2006
DSHS Employee Survey

Washington State
Department of Social & Health Services

RDA Research & Data
Analysis Division

DSHS

WASHINGTON STATE
**Department of Social
and Health Services**

Headquarters located at:
14th and Jefferson Street
Olympia, WA 98504

Office of the Secretary
Robin Arnold-Williams, Secretary

**Management Services
Administration**

*Kathleen Brockman, Chief
Administrative Officer*

**Research and Data Analysis
Division**
Elizabeth Kohlenberg, Director

RDA

Information About This Publication

Title: 2006 DSHS Employee Survey

Abstract: 13,344 employees completed the employee survey. They addressed communication, supervisor/manager support, fairness, job satisfaction, and business practices.

Employees appreciate the chance to work with and assist needy residents of Washington State; supportive, dedicated co-workers; supervisors who support, respect, listen, encourage autonomy, and reward good work; clear information and guidelines; and fair treatment – especially in hiring/promotions.

Employees would like to see management decisions that are based on in-depth knowledge of the realities and pressures of line work; input from line workers who will be impacted by decisions; respect for employees' time, expertise and dedication; accountability for all levels of the organization; and concern for the welfare of both clients and employees, rather than "bean counting" and "number crunching."

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Authors: Nancy Raiha, MSW, Ph.D., Deanna Rankos, Ph.D., Monica Stanley, Debbie Macy, Barbara Allard, MSW

Contributors: Andrea Stanley, Penne Call-Apgar, Craig Woodworth, John Doane, Aaron Hutchinson, Catherine Douglas

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DSHS . . . *improves the quality of life for individuals and families in need in Washington State*

DSHS currently serves
one in four state
residents

RDA . . . Brings data and analysis
to the decision-making agenda:
- Better work process
- Better decisions
- Better outcomes

2006

DSHS Employee Survey

Appendices are available in conjunction with this report on the RDA Website:
www1.dshs.wa.gov/rda

Background, Methods and Response Rates ● Detailed Results by Each Question ● Detailed Analysis of Narrative Comment Themes ● Comparison between 2006 and the Previous DSHS Employee Survey ● Comparison of Institutional Staff and All Others ● Comparison with All Employee Surveys

Executive Summary

The 2006 employee survey is the third DSHS-wide employee survey. This survey differs from previous surveys in its high profile, wide-spread participation, and extensive follow-up.[1] The survey was:

- Administered in conjunction with a survey of all state employees, sponsored by Governor Gregoire
- Customized to meet the needs of each program
- Available to all employees simultaneously – from March 1 to April 14, 2006
- Strongly emphasized by Secretary Arnold-Williams, DSHS Assistant Secretaries, and Division Directors, resulting in an exceptional **77%** response rate
- Followed up with Action Plans from all parts of the organization[2]

Results

The 13,344 employees who completed the survey had much to say. Answers to the 18 standard questions are displayed on page 2. The answers to these standard questions are further clarified by the more than 20,000 written responses to narrative questions, summarized on page 2. The first five chapters of this report examine responses to both standard and narrative questions, summarizing employee sentiments in the areas of communication, supervisor/manager support, fairness, job satisfaction, and business practices.

The Most Common Themes:

Employees appreciate:

- The chance to work with and assist needy residents of Washington State
- Supportive, dedicated co-workers
- Supervisors who support, respect, listen, encourage autonomy, and reward good work
- Clear information and guidelines
- Fair treatment – especially in hiring/promotions

Employees would like to see management decisions that are based on:

- In-depth knowledge of the realities and pressures of line work
- Input from line workers who will be impacted by decisions
- Respect for employees' time, expertise, and dedication
- Accountability for all levels of the organization
- Concern for the welfare of both clients and employees, rather than "bean counting" and "number crunching"

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[1] See Appendix A for more detailed description of methods and response rates.
[2] See Chapter 6 for more information about Action Plans

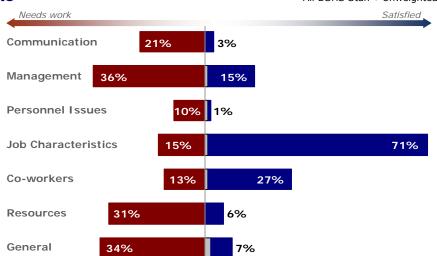## Percent of Employees Answering "Usually" or "Always"

All DSHS Staff ● Weighted

COMMUNICATION

Question	Percent
I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work	50%
I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things	50%
I receive the information I need to do my job effectively	64%
I know what is expected of me at work	84%
I know how my agency measures its success	50%
I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency	79%

SUPERVISOR/MANAGER SUPPORT

Question	Percent
My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance	64%
My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information about my performance	54%
I receive recognition for a job well done	49%
My supervisor holds me and my co-workers accountable for performance	78%
My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect	81%

FAIRNESS/DIVERSITY

Question	Percent
In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination	67%

THE DAILY JOB

Question	Percent
I have opportunities at work to learn and grow	53%
A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup	66%

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Question	Percent
I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in my program	35%
My agency uses my time and talents well	51%
In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes	43%
I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively	60%

Major Comment Themes – Percent of respondents who made comments

All DSHS Staff ● Unweighted

Needs work ← → *Satisfied*

Theme	Needs work	Satisfied
Communication	21%	3%
Management	36%	15%
Personnel Issues	10%	1%
Job Characteristics	15%	71%
Co-workers	13%	27%
Resources	31%	6%
General	34%	7%

NOTE: Percentages show respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents who made narrative comments. Grey areas show neutral or mixed comments.

Communication

What Employees Want

Communication is a very important issue for DSHS employees. It was mentioned by nearly one in four survey respondents.

This chapter addresses the three key aspects of communication most frequently requested by survey respondents:

- **Staff input** – into decisions about change

- **Information sharing** – open and concise information from management

- **Goals, guidelines, and performance measures** – that are clear, consistent, and relevant

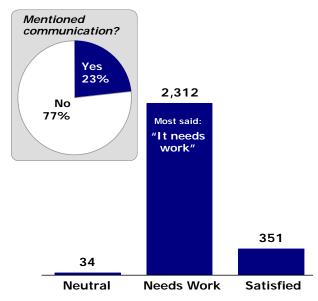Imelda Ang

Laquetta Harrison, Monique Williams, Emajanae Kelley

Karine Kerimova, Abrek Kerimov

Department of Social and Health Services │ Research and Data Analysis Division │ Olympia, WA

THEME | Overall communication

The survey asked employees about various aspects of communication. Of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments, 23% (2,607) mentioned communication.

