

**Review of Turnover in Milwaukee County
Private Agency Child Welfare Ongoing Case
Management Staff**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of turnover of ongoing case managers in the private agencies providing foster care and safety services for the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare(BMCW) revealed that turnover of staff remains problematic, impacts negatively the permanency outcomes of children in the system, and has high costs to the agencies and the system. Contributing factors to the problem include low salary and benefits; perceived low regard for the work of ongoing staff, and of them specifically; inadequate training and career opportunities; and an organizational and system culture that is perceived to be unsupportive and punitive.

Major strategies recommended for addressing this problem include establishing a salary and benefit package for ongoing staff that reflects that of the BMCW intake and assessment staff, requiring full social work certification for all staff, upgrading training programs, targeting staff recruitment activities and the development of stronger agency based quality improvement programs.

A major concern expressed is that under current plans the BMCW will place the foster care and safety services out to bid increasing the potential for additional staff turnover. Another concern is the potential that case transfers will be used to realign caseloads when the BMCW moves from five to three sites. It is recommended that the BMCW provide assurances that all current ongoing and safety staff be guaranteed employment with the successful bidders and that no case transfers will be used to realign site boundaries. Case transfers have the same effect on clients as do turnover - a delay in permanency.

This report hopefully provides the parties and stakeholders in the Milwaukee County child welfare system with some alternative strategies to address this critical problem of case worker turnover.

Review of Turnover of Milwaukee County Private Agency Child Welfare Case Management Staff

High turnover is a national issue that impacts performance of child welfare systems and, most importantly, the outcomes of children and families who come in contact with those systems. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) study highlighted the relationship between critical child welfare functions impacting the achievement of positive outcomes and workforce as they relate to the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR). The report identifies that high turnover is related to low salaries, high caseloads, limited supervision, insufficient training and concerns about personal safety. A 2003 Annie E. Casey Foundation report estimated that annual turnover in Child Welfare was approximately 20%. The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) experiences turnover rates ranging from less than 10% to 67% depending on the service area.

The Governor's Office of Wisconsin, being aware of the enormity of the issue and the potential consequences to children and families, requested an initial short-term inquiry to examine the issue of turnover within the BMCW. Upon early exploration it was determined that turnover rates for Intake and Assessment staff, private agency adoption staff, and foster care (licensing) staff were all under 10%. Conversely, ongoing case management staff all employed by private agencies experienced a 34% to 67% turnover in 2003 and 2004. The BMCW views this as a major issue and was also identified in a January, 2000 report by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Inc. (WCCF) entitled *From the Front Lines: Milwaukee's Child Welfare Community Speaks Out*. It is also a concern of the private agencies, the Juvenile Court of Milwaukee County, and Children's Rights, attorneys for the plaintiffs covered by the settlement agreement. The settlement agreement and the BMCW's operational plan identify goals, targets, strategies, and monitoring expectations concerning the problem of ongoing case manager turnover.

Given the magnitude of turnover in ongoing case management, the inquiry was primarily limited to this area of service delivery as it directly impacts a broader scope of outcomes related to safety, permanency, and child and family well being. While Milwaukee County experiences some of the national conditions contributing to turnover identified in the GAO workforce report, in addition to others identified during the inquiry, it has the opportunity to address the problem with reasonable steps.

THE REVIEW

The review determined that four critical questions required exploration.

- Is turnover of ongoing case managers a continuing problem in Milwaukee County?
- Does turnover of ongoing case managers impact permanency for children?
- What are the costs associated with case manager turnover?
- What are the various factors contributing to turnover?

Exploring each of these would be critical to determining the ultimate impact of turnover as well as informing any considered strategies to address the issue.

To illuminate this inquiry information was gleaned through various mechanisms consisting of the following:

- Interviews with private agency chief executive officers (CEO's) and other identified management staff
- Interviews with critical state leadership of the BMCW
- Interviews with the BMCW's program evaluation managers (PEM's)
- Interviews with Judges and staff of the Milwaukee Juvenile Court
- Interviews with the University of Milwaukee training partners
- Meetings with the Workforce and Recruitment Workgroups
- Eight private agency focus groups involving 57 (26%) ongoing case managers and 28 (62%) supervisors
- Administration and compilation of Employee Environment Surveys
- Agency Management Surveys encompassing staffing, caseloads, recruitment and retention data, and quality improvement activities related to turnover
- BMCW data and reports

The BMCW is data and information rich, particularly in the area of program evaluation. Bureau management has itself, in partnership with the private agencies, begun to address the issue of turnover through the formulation of the Workforce Workgroup and the Recruitment Sub-Committee. While various efforts to monitor and improve turnover have begun, the fruition of these efforts has not yet been realized as the first critical question is explored.

Critical Questions

Is turnover of ongoing case managers a continuing problem in Milwaukee County?

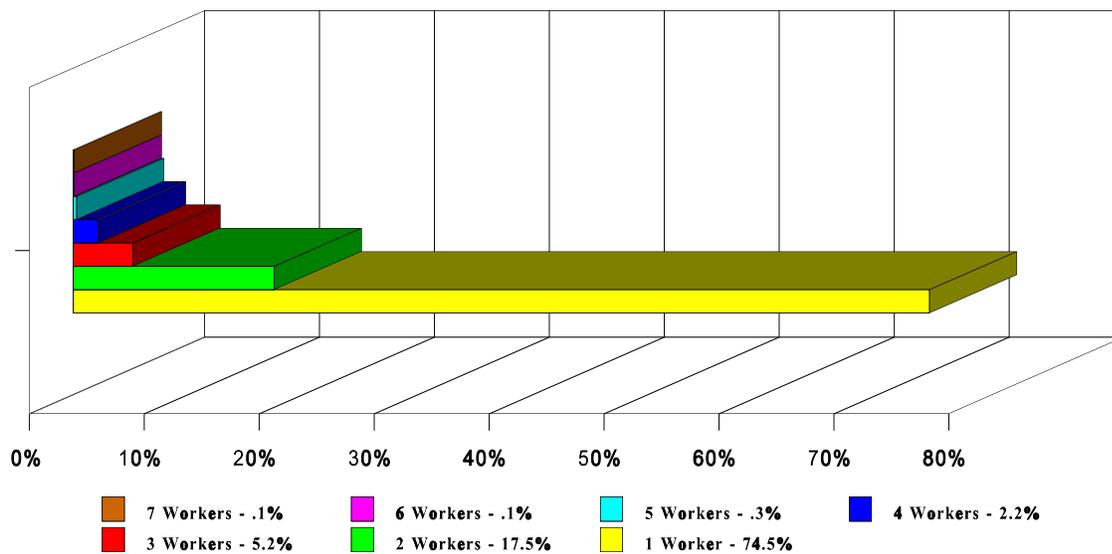
Evidence suggests this remains a serious problem, as suggested by the high turnover rates of 34% to 67% in 2003 and 2004. One of the most important factors in achieving positive outcomes for children and families is consistency and continuity of case managers. This may most aptly be illustrated by a comment contained in the WCCF report, which highlighted a comment by a worker who indicated they were a child's tenth worker within a five-year period. At that time the child did not want to know the worker's name and instead elected to refer to the worker as "Number Ten." Changes in case managers force clients to start over with new workers often resulting in a lack of trust and delays in moving ahead with required service plan activities to achieve permanency. In addition, worker changes may result in delays in court hearings producing docket delays as cases are rescheduled.

