

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee

Special Report: Measuring the Strength and Needs of DYFS Workforce, December 2011

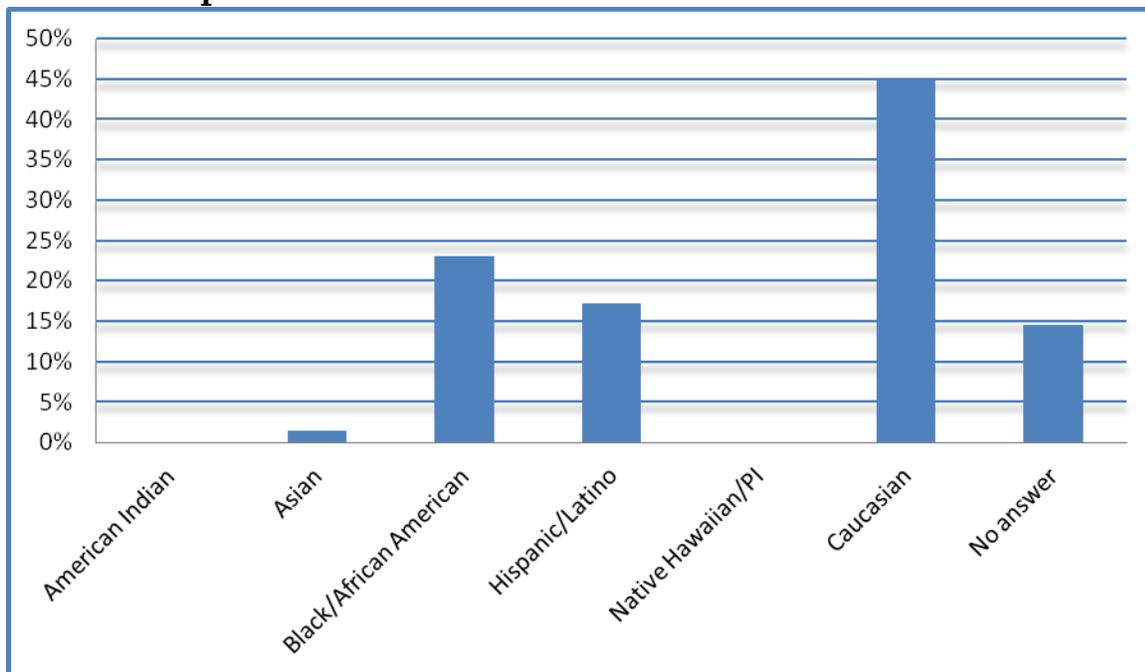
Appendix A

In March 2011, the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS), in partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), conducted a survey of Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) caseworkers, investigators, supervisors and managers.

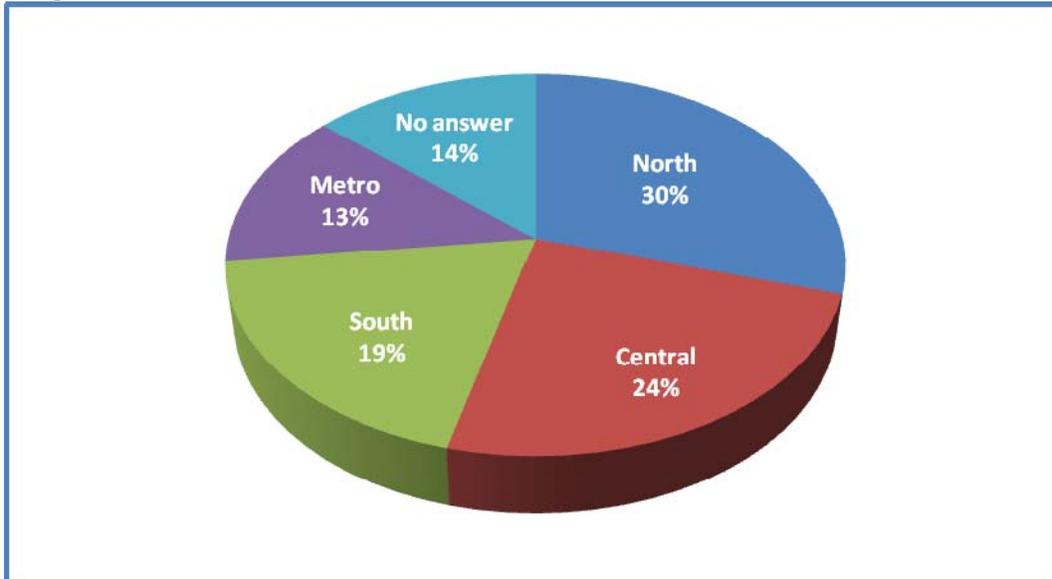
The survey was designed to identify areas of strength upon which DCF could continue to build, as well as target areas that require additional attention. The goal is to strengthen our child protection system and keep children safely at home with their families, whenever possible.