23% mentioned communication issues*

Mentioned communication?

Yes 23%

No 77%

34
Neutral

2,312
Most said: "It needs work"
Needs Work

351
Satisfied

Survey respondents made it very clear in both written comments and standard questions that communication is a major area for improvement; 89% of those who mentioned communication made suggestions for improvement.

The following pages address the three key communication themes. Of the 2,607 employees who mentioned communication:

- 1,261 (48%) discussed opportunities for staff input into workplace decisions (pages 5-7)
- 783 (30%) talked about information from management (pages 8–10)
- 440 (17%) addressed communication about agency guidelines and performance measures (pages 11–13)

VOICES . . .

A number of respondents were happy with communication in a global sense
- "I appreciate the efforts that have been made so far in communication."
- "I especially like the dynamics of my immediate peer group and our supervisor. We are able to trust, respect, openly communicate and rely on each other. I like that the division has an open door policy and is proactive, ready to help resolve issues as they arise and will support decisions made."
- "The following applies to my immediate supervisors (not upper management) — cohesiveness, open communication, a team learning environment, opportunities to be creative and therapeutic for patients, and to express concerns."
- "I appreciate working for an administrator who is supportive, sets goals and objectives, and allows input on how to reach our goals."

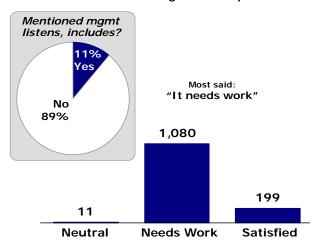**Others felt that increased communication is needed**
- "Increased cooperation, coordination and communication between DSHS administrations on issues/topics that overlap (e.g. potential legislation or specific program policies)."
- "More open communication between Olympia and the region and local offices. It seems that when an opinion is asked for by Olympia, before feedback has been given, a decision is already announced."
- "More communication...It seems we are on a 'need to know' basis, and nobody thinks we need to know."
- "Better communication. There is a substantial lack of communication between my immediate and secondary supervisors/management that, for the good of the agency, needs to be corrected. Almost nothing, even when directly impacting our work, is passed down to my 'workgroup' in a timely manner."
- "Communication is a one-way street. There are no opportunities to change the way we do our work. One can voice opinions, but it goes no further because employee input has little effect on policy."
- "Since almost all memos are sent by computer, it would be most helpful if we 'had' a computer so we could read memos. We are kept in the dark as far as communication."
- "Improved communication between field offices and the region. There is often an 'us vs. them' mentality. Less disconnect between state office and the field. We need a more coherent work model and plan."
- "Quicker communication of news and decisions to stop the rumor mill."
- "The communication stinks. We see little or no information that gets down to the line worker level."
- "Management wrongly assumes that if they e-mail something out, everyone immediately knows. Most of us still have to wait for the grapevine to get the message to us — it is usually more accurate anyway."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Listening to input from staff

1,261 of the 11,176 survey respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of managers listening to staff.

11% mentioned listening to staff input*

Mentioned mgmt listens, includes?

11% Yes

No 89%

Most said: "It needs work"

1,080

11

199

Neutral **Needs Work** **Satisfied**

Of the 1,261 respondents who wrote comments about staff input, 16% (199) felt their input was listened to and used in decision-making. Many of these positive comments concerned decisions made at the local level.

Most of the comments (86%) indicated there was room for improvement in this area. The 1,080 comments requesting improvement often concerned senior management decisions. Employees asked management to:

- Give us early notice about possible changes
- Solicit our input
- Actually consider our input (don't just give lip service)

VOICES . . .

Employees are happy when they are involved in decisions
- "My supervisor and administrator consider issues brought to their attention and always offer staff the opportunity for input."
- "I like the fact that management involves all members of the staff in decisions. They make every employee feel like they are an important part of the team."
- "I appreciate that the input I present is listened to and receives consideration."
- "I enjoy the fact that when there is an issue to be dealt with and work to be done, DASA makes the effort to coordinate with all staff involved to make a decision on how to proceed."
- "Less telling, more listening."
- "My supervisor involves staff by asking for input before her final decision. She listens to what staff suggest."

Some staff commented on the need to ask for their ideas before changing policy or procedures
- "Employee input is seldom requested, even when it directly affects an employee's workload. Who better knows the workable process and things to consider than the ones doing the work?"
- "It would be nice if the people who make the decisions would ask the people that are actually doing the job if things are working so we could tell them, without getting in trouble."
- "Field staff have given input after input, but to no avail. You do not listen and then we are labeled as 'just staff resistant to change' as quoted on our agency website."
- "If major changes are coming, outcomes are always much better if people are part of the decision making."
- "Do not get input from the employees and then not use the input or explain why the input wasn't used."

Other staff asked that management actually use the employee input after it is requested
- "We are frequently asked for input, but seldom is that input used. It seems we are asked for input to satisfy some requirement."
- "Instead of the powers to be just dictating the way things are to be, it would be nice if they listened to those that will be affected by their decisions and incorporate those ideas into beneficial guidance."
- "There is a big difference between being able to give input and having someone actually listen and consider the input. The supervisor needs to articulate why the input isn't the best fit rather than just blow it off."
- "Leadership — stop making decisions first, and then asking our opinion on what we should do."

Employees also noted the need for advance notice when changes are being considered
- "When administrators, supervisors or support services know of an upcoming change or event, it is assumed that everyone also knows about it. Those who are impacted the most are frequently the last to know."
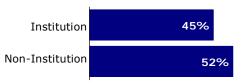- "We often get information after the fact and without any opportunity for input."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.
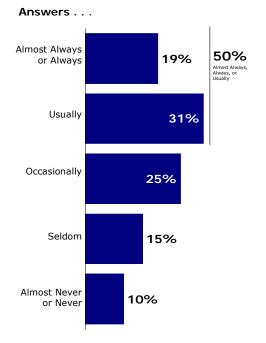
QUESTION | I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

One out of every two employees reported that they have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting their work. However, 25% of staff do not feel they have consistent opportunities to have a say in how decisions impact their work. Based on employees' written comments, staff like it when supervisors and managers:

- Encourage and consider all input, especially if decisions affect employees' work

- Actually use the input when possible

- Give reasons why input was not used

- Don't ask for input if it won't be considered

Fewer staff in institutions reported having input into decisions affecting their jobs.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	19%
Usually	31%
Occasionally	25%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	10%

50% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	45%
Non-Institution	52%

VOICES . . .

