case, "dissatisfied employees will develop withdrawal intentions, and their contribution to the organization will be minor and in extreme cases even negative" (Freund 2005, 17). Such contribution can affect other workers and the services being provided to their clients. If the matter is not addressed or recognized the end result is very simple, workers will feel less of an attachment to the work that they do.

"Ultimately, this cognitive appraisal results in the employees' withdrawal from the organization" (Hellman 1997, 678). "When employees are unhappy with their jobs or do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the organization, they begin to contemplate leaving their jobs" (Barak, et al. 2001, 653 and Hellman, 1997, 684). There are a few things that can be done to help improve and change employees' feelings about the job.

Clugston (2000, 481) indicates that variables that can influence job satisfaction include satisfaction with pay, promotion, supervision, work, and co-workers. Caseworkers often times want to know and feel like they are support, appreciated, valued and that they are in it together. When caseworkers feel that they are on their own and no one seems to care, that is when they make the choice to get up and leave. There needs to be a better focus on work environment issues to help improve turnover intent and job satisfaction (Lambert, et al. 2001, 246).

Job Commitment amongst Caseworkers

"Both career commitment and job satisfaction have a significant influence on withdrawal intentions and on thinking of quitting the organization" (Freund 2005, 5). IASWR (2005, 10) reaffirms that commitment to the job affects retention and turnover amongst caseworkers in the child welfare system. Many caseworkers often find out through the course of their employment that maybe it is not what they had expected.

This factor can greatly influence workers to seek other employment as well as create a negative environment in the organization. "More specifically, employees who lack in organizational and professional commitment, who are unhappy with their jobs, and who experiences excessive burnout and stress but not enough social support are likely to contemplate leaving the organization" (Barak, et al. 2001, 652). But there are many variables that affect and determine whether one chooses to leave an organization besides job commitment alone.

Additional factors influence that commitment along the way. "In addition to being unhappy with their jobs, lacking in organizational commitment, and feeling burnout, stress, and lack of social support, employees who have actually left their jobs

contemplated quitting their jobs prior to doing it, were unhappy with management practices, and had alternative employment options" (Barak, et al. 2001, 652). It is important to note that job commitment is different for everyone and that no person looks at things the same. Caseworkers themselves value different things as much as they have different commitments to the job.

"In any given agency, caseworkers are at different points in their intentions to continue their journey within public child welfare system" (Rycraft 2001, 2). There are four different types of caseworkers that determine their commitment to the job. At what level caseworkers fall under could make the difference between staying committed to the job and leaving. The crusaders find the job challenging and exciting.

They have determination to succeed and passion for their jobs. They do not give into the pressures and demands of the system (Rycraft 2001, 2). These are the true warriors dedicated to the work they set out to do. But with time these people too can lose faith in the system as they soon realize the hill is high to climb. It is only a matter of time before they too start loosing hope, become discouraged, and become less satisfied with the job they are doing.

The midway passengers are the backbone of the child welfare system. They have skills and capabilities to do their jobs well with in the system. They know how to get the best benefit for themselves and their clients (Rycraft 2001, 2). Caseworkers who fall under this category have been through the ups and downs and know how to work around the system or have been there long enough that it is much harder for caseworkers to up and leave. They continue to do the work as they have developed a system and way of dealing with the pressures and constraints of the job. These are the workers likely to get

promoted and move up in the child welfare system. The future travelers see the responsibilities and expectations as too much for the pay. They see few rewards; can be hostile and bitter if change does not happen (Rycraft 2001, 2). Caseworkers in this area are looking for a way out and it is only a matter of time before they find one.

It is also likely that those in this stage either made a bad career decision or the work is no longer fulfilling to them. The last stage is the hangers on who have very little interest in their jobs. They can be resentful of the job and do not see opportunities for other employment (Rycraft 2001, 2). These are the caseworkers who are on the verge of a breakdown, are burnt out, frustrated, and tired. They do the work because it's a paycheck and it helps sustain their way of living for the moment.

Caseworkers in this stage will more than likely leave if they sought other employment, but lack the motivation to do it. "There is a need to develop organizational commitment among employees, especially commitments that highlight organizational values, perceptions, and the freedom to promote issues. These ensure organizational support of and appreciation toward the employee" (Freund, 2005, 6-7). Factors to some degree allow caseworkers to continue their employment and remain in the field of public child welfare (Rycraft 1994, 76).

Attachment to Organization

"Organizational commitment is also examined is several studies as a predictor of intention to quit and turnover" (Barak, et al. 2001, 631). How much is invested not only to the job, but to the organization can make the difference in turnover. There are several mitigating factors that employee's posses that affect their commitment to an organization. Those factors are age, gender, length of time in job, and job history (Freund 2005, 8).

Along side these factors are other variables that go hand in hand with these factors noted such as job satisfaction, commitment, and growth. It is important to note that just as there are levels of commitment to the job amongst caseworkers so to are there levels of commitment to an organization.

Clugston defines this process very well by listing three different categories caseworkers fall under to determine the level of commitment to an organization. The first is the "affective commitment as an attitudinal process whereby people come to think about their relationship with the organization in terms of value and goal congruency" (Clugston 2000, 478). These caseworkers want to be there and have a desire to do what it is they are doing.

As Clugston (2000, 478) states these types of people tend to stay with an organization because they choose to do so. The second group of caseworkers is those who have thought out the process of leaving carefully and feel it is not in their best interest to do so. Clugston (2000, 478) lists continuance commitment as those employees who choose to stay with an organization due to the cost and risks of leaving.

"These costs are manifest in two distinct ways: (1) as individuals gain tenure in an organization they accrue investments in the form of pension plans, seniority, specialized and untransferable job skills, local affiliations, familial ties, and so on which may be sacrificed or damaged by changing jobs; and (2) individuals may feel as though they have to remain in their current jobs because they do not have any alternative job prospects" (Clugston 2000, 478).

These types of caseworkers can do more harm than good if there commitment to the organization does not fit with the mission, goals, and objectives. Such caseworkers may do a good job, but see the job as just that, a job. The final stage of commitment is normative commitment. Normative commitment employees tend to have a sense of duty, loyalty, and moral obligation when choosing to stay at an organization.

"This type of commitment may derive from an individual's culture or work ethic, causing them to feel obligated to stay with an organization" (Clugston 2000, 478). These caseworkers know what dedication, desire, and commitment mean. They may have good intentions, but commitment to an organization is one thing and commitment to the job is another. Caseworkers may love the organization, but may not necessarily love the job and vice versa. "Thus, the sense of loyalty and duty underlying an employee's normative commitment influences the individual to remain with the organization because they feel as though they ought to do so" (Clugston 2000, 478).

Workers put forth more investment into an organization when the organizations commitment is high towards its employees. But very few organizations do this and usually expect the employee to put forth more energy and effort with little to nothing in return. "Hence, it is the organization's interests to develop high organizational commitment among workers (Freund 2005, 7). If the organization can provide the support, resources, and the environment to be successful, caseworkers are most likely to be invested in the organization.

Freund (2005, 8) confirms that it has been shown by research that organizational commitment influences workers ability to remain with an organization as well as their work performance. Organizational commitment helps workers respond to an organization's needs as well as build and enhance their careers (Freund 2005, 8). If organizations can bridge the gap between its workers and the organization, then the organization as a whole wins. Caseworkers will be happy, satisfied, and committed to doing their job well.

Getting caseworkers to be invested in their work is critical in being able to retain workers and reduce turnover. Thus, "a person with motivation to invest in work will believe that it is important to invest in one's particular job and thereby reinforce one's organizational commitment" (Freund, 2005, 9).