Between January and September 2004 clients served in Milwaukee County ongoing services, foster care, experienced significant worker turnover. Over 40% of the family cases served by the five sites had more than one worker in the nine-month period (Site 1 = 38%, Site 2 = 43%, Site 3 = 45%, Site 4 = 41%, and Site = 48%). Of the 2899 children who remained in the Bureau's care at the end of September 2004, 40% had more than one worker.

Does turnover of ongoing case managers impact permanency for children?

For those children who entered care in calendar year 2003 through September of 2004 and exited to permanency within the same time period, ***increases in the number of worker changes were correlated to lessening the chance of permanency achievement*** (See Graph Below). Children entering care during the time period who had only one worker achieved permanency in 74.5% of the cases. As the number of case managers increased the percentage of children achieving permanency substantially dropped, ranging from 17.5%, having two case managers to a low of 0.1% having six and seven case managers.

Fewer Changes in Caseworkers Increases the Chances of Permanency for Children



Data reported represents 679 children who entered care in calendar year 2003 through September 2004 and exited within the same time period. Data reported to review staff by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.

Another measure of this problem is reflected by the high percentage of ongoing workers who have been on-the-job for less than twelve months (Site 3 and 5 - formally IFPI at 63 of 94 = 67%, Site 1 and 2 - WCSN at 41 of 81 = 50.6%, and Site 4 - LaCausa at 15 of 44 = 34%).

Turnover remains a real problem and it has client related implications.

What are the costs associated with this high turnover of case managers?

The cost of case manager turnover goes beyond the negative impact on clients. Those impacts delay permanencies for children in foster care and result in unnecessary foster care expenditures. The Bureau and the partner private agencies experience direct costs as a result of turnover. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) estimates the cost of employee turnover to be approximately one-third of their annual salary. This includes cashing out benefits, additional recruitment costs, investing in

training new staff, and other related costs. Loss in productivity is not included in the DOL estimate, but may translate into agencies experiencing holdbacks or penalties should their quantitative performance fall below acceptable levels. A raw estimate of the cost of turnover of ongoing case managers who have left LaCausa, IFPI (now WCSN), and WCSN in the last eighteen months exceeds \$1.4 million. Since the agencies are required to maintain caseloads at a given level, replacing exiting case management staff must occur. This high turnover results in morale problems and potential deficient budgets.

What are some of the factors contributing to turnover?

The focus groups highlighted some of the factors they saw as contributing to worker turnover. Additionally, the results of the Employee Environment Survey, administered to all eight focus groups prior to their participation in the group, provided additional information (*See Appendix A, pg. 12 – Results*). The survey, developed and tested by the Gallup organization, has been used widely to determine worker's satisfaction. This survey has been used in Illinois for a similar purpose. While not having the opportunity to talk to workers who recently left the agencies, we were able to review some exit interview information provided by two of the agencies in their completed agency surveys. Twenty-six percent of ongoing case managers participated in the focus groups and 62% of the supervisors participated. Each of the five case manager groups was agency/site specific and was composed of only case managers. The three groups of supervisors were agency specific and composed of on-going case management supervisors. Additionally, two safety supervisors participated. Each focus group of on-going case managers was comprised of individuals with different educational backgrounds. Each group was comprised of an equal number of individuals having 6 months or less experience and three years or more experience. While the supervisor groups had a mix of educational backgrounds and lengths of service, half had been employed more than three years and the remainder less. Given the size and demographics of the groups, including a wide array of ages, it is felt that the group attendees were representative of the staff currently on-board and those who recently exited.

Some of the themes surfacing across the focus groups as contributing to turnover and dissatisfaction included the following: low salaries and infrequent and inadequate salary adjustments; risk of violence; lack of professional regard, particularly from the Juvenile Court; lack of a career ladder within the organization; inadequate training; and lack of support. These observations align with those identified in national studies on turnover, including the GAO report on the child welfare workforce.

Salary Concerns: The starting salary for ongoing staff is less than that offered state BMCW staff performing similar, yet time limited, duties such as Intake and Assessment (IA) staff. IA staff start at \$31,825 annually while ongoing staff at LaCausa start at \$30,171, IFPI (now WCSN) staff started at \$27,000, and WCSN staff start at \$27,789. This difference becomes more disparate with tenure since the private agencies do not offer salary adjustments comparable to the BMCW.

Professional Regard: Ongoing staff is apparently largely not certified as social workers as is the BMCW IA staff. The requirement for use of certified staff, although part of the contract, is routinely waived at the request of the private agencies. In two focus groups, of 26 staff, only three were certified and only four others were working on their certification. Four sites comprised of 200 ongoing case managers provided data that indicates only 33 (16.5%) are certified. Of the 167 non-certified staff, the information indicates that 161 (96%) have degrees (social work, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, and related human service) that qualify them for basic certification consideration as a social worker through the Department of Regulation and Licensing. Staff in the focus groups saw no value in certification as there would be no salary adjustment should they obtain certification. Additionally, several groups perceived an added liability should they be certified. They also reported that the court does not view them as professionals, instead referring to them as “lay people.” While several focus group participants indicated that the recent meetings with the Juvenile Court Judges have improved relationships they report continued difficulty with staff from the District Attorney’s Office. Certification, or lack of it, may contribute to this opinion by key stakeholders.

Training: Reviews of the CFSR’s suggest that states perform better when they have strong training programs. Some staff reported that previously offered intensive court training was no longer available. This training was viewed by participants as very helpful. Several focus groups identified that staff have been sent to court prior to attending court training. Case manager groups indicated that they would like to have more in-depth training occur during their respective core training. Many indicated that the basic knowledge relayed in the core training were concepts and topics they covered in their degree programs. The training was perceived by many as overviews of topics and desired more directly linked content such as hands-on WiSACWIS training with real cases, accessing hard services, and completing actual paperwork using a mock case. Instead, new workers reported they spend most of their time asking how to execute these functions after attending training. Supervisors had various levels of knowledge regarding their core training, with some not even aware that there was a core training. Supervisors echoed the concern of case managers regarding the lack of depth to the topics and described them more as “overviews.” Supervisors reported that it is sometimes difficult to incorporate what they learn into practice because they are so busy ensuring compliance. Staff report that many of the on-going trainings are repetitive. They added that the training that they wanted or needed to attend was often so full they could not get in. Staff also reflected concerns about balancing their work with training, answering pages and phone messages during breaks, lunch, and after training sessions. They also voiced concerns that if away for an extended training other workers may not make the same efforts to cover cases and see clients on their caseloads. This was a similar concern when going on vacation.