Some staff reported many opportunities for input into decisions
- "I know that any comment I make on how we can better our job performance is actually heard."
- "Our Director continues to make an effort to be inclusive of ALL staff in our division."
- "Our ideas are valued and we can take risks without fear that failure will be punished."
- "The freedom to express new ideas and have them treated with consideration."
- "We are always free to express our opinions and views without fear of retribution."

Conversely, other employees commented that they were not asked or that their input was ignored
- "If employee input is offered, it is not very well received. This is tragic considering we have good ideas that should be considered and possibly implemented. This hinders morale and productivity."
- "We were asked to review and offer suggestions on a form — the form had already gone to print so our input was irrelevant. We were later told to use it 'as is' and not complain. We are professionals, with advanced degrees and years of experience. Our input/feedback is consistently ignored."
- "I have the opportunity for input (or I take it), but my input is generally overruled or ignored. If the opinion/input of those doing the work is going to be disregarded, I'd like it to be for a clear and rational reason. Maybe part of the problem is just an unwillingness to spend the time to explain the rationale."

They suggested that upper management consider asking for and using field staff input
- "I would like to see upper management not make decisions affecting work that they know nothing about. They should first speak to the people doing the work."
- "There are many changes planned and staff are not involved from the start. I rarely 'receive' the information (to make the change) I need and must go out and actively collect it."
- "I believe HQ staff should be mandated to work in the field on a rotating basis to understand how the decisions they make and the information they choose not to share affect line staff. Decisions are made in secrecy and without the input of supervisors or line staff."
- "Headquarters and local managers should spend more time with the line staff to decide what's needed."
- "Management asks for our input, but their minds are already made up."
- "I would like to have input on the policy I am supposed to implement."
- "I'd like a voice in changes in the division; not a management bulletin after the changes."
- "People are afraid to offer opinions/give input for fear of negative consequences. I have to be very careful."
- "Management needs to have experience in the job being done and listen to line staff when changing policy."

QUESTION | I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things

One out of every two employees reported that they are encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things. Another 22% reported that they are occasionally encouraged to find creative solutions to workplace problems.
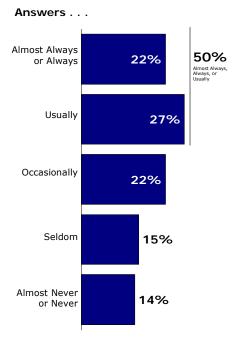
Nearly 30% say they are seldom or never encouraged to offer suggestions. Staff like it when they are:

- Encouraged to suggest new ways of working
- Free to be creative
- Given reasons why ideas were not used

Employees like it when their input is actually used

Fewer staff in institutions said they are encouraged to find new ways of doing things.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	22%
Usually	27%
Occasionally	22%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	14%

50%
Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	44%
Non-Institution	52%

VOICES . . .

Many staff reported working with managers who encourage input to improve work processes
- "I am given room to be creative with ideas to improve the job and environment. We are encouraged to think outside the box!"
- "I am encouraged and backed to figure my own ways of doing things. They respect my input and back me to make changes I would like to see."
- "I know what is expected and am able to meet the goals and expectations with the freedom of creativity in making the needed decision."
- "I appreciate that creativity is encouraged in my position. I feel comfortable suggesting new ways to do business. Taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary!"
- "I am encouraged to approach my supervisor with concerns and/or problems and we are able to identify a resolution together."
- "The fact that my input is encouraged and respected in making decisions pertaining to office operation."
- "I like that I am encouraged…to create as I go to help better production of assigned tasks, and to work in a team where all ideas are looked at and provided good constructive criticism."

Other staff described a lack of encouragement to come up with improvements
- "When I suggest ways we can save a great deal of money and resources, I am told 'that is not your job.'"
- "I would like to see more encouragement on giving new ideas to help make our jobs better. I'd like a chance to give feedback on new ideas or new ways of doing things."
- "Headquarters does not invite creativity. It seems people are so stuck in the 'same old' routines and ways."
- "I've come to learn that creativity and passion are deleterious to upward mobility."
- "Our input is neither wanted nor valued and it is interpreted as a challenge to our director's authority."
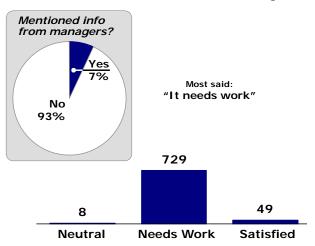
Staff feel strongly that their input should be considered
- "I would like to see line staff asked about how they might be able to do their job more efficiently."
- "Receive input from all levels of the organization before implementing change. Look at the whole picture."
- "I am so TIRED of having policy developed by people who have no idea what field work is like TODAY!"
- "When you ask what we think, be prepared to deal with and respond in a positive way."
- "It would be nice if the grunts in the field had more input in decisions from Olympia."
- "Upper management might listen better to those on the front line. Too many decisions are top down."

THEME | Information communicated from managers to staff

Seven percent of staff who wrote comments (783 of 11,176) talked about managers providing information.

7% mentioned communication from managers*

Mentioned info from managers?

Yes 7%

No 93%

Most said:
"It needs work"

729

8   49

Neutral   Needs Work   Satisfied

Almost all of the 783 comments about information sharing by management (93%) suggested room for improvement.

A few (6%) specifically mentioned their satisfaction with information flow from supervisors.

Employees commented on areas for improvement – both for local managers and supervisors, and for upper management:

- Ambiguous communications
- Constant change
- After-the-fact notification of changes
- Too little or too much information

VOICES . . .

Some employees praised the open and supportive communication style of their supervisors
- "My supervisor is what I like about my current job. She is a good listener and communicates well."
- "I have a great supervisor who is supportive. We are able to discuss the things that frustrate me. She is not able to do anything to change things, but it is good being able to talk."
- "My supervisor gives me feedback and I willingly listen to learn. She gives me feedback on things I need to improve upon and challenges me to mature in those areas."
- "I love who I work for. She tells it how it is — no beating around the bush. She is a go-getter, fair and a strong leader. She has a constant open door to all of her employees and treats everyone with respect."

Other employees feel communication from supervisors could be improved in a number of ways
- "My manager never returns my calls."
- "My supervisor ignores voice mail and emails for months and then deletes them without reading. We end up with crisis situations because management ignores our communications."
- "More communication — there is absolutely no communication between my boss and her employees, AT ALL."