If caseworkers can continue to commit to their organization, then their value as employees increases creating greater opportunities for them in the long run. Caseworkers want to be able to develop skills that will help improve the organization as a whole. Caseworkers want to know that there are other opportunities for them as well. Freund (2005, 116) indicates that employee's generally stay with an organization that allows them to develop their professional careers.

Caseworkers do not want to be caseworkers for the rest of their career. They want to have opportunities to grow and develop as professionals. "That is, one of the rewards that the organization provides and which directly reinforces continuance organizational commitment is the opportunity to develop a professional career" (Freund, 2005, 16). If a commitment cannot be achieved by either the caseworker or the organization, turnover will continue to plague child welfare agencies and the cycle will continue until something is done about it.

"Thus, an organization ought to create among its workers a sense of commitment to the organization and its goals prior to the stage of intent to leave" (Freund 2005, 10). Freund (2005, 10) solidifies this by suggesting that there has to be a strong bond between the worker and the organization in order to get the employee to believe in the organization again. If such relationship is not built, caseworkers will likely to leave their job due to the lack of organizational commitment.

Organizational Factors

Organizational environment plays a huge role in staff retention (CWLA 2002, 4). There are often personal reasons why caseworkers are dissatisfied with the organization and therefore have a lack of commitment to it. "Findings showed that the major sources of dissatisfaction were organizational factors: low work morale, paperwork, lack of clerical support, administrative policies, procedures and lack of support of employees" (Bernotavicz 2000, 4 and Legisweb.state.wy.us 2000, 7). Daley (1979, 378) noted that poor career ladders, entry level positions with glass ceilings, and educational credentials over experience were factors in the organization affecting caseworkers. These factors alone can be sufficient enough to cause workers to leave and sever their ties with the organization.

CWLA (2006, 4) also indicates that a poor image of child welfare agencies have negative effects on morale and retention of qualified employees. This deters potential employees from seeking a career and a job with the child welfare system. Additional factors affecting caseworkers are high caseloads, poor working conditions, lack of worker autonomy, lack of quality supervision, limited opportunities for advancement, and scarcity of supportive resources (IASWR 2005, 10 and Legisweb.state.wy.us 2000, 2). If organizations cannot improve the working environment, how do they then expect workers to stay committed to their jobs and be satisfied?

"The aspects of the job liked least were predominately related to work environment: lack of competent supervision, office politics and a distrustful work environment" (Bernotavicz 2000, 7). Thoma (1998, 4) states that mismanagement is an

organizational factor that is part of turnover. It is obvious that organizations need to do a better job of providing support, resources, and better options to their employees.

Employers need to focus on staffs organizational, career, and job commitments in regard to how they relate to job satisfaction and other personal attributes (Freund 2005, 6). This is a starting point in which the organization can begin to repair internal issues that affect caseworkers. Bernotavicz (2000, 8) suggests that agencies need to work on three areas to improve turnover and organizational commitment. They are work environment, personal, and staff development.

People will leave if they lack support from the organizational itself. With this also goes personal commitment to the employees by offering recognition, rewards, better benefits, and pay as they all go along with professional development (Bernotavicz 2000, 8). If organizations can do this, they have solved half of the problems affecting caseworkers. Attitudes, feelings, and commitment to the organization goes a long ways when trying to keep caseworkers from leaving.

Formal Education

Skilled Workforce

According to GAO, to provide adequate child welfare services and meet federal goals, child welfare agencies have to meet the challenge of a stable and highly skilled workforce (CWLA, ND, 1). Due to caseworker turnover, many that are left behind are so new that they lack the skills, training, and experience to help those coming into the field. "Turnover can be particularly detrimental to a social agency such as DFS, since its effectiveness is dependent on the knowledge, skills, and abilities, of its caseworkers when serving clients" (Legisweb.state.wy.us, 20000, 4).

If caseworkers who are well experienced and qualified to do the job are leaving, it depletes the available resources that can be vital to incoming caseworkers. "The rapid and continuing loss of experienced and committed child welfare workers must be reduced to ensure a workforce with the skills to perform extremely difficult and critical functions" (Drake and Yadama, 1996, 2). Due to lack of skills and training of new workers, the turnover for new caseworkers is just as high as tenured workers. GAO (2003, 18) states that insufficient training continues to be a problem in recruiting and retaining workers.

Caseworkers are unable to meet the demands of the job and complete the necessary duties to be effective. "Even moderate levels of staff turnover can create crisis conditions in any type of work organization if there is a shortage of trained replacements readily available to assume the workload" (Graef and Hill 2000, 518). Legisweb.state.us.wy (2000, 4) indicates that turnover puts more responsibilities on less experienced caseworkers.

This leaves very little room for error from child protective services as the services provided to their clients is compromised. As caseworkers leave child protective services needs to find replacements and do it expeditiously. Graef and Hill (2000, 518) and Legisweb.state.wy.us (2000, 2) note that if there is not enough qualified applicants available, it slows down the process of being able to fill those vacant positions. This creates a gap in services and reduces the effectiveness of the organization. This puts children's lives at risk and fails to provide families with the support they need.

Thoma (1998, 5) strongly notes that incompetence plays a huge role among child protective services workers. This mostly due to the lack of training they received when they first got hired. Caseworkers are quickly rushed in, processed, and put out on the

field to fill the vacant spots. "Basic training does not provide new staff with the skills they need to do their jobs" (GAO 2003 18). Caseworkers are so desperately needed that the expectations of them are minimized.

When caseworkers are set out to do the job, they soon realize that they lack the knowledge and training to provide effective services. "Training opportunities were often inadequate to ensure a smooth transition for new recruits into the agency" (GAO 2003 18 and Liederman 1993, 2). Thoma (1998, 1) indicates that most of the training is spent on filling out forms and doing paperwork. This kind of training sets up the caseworker to fail, feel incompetent, burnout, and quit. According to Thoma (1998, 1) usually reading policy manuals and shadowing seasoned workers is all the training one gets. This is not acceptable and cannot be allowed to continue if child welfare services wants to improve its image and retain its caseworkers.

Even more compelling notes Thoma, (1998, 3) is that the skills of workers being hired as so poor that they often have poor grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and are unable to write sentences. Some are even troubled and dysfunctional people. Caseworkers, in spite of having training, still felt unprepared to manage and handle their cases and paperwork documentation was burdensome (GAO 2003, 27). Training only provides minimum training on the real work such as rules, regulations, paperwork, and standards.

Training should be intensive, almost like a police academy of sorts with real life situations, actual walk-through of paper work, court hearings, and scenario situations. Thoma (1998, 1) notes that nothing like this kind of training is provided when you join the department. "Training partnerships may increase workers' skill levels, caseworkers may still feel unprepared for the realities of child welfare practice" (GAO 2003, 27). The

actual realization that no matter how much training is provided, nothing prepares you for

the real work that lies ahead. But mostly, the case for such lack of training is due to the

actual time spent in training. Training programs are very short from a few weeks to a

couple of months depending on the needs of the department due to staff and management

being so eager and quick to assign cases and workloads to alleviate overloaded staff

(Thoma 1998, 1).

The child welfare system needs to reconsider the training it is providing to new

recruits. The training provided defeats the purpose of hiring new workers when the ones

recently hired are leaving. It perpetuates the revolving door myths that as caseworkers

leave new ones come. Without adequate trained and experienced caseworkers, the

organization cannot function to its full potential leaving many families and children at

risk. Poorly trained child protective services workers greatly impact families and lives.

