

**Rider 11: Human Resources  
Management Plan**

**Fiscal Year 2015 Update**

**The Texas Department of Family and  
Protective Services**

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## Purpose and Background

Senate Bill 1 (S.B. 1), Rider 11, of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2015 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 there is a reduction in annual employee turnover rates at the agency, specifically by the reduction in the turnover rates for caseworkers.

In January, the agency laid out the strategies the agency would initiate to achieve the outcomes required by Rider 11. Strategies implemented covered the full spectrum of workforce development, beginning with who the agency recruits, to how the agency screens these applicants to identify the strongest candidates. The agency also outlined efforts that had the potential to most directly affect whether or not workers decided to remain with the agency, including compensation, work environment, supervisor training and support, and employee outreach and recognition.

This report provides an update on progress made on the agency's strategies.

## Strategy 1: Recruitment and Hiring

Stabilizing the agency's workforce begins with recruiting candidates who possess the knowledge, skills, and dedication necessary to provide high quality services to our clients while being able to cope with the difficult and emotional nature of social work.

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<p><u>College Collaboration: Title IV-E Partnerships</u></p> <p>In order to determine the best model for the state of Texas, DFPS engaged a core group of key institutions to provide feedback on various Title IV-E-funded collaborations that are taking place nationwide.</p>	<p>The agency initiated a college collaboration workgroup that explored various aspects of Texas' Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program. Recommendations were developed that will work towards strengthening the partnership between DFPS and its Title IV-E partners. Some of those recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the placement of students within the units into which they will be hired.</li> <li>• Collaborate with partners to develop a tool to evaluate the program's effectiveness in producing quality, long-term CPS caseworkers.</li> <li>• Develop a toolkit for prospective Title IV-E institutions and a web page for current IV-E partners.</li> <li>• Designate a statewide Title IV-E Training Program Coordinator at DFPS.</li> </ul> <p>DFPS has reached out to all universities who</p>

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	<p>are eligible to participate in the program with an eye towards increasing the number of DFPS regions with a Title IV-E university headquartered in the region. Those regions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Region 1 - Lubbock</li> <li>• Region 2 - Abilene</li> <li>• Region 4 - Tyler</li> <li>• Region 9 - Midland</li> </ul>
<p><u>College Collaboration: Curriculum Development</u></p> <p>With the goal of creating a professional workforce, the agency coordinated with universities to solicit their expertise in developing the DFPS workforce.</p>	<p>The following Title IV-E university partners participated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas State University</li> <li>• University of Houston</li> <li>• UT - Arlington</li> <li>• UT - Austin</li> <li>• UT - El Paso</li> <li>• UT - San Antonio</li> </ul> <p>In partnership with DFPS, these participating universities explored social work-related curricula across each university to determine whether consistency could be created in what caseworkers with a social work background were learning and found that consistency already exists due to accreditation requirements.</p>
<p><u>Associate's Degree Tracks</u></p> <p>The agency is launching a pilot expanding its applicant pool by allowing applicants with two-year degrees to be considered eligible for certain DFPS positions.</p>	<p>DFPS began exploring the feasibility of ending the practice of automatically screening out applicants who do not have an undergraduate degree for direct delivery positions in Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, and Statewide Intake. The intent of the recommendation is to ensure the agency does not lose applicants who have the necessary skills and knowledge because they do not meet the minimum education requirements, and to stabilize the workforce by creating career opportunities for those with two-year degrees - or equivalent hours - who have already dedicated their careers to the agency.</p>
<p><u>Non-Traditional Students and Other Target Populations</u></p> <p>Data from an internal survey of almost 150</p>	<p>DFPS conducted a literature review of this and other possible target populations to determine which of these groups could be the focus of the agency's recruiting efforts. The analysis was to</p>