Some employees identified needed changes in communication from upper management
- "We need more information and visits from headquarters so they can learn more about the work we do."
- "I would like to have more information from headquarters and the region on a regular basis about changes, updates, what's happening internally; not just manager bulletins after changes are made."
- "So much of the direction from headquarters is ambiguous, contradictory and so far out of touch with the reality of work on the line. They make knee jerk decisions based on the latest law suit or headline with lip service paid to seeking 'input from the line.'"
- "I would like to see less constant change in procedures. I would to see more input from those who actually do the work and a better way of disseminating the information to those who need it."
- "Better communication from the regional and headquarters levels about current initiatives and field impact."
- "Senior leaders need to communicate the direction they are considering instead of surprising staff with an edict. Make sure they ask for input from those whose job duties would be affected by changes in direction."
- "There are many examples of communications from upper management that are not respectful, clear or immediate. I would be much happier and feel more satisfaction at work if the statements made by our leader were congruent with her actions."
- "A 'shadow training' for top CA and AA managers to give them current, practical awareness of the complicated tasks, challenges and time constraints that line staff face."
- "Better communication - a two-way process with feedback. Not just a pass through from top down."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

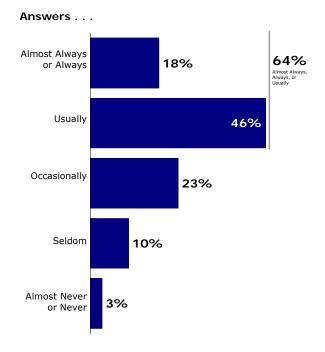## QUESTION | I receive the information I need to do my job effectively

Six out of ten employees (64%) reported having the information needed to do their job effectively. However, 13% said they often did not have the information needed to do the job well.

As the comments below show, some employees wrote about getting timely and complete information from their supervisors.

Many more, however, commented on the lack of timely, complete and accurate information needed to do the job. Communication problems between staff, direct supervisors, regional and headquarters staff were identified.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	18%
Usually	46%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	10%
Almost Never or Never	3%

64% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Fewer staff in institutions reported having the information they needed to do their jobs.

Institution	59%
Non-Institution	66%

VOICES . . .

Many employees commented on receiving the information they needed to do the job
- "My manager is respectful and keeps me informed about what is going on."
- "This job supports independence, decision-making, and growth through training. Our office allows for program clarification among peers, and when a decision cannot be made on that level, we are encouraged to take the matter to a supervisor. And, it is great knowing that the administrator encourages an open door policy to approach him with all matters."
- "New staff are given good overall training but are not given much individual time to help them understand."
- "My supervisor keeps the management team fully informed, shares information freely and encourages us to do the same with our units. This makes for a well-informed group of workers who are happy to come to work. They know what is going on and why."

Some employees feel that job-related information from direct supervisors could be improved
- "Less of a bottle-neck for information (both coming and going) from my supervisor."
- "We must search out answers to our questions from other sources. This is hindering our efficiency."
- "Be consistent with the policy/decision rather than change it once a week. Supervisors should make announcements to all members of the unit, instead of just a few."
- "New management has made drastic changes with no explanation or forewarning causing many hard feelings and low morale. A manager should never say 'because I can' when asked."
- "Changes in our work procedures are not written, but provided verbally, and usually not revealed to all employees of the 'workgroup' at the same time. This leads to confusion as the instructions may change from day to day, may not be given to everyone and are dependent on interpretation and the supervisor's memory. Constant change occurs until something works and is decided upon, causing a greater risk of error and again less efficiency."
- "I'd like more precise communication. Sometimes I feel lost in the maze of information from several levels, none of which helps me in my daily functioning. The problem is not having enough information but having so much superfluous information to dig through to get to the meaningful information to do the job."
- "The leadership is invisible and the aura of secrecy is deplorable. No one ever knows what is going on."
- "No waiting to the last minute to inform us of policy decisions. More mass mailings to inform families of changes. I am tired of hearing that apparently we were supposed to be doing that last August. The lack of communication dumbfounds me since we have more than a few means of communicating."
- "I have to go to third parties to get information to complete my assignments. I have been refused direct access many times."

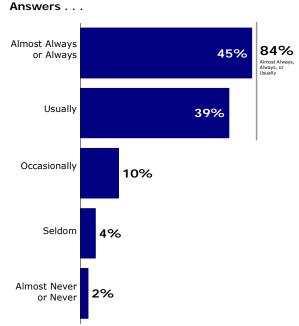## QUESTION | I know what is expected of me at work

Most DSHS employees understand the job expectations at work. Eight out of ten employees know what is expected of them at work most of the time. Six percent indicated that they seldom or never know what is expected of them.

Some employees used the survey to express appreciation for supervisors who provide clear, consistent job expectations.

Others, however, noted an absence of clear job expectations. A number of employees wrote about frequent changes in job expectations in the field. Employees also appreciate autonomy to perform the job in their own way.

Slightly fewer staff in institutions reported knowing job expectations.

Answers . . .

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	45%
Usually	39%
Occasionally	10%
Seldom	4%
Almost Never or Never	2%

84% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	82%
Non-Institution	85%

VOICES . . .

Some employees are happy with the clear job expectations provided by their supervisors
- "Management sets expectations and clearly defines what is needed in our office. We function as a team. It is a rare gift and the first time I have experienced it in fifteen years with the agency."
- "Clear expectations and high productivity are achieved through a focused, consistent, and congenial team."
- "My supervisor clearly sets expectations and then does not micromanage me."
- "My supervisor outlines clearly her expectations for my job performance, but could back off on micromanaging a bit and allow for more autonomous work decisions."

Other employees wrote that job expectations were unclear, inconsistent and unrealistic
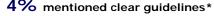- "The job expectations are not clear, the oversight from Olympia is extremely judgmental and critical, and the work is unmanageable. We are conscientious and efficient in our efforts to maintain best practices despite a serious lack of direction and resources."
- "I'd like a clear and precise mission statement with job related expectations of how my position is expected to meet those goals."
- "Please, please settle on one consistent set of expectations. We have CFSR/COA standards, RCW/WAC and Children's Administration policy and the Braam panel's expectations. Can we just have one set of expectations? It feels like it changes by the minute in the field."
- "I'd like a clear set of expectations that a reasonable person can interpret and follow."
- "I need my work expectations to be clearer. I can't do what I am not reasonably informed to do."
- "I'd like a more accurate, quantifiable, and consistent job description."
- "We are told to do things one day, then different the next — AND shamed if we can't keep up with changes."
- "My supervisor rarely shares information and my unit finds out from another unit."