Children will continue to die and families will continue to be destroyed (Thoma 1998, 5).

Role of Education

Education plays a significant role in child welfare services considering that states

across the country vary on their qualifications. Education is a good indicator not only of

being able to perform the job functions, but also show how qualified one is. "The

turnover studies of broad cohorts of workers, not with specific degrees or IV-E education,

do indicate that turnover is quickest for those without the professional commitment and

or at least a minimum level of education to perform job tasks" (IASWR 2005, 2).

Some states only require a high education while others require four year college

degrees. Thoma (1998, 2) notes that one quarter of states do not require college degrees

and less than half train their workers before getting assigned cases. Caseworkers with

little education and lack of expertise hurts agencies across the country in being able to provide effective and qualified services to the families and children they serve. But aside from the lack of education, too much education can also hinder child welfare agencies from retaining their workers. "It was found that the higher the worker's education, the greater the worker's intent to leave the organization; that is, initial intentions to leave were reported" (Freund 2005, 16). Caseworkers with more education are most likely to keep their options opened and look for advancement and opportunities that fit their needs.

"The current findings coincide with other studies that suggest that employees with a high level of education, i.e., of a high human resource value, have higher professional expectations than nonprofessional employees" (Freund 2005, 16). If employees feel that the organization cannot meet the level of expectations they have, the more likely they are to seek a job elsewhere.

Education is a great indicator for turnover if the agency cannot meet the needs of its workers and does not offer adequate pay, salaries, and benefits. Caseworkers are no different; they choose to enter the field in hopes of moving up the ladder and using their skills and knowledge to help others coming in. So many caseworkers find themselves going back to school in order to fill another part of their lives.

Whether it is another field or a similar degree, caseworkers want to be able to make progress in their professional careers. No one likes to be stagnating and surely caseworkers do not envision being caseworkers for the rest of their careers. "Often employees study while working in the organization, and once studies are completed they find their job in the organization is no longer suitable to their level of expertise. It is possible that the desire to find an alternative work place evolved from the feeling that

they could not apply what was learned. An alternative explanation is that workers with an academic background are more aware that they have job alternatives outside the organization" (Freund, 2005, 16). Education can create turnover if options are not available to caseworkers. Education has its advantages of seeking very qualified and highly skilled workers, but it can also hurt your chances of keeping them on board if they have bigger goals in mind.

Types of Education

"Some research has also linked social work education to employee retention in child welfare" (CWLA 2002, 4). It is understood that caseworkers who have social work degrees are more to be better at their job. Caseworkers have the skills and knowledge necessary to do the work they set out to do and have the motivation and desire to want to help. CWLA (2002, 4) notes that those with social workers degrees are more like to stay in their field and have more job satisfaction than without. Agencies tend to have fewer turnovers when they require staff to have social work degrees. But the problem is not with those who have degrees; it is the agencies that only require a minimum education to get the job that is an issue.

Thoma (1998, 3) states that the requirements for becoming a social worker are very low. Some states only require a high school diploma while others some college as a prerequisite. "Many child welfare caseworkers have professional degrees in social work; however, this credential is not always required and many practicing in child welfare have undergraduate degrees in seemingly unrelated fields" (GAO, 2003, 1). This could very well be due to the fact that so many workers are leaving and quitting. There just isn't enough workers filling the vacancies and therefore, agencies are left to hire staff that has

similar or related degrees in the field. Thoma (1998, 4) indicates that many child welfare

agencies turn to those with little to no social work experience. A lot of them have

degrees in the humanities or other unrelated subjects. None the less, having an education

related specifically to the field of practice can make the biggest difference in reducing

turnover and hiring better well suited caseworkers for the job that lies ahead. Turnover is

higher in states that require no degree and lower in states that require a master's degree in

social work (Socialworkers.org 2003, 1). It is important to note the figures of those with

a social work degree to get a better picture of just how many there are.

This could be a future indicator of what problems may lay ahead if the numbers

are lower than expected. Thoma (1998, 2) notes that 15 percent have a B.S. in social

work and 13 percent have a masters in social work. Socialworkers.org (2003, 2) shows

that 28 percent of caseworkers hold a BSW or MSW. Less than 15 percent of agencies

require workers to hold either a BSW or MSW. MSW is the best predictor of overall

performance in social work.

<div align="center">**Personal and Family Reasons**</div>

Non Factor

"The bad news is that employees often leave not because of personal and work-

family balance reasons but because they are not satisfied with their jobs, feel excessive

stress and burnout, and do not feel supported by their supervisors and the organization"

(Barak, et al. 2001, 655). Usually family reasons and balance is not something an

organization can do anything about. More importantly, family reasons as a factor for

turnover have no bearing on the organization as it is not a direct cause of the

organization.

Factors causing turnover all point to specific job functions and or environmental aspects of the organization itself. Families often make decisions on relocation and finding balance between work and family. Drake and Yadama (1996, 3) notes that there are many other factors that affect worker turnover such as pay, job satisfaction, role conflicts and ambiguity, health problems, relocation of a spouse's employment, and having other job availability.   It is important to note that personal and family reasons are not associated with organizations reasons for turnover. The factors and causes all seem to point to one direction, the work environment in the child welfare system.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this research is to determine what factors affect Child Protective Services caseworker's propensity to leave their jobs. The formulation of formal hypothesis will make a direct connection and link to support the literature. The six formal hypotheses that will be used to determine what factors are more prevalent are (1) High caseloads is positively related to turnover propensity, (2) Pay is negatively related to turnover propensity, (3) Workload/Administrative burdens is positively related to turnover propensity, (4) Supervisory support is negatively related to turnover propensity, (5) Organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover propensity, (6) Training is negatively related to turnover propensity.

The expectation of the literature and the formal hypotheses are to determine what specific factors cause caseworkers to leave their jobs in the child welfare system. "The bad news is that employees often leave not because of personal and work-family balance reasons but because they are not satisfied with their jobs, feel excessive stress and burnout, and do not feel supported by their supervisors and the organization" (Barak, et al. 2001, 655). **Table 2.1** connects the conceptual framework to the literature.

Table 2.1 Conceptual Framework Linked to the Literature

Conceptual Framework Link to Literature	
Hypotheses	**Literature**
(H1) High caseload is positively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	Bernotavicz (2000) CWLA (2006) GAO (1995) GAO (2003) Liederman (1993) Socialworkers.org (2003)
H2) Pay is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	CWLA (2002) Daley (1979) GAO (2003) Lambert, et. al. (2001) Socialworkers.org (2003) Rycraft (1994)
(H3) Workload/Administrative Burdens is positively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	CWLA (2002) Daley (1979) GAO (2003) Graef and Hill (2000) Rycraft (1994) Socialworkers.org (2003) Strayhorn (2004) Legisweb.state.wy.us (2000)
(H4) Supervisory support is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	Barak, et. al. (2001) Bernotavicz (2000) CWLA (2002) Daley (1979) GAO (2003) Rycraft (1994) Rycraft (2001)
(H5) Organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	Barak, et. al., (2001) Bernotavicz (2000) Clugston (2000) CWLA (2002) CWLA (2006) Daley (1979) Freund (2005) Hellman (1997) IASWR (2005) IASWR (2005) Koeske, et. al. (1994) Lambert, et. al. (2001) Maslach and Jackson (1981) Rycraft (1994)

	Rycraft (2001) Thoma (1998) Legisweb.state.wy.us (2000)
(H6) Training is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.	CWLA (ND) CWLA (2002) Drake and Yadama (1996) Freund (2005) GAO (2003) Graef and Hill(2000) IASWR (2005) Liederman (1993) Thoma (1998) Thoma (1998) Legisweb.state.wy.us (2000) Socialworkers.org (2003)

Chapter Summary

In this chapter several factors are identified determinants of turnover in child welfare caseworkers. These factors are used to gain a better understanding of the problems and dilemmas caseworkers face in order to remain in the field. It is apparent from the literature that the child welfare system is in need of a thorough overhaul. Caseworkers are understaffed, overworked, and underpaid. Issues that persist and continue to plague the child welfare system will continue to lead to turnover of caseworkers if the issues noted are not addressed. The following chapter discusses the methodology utilized in this research.