The availability of support for advanced degree education for ongoing staff appears to be limited. The GAO study reported that in Kentucky and California, two of the states they visited and reviewed, more than 80% of the students utilizing Title IV-E funded stipends remained with their respective child welfare agencies after their contractual employment obligations had expired. In a Texas study 67% of staff with a social work degree were still working for the agency five years later. Of those people who had a social work degree and

also held an internship in the social service agency prior to working there, the retention rate was even higher - 87%. When queried regarding the use of social work interns in their organizations both supervisors and staff reported that such internships were not usually available and they believed it was due to issues regarding client confidentiality. While this may or may not be the case, various studies support the utilization of internships within an organization to foster future and long-term employment within a child welfare agency.

Organizational Culture Issues: The private agencies involved in ongoing and safety services appear to be autonomous in name only. They report, for example, being instructed not to use their letterhead in certain communications, and one was told not to develop its own mission statement. Bureau administration reported being unaware of these restrictions except that letterhead must reflect the organization's connection to the Bureau in certain legal communiqués. What seems apparent is a disconnect in communications. Staff, including supervisors, reported that there was little autonomy between their agency's day-to-day function and the span of control of the Bureau. Three case management focus groups reported that both internal and external communication often comes in the form of memos, often without clear explanations as to why certain management decisions were made or why changes in practice are implemented. Staff all reported that policy was available on-line but qualified this statement by adding that they have been told not to rely on it as it is out-of-date. Communication between and among the BMCW, ongoing case managers, and their management is sometimes confused and staff report they do not feel anyone can defend them when things go wrong.

The CEO's believe they have almost no ability to address emerging needs, given the rigid nature of the budget/contract, while Bureau management indicates they have met with agency management, when requested, to discuss alternative programming and funding strategies. Despite this divergent information, what remains is still a perception that the contract is inflexible. While financial penalties may be imposed for performance failures, few, if any incentives reward exceptional performance. This issue is complicated even more by the history of agency changes during the last several years. The CEO's feel they have no ability to address salary issues given these constraints.

The Bureau requires an agency to have a quality assurance plan according to the contract. The PEM's report that this is actually required when an agency is out of compliance and then takes the form of a corrective action plan versus a defined Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Improvement (QI) Plan relating to their unique service arrays. What appears to be lacking is an overall Bureau Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Plan that overarches and provides continuity with similar individual private agencies plans contracted to provide the various services of adoption, foster care (licensing), safety, and ongoing services. Staff from several agencies indicated being involved in workgroups and other activities which were directly involved in using quality assurance information to improve performance, e.g. the BMCW's workforce and recruitment workgroups, policy committees, etc. On the other hand, staff reported that if issues are raised which require the Bureau's response; they usually do not obtain a response. They reported a better response when the issue was internal to the agency. However, in groups from one agency, they reported not completing the most recent

satisfaction surveys, because they had not received feedback from prior satisfaction surveys. Defining communications and a feedback loop is a key element contained in an agency QA/QI plan, and assists in identifying organizational identity and its relationship to other partners.

Recruitment and Employment Screening: Hiring the right staff is crucial to retaining staff. Research indicates that individuals with degrees unrelated to social work do not stay as long in their positions as those with social work or related degrees. The vast majority of case managers in all the focus groups reported that neither their interview nor the job description they received gave them an accurate picture of what the job entailed. Many were drawn to working with children and families but were unaware that the majority of their time would be spent completing paperwork. The majority of recent college graduates in the focus group reported the position as being “entry level” in the field of social work.

Supervisors routinely reported that there is no structured interview process for case managers, e.g. standardized questions, and questions posed do not routinely query the interviewee relative to the competencies necessary to perform child welfare work. Several accrediting bodies of child welfare agencies including the Council On Accreditation (COA), the largest accreditor of child welfare agencies, have established human resource standards that address the need for standardized and competency based interviews in addition to job previews or the ability to speak to senior staff in similar positions.

Possible Strategies: Addressing Ongoing Case Manager Turnover

The initial strategies we would recommend are fairly basic. Hire the right staff, pay them a fair salary and train and support them the right way. All the evidence points to this as the right direction.

Unfortunately, the right strategies often seem out of reach or too costly. In this case the evidence strongly suggests that not addressing this issue costs more than leaving it alone, both in human and financial terms. The following are our suggested steps. They are viewed as a package rather than a menu from which one might select one step, perhaps a necessary step but by itself not a sufficient step.

1. The inadequate salary and benefits of ongoing staff are a significant factor in ongoing staff's job satisfaction and probably contribute to the higher than desirable worker turnover. The salary levels are below those offered BMCW IA staff. The salary and benefits for ongoing staff should be adjusted to reflect a benefits package similar to that offered by the BMCW. The private agencies are responsible for the benefits packages offered their employees and as such should make appropriate adjustments as soon as is possible. Noting the perceived and real rigidity of the ongoing services contracts, the BMCW should grant the private agencies permission to reallocate resources in order to achieve this change. These conditions should be included in the required terms and conditions of the request for proposals for ongoing and safety services that are soon to be let. Costs associated with implementing these conditions should be recognized as allowable. (*See Appendix-B, pg. 18 – Example Salary Approach*)

2. Steps should be taken immediately to improve the professionalism of the ongoing workforce. Ongoing staff should be required to be certified social workers as is required of BMCW IA staff. This step should be required under the terms and conditions of the proposed RFP's. Steps have to be taken to achieve this over a reasonable, but not unlimited, period of time. The private agencies should begin immediate discussions with the various schools of social work to build "pipeline" programs designed to bring BSW and MSW graduates into their employ. The BMCW should make Title IV-E resources available to the private agencies, perhaps through the training partnership, in order to assist private agencies.
3. Training programs should be intensely reviewed in order to ensure staff is prepared to take on the difficult work of ongoing services. We would suggest the immediate development of a training academy that supports training teams housing new employees. These new employees would receive six months of intensive training, both theoretical and hands on. Included in this training would be intensive court training. Court training should be immediately restored and be required of all current and new staff. The private agencies could build this training effort independent of the BMCW since they would be paying salaries of staff in training. Ownership of the training effort by the private agencies with the training partnership is still a Title IV-E reimbursable activity although at a lower rate of federal financial participation than if offered solely to public employees.

Two additional strategies must also be considered. One, ensuring that staff hired are the most viable candidates to be retained. The other to provide some relief to the issues related to organizational culture, improving communication and rectifying misconceptions.