Many employees appreciate having the latitude to be creative and autonomous in daily work
- "I like that I have a lot of latitude to make decisions and that I am also held accountable."
- "I know what needs to be done and my supervisor trusts me to do it. If I have questions, he is always there to provide answers or guide me."
- "What I like best is the ability to do my job without a great deal of micromanagement from superiors."
- "I have a lot of autonomy/flexibility. I can schedule my own time and workload as long as the work gets done. My boss does not micromanage; she treats us like trustworthy adults. I like this very much!"
- "I love the creativity and problem solving my work requires. It is never boring."

THEME | Clear guidelines from management

An important factor in communication is clear guidelines from management to staff. This element of communication includes not only clear guidelines, but also communication of policies, roles, expectations, priorities, and mission. Of the 11,176 employees who made comments, 440 (4%) wrote about the need for clear guidelines from management.

4% mentioned clear guidelines*

Mentioned clear guidelines?

Yes 4%

No 96%

Most said: "It needs work"

Neutral	Needs Work	Satisfied
7	364	73

Most (83%) of the 440 who commented suggested a need for improving communication about guidelines, policies, roles, expectations, and mission.

As the comments below illustrate, many suggested that DSHS should articulate a clearer vision and that guidelines and policy should be consistent. Constant change is a source of frustration for some. Employees like it when:

- Guidelines are clear and consistent
- There is stability in vision and policies
- All employees (line workers and managers) are held accountable

VOICES . . .

Some employees clearly understand the vision and guidelines
- "Our value statement is reviewed on a regular basis and input on 'how we're doing' at living our values is an ongoing agenda item. Input from all levels is valued."
- "My supervisor provides positive feedback, is accessible, and communicates our goals and objectives."
- "It has become very exciting to have a real leader. To know what direction we are headed is invaluable and makes everyone work harder."

Others call for clear and consistent vision, guidelines and stability
- "My current job has no clear objectives. What is done one day is not done the next. No consistency. My supervisor is very controlling and will not allow independent thought from experienced staff."
- "Constant change. How can a line worker know what is expected when management can't figure it out and/or continually changes the expectations/rules?"
- "I'd like regulations implemented as they are written and not have constant revision and clarification that makes enforcement of these regulations cumbersome and inconsistent. This 'back and forth' hurts our professional image in the community and frustrates and confuses our customers."
- "I'd like HQs to set realistic priorities given existing resources, develop consistent policies and procedures and make changes based on successful field testing and evidence based practice."
- "There seem to be inconsistencies and ambiguity in how policies are implemented and interpreted by senior management. My perception is that these decisions are reactionary in nature and result in a number of unnecessary tasks for line workers. Accountability to taxpayers and a strong perception that I am truly being used to accomplish the agency's mission are two values that guide my work."
- "Interpretation, application and dissemination of policies, procedures, work guidelines and expectations sometimes seem to fluctuate from day to day, making it difficult to provide quality services. This lack of consistency has led to increased frustration in how to meet the needs of internal and external customers."

Employees like it when everyone is held accountable
- "I would like to see definite decisions made and accountability for those decisions. The ambivalence and indecisiveness get tiring and there is a sense of hopelessness."
- "My supervisor expects that everyone gives 100% in what they are doing — it doesn't matter if mistakes are made as long as you are trying. Most importantly, she enforces accountability!"
- "We are held accountable — our managers are not. I don't mean supervisors or even regional managers. I mean the ones at the top who decide how we do our jobs without ever asking us or having done the work."
- "Accountability is fleeting and is only monitored when something is in the spotlight. It is hard to keep people accountable for verbal tasks that have no expectations. There is no accountability without tracking."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

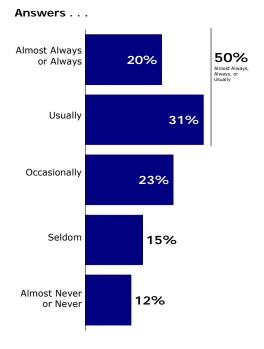## QUESTION | I know how my agency measures its success

One out of every two employees reported being aware of how DSHS measures success. However, 27% reported that they seldom or never know how success is measured.

Some employees who wrote comments like performance measures and suggest use of the data to hold staff accountable.

A number of the employees who are familiar with agency performance measures question their efficacy. Other employees feel the emphasis on data and numbers reduces time spent with clients. Some employees would like measures to focus on quality of services. (See employee comments below.)

Far fewer staff in institutions said that they always or usually know how the agency measures success.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	20%
Usually	31%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	12%

50%
Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	37%
Non-Institution	56%

VOICES . . .

Some people appreciate clear goals and performance measures
- "Goals and target are clear. I believe that HQ staff are working hard to protect the interests of the employees and that we are valued."
- "My performance evaluations, getting timely court hearings, timely visits with clients and the other performance measures show that I can be trusted to do a good job."
- "Although I don't always feel I know where executive management wants to go, I do feel I'm given authority and responsibility to pursue and make valuable impacts to the work and the outcomes."
- "I love what I do and I have the flexibility to be creative to get to the outcomes that have been asked."

Many question whether current performance measures genuinely capture how well we are performing the mission — or if these measures actually detract from client services
- "Less emphasis on the number of assessments per month – we are killing ourselves for the numbers."
- "I would like a shift from over-emphasis on measuring tasks to the quality performance of tasks."
- "There is too much focus on performance measures. While I understand their place in our system as a 'necessary evil,' it has gotten to the point that doing the job comes down to 'how will this affect my performance numbers?' not what is the 'best' or 'most reasonable' way to manage a case."
- "There should be more emphasis on the quality of the work we do as opposed to just a numbers-based performance measure. Saving a buck isn't always an indication of quality work. In mission statements and goals we like to mention quality, but it becomes apparent it is really more about cost savings and stats."
- "It would be a huge help if management cared. We need the time and resources to do our job. We are held under a microscope to get numbers up; however, we are given no time. A great deal of our time is spent doing eligibility. We are raked over coals for not meeting the numbers that we don't have time to meet."
- "I'd like more intelligent/knowledgeable use of statistical performance measures that recognize the every-day, unique nature of this work and the unfathomable variety of human circumstances."