Chapter Three
Methodology

Chapter Purpose

In this chapter, the explanatory case study methodology used to operationalize the conceptual framework is examined. The methodology is the core, which holds this survey together. The six hypotheses were operationalized using specific survey questions geared towards testing the specific hypotheses discussed in chapter two.

Table 3.1 illustrates how the variables of this explanatory study are operationalized using particular survey questions to test and measure each hypothesis. The range and type of questions vary depending on the nature of the variable. This chapter focuses on the operationalization table and its variables. Listed below are the six hypotheses.

H1: High caseload is positively related to turnover propensity to quit job.

H2: Pay is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.

H3: Workload/Administrative Burdens is positively related to turnover propensity to quit job.

H4: Supervisory support is negatively related to turnover propensity to quit job.

H5: Organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover propensity.

H6: Training is negatively related to propensity to quite job.

Survey Research

The survey method will be used to collect data for testing our six hypotheses of this research. "Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (Babbie, 2004, 243). In this case, social workers (caseworkers) will be surveyed regarding various work environment factors. While survey interviews could be conducted from each respondent, "self-administered questionnaires are generally cheaper and quicker than face-to-face interview surveys" (Babbie, 2004, 273).

Babbie (2004, 243) affirms that surveys are great tools for measuring attitudes and point of reference in huge populations. The survey will be conducted by having caseworkers from DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services) complete an on-line questionnaire regarding various factors in regards to their jobs. In this case the population would be caseworkers from Austin, New Braunfels, San Marcos, and San Antonio Department of Family and Protective Services offices.

The propensity for caseworkers to leave their jobs will be measured by a self-administered questionnaire. As Babbie (2004, 273) notes, "self-administered questionnaires may be more effective for sensitive issues." Respondents will be notified of the questionnaire via electronic mail and they will have the results submitted to an online survey website (www.surveymonkey.com).

Sample

This study will employ a purposive/judgmental sample, which is a nonprobability sampling method. The researcher has selected this sampling process based on the knowledge of the population, its elements, and the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2004,

183). This sampling process will be used to survey caseworkers in the DFPS

organization to determine their propensity to leave their jobs. The questionnaires will be

distributed to caseworkers in Austin, New Braunfels, San Marcos, and San Antonio,

Texas. While the sampling method is appropriate for this research study, the sample

design would not provide a good description of caseworkers as a whole; it might suffice

for general comparative purposes (Babbie, 2004, 184). As a result, this research will

focus on the factors that lead caseworkers to want to leave their jobs with DFPS. The

results will then be able to focus clearly on the factors causing the problems of

caseworkers leaving creating awareness and an opportunity for future research and

solutions to such problems.

Operationalization

   Table 3.1 connects the conceptual framework to the survey research utilized in

this study. The survey questions are intended to gather insight to what factors affect

caseworker's propensity to leave their jobs within the coming year. For the most part,

respondents choices are on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly

agree. The last five questions of the survey are demographic questions ranging from age,

gender, race, education, and experience. A copy of the survey questionnaire can be found

in appendix A.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this research is the likelihood of caseworkers leaving their job within the year. The dependent variable will seek out the independent variables that cause the likelihood of leaving your job within the next 12 months. The dependent variable is operationalized through a single question of "What is the likelihood of leaving your job within the next 12 months".

Independent Variables

There are six independent variables that are used to determine the likelihood of a caseworker leaving his/her job in the next 12 months. These independent variables relate to each of the six hypotheses used in this research. The first independent variable is caseload. The second independent variable is pay. The third independent variable is workload/administrative duties. The fourth independent variable is supervisory support. The fifth independent variable is organizational commitment. The sixth and final independent variable is training. These six independent variables will be used to determine if there is a significant correlation with the dependent variable. A list of these independent variables can be found in **table 3.1** below.

Covariates

There are five demographic covariates that are used in this study. They are: age, gender, race, education, and the experience of the subjects. These five covariates are operationalized and coded in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1 Operationlization Table of the Formal Hypotheses

Variables	Survey Questions*	Measurement
Dependent Variable		
Likelihood of leaving your job	4. What is the likelihood of leaving your job within the next 12 months?	0 to 100%
Independent Variables		
Caseload	1. My current caseload is _# of units_. 2. My caseload is unmanageable. 3. High caseload negatively affects quality of my work.	Question 1 is filling in the blank. Questions 2 and 3 of Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA
Pay	5. I receive raises or merit increases on a regular basis. 6. My salary accurately reflects the amount of work I do.	Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA
Workload/Administrative Burdens	7. My current workload/administrative responsibilities is unmanageable. 8. I am dissatisfied with the reasonableness of my current workload responsibilities.	Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA
Supervisory Support	9. My supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me. 10. I am satisfied with the amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation I receive from my supervisor. 11. My supervisor makes him/herself available to me.	Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA
Organizational Commitment	12. My work environment is positive. 13. My organization provides incentives/rewards to me. 14. I am satisfied with my job. 15. I feel that my agency cares about its people. 16. I am proud to work for this agency. 17. Organizational leadership has made changes that are positive for the agency.	Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA

Variables	Survey Questions*	Measurement
Training	18. Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis. 19. Training is applicable to my job.	Survey using Likert Scale of SD-D-N-A-SA
Covariates		
Age	20. What is your age?	Fill in the blank
Gender	21. What is your gender?	Male=0 Female=1
Race	22. What is your race?	White=0 Minority=1
Education	23. What is your current education	Bachelors=0 Graduate/Ph.D.=1
Experience	24. What is the number of years of experience with your current job	Years was converted into months

*Source: http://www.guidestarco.com/Job-satisfaction-survey-questionnaire-sample.htm

Strengths and Weaknesses of Methodology

While survey research in an explanatory study can be beneficial, it also has its limitations. Survey research makes a generalization about a specific group of caseworkers and is not reflective of the entire population of caseworkers across the nation. Also context of social life, superficiality in the coverage of complex topics, and inflexibility are additional weaknesses of this survey. Another weakness was the very structure of the survey. It did not include any survey questions regarding additional comments from the respondents, limiting their specific responses.

But the strength to this study is that the caseworkers who were surveyed are from Texas and from specific locations that are conclusive of those caseworkers whose propensity to leave is desired from. Only caseworkers working for DFPS that have been identified were used for this survey making it much more reliable and valid in nature. The survey was short and brief with specific instructions and conducted over a two week period. The survey had 247 responses out of 518 totals. The survey was feasible due to the large sample, which resulted in a higher response rate and was flexible in the ability to ask multiple questions on any given topic.

Statistical Methods

The statistical procedure used in this study is multiple regression analysis. This statistical method will determine whether the factors are significant and which factors are more likely to be the cause for caseworkers to leave their job. Multiple regression analysis seeks to test the impact of two or more independent variables on the dependent variable. The Likert scale used was transposed and converted backwards for the purpose of presenting the findings.