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<p>CPS staff found that 70% of the respondents had a year or more of professional experience before joining the agency. These results, albeit only from CPS respondents, indicate the potential for untapped talent in students who are not enrolled in traditional undergraduate programs.</p>	<p>answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors would attract this population to DFPS?</li> <li>• Does this population match up to the "optimal" worker profile?</li> <li>• How interested might this population be in working at DFPS?</li> <li>• How was this population recruited into their current position?</li> </ul> <p>Target populations included were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirees</li> <li>• Law Enforcement</li> <li>• Faith-Based Organizations</li> <li>• Other Non-Profits Educators</li> </ul> <p>The review confirmed our expectations that workers in these industries share similar work environments and characteristics necessary to be successful. The information in this analysis will inform ongoing recruitment efforts, which can be found in the Human Resources Management Plan required by Rider 9 of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature, due Fall 2015.</p>
<p><u>Military Veteran Recruitment</u></p> <p>Another talent pool which the agency is focusing on is military veterans, whose experience, skills, and passion for public service make them ideal candidates for careers within DFPS.</p>	<p>The agency has continued to increase its presence at veteran career fairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 5</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 51</li> </ul> <p>The DFPS Talent Acquisition Group has initiated contacts with bases within Texas and in surrounding states as well as with liaisons of the Texas Veterans Commission and Texas Workforce Commission.</p>
<p><u>Screening and Hiring</u></p> <p>The agency enhanced the screening and application process for new frontline workers in all DFPS programs. The goal is for these changes to improve the quality of new hires. Additional screening and hiring enhancements have been added through CPS Transformation.</p>	<p>The DFPS-specific Human Services Index was implemented in March 2015. The new screening and hiring process is being measured for two overarching objectives: the quality of the hires and the efficiency of the process.</p> <p>To ensure quality, the agency will be validating the new screening tool once more data is available. Validation will occur by monitoring a cohort of new employees and will serve to determine whether the traits screened for are</p>

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	<p>the traits that should be measured, and whether they are being accurately measured.</p> <p>The efficiency of the process has historically been measured from the standpoint of the agency, that is; from the time a vacancy occurs to the time a person is on-boarded. In order to gain a better understanding of how long it actually takes a candidate to complete the application process the agency sampled a set of applications from June through August 2015 and found that the time from when an application is submitted to when a hiring decision is made is at an average of 43 business days, down from 49 in the previous 3-month period.</p> <p>The time from the submission of the application to the time when the applicant is interviewed has decreased by roughly 11.5 business days from the previous 3 months.</p> <p>There is an increase of 4 days from when a hiring decision is made to when the successful candidate is on-boarded. This could be attributable to several factors, including reference checks, background checks, or the applicant's availability to begin in the position. The agency will continue to work towards decreasing the time to fill these positions.</p>
<p><u>Targeted Efforts</u></p> <p>DFPS employs focused recruitment efforts on areas of the state where there is a low quantity or low quality applicant pool or a high number of vacancies.</p>	<p>The agency continues to implement recruitment strategies such as offering an increase above the base pay. The agency is authorized to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 3.4% above base pay for targeted degrees or bilingual skills.</li> <li>• 6.8% above base pay for candidates with Masters in Social Work, and when necessary to increase applicant pools.</li> </ul>

## Strategy 2: Continuous Learning

DFPS leadership understands that building a professional workforce is integral to providing quality services to clients. Employees who receive proper training and field experience guided by a mentor before entering a new profession gain confidence in their ability to perform their jobs. When that training on the front end is supplemented by ongoing learning experiences, caseworkers are more likely to stay.