Some employees don't know or understand how performance measures relate to their work
- "There is no clear definition of success or measures of performance linked to tasks. Structure is lacking."
- "Other than avoiding litigation, I really do not know how my agency measures its success."
- "I know that there are performance measures for Children's Administration as a whole, but I don't see any way to relate them to my work. I am not aware of any performance measures specifically within my office."
- "There are no performance measures, no defined expectations, no objective criteria, no real deadlines to meet, no quality standards. It's all about 'the process,' but we really don't measure it or know if it works."

QUESTION | I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency

A large percentage of employees (79%) understand how their work supports agency goals. Many of these feel that goals are clear and important.
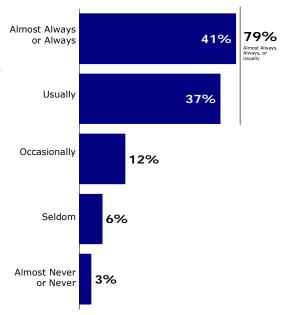
However, one of every ten employees does not understand how his or her work contributes to agency goals.

Some employees commented that the goals are difficult to reach without sufficient staff, services and resources. Others feel their talents were not being used to support agency goals. Some did not know of performance measures related to their own work.

Fewer staff in institutions said that they always or usually know how their work contributes to agency goals.

Percent of All Employees who Responded

Almost Always or Always: 41% — **79%** Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Usually: 37%

Occasionally: 12%

Seldom: 6%

Almost Never or Never: 3%

Institution: 71%

Non-Institution: 82%

VOICES . . .

Some people are proud of their contribution to agency goals
- "I enjoy meeting the mission of the agency each and every day. I enjoy digging deep within myself to find growth and challenges to serve the public interest with integrity and honesty. I am proud of what I do and proud of being a Washington state employee."
- "I like being able to help people and to help them through a very confusing process when trying to access care. I believe in the mission of this agency and what it can do for our communities."
- "What I like best about my current job is that I have the opportunity to fully understand what my division's mission is and truly watch it at work."

Others feel that agency goals are not clear or consistent
- "I find it odd that our division does not have an understandable/reasonable mission statement and related goals. I believe that it would be very beneficial if goals were developed that had significant meaning to all staff (especially the line staff who usually carry the major responsibility)."
- "We need clear vision, goals and direction from the Administration including current priorities and outcomes clearly communicated, including on the intranet. We need a clear understanding of how each Division and each employee supports the vision/goals of the Administration. Having this clearly documented and communicated will help the employee see how their work supports the goals and priorities of the Administration. Conversely, it will also bring to light how certain practices by individuals or groups work against the goals and priorities of the Administration."
- "I feel there needs to be continual communication from the top down on the ever-changing goals and how my work contributes to them."

Some feel that the agency doesn't use their talents or provide sufficient resources to achieve goals
- "We have clearly stated goals, we have great people, but they are so overworked that they cannot reach goals. I hate seeing myself and co-workers over-extending themselves to meet goals that are impossible."
- "We don't have enough workers to accomplish our goals. We are not on the same page. It is quantity and not quality at my office."
- "More trickle down information about strategic initiatives and their specific relation to projects, including expected results. Connect the big picture with the little details so change management can be more efficient and effective."
- "The creation of expectations without creation of resources is a set-up for failure."
- "I would like to see more staff and resources to be able to do my job effectively and meet standards."

Supervisor/Manager Support

What Employees Want

Support, especially from the immediate supervisor, is very important to employees. Nearly half of survey respondents mentioned issues related to supervisor and manager support.

Employees want five main types of management support:

- **Help and mentoring** – Be available and helpful

- **Feedback** – Let us know how we are doing and how we can improve

- **Recognition** – Recognize and reward excellence – both on the job and through formal programs

- **Accountability** – Hold all employees accountable for their performance

- **Courtesy and respect –** Treat every employee with value and dignity

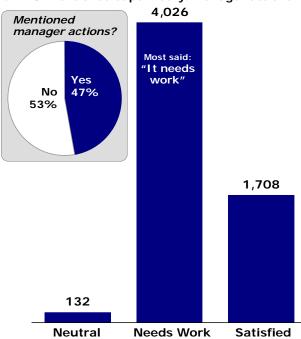Brita Skoog, Deputy Secretary Liz Dunbar, Gayle Hatfield

HRSA takes a bite

THEME | General treatment by supervisors and managers

Treatment by supervisors and managers was an important theme of employee comments. Of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments, 5,278 (47%) mentioned supervisor/manager support and other aspects of supervisor/manager behavior.

47% mentioned supervisory/manager actions*

Mentioned manager actions?

No 53%
Yes 47%

4,026
Most said: "It needs work"

1,708

132

Neutral **Needs Work** **Satisfied**

Some staff (32%) wrote about positive support and relationships with supervisors and managers. A majority (76%) identified major areas for improvement in the way supervisors and managers treat staff. Many, but not all of these issues are addressed in this chapter.

Of the 5,278 respondents* who wrote about manager treatment of employees:

- 1,519 (29%) discussed feedback, support and mentoring (pages 17-19)
- 1,035 (20%) mentioned recognition and awards (pages 20- 21)
- 856 (16%) mentioned courtesy and respect (pages 23-24).
- 955 (18%) focused on fairness and discrimination issues – addressed in Chapter 3 (pages 26-29)
- 3,555 (67%) mentioned a variety of other issues about managers/management. These issues are discussed throughout this report.

VOICES . . .

Employees made many positive comments about supervisors
- "We have wonderful leadership in our division. I am evaluated regularly, I receive useable feedback, and the support I need. I can take any topic forward and I know that my superiors will listen and help me."
- "The supervisors in my office are always willing and available for support and assistance."
- "It's a good feeling to know that you're appreciated, and my supervisor lets me know on many occasions."
- "The supervisors here uphold standards while treating staff with respect and support. Everyone is valued."
- "I appreciate having a manager who trusts my opinion and has taken the time to explain to me what my job is, and then allows me to do it."
- "My manager allows me to do things my way, is active in knowing what is going on, and does pay attention to what I do. If there is a problem, I am told directly what it is; WE work out a solution, and then go on."

Employees commented on the need for both increased recognition and accountability
- "Despite the jokes about state workers, most of the public know we are (for the most part) dedicated public servants doing the best we can with what we have – too bad management doesn't share that opinion."
- "Lower expectations for poor workers kill the drive and ambition of staff that exceed expectations."
- "Employees who do nothing, or very little, should not get a free ride."
- "I would like a manager who shows respect for all workers equally and who provides recognition and positive feedback for a job well done."

