

**Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
FY 2007 Human Resources Management Plan
Senate Bill 1, Rider 15, 79th Regular Session**

Senate Bill 1, Rider 15, 79th Regular Session directs the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to develop a Human Resources Management Plan designed to improve employee morale and retention. The plan must focus on reducing employee turnover through better management. The effectiveness of the agency's plan shall be measured by whether or not there is a reduction in annual employee turnover rates at the agency, specifically by the reduction in the turnover rates for caseworkers.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) recommended a number of reforms for DFPS programs in 2006-2007, many of which were enacted into law via Senate Bill 6 of the 79th Regular Legislative Session. Recognizing that the provision of effective client services is heavily dependent on a trained and dedicated workforce, many of the reforms were directed at attracting and retaining high quality staff. While Senate Bill 6 concentrated on reform of the department's Child Protective Services (CPS) program, the other two large programs, Adult Protective Services (APS) and Child Care Licensing (CCL), were also impacted. Consequently, the agency's FY 2007 Human Resources Management Plan focuses on retention and consists of four interrelated initiatives that will be added to the 2005 and 2006 initiatives that are ongoing:

1. Actively pursue the development of policy and implementation of flexible work schedules and/or teleworking/telecommuting for appropriate staff.
2. Expand structures proven to help in addressing field staff burnout and stress.
3. In addition to the existing emphasis on case management, expand supervisory development, training and support to increase the focus on human resource management.
4. Increase the agency's capacity to use data to pinpoint barriers to staff retention and use this to pilot a program in which high-performing, high-retention units are paired with and able to mentor units that are less successful.

Initiative 1: Actively pursue the development of policy and implementation of flexible work schedules and/or teleworking/telecommuting for appropriate staff.

Over the past two years, DFPS has equipped all APS caseworkers and is currently in the process of equipping CPS investigative and Family Based Safety Services caseworkers with tablet PCs, digital cameras and other "mobile" technology so they are able to maximize their time in the field and streamline their documentation process. In essence, their "office" is with them at all times, thereby making it possible to consider flexible scheduling and a variety of work environments. DFPS would like to pursue various options that would reduce travel time, reduce the need for expensive office space, and further streamline the work of the caseworkers. The Department will develop the appropriate supervisory skills and accountability tools to insure this can be implemented while still achieving core agency functions.

Initiative 2: Expand structures proven to help in addressing field staff burnout and stress.

- **Implementing the STARS program (a program that provides many opportunities for feedback and communication between new workers and supervisors that is designed to retain workers) for all supervisors and caseworkers in all regions and programs.**

The STARS program was developed within CPS several years ago and was successful in retaining workers. It encourages caseworkers who have recently completed their basic skills training to provide online and in-person feedback on their experience and provides timely assistance from the supervisor on problems and issues. DFPS would like to implement this program in all regions and among all programs.

- **In addition to our existing employee assistance program, develop internal resources that will address causes of “burnout” and worker stress.**

Commonly, caseworkers cite stress and/or burnout as a reason for leaving their jobs. Going into dangerous or violent situations, addressing unsafe living conditions, managing high caseloads, and fearing that a mistake can cause harm to a client are all daily realities for caseworkers. DFPS would like to research ways in which it can provide additional support to its caseworkers for the type of stress or burnout that can result.

Initiative 3: In addition to the existing emphasis on case management, expand supervisory development, training and support to increase the focus on human resource management.

- **Further enhancing the DFPS supervisory training program to include more focus on retaining staff and coaching/mentoring staff.**

Studies on worker retention consistently show the importance of the relationship with the supervisor. Workers in difficult situations often manage quite well and are committed to stay when they feel they have the support of their supervisors. Current supervisory training will be further enhanced by focusing on techniques that retain staff and mentor them. Additionally the Department would like to build the capacity of supervisors to recognize and address the signs of worker burnout and stress.

- **Develop training for all program workers who are interested in moving into supervisory positions.**

Currently, when a DFPS caseworker is promoted to a supervisory position, s/he is given a list of certified courses that are available to help the individual learn supervisory skills. The Department will begin training on supervisory skills earlier so that newly hired supervisors are sooner and better prepared to address the challenges of unit supervision.

Initiative 4: Increase the agency’s capacity to use data to pinpoint barriers to staff retention and use this to pilot a program in which high performing, high retention units are paired with and able to mentor units that are less successful.

DFPS caseworkers are always challenged by high caseloads and work under difficult circumstances. Statewide performance reports show that some units are able to successfully manage high caseloads and retain workers, while others are not. DFPS would like to implement a pilot that would allow staff from the successful units to advise and coach the less successful units so that skills and knowledge could be transferred and hopefully retained. This project will be designed through in-depth analysis of the characteristics of staff and units who are successful and those who have departed the agency.