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<p><u>New CPS Continuous Learning Model which Includes Mentorship Component</u></p> <p>The new basic training, now called "CPS Professional Development," (CPD) shifts from a focus on task-specific knowledge to one that develops measurable worker competencies such as the ability to detect abuse and neglect, recognize a child's emotions, and strengthen collaboration skills. Workers will understand the broader concepts and purposes behind required tasks and how they fit together in the context of a case. The opportunity to observe case practice first will make classroom learning less abstract. The new Continuous Learning model also includes a mentorship component. The mentor will work with a mentee for up to 16 weeks and in order to ensure that the mentee gets the most out of the relationship, the agency has established criteria for workers to become mentors, who will then be paired with their mentees based on various factors.</p>	<p>By the end of October 2015, the entire state will be training new workers under the new CPS Professional Development model.</p> <p>A June 2015 focus group made up of supervisors, caseworkers, and program directors shared that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter classroom time and immediate time in the field builds on new worker's enthusiasm.</li> <li>• Supervisors appreciate the first-hand experience new workers are getting quickly.</li> <li>• The adjustable timeline of training helps to better address individual training needs.</li> <li>• Finding a sufficient number of qualified mentors is an issue in some areas of the state.</li> </ul> <p>The Child and Family Research Partnership at the University of Texas' LBJ School of Public Affairs is conducting a third-party review to help ensure the soundness of the model and its implementation.</p>

### Strategy 3: Retention

All of the efforts the agency is implementing are geared towards the ultimate outcome of increasing retention rates. Based on data compiled from exit surveys administered by the State Auditor's Office in fiscal year 2014, DFPS intends to increase retention by addressing work environment, compensation, supervisors, and conducting employee outreach and recognition.

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<p><u>Work Environment: Worker Safety Support</u></p> <p>DFPS caseworkers sometimes find themselves in dangerous situations that involve physical assaults, dog bites, slashed tires, and other threatening circumstances. In order to address this issue, the agency initiated the Aggressive Safety Action Project.</p>	<p>The Aggressive Safety Action Project is now closed, with leadership choosing to operationalize its sub-project, the successful <i>Enhanced Incident Support</i> (EIS) model. The EIS model provides specialized support and assistance to workers and managers in preventing, navigating, and recovering from work-related aggressive incidents. The Office</p>

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	<p>of Worker Safety Support, funded by the 84th Legislature to expand our current safety efforts, is tasked with taking the EIS model statewide. The Office of Worker Safety Support will launch worker safety resources and tools, including SafeSignal, a new-technology-based "zero-button" emergency alert for frontline caseworkers and their supervisors that is being tested in Harris, Travis, and Williamson counties beginning in November 2015. This hands-free device works through a locked iPhone and allows workers to send an alarm to a monitoring center 24/7, 365 days a year. If this test goes well, DFPS will deploy statewide early in 2016.</p>
<p><u>Work Environment: CPS Master Workers</u></p> <p>In fiscal year 2014, CPS introduced two new positions: Master Investigators and Master Conservatorship Workers. These tenured workers are deployed to "Hot Zones", areas of the state that are experiencing difficulties and an increased level of workload stress. Some of the factors considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High turnover rates</li> <li>• High number of vacancies</li> <li>• High caseload</li> <li>• Critical incidents that may affect morale</li> </ul>	<p>CPS Systems Improvement conducted an evaluation and found that Master Investigators (MI) are having a "significant and positive impact" and generally leave areas stronger than they found them. Analysis found that counties remained stable for at least 3 months after deployments ended. From August of 2014 until June of 2015, MIs have closed 1,999 (1,293 delinquent) cases in 27 counties and reduced "Hot Zone" scores in counties they worked in by an average of 21%.</p>
<p><u>Work Environment: The Statewide Intake Retention Initiative Steering Committee (RISC)</u></p> <p>The Retention Initiative Steering Committee (RISC) implements projects to improve the work environment at the DFPS' abuse and neglect call center. Areas of focus include: promoting employee communication and input, strengthening supervision, managing workloads, valuing employees, and meeting the needs of night and weekend staff.</p>	<p>One program initiated by RISC in December 2014 is the mentor program. The program pairs new employees with tenured staff onsite. Depending on the needs of the new employee, they can meet up multiple times over a 12 week span. The mentors are given an initial training on topics that are needed to cover the "basics", but communication between the mentor, mentee, and the supervisor of the mentee ensures that additional relevant topics are covered.</p> <p>A chat room, set up so that the mentees can ask questions to the entire mentor group, has allowed new staff to get help and answers quicker than during scheduled meetings, and allows teleworkers a chance to act in a mentorship capacity as well. Surveys of mentors and mentees have shown positive results.</p>