Below are charts that did not appear in the report summarizing the key findings of the survey.

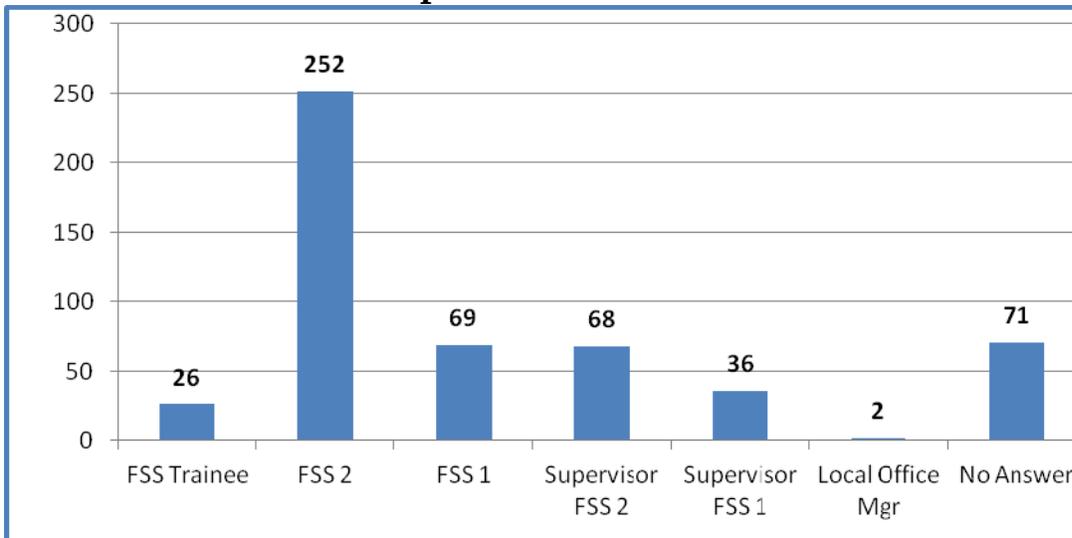
Race of Respondents (n= 524)



Region of State (N=524)



Current DCF titles of respondents (n=524)



Family Service Specialist Trainee = FSST – Newly Hired Case Worker/Manager

Family Services Specialist 2 = FSS2 – Following a working test period, Case Worker/Manager (FSST) are eligible for a promotion to a FSS2

Family Services Specialist 1 = FSS1 – This is the more experienced Case Worker/Manager

Supervising Family Service Specialist 2 = SFSS2 – Front Line Supervisor

Supervising Family Service Specialist 1 = SFSSI - Case Work Supervisor (Front line Supervisors' Supervisor)

Supervision scale (n = 510)

To interpret these scores, lower mean scores (the average of the respondents' scores for each question) reflect a positive perspective for each question. For example, the lowest mean score for any of these questions was for the item, "supervisor is knowledgeable." This means that most respondents had strong to moderate agreement with this statement.

Item	Strongly to moderately agree (1)	Slight agreement (2)	Moderately to strongly disagree (3)	Mean Score
Supervisor assists me in setting goals	54.5%	29.4%	16.1%	1.62
Supervisor encourages creative solutions	58.2%	26.9%	14.9%	1.57
Supervisor demonstrates consistency	52.4%	27.6%	20%	1.68
Supervisor is appropriately flexible	57.8%	25.5%	16.7%	1.59
Supervisor is knowledgeable	69.2%	20%	10.8%	1.42
Supervisor reinforces the training curriculum	61.8%	26.5%	11.8%	1.50
Supervisor helped me learn the ropes of agency	44.9%	26.7%	28.4%	1.84
Supervisor demonstrates leadership	60.6%	21.2%	18.2%	1.58
Supervisor assists me in setting long-term goals	54.5%	29.4%	16.1%	1.62
Cases are assigned in fair manner	49.8%	26.9%	23.3%	1.74

Staff Retention

For this set of questions, higher scores indicate higher retention and more positive outlook toward DYFS employment.