Human Subjects

As previously noted, caseworkers from DFPS were asked to participate and complete a survey questionnaire regarding various aspects of their job and organization. The participants were not placed in any harm or had any risks associated with their participation in this research. Caseworkers who participate did not have their terms of employment jeopardized with the DFPS. There was no financial benefit provided to the participants. Their responses will provide DFPS with new and up to date research pertaining to the shortcomings DFPS caseworkers are facing in the field in regards to their employment with the organization. Participation was voluntary and the participants were able to discontinue their participation at any time during the process. Anonymity was ensured for all participants so that the information provided cannot be deduced back to any of the participants. Survey participants were able to contact Gabriel Guzman at 210-877-5232 or at GG37098@txstate.edu, or the faculty supervisor of this research, Dr. Hassan Tajalli, at Texas State University at San Marcos at 512-245-3284 or at ht03@txstate.edu with any questions or concerns regarding this research.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the conceptual framework is operationalized through the survey questions. The survey questions are drawn out from the literature and used to test the hypotheses of this research. Additionally, the sample used, research method, dependent and independent variables, covariates, the strengths and weaknesses of the survey, statistics utilized, and the human subject disclosure are discussed. The results of the survey are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Four
Results

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings obtained from the variables that affect the likelihood of leaving one's job within the next 12 months. The data addresses the purpose of explaining the six hypotheses and their significance to the dependent variable. The results will be presented using multiple regression analysis as well as some descriptive statistics.

Description of Surveys Obtained

Four cities from Central Texas were selected as part of the research to survey caseworkers. Austin, San Marcos, New Braunfels, and San Antonio were the cities used in this survey. Out of 518 caseworkers surveyed, 247 responses were obtained. The response rate for all caseworkers surveyed in the four cities was 48%. All 247 surveys submitted were fully completed. **Tables 4.1-4.2** present demographic distribution of respondents. **Tables 4.3-4.17** illustrate the dependent variable, the multiple regression analysis of the findings, as well as the mean, medium, and mode for each category. Frequency and percentages present the response to each question.

Respondent Characteristics

Tables 4.1-4.2 illustrate the demographics in mean, median, mode, and percentages. The average age of all respondents was 33 years of age. The median response of all the data gathered was 30 years of age and the mode response given was 24 years of age. As expected, a vast majority of respondents (87.4) were females as social work is primarily sought out by a specific gender. Females had 216 of the 247 responses

with an 87.4% response rate. When looking at the race makeup of the respondents, an

overwhelming response was (55.4%) minorities. But on an individual basis, Whites had

the majority with 44.5% when compared to the other races.   An enormous number of the

respondents hold a bachelors degree with 66%, while only 33.6% hold a masters and .4%

holding a Ph.D. The average length of experience of caseworkers was 34 months and the

median response was18 months. The most frequent response given regarding experience

on the job was 12 months.

Table 4.1 Covariates

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
Age	247	32.84	30.00	24
Experiences (In Months)	247	34.25	18.00	12
Likelihood of leaving job within the next 12 months	247	54.40	50.00	50

Table 4.2 Covariates

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
• Male	31	12.6
• Female	216	87.4
Race		
• White	110	44.5
• Hispanic	89	36.0
• Black	39	15.8
• Other	9	3.6
Education		
• Bachelor	163	66.0
• Masters	83	33.6
• Ph.D.	1	.4

Results Summary

       Table 4.3 below shows descriptive statistics of the dependent variable (likelihood

of leaving job) and **Table 4.4** below, shows the results of the multiple regression

analysis. R^2 means that all the independent variables collectively explain 35.2% of the

reasons for individuals' propensity to quit. With a significance of 35.2%, this number

reveals that this model is weak and that other factors may be able to strengthen the model

and make it more significant. F-value at 9.65** (and its significance) is used to find out

whether the R^2 is significant or if it was obtained by chance. In this case, R^2 is

significant. In reviewing the data, only two independent variables were significant.

Attitudes towards workload and responsibilities were significant, meaning that propensity

to leave job is directly affected by the amount of workload responsibility of caseworkers.

A higher workload responsibility increases the probability of leaving the job. The second

significant variable was organizational commitment. It is then certain that caseworkers

are most likely to leave their job within the next 12 months due to a lack of

organizational commitment. All other variables were not significant

1=Strongly Disagree
2=Disagree
3=Neutral
4=Agree
5=Strongly Agree

Table 4.3 Dependent Variable

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
Likelihood of leaving job within the next 12 months	247	54.40	50.00	50

Table 4.4 Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Caseload	-.198	.128	-.094	1.544	.124
Unmanageable Caseload	3.073	2.382	.099	1.290	.198
Caseload and Quality of Work	.797	2.326	.021	.343	.732
Pay	-3.481	3.162	-.064	1.101	.272
*Workload Responsibilities	5.721	2.693	.168	2.125	.035
Supervisory Support	-1.217	2.064	-.036	-.590	.556
**Organization Commitment	-16.320	3.476	-.355	4.695	.000
Training	-3.639	2.357	-.092	1.544	.124
Age	-.277	.244	-.073	1.139	.256
Gender	.368	5.949	.003	.062	.951
Race (White and Minority)	.501	3.815	.007	.131	.896
Education (Bachelors and Graduate)	-3.891	4.055	-.053	-.960	.338
Months of Experience	-.060	.052	-.074	1.149	.252
Constant	108.811	20.027		5.433	.000
R^2= 35.2%					
F=9.65**					

Dependent Variable: What is the likelihood of leave your job within the next 12 months (Please fill in using a number between 0 - 100%)

* Significant at < .05

** Significant at < .01

Caseload

Caseload as a variable in this research was not a factor in causing caseworkers to want to leave their jobs. Therefore, our first hypothesis is not supported by the data of this research. Based on the results (**See Table 4.5**) obtained from the research, current caseloads averaged 30.54 cases per caseworker. Half of the caseworkers, however, held less than 30 cases while the other half held more than 30 cases. The most frequent number of cases any one caseworker held was 35.

In regards to caseloads being unmanageable (meaning they have too many cases to oversee for one person), the average response was neutral with a 3.14 on the Likert scale meaning that caseworkers felt caseloads were not a factor in wanting to leave their job. The median response was neutral with a 3.0, meaning that half of the caseworkers indicated that there was no clear stance on whether their caseloads were unmanageable. The most frequent response to caseloads being unmanageable was a 4, meaning that a typical caseworker believes that caseload is unmanageable. Overall, 41.2% of caseworkers indicated that caseloads were unmanageable when compared to just 81 caseworkers or 32.8% who indicated caseloads were not unmanageable.

The average response of caseworkers who felt that a high caseload negatively affects the quality of their work (meaning work performance is poor) was 4.35 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating that they agreed with this statement. The median response to this question was a 5.0, meaning that half felt a high caseload affected the quality of their work while the remaining half indicated a high caseload did affect the quality of their work. An overwhelming response (85.4%) of caseworkers indicated that a high caseload negatively affects the quality of their work. Only 6.5% of caseworkers indicated that a

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high caseload did not affect the quality of their work. Please see **Table 4.5 and 4.6**

below.

Table 4.5 Caseload

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
My Current Caseload is	245	30.54	30.00	35
My Caseload is Unmanageable	247	3.14	3.00	4
High Caseload Negatively Affects the Quality of My Work	247	4.35	5.00	5

Table 4.6 Caseload

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
My caseload is unmanageable	247	16 (6.5)	65 (26.3)	64 (25.9)	72 (29.1)	30 (12.1)
High caseload negatively affects the quality of my work	247	2 (.8)	14 (5.7)	20 (8.1)	71 (28.7)	140 (56.7)

Pay

Pay as a variable in the multiple regression turned out to be insignificant (Sig.

