

# **PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES AGENCY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE**

## **Introduction**

In October, 2000, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio's (PCSAO) Board of Trustees requested staff to research strategies for county public children services agencies (PCSAs) to more effectively recruit and retain qualified staff to accomplish the mission of increasing the safety of children, stability of families, and the support of the communities in which they reside.

Currently, staff turnover occurs at an estimated rate of 30% annually on a statewide basis. Within the 88 county PCSAs that annual turnover ranges from 4% to more than 100%. Estimated costs associated with each staff member who leaves the organization are \$21, 000. This includes time and effort to recruit, select, orient, train, and support the new worker. This cost, however, does not take into consideration the costs to the families and children that we serve. New relationships and trust need to be formed and because of this, the family's progress can be slowed or regress until a new level of trust is established with the new worker.

Invitations were extended to all counties to participate in this effort. Staff from twelve counties participated throughout the nine month period of development. The draft standards were shared with a representative group of county PCSA staff at the PCSAO Annual Conference in September, 2001. At that time, people were asked to provide feedback on the content. All feedback that was received was incorporated into this version which is provided for your use and modification to suit the needs of your agency.

At the outset, the group identified the critical characteristics they felt and the research indicated were essential to recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Those characteristics included:

1. Good leadership throughout the agency, particularly at the executive level.
2. Effective supervision of direct service professionals.
3. Providing competitive wages and benefits.
4. Developing standardized screening and testing of job applicants to better assess their potential for doing the work and staying on the job.
5. Providing orientation, job shadowing, training, and mentoring support to employees not only during the first year of hire, but throughout their careers.
6. Providing a career ladder for employees to remain with the PCSA and to contribute to its mission.
7. Providing training and professional development opportunities for all employees.

8. Ensuring reasonable workloads for all staff so that they can experience increased job satisfaction.
9. Making clear the agency's expectations of all staff so there is no confusion of what the job entails and what is considered as acceptable performance.
10. Understanding there are cultural and generational differences among our workforce and employing strategies to create a work place that values and supports diversity.
11. Develop working relationships with colleges and universities who train our future staff so that they understand what we need to be successful in attaining our mission.

The standards that follow flow from these characteristics. While these Recruitment and Retention Standards attempted to incorporate as much of the Council on Accreditation's Standards for the Management of Human Resources as possible, they fail to do so completely. Nor do these standards constitute a complete personnel manual for a county public children services agency. Agencies should feel free to build their personnel manuals around these suggested standards.

Within each standard, there is the content of the specific standard and in many, there are also specific examples of what the committee deemed as models for counties to consider when developing or revising their current personnel manuals.

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I hope this material assists you in your efforts to increase the safety of children, the stability of their families, and the support of the communities in which they reside.

Best wishes, Dan Schneider