Staff Retention Questions (n=466)

Item	Strongly to moderately agree (1)	Slight agreement (2)	Moderately to strongly disagree (3)	Mean Score
I plan to leave this agency in the next 12 months	10.7%	19.1%	70.2%	2.59
I prefer to leave but salary/benefits are strong incentive to stay	30%	29.2%	40.8%	2.10
In past 12 months, I have looked for other job opportunities	29%	18.9%	52.1%	2.23

Staff Caseload Management Questions (n=347)

Item	Strongly to moderately agree (1)	Slight agreement (2)	Moderately to strongly disagree (3)	Mean Score
The size of my caseload is manageable	57.9%	26.5%	15.6%	1.57
The amount of paperwork is manageable	35.2%	30.3%	34.6%	1.99
I am often asked to handle tasks associated with employees on leave	32.3%	36%	31.7%	1.99

Supervisor Caseload Management Questions (n=113)

For this set of questions, the first two questions reflect positive outlook when the means scores are lower. For the third, the higher the mean score, the more positive it is.

Item	Strongly to moderately agree (1)	Slight agreement (2)	Moderately to strongly disagree (3)	Mean Score
The size of my caseload is manageable	72.6%	23.9%	3.5%	1.31
I am often asked to handle tasks associated with supervisors on leave	34.5%	33.6%	31.9%	1.97

For more information or to provide feedback, contact Adrienne Jackson, executive coordinator, New Jersey Taskforce on Child Abuse and Neglect, at dcfnjtfcan@dcf.state.nj.us.

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Appendix B

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The survey was designed to identify areas of strength upon which DCF could continue to build, as well as target areas that require additional attention. The goal is to strengthen our child protection system and keep children safely at home with their families, whenever possible.

The survey asked several open-ended questions. Below is a representative sampling of responses to certain questions.

Q: What, if any, challenges do you face in accessing services for families on your caseload?

Theme: General lack of appropriate, available services

“My main challenge is the lack of appropriate services that actually work for the families. Most programs are created for the general family; however, not everyone has the same strengths and weaknesses.”

“With referrals coming in to the agency daily, there are limited resources. Families are referred to the same services and many times are not offered what they truly need. Although the agency is well aware of this, a blind eye is turned to this issue. As long as the family is enrolled in a service, there is no issue.”

Theme: Services not offered at times convenient to families,

“Lack of flexibility in terms of the scheduling of services, for parents who work or have other demands such as child care (or even other services) on their schedule.”

“Many of our service providers offer services during the week. Unfortunately, many of our families work 5, 6, or 7 days a week just to make enough money to put food on the table for their children. Our families cannot make these services.”

Theme: Cost/quality of services

"If a family makes too much money, they do not qualify for a lot of services. We can pay for some things while we are involved but our goal is to eventually pull out of the families lives and yet we expect them to maintain the same services once we are not involved. If they financially can't afford it, most likely they will not follow through."

"Clients cannot always afford even the sliding scale fees for some services."

"The providers terminate clients too quickly, who are ambiguous, relapse, or resistant, even though these things are part of healing and recovery."

"Our services are cookie cutter and often not flexible."

Theme: Cultural Barriers

"I work with primarily undocumented families that are not eligible for any government funded assistance aside from WIC and Food Stamps. They also live in indigent communities; housing is a huge issue (impoverished), with an entire family living in one bedroom and several families living in one house or apartment. Cultural differences that are not spoken to in DYFS policy."

"Services are limited for the clients that do not speak English. Most of the services are not available for people with illegal status in this country."

"More bilingual services would help us out a lot. I had a kid almost rejected by a state run facility because he didn't speak fluent English as if there was a fully Spanish speaking facility."

Theme: Need for financial/housing services

"Any financial assistance in the community is limited and usually only available in the beginning of the month so DYFS ends up paying for EVERYTHING a client needs."

"When working with families who are homeless there are no community resources to refer them to assist them with obtaining housing."

"There is a great need in assisting families with housing and employment, which keeps parents from getting children back at times."

Theme: Waiting lists

"The services in our county are limited and there are waiting lists. It would be nice to build in more LOS (length of services) in our existing contracts since in our county the LOS is maxed out two to three months before the new contract begins."

"WAIT LIST UPON WAIT LIST. So few places actually take Medicaid, and the ones that do have wait lists, including much needed counseling."

"There is no data bank of all the services that we provide. I usually ask other caseworkers to tell me what they are doing, but it's hit and miss. We need one place, one website that lists all

the providers. For example, if I have a family in which the father needs DV counseling, I do not have any way to find out where the DV counselors are. I have to ask other caseworkers who may or may not know. This agency is extremely disorganized in this particular respect. Those Resource Fairs do not help much either."

Q: Please provide any suggestions you may have for improving the quality of training you receive.

Theme: Make trainings more relevant to job and workers' experience level

"It would be beneficial if every week they used one case and followed that case from SCR to investigation to the end and closing of the case. And then have other days for terminology and such."