1. Partial or fully standardized competency based interviews should be instituted, including the addition of job previews. A lack of clearly defined competencies impacts the selection process of new staff. While several agencies reported a waiting list of potential employees, none indicated that candidate competencies had been defined nor have questions been formulated which inquire into these areas. Using information obtained from exit interviews may also assist in formulating questions. Acknowledging the trends identified through this process of information gathering may inform questions which can assist candidate selection to help reduce preventable turnover. Providing opportunities to preview the job can help to ensure that perspective hires have a better understanding upon which to make their hiring decision. Currently, the Bureau's workgroup on workforce and recruitment has identified some of the contributors to turnover as well as formulating recruitment strategies. What must accompany this is a more reliable selection process that screens out potential hires accurately and clearly provides a pool of applicants that display the most viable competencies, thus increasing the odds of retaining staff.
2. Individual agency and Bureau Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Plans should be developed and implemented. Currently, the BMCW has multiple mechanism of program monitoring as do the individual agencies, including multiple performance improvement plans and quality improvement activities which occur within multiple workgroups, committees, and internal and external reviews (e.g.. the Partnership Counsel - planning on conducting

focus groups, the Workforce Workgroup - working on retention and recruitment, the Wingspread Conferences relating to the Chapin Hall study of the BMCW, etc). These activities and others all enhance the knowledge base regarding the agencies performance and its strengths and opportunities. Given the breadth of activities, formulating a concise plan supports clear communications of findings and plans for improvement. The plan can clearly define activities related to risk management, program evaluation and review, and consumer, employee, and stakeholder input and satisfaction. It can ensure that staffs, at all levels, have the opportunity to participate and with that participation have a responsibility to communicate with their agency staff. It can effectively serve as a template within which feedback loops can be identified and closed, both internally within the agency, and externally between the agency and the Bureau, thus enhancing the overall satisfaction level of staff.

Additional Considerations

A number of other issues contribute to the complexity of any resolution of this issue.

The BMCW's intent to place these services out to bid increases the possibility of higher turnover. One CEO reports that staff already are anxious over their future. The Courts will expect higher turnover and potential backlogs from caseload transfers, which, we understand, happened once before. Private agencies cannot guarantee staff they have employment since they do not know the outcome of the process. The BMCW might be able to address this issue but only if they guarantee all current staff that they will be employed by any succeeding agency. This too would have to be a term of the RFP's and contracts.

Private agencies have an obligation to address these issues independently of the BMCW. The ongoing staff are their employees and they should be protected and developed by the private agency leadership.

The BMCW is reviewing their contracts for ways to make them more outcomes based. Although there are no simple solutions, it is recommended that there be a greater focus on outcomes for children and families. Such a focus might lead to discussions about obstacles to reunification and adoption. The privates view the contracts as micromanagement and compliance oriented. The terms of the contracts are specific in nature and focus on important issues required by the settlement agreement. Shifting to an outcome based contract will require identifying client based outcomes. This will require a conversation between all the stakeholders prior to the cementing them into specific contract terms.

A Lot of Good Work is Being Done Here So Solve This and Move On.

There is so much good work going on by hundreds of very committed individuals that there should be reason to celebrate the improvements. There are communications issues that every large system experiences. Solve these issues by sitting down with the advocates and private agencies as full partners in changing the child welfare system. There is richness here in Milwaukee County and you need to tap it.

The opportunity to resolve the issue of case worker turnover is more positive in Milwaukee County than perhaps any other jurisdiction in the country. Caseloads are already at reasonable levels. The Governor is committed to addressing the issue. The court settlement requires the issue to be resolved. Strategies as discussed in this paper exist to resolve this issue. The cost of not resolving this issue is enormous in terms of permanency for children and families. The cost to resolve the issue is reasonable and affordable given the resources committed to the system. The time to act is now.

Appendix – A

Results of the Employee Environment Survey with Correlations to Focus Group Information

The Employee Environment Survey was administered to all focus group members prior to commencement of each group. Fifty-seven (57) ongoing case managers and 28 supervisors completed surveys, respectively 26% and 62% of all ongoing case managers and their supervisors.

The survey was developed and tested by the Gallup Organization and was integral in Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman’s in-depth study of over 80,000 managers selected on their ability of turning each employee’s talent into performance. The survey measures employee engagement and has proven to be highly predictive of retention, productivity, and other business outcomes. The survey, composed of 12 questions (*see next page*), addresses four hierarchical elements that contribute to a recurring sense of achievement. These are:

- *What do I get? (Questions 1 &2)*
- *What do I give? (Questions 3-6)*
- *Do I belong here? (Questions 7-10)*
- *How can we all grow? (Questions 11 & 12)*

Each of the 12 questions is responded to on a 6-point scale, ranging from “*Disagree Very Much*” to “*Agree Very Much*.” Responses of “*Agree Moderately*” (4) and “*Agree Very Much*” (5), indicate a high level of engagement, being fully involved and positive toward work, while scores below a four are not engaged or actively disengaged. Organization managers should strive to have 90% of their employees rate all questions in the moderately to very much agree categories

The following pages provide aggregate data for ongoing case managers and supervisors from the five sites, indicating the percent of response reflecting a high level of engagement (moderate to very much agree) and the percentage falling below that threshold. The final section of this appendix correlates some of the available focus group information to each question, provides a comparison between the responses of case managers and supervisors, draws some additional correlations to available research; and compares certain queries.

Employee Environment Survey Aggregate Results - Supervisors

	Disagree Very Much	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Slightly	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Very Much
1. I know what is expected of me at work.		11%			89%	
2. I have the materials and equipment I need in order to do my work right.		29%			71%	
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.		25%			75%	
4. In the last seven days, I have received praise or recognition for doing good work.		71%			29%	
5. My supervisor seems to care about me as a person.		36%			64%	
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.		55%			45%	
7. At work, my opinion seems to count.		43%			57%	
8. The mission/purpose of this organization makes me feel my job is important.		25%			75%	
9. My co-workers/peers are committed to doing quality work.		32%			68%	
10. I have a friend at work.		25%			75%	
11. In the last six months, someone has talked to me about my progress.		33%			67%	
12. This last year, I have been provided with opportunities to learn and grow.		37%			63%	

Employee Environment Survey Aggregate Results - Ongoing Case Managers

	Disagree Very Much	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Slightly	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Very Much
1. I know what is expected of me at work.			14%			86%
2. I have the materials and equipment I need in order to do my work right.			28%			72%
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.			53%			47%
4. In the last seven days, I have received praise or recognition for doing good work.			53%			47%
5. My supervisor seems to care about me as a person.			25%			75%
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.			35%			65%
7. At work, my opinion seems to count.			67%			33%
8. The mission/purpose of this organization makes me feel my job is important.			45.5%			54.5%
9. My co-workers/peers are committed to doing quality work.			47%			53%
10. I have a friend at work.			2%			98%
11. In the last six months, someone has talked to me about my progress.			36%			64%
12. This last year, I have been provided with opportunities to learn and grow.			35%			65%

Correlation of Focus Group Information to Survey Results

Question 1 - I know what is expected of me at work - This question was similarly rated by both supervisors and case managers, both nearly achieving 90% in the moderate to very much agree category (supervisors 89% and case managers 86%). Focus group participants indicated they knew what their supervisors' and managers' expectations were, although many of them indicated that at the point of employment as a case manager the expectations of the job were not entirely clear.