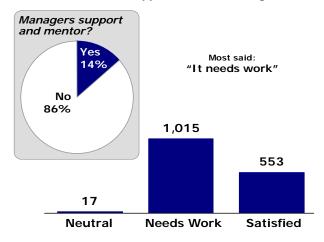**Staff appreciate managers who value and support employees**
- "Our supervisor is always there for us. She lets us give feedback, allows us to vent and then we go on. She does not choose favorites. She sets high standards and encourages us to improve where we are weak."
- "DSHS appears to be so concerned with families but not their own. We too have family issues, day care issues, elderly parent issues, etc. Where's DSHS compassion for their employees?"
- "I don't feel valued, listened to, trusted, or understood. So a person may outwardly treat you with respect, but it feels only skin-deep. Dignity and respect don't substitute for competence or communication!"

*Some employees made more than one type of comment. Total of all categories will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Supervisors and managers support and mentor

1,519 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments talked about the importance of management support and mentoring — including availability, assistance, and feedback.

14% mentioned support and mentoring*

Managers support and mentor?

Yes 14%

No 86%

Most said:
"It needs work"

1,015

553

17

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

Of the 1,519 respondents who wrote about management support, mentoring, help, availability, and feedback, 36% (553) expressed satisfaction, and 67% (1,015) suggested there was room for improvement.

Staff like it when supervisors and managers:

- Are accessible to help and mentor
- Provide clear expectations
- Show sincere appreciation for good work
- Give job-specific feedback to improve
- Avoid micromanaging

VOICES . . .

Employees like it when supervisors are responsive, available and knowledgeable
- "My director and office chief are accessible, willing to talk and relate information accurately and timely."
- "I like that my supervisor has an open door policy, encourages personal growth."
- "I am given responsibility to handle many challenges and if I need help, my manager is there to listen and support me in resolving any roadblocks."
- "The supervisor gives me the professional benefit of being knowledgeable and experienced in 'my' profession. This supervisor instills accountability and is very open for discussions on any aspect of the job."
- "I appreciate my manager's availability when I hit a snag or need to just process out loud."
- "Since some supervisors do not know exactly what skills are required and what its takes to finish a task in their unit, they could not help workers to improve performance."
- "Supervisors might actually get involved in what their workers are doing and give them guidance, standards and timelines. It's sad when a supervisor doesn't know much and cannot provide guidance needed."

Employees appreciate honest feedback, but do not want to be micromanaged
- "Too much feedback is known as micromanaging."
- "I would like to be treated as a professional. Despite the fact that I have a college degree and that I am very good at my job, I am treated like a small child and MICROMANAGED to the Nth degree."
- "I like the freedom to do my job without fear of being micromanaged but always knowing my supervisor is a phone call away for staffing, input, answering questions, etc."
- "Decrease in the amount of micromanagement. We are professionals and should not be treated like children having to check in with their parent about everything we do."

Employees said they like managers who support and mentor for success
- "My supervisor is my mentor. I am treated with respect and given opportunities to lead, learn, and grow."
- "I like my boss, who is always willing to teach and share his knowledge. He is also patient and supportive."
- "My boss supports me, gives me the reins, and offers me lots of training."
- "I have been truly supported and encouraged to perform beyond what is normally expected. I have advanced on a promotional path beyond my expectations."
- "We need an administration that mentors, coaches and helps. I see untapped potential in people that can be channeled more productively."
- "Stop giving lip service about mentoring and helping employees advance. Actually, take action that produces results. Provide opportunities for ALL staff, not just supervisors and upper management."
- "Supervisors, especially the inexperienced, need more mentoring from managers to succeed."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.
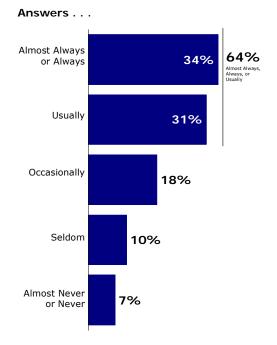
QUESTION | My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance

Nearly two out of every three employees reported that their supervisors give consistent, ongoing feedback. However, 17% of staff reported seldom or never receiving feedback from their supervisor. Employee comments provide insight into the importance of feedback, coaching, and praise. Staff appreciate supervisors who:

- Provide honest and consistent feedback
- Provide direct, positive and constructive coaching to improve performance
- Give deserved praise often
- Show care and concern for employees as people

Answers . . .

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	34%
Usually	31%
Occasionally	18%
Seldom	10%
Almost Never or Never	7%

64% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Fewer staff in institutions reported receiving feedback from supervisors.

	%
Institution	58%
Non-Institution	67%

VOICES . . .

Many employees report receiving great feedback from supervisors
- "My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect and gives me ongoing feedback to help me improve."
- "The supervisors here are very proactive in situational training and development."
- "Staff need to feel that their work has value, is worthy and that they are trusted and appreciated. It starts with providing a safe environment, listening and providing positive feedback along with corrective training."
- "I like that the QA process helps me get better and better, without fault and blame."
- "My current supervisor excels at positive feedback."
- "I know that any comments I may make regarding how we can better our job performance are actually heard. Feedback from management is fantastic."

Employees like it when the feedback helps them to do a better job
- "I would like to have set expectations and feedback from my supervisor. Not just doing an evaluation because it is required, but actual feedback that is specific to me in my position."
- "I would like clear expectations. I would like consistent feedback on how I am performing. I would like to feel that the work I do is valued."
- "My supervisor cares about the work we do and gives meaningful feedback. There is a lot of guiding AND growth and not a lot of negative feedback."
- "I would like recognition for a job well done and feedback on issues that need improvement."

Some employees request more recognition and praise for good work
- "More recognition for work done well, more feedback on ways to improve and more opportunities to grow."
- "Positive feedback is never given – just work, work, work."
- "More positive feedback. We usually hear what is going wrong and not what a good job one is doing."
- "I would like a much more positive, supportive, and enjoyable work environment - a greater emphasis on overall quality. Management that uses positive rather than negative feedback as a motivation tool."
- "Less judgmental feedback from Olympia."
- "Being told more than once a year that you did a good job."
- "Positive strokes/acknowledgement are not consistently given by management. People want to be recognized. Recognition does improve performance."