"Have it pertain to the actual population that we deal with. Trainings are based on DYFS believing that these families are wanting and willing to have DYFS involved when in reality, they don't. They fight us and do what they need to do to get us out. How about a workshop that deals with clients insulting you and your job, calling you obscenities and how to deal with THAT when all engagement tactics fail? How to progress on a case when you don't have enough for court but your office wants to keep it open and this is what you deal with."

"The trainings need to be more realistic."

"The only feedback I really have is that throughout all the training courses I have taken through the DCF training academy, I have learned very little that is actually relevant to my work as a DYFS employee. However, my studies in the PCWIWP for my MSW has allowed me to develop my skills tremendously. A lot of what is taught in this program are things that DYFS employees should be trained in. Understanding the social work field, current practices, different systems, etc are all imperative to a DYFS worker however, very little of this, if any, is taught in any training available through the DCF training academy."

"A lot of the trainings are geared to text book situations. In this position, "text book" does not apply."

"Email us when trainings pertinent to our positions are available. Don't email us about trainings that we are not allowed to attend. Maybe 40 hours of training a year is too much? Just a suggestion, maybe 25-30 hours tops. There are not enough worthwhile choices to make up 40 hours a year."

"The trainings that we are mandated to attend are rarely relevant to our actual jobs and are usually redundant information that has been repeated over and over. I would appreciate practical trainings like how to use different car seats (if you are not a parent with personal experience you are left to guess how to properly secure the car seats in the car) or how to access

available resources, properly do case plans, etc. We have had too much training on empathy, cultural competence, Family Team Meetings and Case Practice Model. We need practical trainings that we can actually use.”

Theme: Lack of supervisory support

“The premise of our trainings are to partner and team with the families. However, often the feeling from the LOM (local office manager) is that the agency is not partnering with its workers. So there is a dichotomy in how we are trained and expected to be with our clients to how we are treated and viewed as workers, i.e. the families are valued but not the employees who work with the families. My suggestion is to have a training in this to improve the morale of the workers and thereby the work that is performed.”

“Practice in Local Office and management are at variance with training. Example: training emphasizes stability of placement/relative placement absent of safety concerns but home study process bring matters that have the effect of disrupting the placement.”

“The trainings offered are excellent and relevant to our jobs. The problem is that the training we receive is not followed by upper management. For those that have newer supervisors the models taught in class are supported, but for those that are supervised by individuals that have worked for the Division for over ten years there is a major disconnect on the new models and practices taught in our trainings. This is very frustrating for workers, and negatively effects the way we do our business. “

“Greater effort should be made to train staff and supervisors together. This will allow for some consistency of knowledge and procedures. Supervisors also need to be trained as to appropriate interactions with staff.”

Theme: Need experienced trainers

“Trainers who have worked in the field with families and understand the difficulties and resistance that case workers come up against working with families.”

“ALL trainers should have past field experience even if it is outside of the Division.”

“Those giving the training should include people with DIRECT protective service background and experience not just professionals in the social work field with experience contracting with protective service agencies.”

Theme: More convenient locations

“Trainings are interesting and useful, however, they are offered at inconvenient locations which require a lot of travel time. The same locations offer the same topics repeatedly, so we must travel to go to trainings on different topics.”

Theme: A wider variety of courses

“The trainings that are offered year to year are not varied enough. I feel like the courses that are being offered this year are courses that I had two years ago. I feel stalled in my ability to grow and improve as a social worker.”

Q: Please describe any challenges you face with instituting the Case Practice Model and incorporating aspects of child welfare reform into your everyday work life.

Theme: Inadequate Services

“The major challenge is that there not ENOUGH services that meet our families needs.”

“Service providers do not take into to account family schedules. Many providers only services families from 9 to 5 pm.”

“As much as we talk about the "cookie cutter" services, we still provide them. Sometimes a parent cannot complete "parenting group" (and gets penalized for that) because his substance abuse problem is greater or his mental health issues. A person needs to be sober in order to obtain a benefit from the parenting group or anger management groups.”

“I feel we need additional variety of service providers who can meet client's time frames and cultural needs.”

Theme: Lack of Time

“Time is one factor that gets in the way of CPM as there are too many other deadlines to meet and FTM does take up a lot time.”

“One difficulty is the additional time demands of prepping and conducting Family Team Meetings - as our office requires at least one per worker per month, and that they occur quarterly on every case seemingly without exception.”

“Often there is too much paperwork/administrative issues to deal with, which prevents us from having the time to actually engage our families and work intensively with them.”