Question 2 - I have the material and equipment I need in order to do my work right - Slightly over 70% of supervisors and case managers rated this in the moderate to very much agree category (supervisors 71% and case managers 72%). While focus group members did not raise any specific concerns regarding access to supplies or equipment, participants from three sites indicated that the facilities are often dirty and ill maintained. Two sites identified that having an agency car and cell phones would be beneficial, helping in defraying their out-of-pocket expenses as well as giving them a mechanism to obtain assistance while in the field.

Question 3 - At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day - The response between supervisors and case managers was more disparate on this question. In rating the categories of moderate to very much agree category, 75% rated it in one of these two categories while only 47% of case managers rated it in one of the two categories. This seems to correlate to statements in focus groups from case managers who indicated that the job they are currently performing was not what they expected to be. That instead of spending the majority of their time working with children and families it is being spent on paperwork, staffings and court.

Question 4 - In the last seven days, I have received praise or recognition for doing good work - Twenty-nine (29%) of supervisors and 46% of case managers rated this in the moderate to very much agree category. Many case managers in the focus group reported that their supervisors were supportive, available, and provided supervision. Staff at several sites indicated they are located on a different floor than their supervisor or in a part of the office that is not in proximity to their supervisor or other team members. Case managers and supervisors indicate that due to the focus on compliance interactions with their superiors usually focus on what needs to be done rather than on what has been done - thus lessening the opportunity to recognize good work.

Question 5 - My supervisor/manager seems to care about me as a person - This question scored higher than number 4 for both case managers and supervisors. Moderate to very much agree responses were at the level of 64% for supervisors and 75% for case managers. Once again this seems to coincide with the responses from both case managers and supervisors in the focus groups, both of whom indicated that their superiors were usually supportive, available, and provided flexibility which help to offset personal demands of the job.

Question 6 - There is someone at work who encourages my development - Forty-five percent of supervisors and 65% of case managers were moderately or very much in agreement with this statement. For case managers there was an exact correlation to Question 12 - This last year, I have

been provided opportunities to learn and grow. For supervisors this was not the case with 63% rating question 12 in the moderate to very in agreement. Case management staff reported in the focus groups that the majority of supervisors make them aware of training opportunities. While many supervisors indicated they were aware of core training and other training prospects, some had no knowledge of the core training existence. Both reported that there were some opportunities available to pursue advance degrees, but these were limited. The lower rating associated to question 6 for supervisors may also be due to the nature of supervisor and manager communication which was characterized as often focusing on assuring compliance activities which may decrease the probability of discussing professional development.

Question 7 - *At work, my opinion seems to count* - Only one-third (33%) of case managers and 57% of supervisors are moderately or very much in agreement. While a few focus group participants indicated that they have participated in work groups and committees formulated to improve various aspects of their individual agency or the BMCW, many were unaware of these groups or the outcomes. Some staff reported that they have been instructed not to raise issues in some meetings in order to preclude any possible repercussions. Staff report raising issues which need resolution either within their agency or at the Bureau. They indicate they are more apt to receive a response when the responsibility for resolution lies within their agency versus when it lies with the Bureau. Some staff report participating in satisfaction surveys, but have elected not to participate in future ones as they heard nothing from the past ones.

Question 8 - *The mission/purpose of the organization makes me feel my job is important* -. Three-quarters (75%) of supervisors and slightly over one-half (54%) of case managers fell within the desired category for this query. Supervisors in the focus groups reported a high level of understanding of their role and responsibility in the organization. Over 70% have been with their respective agencies for more than two years and 57% more than three years. Seventy-one percent hold either M.S.W. degree or advance degree in a related Human Service field. These results involving tenure of staff and educational level parallel the findings of Dickinson's and Perry's 1998 research that notes that relevant education appears to solidify organizational commitment and ultimately is a predictor of retention. Approximately one-half (49%) of the case managers participating in the focus groups have been employed for two years or less. Of those, 54% were employed for six months or less. Research has shown that individuals who are highly committed to their organization will be less likely to think about leaving. Additionally, the link between commitment and turnover may be strongest early in the career. At this stage the importance of the job may be influenced by being given challenging and interesting jobs (*See question 3*), receiving suitable training and development (*See question 12*), the perception of career opportunities, and receiving both formal and informal career management support (*See questions 6 and 11*). Each of the cited questions received moderately to very much in agreement response rates ranging from a low of 45% to 65%, which may contribute to the lower response rate to question 8. Case management staff and supervisors both reported that a career ladder and opportunities for advancement were extremely limited. Additionally, the external perception of the organization by stakeholders and the community may also influence the level of importance that staff feel regarding their jobs. While the vast majority of focus group participant felt that the work of their organizations was important, they acknowledge that perceptions of court personnel, negative media coverage, and some perceptions of their own

families causes stress; detracting from their efforts which results in them “second guessing” their job choice.

Question 9 - *My co-workers/peers are committed to doing quality work* - Fifty-three percent of case managers and 68% of supervisors agreed moderately or very much to this statement. This question aids in determining if staff perceive that their colleagues operate within a similar value system relative to their work. Staff are more likely to remain employed in organizations that compliment those systems. Focus group participants provided limited information that might inform the level of response. One group did cite that they were sometimes concerned about the quality of coverage for their caseload when going to extended training sessions or on vacation.

Question 10 - *I have a friend at work* - Case managers very much or moderately agreed to this at a level of 98%, while supervisors responded at a 75% level. This query combined with items seven through nine helps to illuminate the level of the staff’s connection to the organization. Organizations that provide an environment that supports peer connections is in a better position to improve retention rates

Question 11 - *In the last six months, someone has talked to me about my progress* - Over 60% of both supervisors and case managers agreed moderately or very much (Supervisors - 63% and Case Manager -65%). Both groups of staff reported that regular supervision does occur, as do evaluations. It was expressed that in some cases the focus tends to be on compliance activities, rather than professional development.

The results of the survey, combined with the focus group information, suggest that there are numerous opportunities to build on the areas of strengths identified by the data. While only one question exceeded a level of 90% many were above 70%. These are clearly opportunities to build upon. While others fell below 70% and might be considered to be deficit areas, building on the strengths may provide a domino effect on the other areas. These questions are built on a hierarchy and as first areas improve subsequent areas will also be impacted.