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<p><u>Compensation: Paid Overtime for CPS Staff</u></p> <p>Prior to fiscal year 2016, staff were paid for overtime only after balances reached 240 hours. Based on need and availability of funds, DFPS programs could request waivers from this requirement and pay overtime before staff accumulate 240 hours.</p>	<p>The agency received funding from the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature to pay down overtime to 140 hours and then make the 140 hour level the new baseline over which overtime is paid.</p> <p>This new model will be implemented in fiscal year 2016.</p>
<p><u>Compensation: Modifications to Career Ladder</u></p> <p>Funds appropriated for the 2014-2015 biennium were used to modify the caseworker career ladder. The new career ladder begins new CPS caseworkers at a Caseworker I level - as opposed to their previous entry at a Caseworker II..</p> <p>Additionally, certification across programs were amended to allow workers to attain their first certification sooner. For example, all CPS, APS, and SWI workers as well as CCL Investigators, are eligible to receive their first pay increase at nine months – a critical point in time for turnover – rather than the previous, longer timeline of one year.</p> <p>All programs' workers' certification pay increases were increased from 7% to 10% of their salary.</p>	<p><u>CPS</u></p> <p>The effects of adding a new entry point into the caseworker career ladder will be determined over the course of the next several fiscal years. Currently, the average tenure of a caseworker is roughly 3 years. The agency can expect that this additional rung will extend the length of time CPS workers will remain in direct delivery positions.</p> <p>The number of separations that occurred amongst caseworkers from the three main stages of service who were in their first year of service decreased from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 49.5% of caseworkers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 45.8% of caseworkers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> </ul> <p>The largest decrease in the number of workers who left within their first year occurred in the Investigation stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 58.3% of Investigators who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 52.9% of Investigators who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> </ul> <p>Under the new Continuous Learning model the agency expects that attrition will occur sooner as new employees gain a realistic perspective during their first month of shadowing their mentor and during their field-based training.</p>

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	<p><u>Adult Protective Services (APS)</u>  APS saw an increase in the number of workers who left from 61 in fiscal year 2014 to 64 in fiscal year 2015. Less workers overall left during fiscal year 2015, therefore the <i>percentage</i> of people who were in the first year of service when they left shows a larger increase than one might expect with a 3-person change in separations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 61 of 176 (34.7%) APS workers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 64 of 163 (39.3%) APS workers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> </ul> <p><u>Child Care Licensing (CCL)</u>  CCL saw no change from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2015 in the number of workers who were in their first year when they left the agency. The increase in percentage is due to the fact that less workers, overall, left in fiscal year 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 27 of 85 (31.8%) CCL workers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 27 of 76 (35.5%) CCL workers who left the agency within the fiscal year were in their first year of service.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Compensation: Locality Pay</u>  Some localities have very specific needs. For example, individuals in the Midland–Odessa area face high costs of living due to the energy industry located in that area.</p> <p>Based on the increase in the cost of living, DFPS began providing a monthly stipend of \$1,000 beginning in September 2014.</p>	<p>Region 9 began experiencing an increased rate of turnover as a result of increased energy exploration in the Midland-Odessa area. To counter the effect of a higher cost of living, the agency received approval from the 83rd Legislature to provide a stipend for those in that area. The stipend was initiated on September 1, 2014. Turnover for all CPS caseworkers in Region 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2013: 42.1%</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 27%</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 30%</li> </ul> <p>CPS Investigators follow the same trend with a spike in fiscal year 2013 and relative</p>