.272) in affecting the likelihood of caseworker's quitting their jobs. Therefore, the

second hypothesis is not supported. About 73% of caseworkers felt that they do not

receive merit increases on a regular basis. Please refer to **Tables 4.7 and 4.8**.

Caseworkers also indicated that their salary did not accurately reflect the amount

of work they had to with an average response of 1.44 on the Likert scale. The median

point was at 1.0 and the most frequent response to this question was a 1 for strongly

disagree on the Likert scale. About 94% of caseworkers felt that their salary did not

accurately reflect to the amount of work they had to do. But pay alone as a factor was not

sufficient enough to cause caseworkers to want to quit their job indicating that they are

not in this profession for the money. Please refer **Tables 4.7 and 4.8**.

Table 4.7 Pay

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
I receive raises or merit increases on a regular basis	247	1.98	2.00	2
My salary accurately reflects the amount of work I do	247	1.44	1.00	1

Table 4.8 Pay

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
I receive raises or merit increases on a regular basis	247	88 (35.6)	93 (37.7)	50 (20.2)	15 (6.1)	1 (.4)
My salary accurately reflects the amount of work I do	247	162 (65.6)	69 (27.9)	9 (3.6)	6 (2.4)	1 (.4)

Workload/Administrative Burdens

As **tables 4.9 and 4.10** shows workload/administrative duties has a significant impact on the propensity of caseworkers wanting to quit their job. The results, therefore, support our third hypothesis. The average response to workload/administrative duties being unmanageable was 3.32. The median point to of all responses was a 3.0 on the Likert scale and the most frequent response given by caseworkers was a 4 for agree. About half of caseworkers (46.2%) felt that their workload/administrative duties were unmanageable. Please refer to **Tables 4.9 and 4.10 below.**

The average response to the dissatisfaction of the reasonableness of caseworker's workload responsibilities was 3.45 on the Likert scale, meaning that there was a slight edge of agreement on the subject. Tthe most frequent response given by all caseworkers surveyed was 4. This shows that caseworkers who responded leaned slightly towards agree in their responses, meaning that there was dissatisfaction with their workload. About 53% of caseworkers believe that they were dissatisfied with the reasonableness of their workload responsibilities. Please see **Tables 4.9 and 4.10** below.

Table 4.9 Workload/Administrative Duties

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
My current workload/administrative responsibilities is unmanageable	247	3.32	3.00	4
I am dissatisfied with the reasonableness of my current workload responsibilities	247	3.45	4.00	4

Table 4.10 Workload/Administrative Duties

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
My current workload/administrative responsibilities is unmanageable	247	7 (2.8)	60 (24.3)	66 (26.7)	74 (30)	40 (16.2)
I am dissatisfied with the reasonableness of my current workload responsibilities	247	5 (2.0)	55 (22.3)	57 (23.1)	85 (34.4)	45 (18.2)

Supervisory Support

Supervisory support does not show to have a significant impact on the likelihood of caseworkers wanting to quit their jobs. The fourth hypothesis of this research, therefore, is not supported. The results actually show that most caseworkers surveyed felt that they are support by their supervisors, meaning that this is not a factor in wanting to quit their job. Looking at the three question used in the survey regarding supervisors (Please refer to **Tables 4.11-4.12**), caseworkers gave favorable responses, indicating that they are content with the amount of support and praise they receive.

In the first question, "my supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me", caseworkers on average gave a response of 3.78 on scale of 1 to 5 (score of 5 indicating strong agreement with the statement). Just slightly more on the agree side than neutral. The median response to this question was a 4.0 and the most frequent response given by caseworkers was a 5. Overall, 164 caseworkers or 66.4% percent agreed that supervisors care and respond to issues caseworkers have regarding their job.

In the second question regarding supervisor support, caseworkers gave favorable responses as well. Most caseworkers felt that they are satisfied with the informal praise and appreciation they receive. The average response to this survey question was 3.52 on a scale of 1 to 5. About 57.9% of caseworkers believe that they were satisfied with the informal praise and appreciation they receive from their supervisors.

The last question regarding supervisory support availability received favorable responses as well. Caseworkers on average responded with a 3.98 on scale of 1 to 5. The median response gathered was at 4.0 and the most frequent response given by caseworkers was a 4. As a result, about 78% of caseworkers believe that supervisors do make themselves available to their caseworkers. Please refer to **Tables 4.11-4.12** below.

Table 4.11 Supervisory Support

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
My supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me	247	3.78	4.00	5
I am satisfied with amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation I receive from my supervisor	247	3.52	4.00	4
My supervisor makes him/herself available to me	247	3.98	4.00	4

Table 4.12 Supervisory Support

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
My supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me	247	14 (5.7)	27 (10.9)	42 (17.0)	80 (32.4)	84 (34.0)
I am satisfied with amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation I receive from my supervisor	247	19 (7.7)	36 (14.6)	49 (19.8)	84 (34.0)	59 (23.9)
My supervisor makes him/herself available to me	247	11 (4.5)	20 (8.1)	24 (9.7)	101 (40.9)	91 (36.8)

Organizational Commitment

As **Tables 4.13 and 4.14** shows, organizational commitment has a significant

impact on the decision of caseworkers to quit or not to quit their jobs. Lack of

organizational commitment increases the likelihood of caseworkers wanting to quit their

jobs. This is in conformity of our fifth hypothesis. The survey asked six specific

questions related to organizational commitment. Each of the questions will be addressed

individually to show the importance of each element of overall organizational commitment. Please see **Tables 4.13-4.14** below.

Caseworkers responded favorably to the work environment when surveyed, meaning that they are content with the mood and atmosphere in the office. The average response was a 3.41 on a scale of 1 to 5. On average, most caseworkers were slightly more on the agree side than neutral side. The most frequent response given by the caseworkers surveyed was agree. Overall, 54.7% of the caseworkers agreed that the work environment was positive.

In regards to incentives and rewards provided, caseworkers responded unfavorably with an average response of 2.17 on a scale of 1 to 5. This indicates that caseworkers do receive merits, raises, and rewards for the work they do on a consistent basis. About 66% of caseworkers disagreed that the organization provides incentives and rewards to its employees.

Caseworkers on average responded neutrally to being satisfied with their job (score of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5). The median of all responses was at 3.0 with the most frequent response given being a 4. Overall, 38.1% of caseworkers are satisfied with their job. Those dissatisfied with their jobs came in a close second with 32.4%. 29.6% responded neutrally.

 The question regarding the agency caring about its people received on average disagreeable responses with a 2.29 on a 1 to 5 scale. About 61% of caseworkers disagreed that the agency cared about its people.

Caseworkers on average agreed that they were proud to work for the agency with an average of 3.52 on a 1 to 5 scale. The median of all responses gathered was at a 4.0 with the most frequent response being a 4. About 53% of caseworkers agreed that they were proud to work for the agency. When it came to positive changes made by the organization leaders, the average response of caseworkers was a 2.51 on a scale of 1 to 5, meaning that the responses were just slightly on the neutral side. Overall, 48.2% of the caseworkers surveyed disagreed that organizational leaders had made positive changes for the agency. Please refer to **Tables 4.13-4.14** below.