Appendix – B

Example of Salary Schedule Approach that Encourages Staff Retention and Professionalization

A major challenge to solving the ongoing case manager turnover problem is to establish a salary and benefits package that encourages staff to stay in this pressure laden and critical job. A common theme in focus groups reflected that salary issues were a major concern of staff. Additionally, national reviews of child welfare workforce turnover report inadequate salaries as being a major contributor to the problem. Often the problem is viewed as intractable due largely to the cost of proposed remedies. Failure to address the salary issues, which contribute significantly to turnover, actually results in higher costs due to the poor and more costly performance of the child welfare system. Such is the case in Milwaukee County.

A major consideration in the salary discussion is the apparent inequity, or disparity; between the salaries of private agency ongoing case managers and Bureau of Milwaukee County (BMCW) Intake and Assessment staff who perform similar direct service responsibilities. This BMCW staff to private agency staff salary comparison in Milwaukee County is the fairest way to describe the market for salaries and appropriate parameters for salary basis solutions. Comparison with private agency salaries in other parts of the Midwest and the country are not appropriate comparisons to be used in resolving the Milwaukee County problem. Comparing low private agency salaries in other jurisdictions with Milwaukee County private agency ongoing staff salaries will reflect only that private agencies probably pay staff low wages everywhere.

Balancing Outcome or Performance Based Salary Structures with Guaranteed Step and Merit Systems

It is increasingly popular to suggest outcome or performance based salary structures in lieu of more traditional step and merit systems, which essentially guarantee annual increases based upon a payroll plan. The problem with outcome-based systems may be that there is often little agreement about the basis for measurement of employee performance. In addition, much of the resources necessary to achieve outcomes in child welfare settings are beyond the control of the caseworker. Effective substance abuse services and housing resources are two of the most critical resources necessary to successful reunification of families in the child welfare system. These resources are seldom sufficient and almost never under the control of the child welfare system. However, without these services child welfare caseworkers are unlikely to be able to achieve reunifications. They find they cannot meet, in this example, expectations for performance because they do not have access to appropriate services.

Another problem in framing outcome-based systems is the tendency to confuse activities with outcomes. The BMCW expects that case managers see children in foster care every month. This is an expectation of the court settlement agreement and a matter of state policy. It is tightly monitored

and sanctioned by BMCW. It is for many a classic example of an outcome measure when it is actually an activity measure. A case manager with a reasonable caseload, also required by the BMCW, should be expected to achieve this visitation requirement in order to qualify for a satisfactory performance evaluation. The worker who achieves higher than expected performance for permanencies, adoptions or reunifications, is achieving client-based outcomes and should be rewarded accordingly.

The BMCW may want to encourage a broader discussion of client based outcomes for the Milwaukee County child welfare system as a basis for establishing a performance/outcome based contracting system for services to children in foster care. Once there is agreement on outcomes a discussion about obstacles to achieving the outcomes can be held resulting in strategies to address barriers to permanencies. It is critical that the BMCW actually be able to measure the outcomes in a way so that agencies and the BMCW agree on actual performance.

Private agencies under a performance structure could conceivably pass through the “reward” for performance to employees in some fair manner. Since a bonus for performance most likely will be a one time payment agencies will find it necessary to structure internal rewards accordingly. It is in this regard that outcome or performance based structures fail. They do not attend to the infrastructure necessary to achieving performance. This may suggest that a blended step and “outcome” based salary system may be most desirable.

The step system is often viewed as archaic and oppositional to performance. This concern is actually a management issue rather than a salary issue. Failure to manage the workforce, including addressing necessary infrastructure needs, leads to poor performance.

The step system allows employees to forecast their future within the respective agency. It suggests the relative rewards for tenure, academic achievement and professional certification. It provides a framework for salary growth, assuming satisfactory performance. It can recognize required advanced degrees and reward employees who achieve advanced degrees such as a Masters in Social Work. It also can reward receipt of preferred, actually required, certifications such as certified social worker.

The trick for child welfare systems is how to structure a salary system that encourages staff to stay, perform and grow all in the context of ever increasing pressures to achieve more and better outcomes for children and families. It is especially important when you consider that the caseworker is the vehicle for achieving outcomes.

Principles for a Possible Milwaukee County Private Agency Ongoing Case Managers Salary Structure

The primary purpose of our effort is to identify causes of case manager turnover and strategies that might be pursued to improve this condition. The most important step to be taken is to address salary inequity in Milwaukee County. The following principles, or strategies, are laid out as the basis for this alternative salary proposal. Salary levels should reflect BMCW salary levels for IA staff as a basis for addressing fundamental issues of inequity between staff who perform similar functions.

1. Salary levels value length of service, or experience, and satisfactory performance.
2. Salary levels value certification of staff as required by the BMCW and as expressed in Wisconsin state law and regulation for certified social workers. This step is critical to professionalization of the workforce.
3. Salary levels assume agencies will hire BA and MA level candidates who can qualify as certified social workers.
4. Salary levels recognize the current composition of the ongoing workforce and are structured to encourage staff to achieve advanced professional degrees and certification. It does, at a minimum, “grandfather” the current workforce.
5. The specific steps provide a future framework for staff who desires to remain in a casework role.
6. A specific outcome based reward system could be built on top of such a structure providing additional incentives for outstanding performance.

These principles, or strategies, of a salary system are intended to address the fundamental issue of workforce turnover. If this problem is not resolved, attempts to achieve improved performance will fail as the workforce continues to cycle through the Milwaukee County child welfare system.

Details of a Proposed Salary Plan for Private Agency Ongoing Case Managers

Following is a framework for a step based salary schedule that recognizes tenure, satisfactory performance, professional degrees and certification. It is intended as a platform upon which various performance based incentives could be built. The details are as follows. (*See - “Sample” pg. 21*)

1. It creates four levels of professional staff: level one (1) for BA, non-certified but approved staff; level two (2) for BA and certified staff; level three (3) for MA, non-certified but approved staff and level four (4) for MA and certified staff. The entry-level salary reflects but does not mirror BMCW salary for IA staff. Entry level for BMCW IA staff is \$31,825.25 per year. Advanced workers qualify for an annual salary of \$37,239.48. Both positions require certification as a social worker. Steps 3 and 4 reflect the certification requirements.
2. The salary schedule is laid out for a ten (10) year period in order to give staff a sense of their future should they decide to commit to the agency and the child welfare mission. A primary purpose of the schedule is to indicate to staff the future of compensation for their effort and how choices they make in advancing professionally will benefit them.

3. The schedule assumes that any changes, such as annual cost of living adjustments or performance bonuses, would be built on top of the step system.

4. The schedule builds in annual adjustments reflecting tenure but favoring certified positions, steps 2 and 4. The adjustment for steps 1 and 3 is 3.5% annually. The adjustment for steps 2 and 4 is 4% annually.

The use of a step salary approach is very compatible with performance approaches in that the step system helps stabilize the workforce while permitting incentive approaches to be built on the basic platform. Implementing such a system in an existing system will have initial costs but may well be offset by savings due to reduced turnover costs and increased performance.