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	stabilization across fiscal years 2014 and 2015. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal Year 2013: 47.6%</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2014: 25.2%</li> <li>• Fiscal Year 2015: 28.8%</li> </ul>
<p><u>Supervisor Training and Support: Strengths-Based Supervision</u></p> <p>Supervisors are responsible for supporting and developing staff, and those who do their job well increase the quality of caseworkers' performance and overall job satisfaction. On the other hand, ineffective supervisors can negatively affect the quality of service to children and families and drive staff to leave.</p> <p>DFPS selected Strengths-Based Supervision (SBS) to encourage supervisor training and support. This evidence-based program develops staff as they transition from caseworker to supervisor and from supervisor to higher levels of management.</p>	<p>This training was provided to CPS' statewide leadership from supervisors to Regional Directors. Regional feedback on the group coaching sessions, led by Program Directors and Administrators, has been positive, especially from new supervisors. An internal process evaluation completed by CPS found 68% of supervisors active in June 2015 have completed the SBS training. The DFPS Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence (CLOE) continues to offer the Strengths-Based Supervision course in all regions to train new supervisors.</p>
<p><u>Employee Outreach and Recognition: Commissioner's Tour</u></p> <p>The DFPS Commissioner and his executive staff visit every region to provide information on changes occurring in the agency and to receive feedback from staff on these changes. They also use these visits as a time to recognize staff's efforts.</p>	<p>Following the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, Judge Specia began his "Making Great Strides" Tour. So far this year, the Judge has held all-staff meetings in the following cities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amarillo</li> <li>• Lubbock</li> <li>• Dallas</li> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Austin</li> <li>• Waco</li> <li>• Galveston</li> <li>• Beaumont</li> <li>• San Antonio</li> </ul>
<p><u>Employee Outreach and Recognition: CPS Outreach</u></p> <p>CPS Regional Directors are calling staff who have been with the agency at least six months to "check in".</p>	<p>Feedback from staff thus far has been positive. As of June 2015, of the approximately 1,600 persons identified to get a call over the course of the project, 97 percent remain employed with CPS.</p>
<p><u>Employee Outreach and Recognition: Rookie-Year and Other Surveys</u></p>	<p>The Rookie-Year survey is under review, and other survey tools are being developed, in collaboration with The Child and Family</p>

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<p>New employees were surveyed at 3-, 6-, and 12-month tenure marks to gather feedback on their work environment and determine whether they feel engaged by their unit</p>	<p>Research Partnership at the University of Texas' LBJ School of Public Affairs. These surveys will be aligned in terms of timeline and feedback to ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competencies sought through the application process' behavioral assessment are being exhibited by those we hire.</li> <li>• CPS Professional Development, along with mentorship, are instilling the skills necessary to be successful as a fully case-assignable caseworker.</li> <li>• If workers do leave, the agency is able to capture the reasons why.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Employee Outreach and Recognition: DFPS Stars</u></p> <p>This program honors outstanding employees nominated by their colleagues, from each region and across all programs, on a monthly basis. The winners from each region are featured in the DFPS employee newsletter and are awarded with a certificate and a gold star pin in a face-to-face meeting with the Regional Director, his or her designee, or the DFPS Commissioner. The objective is to celebrate employees who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty to fulfill our agency's mission.</p>	<p>The DFPS Stars continues to grow and every region has had at least one person selected for the honor. Thus far, 70 employees have received the designation between November 2014 and September 2015.</p>
<p><u>Employee Outreach and Recognition: Survey of Employee Engagement</u></p> <p>DFPS recognizes that the workload, emotional impact, and complexity of everyday responsibilities of frontline staff can impact the morale of even the most resilient workers. DFPS uses the Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) as a means to evaluate morale. The SEE, developed by the University of Texas Institute for Organizational Excellence, provides an opportunity to collect the opinions of all employees regarding organizational effectiveness, working environment, staff engagement, and job satisfaction.</p>	<p>The agency is preparing to initiate the next SEE which is scheduled to begin in early 2016. The agency hopes to exceed its 2014 response rate of 69%.</p>

## Conclusion

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The agency continues working towards a professional and stable workforce by addressing all components of the workforce pipeline, beginning with recruitment - where DFPS is developing the processes and skills necessary to find and attract the best candidates - to creating an environment in which workers want to stay.

The newly created Workforce Development Division is tasked with continuing the implementation of the agency's workforce initiatives and ensuring that processes are put in place to monitor the outcomes of initiatives underway and those planned for the future.