Table 4.13 Organizational Commitment

	N	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**
My work environment is positive	247	3.41	4.00	4
My organization provides incentives/rewards to me	247	2.17	2.00	2
I am satisfied with my job	247	3.00	3.00	4
I feel that my agency cares about its people	247	2.29	2.00	2
I am proud to work for this agency	247	3.52	4.00	4
Organizational leadership has made changes that are positive for the agency	247	2.51	3.00	3

Table 4.14 Organizational Commitment

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
My work environment is positive	247	20 (8.1)	30 (12.1)	62 (25.1)	99 (40.1)	36 (14.6)
My organization provides incentives/rewards to me	247	77 (31.2)	87 (35.2)	53 (21.5)	23 (9.3)	7 (2.8)
I am satisfied with my job	247	27 (10.9)	53 (21.5)	73 (29.6)	82 (33.2)	12 (4.9)
I feel that my agency cares about its people	247	71 (28.7)	80 (32.4)	56 (22.7)	33 (13.4)	7 (2.8)
I am proud to work for this agency	247	9 (3.6)	20 (8.1)	87 (35.2)	95 (38.5)	36 (14.6)
Organizational leadership has made changes that are positive for the agency	247	46 (18.6)	73 (29.6)	87 (35.2)	38 (15.4)	3 (1.2)

Training

The hypothesis that training has direct impact on the decision of caseworkers to quit is not supported by the findings of this research. When looking at the results, most caseworkers provided favorable responses to the training questions provided in the survey. Please refer to **Tables 4.15-4.16** below.

Caseworkers felt neutral in regards to adequate training being provided on a consistent basis with an average response of 3.20 on scale of 1 to 5. The median response to this question was at a 3.0 with the most frequent response given being a 4. About 50% of caseworkers indicated that they agreed with the training provided as being adequate.

Caseworkers responded favorably to the question of training provided being applicable to their job. The average response was 3.52 on the Likert scale, just slightly on the agree side. The middle point of all responses was at a 4.0 and the most frequent response given by caseworkers surveyed was a 4. 154 caseworkers or 62.3% agreed that the training provided is applicable to their job. Please see **Tables 4.15-4.16** below.

Table 4.15 Training

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis	247	3.20	3.00	4
Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis	247	3.52	4.00	4

Table 4.16 Training

	Total N	SD N (%)	D N (%)	N N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)
Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis	247	17 (6.9)	49 (19.8)	58 (23.5)	114 (46.2)	9 (3.6)
Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis	247	10 (4.0)	31 (12.6)	52 (21.1)	129 (52.2)	25 (10.1)

Summary of Findings

In Table 4.17, a summary of the findings for each hypothesis is listed. Only two

variables were supported in the likelihood to cause caseworkers to want to quit.

Workload/administrative burdens and organizational commitment were both supported

by the findings in the survey. The remaining four variables did not yield enough support

to substantiate the hypothesis. Some reasons for this may be due to the fact that there

may be other variables that are significant. Variables such as family/personal issues,

medical concerns, traveling on the job, and threats or danger of the job itself could be

more significant. Regardless, additional studies need to capture and assess other

variables. For the purpose of this research, only variables dealing with the organization

were studied. The organization cannot do anything about issues that are not directly tied

to it and are outside of its control.

Table 4.17 Summary Findings

Hypothesis	Findings
Caseload	Not Supported
Pay	Not Supported
Workload/Administrative Burdens	Supported
Supervisory Support	Not Supported
Organizational Commitment	Supported
Training	Not Supported

Chapter Five
Conclusion

In conclusion of this research study, only two of the six hypotheses were significant in causing caseworkers to quit their job within the next 12 months. Overall, a better perceptive and overview of the problems facing caseworkers was able to be understood. While four of the hypotheses were not supported by the data of this research, they were still able to provide crucial information about how caseworkers feel in regards to each issue presented in the study.

Caseloads were not only insignificant; there was still a crucial problem facing caseworkers in regards to their caseload being manageable and how it affects the quality of their work. Caseloads may not have been support due to the fact that caseworkers may have gotten accustomed to dealing with high caseloads. It could also be that caseworkers felt that a caseload is not sufficient enough to walk away from the job. They see it as an even bigger challenge of trying to help as many families and children as possible. But caseloads to do vary from time to time and do have peaks and down times. It could very well have been a down time while this survey was being conducted.

It is important to note that even though on average, caseworker's caseload was at about 31 per worker; this is still above the recommended amount of 12 to18 by national standards. It is obvious that a child protective service does not seem to be able to put a hold on the number of cases a caseworker handles. In some instances caseworkers had more than 50 cases. Standards and restrictions need to be in place in order for caseworkers to do a good job at a quality level. It is always best to think quality over quantity.

Pay continues to be a very important problem facing child protective service. While pay was not significant enough to cause workers to want to quit their job, it is very clear through the research that caseworker's are not paid well to do a very stressful job. A majority of caseworkers feel that they do not receive merit increases on a regular basis and that the pay does not equal to the amount of work they have to do.

While it is so common and cliché to hear that caseworkers are not in this career for the money, keep in mind that they too have families and need to make a living. They are professionals and should be compensated as such for a job that is not so highly desirable. Child protective service seriously needs to reconsider what they are paying their caseworkers and develop annual merit plans and performance plans. Incentives need to be created such as bonuses, earned time off when working extra hours or days, and accrue extra time off when required to work six or more days a week.

Pay may not have been supported because caseworkers feel that this career is not about money. They may have additional goals and aspirations for doing this kind of work. Helping children, having a sense of fulfillment, or even getting a rush from the job may be some factors that caseworkers feel are more important than a paycheck. Pay is very important in any kind of work, but to caseworkers, it may not the most important thing.

Workload and administrative duties was one of the two hypotheses that were significant in the research to cause caseworkers to want to quit their job within the next 12 months. Caseworkers strongly felt that their workload was unmanageable and unreasonable. It would be worthy to conduct additional research regarding this issue to determine what are the typical workload responsibilities and how do they impact the

work that they do. It is safe to assume that there may be numerous factors as to the causes and the types of workload responsibilities caseworkers have to deal with. If caseworkers have to work extra hours and come in on days off, this might be the place to start looking into. It is often the norm to overwhelm caseworkers and place unreasonable demands and expectations on them or risk losing their jobs.

Some reasons why workload and administrative duties was supported and not caseloads are due to the fact that they are both two different things. Workload is everything other than a caseload. It is the additional things that are piled on top of a caseload. Having to go to court, drafting court orders, traveling, working late nights to complete tasks, visits, phone calls, emergencies, taking children to hospitals, and having meetings are the additional tasks that can be overwhelming on caseworkers.

Supervisory support was not a significant factor as a hypothesis in this study. This may be due to the simple fact that a lot of caseworkers are often promoted to supervisor positions as positions become vacant. Therefore, they are able to sympathize and be more understanding of the dilemmas facing caseworkers. In fact, the majority of caseworkers felt that they are provided with the support, praise, and direction that they need in performing their jobs.

This is very important in this research as it may be a reason why caseworkers do stay in the organization. Caseworkers are able to receive the necessary support and guidance needed to perform their jobs day in and day out. Supervisors more than likely have been caseworkers before and understand the stress and problems that come with the job. They are able to provide solidarity and become the backbone for the organization.

The work supervisors do is immeasurable and has a lot of institutional value that may not always be so easy to replace.

Organizational commitment was the second hypothesis that was supported in this study to cause caseworkers to want to quit their job within the next 12 months. While caseworkers answered favorably to two out of the six questions, the remaining four were viewed negatively by most caseworkers. Organization incentives/rewards, the agency caring about its people, proud to work for the agency, and positive changes for the agency were issues caseworkers felt were serious and unsatisfactory.