“SAMPLE” SALARY SCHEDULE (DISCUSSION USE ONLY)				
Length of Service	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>Start</i>	\$30,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$38,000
<i>One Year</i>	\$31,050	\$34,320	\$34,155	\$39,520
<i>Two Years</i>	\$32,137	\$35,698	\$35,350	\$41,100
<i>Three Years</i>	\$33,262	\$37,120	\$36,587	\$42,744
<i>Four Years</i>	\$34,426	\$38,605	\$37,868	\$44,454
<i>Five Years</i>	\$35,630	\$40,149	\$39,193	\$46,232
<i>Six Years</i>	\$36,878	\$41,755	\$40,565	\$48,081
<i>Seven Years</i>	\$38,168	\$43,425	\$41,985	\$50,004
<i>Eight Years</i>	\$39,504	\$45,162	\$43,454	\$52,005
<i>Nine Years</i>	\$40,887	\$46,968	\$44,975	\$54,085
<i>Ten Years</i>	\$42,318	\$48,847	\$46,549	\$56,248

The “*Sample*” salary schedule presented above is meant to facilitate discussion around the framework identified in items 1-4 above. It is similar in many respects to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services’ (IDCFS) salary schedule for child welfare staff, except that the IDCFS salary range is higher. That system’s schedule acknowledges both education and tenure. Certification is not included as a salary track as all Illinois child welfare staff (public and private) must be certified by IDCFS in order to practice, and therefore is a condition of employment. Two child welfare titles exist in IDCFS as follows: *Child Welfare Specialist* - Entry level position requires a BSW, MSW, or related Human Service Degree with no experience. Salary schedule provides yearly increases through eight years, with a salary range of \$37,728 - \$55,740. *Child Welfare Advanced Specialist* – Requires and MSW and two years of IDCFS experience. Salary schedule provides yearly increases through eight years, with a salary range of \$39,708 - \$59,196.

Each of the four levels included in the “*Sample*” salary schedule provide for yearly increases up to ten years of continuous employment within the same level. The ranges are as follows:

- ✚ Level I – Uncertified BA Staff - \$30,000 - \$42,318
- ✚ Level II – Certified BA Staff - \$33,000 - \$48,847
- ✚ Level III – Uncertified MA Staff - \$33,000 - \$46,549
- ✚ Level IV – Certified \$38,000 - \$56,248

Potential Impact of Utilizing the “Sample - Discussion Only” Step Salary System

The “discussion only” step based salary schedule demonstrated above has a cost of implementation, as would any salary solution. It is, however, an increasingly important strategy to address this critical problem. Recently the governor of Texas announced a \$349 million child protection reform initiative designed to respond to a number of child protection tragedies. A key problem was worker turnover. The Texas initiative includes a \$5,000 salary adjustment for all CPS employees in order to bring their salary base closer to other professions such as teachers. Addressing the salary issue is the most fundamental step in managing the turnover issue.

A review of the educational backgrounds and experience of private agency staff suggests that almost all staff could eventually qualify for state certification as social workers. Currently very few of the over 200 ongoing and safety staff have received certification. If you assume that the workforce is all certified, either at the BA or MA level, you could calculate an outside, or maximum, cost of implementing the schedule.

Recognizing that WCSN and IFPI have merged we have consolidated the analysis for this new agency. WCSN has 198 and La Causa 49 of the 247 ongoing and safety staff. The total cost of moving current employees to level 2 and level 4, reflecting certified BA and MA staff, and placing them at the appropriate step level reflecting their length of service would cost \$1,904,359 on an annual basis. This does not include adjustments for supervisors, an absolutely necessary step to take.

There is an interesting distribution of the costs when you consider impact by agency. La Causa has 20% of the ongoing workforce, a higher average salary and lower workforce turnover. La Causa’s cost of implementation is \$184,781 total and \$3771 per employee. This may reflect steps the agency has already taken to enrich salaries. WCSN’s cost of implementation is \$1,719,578 total and \$8684 per employee. This probably reflects the higher turnover of the workforce of this agency, especially at IFPI, and lower salaries across the board.

This scenario assumes that the agencies adopt this specific schedule and all staff qualifies for the certified levels. It does not consider the internal savings that are realized from a reduction in turnover. The payout of benefits or cashing out of earned time, etc. would partially offset the cost of implementation. In addition, it is possible that not all staff would qualify for the certification level. This would result in a somewhat lower cost. The cost is estimated at the highest level in order to determine feasibility. This schedule and its cost do appear to be within the parameters of the resources indicated by DFCS child welfare leadership to be available to address this critical problem.

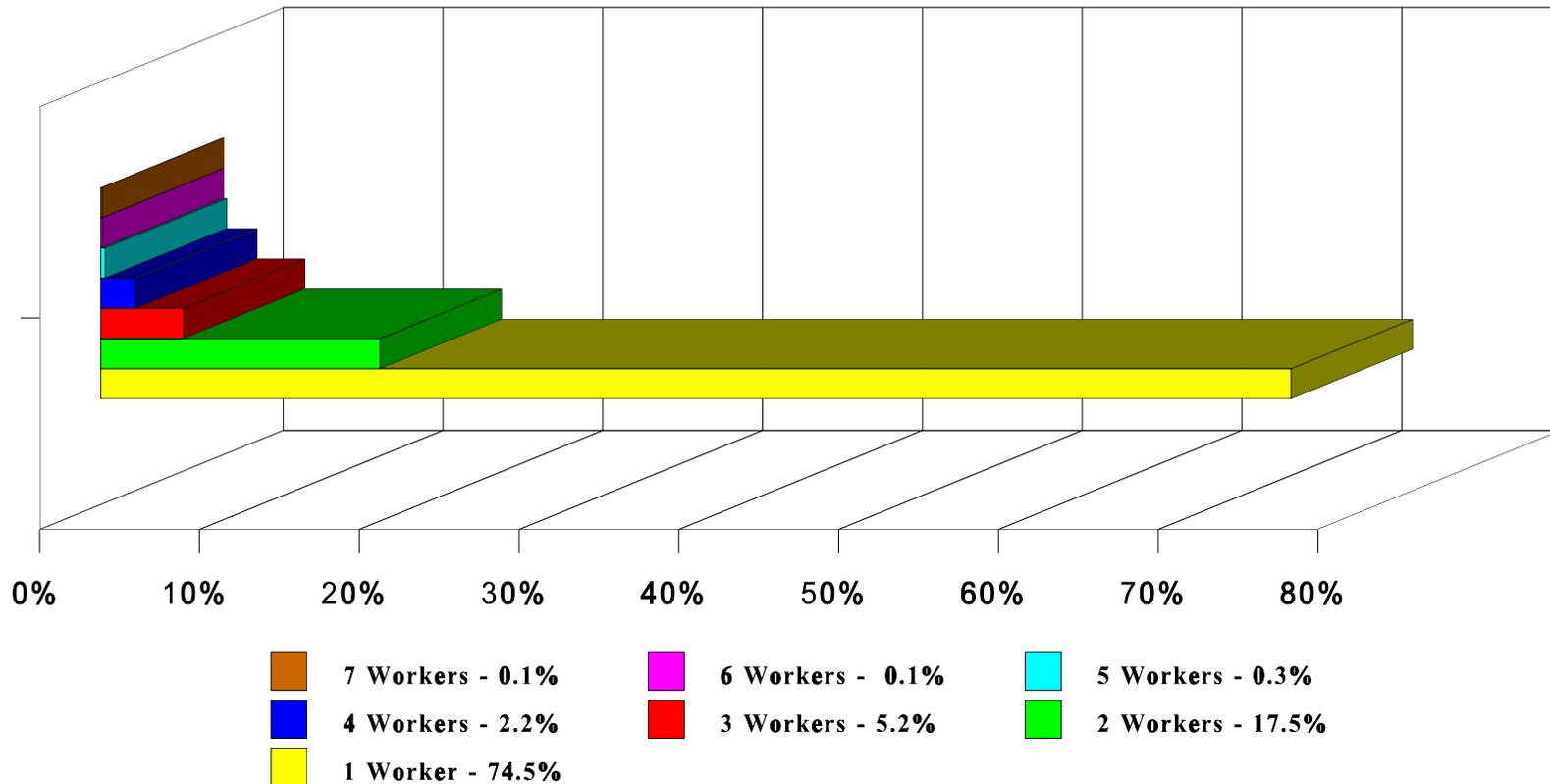
There exists an interesting potential conflict of public policy goals in the effort to resolve the turnover problem. The BMCW is placing ongoing services out to bid under an RFP with one objective being to reduce costs. There also is the expectation under the settlement agreement that worker turnover be reduced. This expectation is appropriately tied to the belief that turnover interferes with successful performance of responsibilities to children and families and negatively impacts performance on their behalf.