Theme: Lack of support from staff/management

“The challenges I face are that I am being told that I am not a social worker and our office is more concerned with numbers and data (in terms of the modified settlement agreement). However, the new case practice encourages social work with families. It is difficult to find the balance when the agency/office does not want you to spend too much time with the families, then it becomes difficult to engage these families.”

“Management and supervisory staff manipulate tools for measuring the outcomes and goals of the Case Practice Model to reflect that the CPM is being implemented appropriately. In

actuality, the real data would reveal a much more significant need for reviewing case loads, reviewing case goals, and understanding the effectiveness of the Division's services."

"The upper level management acts as if they want to incorporate CPM into the office, but a lot of times it's still office practice over policy and even CPM. I find it hard to believe that the upper level management is going to change their decision making because of FTM's. If CPM were carried out to a "T" we DYFS workers could feel more at ease because in CPM the family dictates what they want and not us. However, it's still what we want and not what the family wants. If CPM were followed correctly in conjunction with policy things would go very smoothly."

"It is very difficult to believe that an entire agency is invested in the new model, when you hear phrases like "touchy, feely, garbage" coming from the senior staff in each office."

"My supervisor does not embrace CPM at all. This office is the most intrusive office I have ever worked for. This office waste thousands of dollars homemaker services hours. The staff works an average 48 hours a week on unnecessary actions. Again, this is due to the office not embracing CPM."

"It is not supported by upper management. Newer supervisors support the new ideas and ways of working with clients. For those in management that are used to dealing with clients the "old way," they often conflict with workers and the way we work to build relationships... Some are still focused on believing that people can't change, and focus on their negative past. Management is too quick to remove a child instead of building a team around a family to support them in providing a safe environment for their family."

"The case practice model gives you all the tools you need to do an effective and good job with the family"

Theme: CPM too cookie-cutter

"I believe that the incorporating the CPM into the way DYFS conducts business was a great accomplishment; however, some of the families and individuals do not fit perfectly into the CPM box that has been created and is measured. It has been my experience that some things, like Family Team Meetings can actually make things worse. In many cases, they are a very positive influence; however, being mandated to do these meetings for every family is not a great idea."

"Every family is not the same and we should not have a cookie cutter response of FTMs for each family and doing FTMs the same exact way for each family."

The case practice model is about partnering with families to encourage change in a brief context, however this isn't always effective with the families that are not ready to change, that have deep seated issues that the brief therapy aspect touches on but does not fully address.

Theme: Resistant families

"Most families who accept an invitation for a FTM do so because they think they must. Therefore, they are not willing to follow through with the very services they agree to do. This makes it harder for the worker, who has to "spoon feed" the client to complete his or her agreed task.

"Most families respond positively to the new case practice approach but some families refused to change. The challenge is with the few who refused to change no matter what you try with them."

"Some families will not trust us no matter how much we engage them because they know that, ultimately, we have the power to take away their children. If they complete services it seems that more often than not they've just gone through the motions; we'll see them again six months to a year after we close them out. I think a serious restructuring of the system is in order."

Theme: Other Stakeholders

"Upper management, service providers, some law guardians, service providers, and some staff members are clueless about applying case practice model because they lack social work training/education; therefore, this becomes a challenge when I try to incorporate in my daily work."

Q: What additional supports and/or resources would help you perform your job more effectively and efficiently?

"Higher quality substance treatment programs and parenting skills programs where clients do more than sit around in groups. They need to learn about the various needs of children and their development levels. They also need better education about the disease of addiction and how illicit substances affect them and their families physically, emotionally and mentally."

"Having available services that deal with families issues as a whole. There are single services for parenting classes, therapy, anger management, mental health issues and substance abuse issues which can over service a family and be ineffective. Asking family to attend 3-5 different services can be asking them too much. We need one in-home service that can deal with multi-issues with each session to help heal families more effectively."

"Laptops that allow access to the system even when you are away from the office such as when you are sitting in court. Cell phones that actually work. Cars that are not falling apart."

"It would be helpful with LOM was more supportive to staff versus use of threat of write ups and "getting rid of people" as a form to motivate staff. If Teaming is our philosophy I think this should be practiced with staff as well. The moral of our office continues to decrease because of

threats of write ups versus discussion on how to work together as a team which helps to reinforce and practice the premise of the case practice model.”

“Better communication between caseworker and higher level supervisor at the local office. Communication should be a two way affair and not "order from above" all the time.”

“We are told that we cannot use our state issued cell phones unless it is an emergency. As an intake worker, I feel it would be more efficient if when in the field, I could verify the information a parent or caregiver is giving me before I leave the home, thus saving time and ensuring the safety of the child.”

“Access to Spirit from home, so that we may be able to input contacts from home.”

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