It is crucial to note that the organizational environment can have insurmountable consequences on its employees if viewed in a negative manner. Changes need to take place internally and they need to start at the top. Changes do not start in the middle or at the bottom. With a strong leadership mindset, the organizational environment, culture, and mindset can be changed and influenced in positive ways. Caseworkers can deal with the poor pay and heavy caseloads, but they cannot function and be productive in an environment that does not care about them or the work that they do.

Training was not a significant factor to cause caseworkers to want to quit their job. In fact most caseworkers felt that they do receive adequate training and is applicable to their job. Training is usually not a factor that will cause caseworkers to leave their job alone. But if coupled with other factors, it may just add to the complexity of the problem and may be of significance then and only then.

While this study does not address fully all the complexities and issues facing child protective service, it certainly provides some insight to the increasing problem of caseworker turnover and the agencies inability to solve it. Recruitment and retention are

vital in organization such as child protective service. But in order to recruit and retain their caseworkers, they need to adopt new ideas, safe practices, and realistic standards.

Problems will only persist if holes are temporarily patched up and no long term solutions are implemented. Child protective service needs to asses the issues facing their caseworkers internally, address them immediately, and work towards improving the environment in which they expect their caseworkers to work. If such issues are not addressed, the system will continue to fail, children's lives will be at risk, and families will continue to suffer. The revolving door continues, help stop the cycle.

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Appendix A: Survey

Greetings,

      I would like to invite you to participate in a research study on the propensity for caseworkers to leave their job with DFPS in the coming year. You have been selected for participation in this research study due to your position as a caseworker and affiliation with DFPS. This survey will only take approximately 5 to 10 minutes of your time to fully complete. All participants will be kept confidential and the results in no way, shape, or form will be divulged to any other parties outside of the research process. Your participation in this research is solely voluntary. Answers given will not be tied to any respondents so that they cannot be deduced. You may wish to discontinue in your participation of this survey at any given time. Your employment and affiliation with DFPS will not be compromised in anyway. It is my mission and purpose that with your participation, DFPS will be able to gain a better grasp and understanding of why caseworkers choose to leave their jobs with the department. This research will help lead the way for future solutions and research in caseworker turnover.

      Upon completion of this survey, please reply and submit your answers to the survey online program so that your answers may be collected. You may choose to email them personally to me at GG37098@txstate.edu. Please return your completed survey by March 1, 2007.

Thank You for your participation in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Gabriel Guzman at 210-877-5232 or at

GG37098@txstate.edu., or the faculty supervisor of this research, Dr. Hassan Tajalli, at

Texas State University at San Marcos at 512-245-3284 or at ht03@txstate.edu with any questions or concerns regarding this research.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Guzman
Student, Master of Public Administration program
Texas State University, at San Marcos

1. Instructions

Please read each question carefully and fill in the blank or check the box that most accurately reflects your current position in regards to each question.

Most responses will be in the form of a Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

* 1. My current caseload is

* 2. My caseload is unmanageable

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 3. High caseload negatively affects the quality of my work

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 4. What is the likelihood of leaving your job within the next 12 months (Please fill in using a number between 0 - 100%)

* 5. I receive raises or merit increases on a regular basis

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 6. My salary accurately reflects the amount of work I do

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 7. My current workload/administrative responsibilities is unmanageable

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 8. I am dissatisfied with the reasonableness of my current workload responsibilities

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 9. My supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 10. I am satisfied with the amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation I receive from my supervisor

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 11. My supervisor makes him/herself available to me

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 12. My work environment is positive

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

* 13. My organization provides incentives/rewards to me

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 14. I am satisfied with my job

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 15. I feel that my agency cares about its people

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 16. I am proud to work for this agency

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 17. Organizational leadership has made changes that are positive for the agency

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 18. Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 19. Training is applicable to my job

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

* 20. What is your age

* 21. What is your gender

      Male

      Female

* 22. What is your race

    White

    Hispanic

    Black

    Other (please specify)

* 23. What is your current education

    Bachelors

    Masters

    Ph.D.

* 24. What is the number of years of experience with your current job

Appendix B: Survey Results

My current caseload is

Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

My caseload is unmanageable

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	16
Disagree	65
Neutral	64
Agree	72
Strongly Agree	30
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

High caseload negatively affects the quality of my work

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	14
Neutral	20
Agree	71
Strongly Agree	140
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

What is the likelihood of leave your job within the next 12 months
(Please fill in using a number between 0 - 100%)

Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

I receive raises or merit increases on a regular basis

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	88
Disagree	93
Neutral	50
Agree	15
Strongly Agree	1
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

My salary accurately reflects the amount of work I do

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	162
Disagree	69
Neutral	9
Agree	6
Strongly Agree	1
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

My current workload/administrative responsibilities is unmanageable

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	7
Disagree	60
Neutral	66
Agree	74
Strongly Agree	40
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

I am dissatisfied with the reasonableness of my current workload responsibilities

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	5
Disagree	55
Neutral	57
Agree	85
Strongly Agree	45

Total Respondents   **247**

(skipped this

question)   **0**

My supervisor cares and is responding to the issues of most importance to me

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	14
Disagree	27
Neutral	42
Agree	80
Strongly Agree	84

Total Respondents   **247**

(skipped this

question)   **0**

I am satisfied with the amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation I receive from my supervisor

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	19
Disagree	36
Neutral	49
Agree	84
Strongly Agree	59

Total Respondents   **247**

(skipped this

question)   **0**

My supervisor makes him/herself available to me

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	11
Disagree	20
Neutral	24
Agree	101
Strongly Agree	91

Total Respondents   **247**

(skipped this

question)   **0**

My work environment is positive

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	20
Disagree	30
Neutral	62
Agree	99
Strongly Agree	36
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

My organization provides incentives/rewards to me

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	77
Disagree	87
Neutral	53
Agree	23
Strongly Agree	7
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

I am satisfied with my job

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	27
Disagree	53
Neutral	73
Agree	82
Strongly Agree	12
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

I feel that my agency cares about its people

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	71
Disagree	80
Neutral	56
Agree	33
Strongly Agree	7

| **Total Respondents** | **247** |
| (skipped this question) | **0** |

I am proud to work for this agency

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	9
Disagree	20
Neutral	87
Agree	95
Strongly Agree	36

| **Total Respondents** | **247** |
| (skipped this question) | **0** |

Organizational leadership has made changes that are positive for the agency

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	46
Disagree	73
Neutral	87
Agree	38
Strongly Agree	3

| **Total Respondents** | **247** |
| (skipped this question) | **0** |

Adequate training is provided to me on a consistent basis

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	17
Disagree	49
Neutral	58
Agree	114
Strongly Agree	9

| **Total Respondents** | **247** |
| (skipped this question) | **0** |

Training is applicable to my job

	Response Total
Strongly Disagree	10
Disagree	31
Neutral	52
Agree	129
Strongly Agree	25
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

What is your age

Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

What is your gender

	Response Total
Male	31
Female	216
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

What is your race

	Response Total
White	110
Hispanic	89
Black	39
Other (please specify)	9
Total Respondents	**247**
(skipped this question)	**0**

What is your current education

	Response Total
Bachelors	163
Masters	83
Ph.D.	1

Total Respondents   247
(skipped this
question)   0

What is the number of years of experience with your current job

Total Respondents   247
(skipped this
question)   0

Appendix C: IRB Exemption

Exemption Request

Based on the information in the exemption request you sent January 16, your project has been found exempt.

Your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

Becky Northcut, CIP
Compliance Specialist
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