The RFP process may place La Causa at a competitive disadvantage because they have a higher salary base per ongoing staff than WCSN. The BMCW should consider requiring successful bidders to have a salary and benefits plan that is reasonably related to that of the BMCW. It is important that the successful bidder not be successful at the expense of the staff that does the work. This proposal only illustrates how the BMCW might address this concern. However they proceed, the RFP will seriously impact the workforce turnover issue. Hopefully there will be a positive effort.

Fewer Changes In Caseworkers Increases the Chances of Permanency for Children

Children Entering and Exiting Care to Permanency from January 1, 2003 through September 2004 (N=679)

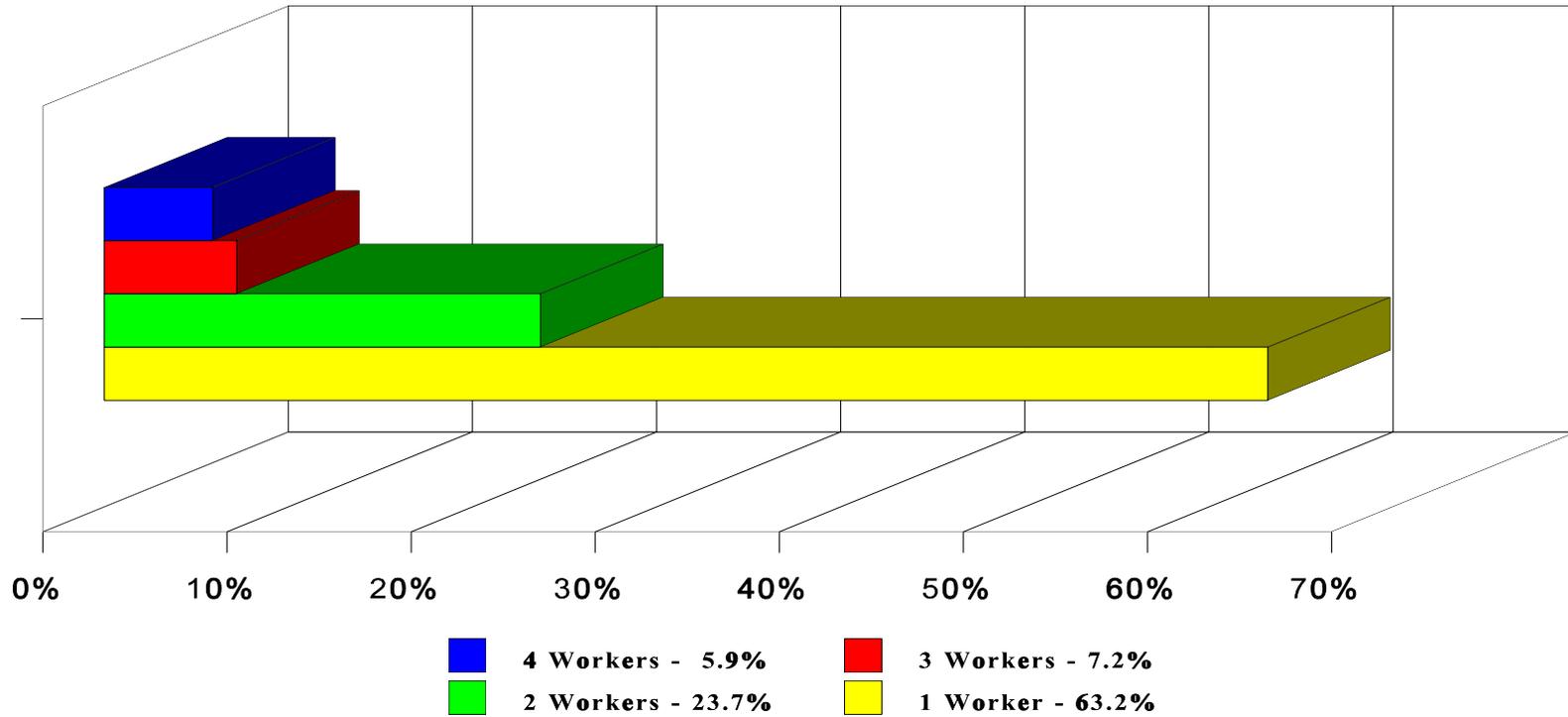
Data reported represents 679 children entering and exiting to permanency from January 1, 2003 through



Data reported represents 679 children entering and exiting to permanency from January 1, 2003 through September 2004. Data reported to review staff by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.

Fewer Changes in Caseworkers Increases the Chances of Permanency for Children

Children Entering and Exiting Care to Permanency, from January 1, 2004 through September 2004, Who Experienced Worker Changes



Data reported represents 152 children entering and exiting to permanency from January 1, 2004 through September 2004. Data reported to review staff by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.