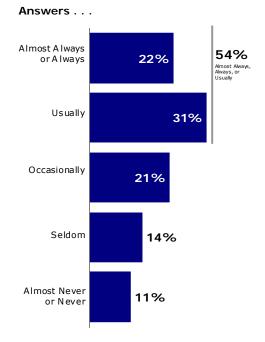## QUESTION | My performance evaluation provides me meaningful information about my performance

54% of employees reported that their performance evaluation always or usually provides meaningful information. However, 25% of employees rated the process as seldom or never helpful. Employees who wrote comments like performance evaluations to:

- Be timely and relevant to the job

- Help them do better work

- Provide candid feedback, both positive and negative

Some staff would like to have input into their supervisor's performance evaluation.

Fewer staff in institutions said that their performance evaluation is meaningful.

Institution	50%
Non-Institution	55%

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	22%
Usually	31%
Occasionally	21%
Seldom	14%
Almost Never or Never	11%

54% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

VOICES . . .

Some employees reported that the performance evaluation process is helpful
- "I have a great boss. The annual performance review recognizes and reinforces my performance."
- "I like being recognized for doing a good job through positive evaluations and pay increases."
- "My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information about my work."

Other employees said they had not had a recent performance evaluation
- "I have not had a performance evaluation in 3 years. I am accountable only to myself."
- "Regular performance evaluations. I have not had an evaluation in seven years; this is common."
- "I have not had an annual evaluation for almost 4 years. I am in WMS so my only venue for a raise is the annual evaluation. I have been deprived of a raise even though my performance has exceeded goals."

Employees want evaluations that help them do a better job
- "I have no idea when I'm doing a good job or if anyone gives a damn. The whole evaluation process is a joke and is going to be an even bigger joke with the new reform."
- "Management pats itself on the back for finally doing timely employee evaluations. Wasn't that part of their job all along? The evaluations are often still just copied from prior years, and basically meaningless."
- "Without any pre-discussion with my supervisor I received my annual evaluation by e-mail. It simply appeared one day. The wording, like her supervision, was demeaning."
- "My performance evaluations are 'rubber stamped' just like the others."

Employees appreciate honest feedback including appropriate praise and suggestions
- "More input about job performance. The evaluations that are given are too generic. They tell you nothing about how to better your job performance."
- "Performance evaluations don't focus on accomplishments and positives, only petty, small issues. Any real insight into the person's talent and abilities are never addressed. Supervisors do not help staff accomplish their set goals from the performance evaluation."
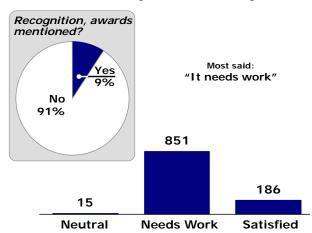
Some employees would like to participate in evaluating the performance of the supervisors
- "I would like to be able to give my input on my supervisor's annual evaluation, rather than have her supervisor evaluate her, since he never sees her perform her job!"
- "Revamp the performance evaluation process so that supervisors and administrators are evaluated by the staff they supervise as well as their supervisors - then actually use the performance evaluations."

THEME | Recognition and awards

Nine percent of staff who wrote comments (1,035 of 11,176) talked about the importance of managers recognizing and praising the good work of employees.

9% mentioned recognition from managers*

Recognition, awards mentioned?

No 91%

Yes 9%

Most said: "It needs work"

15	851	186
Neutral	**Needs Work**	**Satisfied**

Of the 1,035 employees who wrote about recognition, 82% said that this is an important area for improvement.

Employees who wrote comments said:

- Praise us frequently for good work
- Be specific with details of what we did right
- Avoid generalized, canned "thank you's"

Some employees commented on the formal Employee Recognition process, suggesting:

- Recognize more deserving staff
- Avoid giving recognition to the same people
- Simplify the nomination process

VOICES . . .

Employees really appreciate supervisors who frequently praise good work
- "I receive a lot of support, and I can tell the higher-ups really do care about the employees and do not hesitate to recognize work that is done well."
- "Consistent, sincere and frequent acknowledgement and recognition for this work is vitally important – especially when more and more demands in shorter time frames are placed upon workers."
- "My supervisor recognizes good work and good attendance. She spends her own money and gives us rewards with birthday parties and lotto tickets." "
- "Hard work and diligence is always rewarded."
- "What I like best about my current job is recognition for a job well done and positive help when needed."
- "I appreciate the KUDOS and employee recognition. This is the first time I have worked for a state agency that recognizes their employees and I sure do appreciate it."
- "I receive recognition in my annual review. This evaluation reinforces my performance."

Other staff would appreciate more frequent recognition for the work they do
- "Honor employee accomplishments daily rather than just a few people one time a year."
- "I would like to see more appreciation and acknowledgement for our hard work."
- "I'd like to see more positive encouragement of staff, recognition for hard work and the successes we do have."
- "It seems that all verbal recognition and/or monetary recognition are reserved for management, and the employee's hard work and devotion are not considered noteworthy enough."
- "Recognition still goes only to the popular people."
- "My interactions with customers – their overwhelming satisfaction with my work are the only positive feedback/compliment I ever receive. It's great to hear that someone appreciates my work."
- "Sometimes we get thanks from the families we help."

Some employees identified problems with the recognition program
- "I hate employee recognition when just a few people are acknowledged for doing an outstanding job, when many others are more worthy of the recognition (hurt feelings happen). It is not a moral booster."
- "As a supervisor, I spend lots of time writing awards. We are all expected to be good stewards of the state money, be responsive to the public, and meet stringent performance measures to protect residents, but then we are stingy with the only mechanism to recognize quality performance."
- "The employee recognition program does not cut it! So many valuable employees go unrecognized for various reasons. Most of us do not have the time to put in a nomination."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.
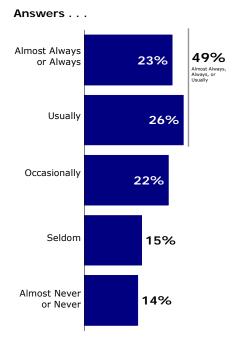
QUESTION | I receive recognition for a job well done

Nearly one of every two employees (49%) reported receiving recognition for good work. However, one in three employees said they seldom or never receive recognition for a good job. These ratings are consistent with many of the written comments. Employees said:

- "Thanks" and "a good job" mean a lot
- Provide consistent, positive encouragement
- Increase emphasis on what's right – too much focus on the negative is a morale buster
- Promotions, job opportunities, special projects, training and other perks are ways to recognize

Fewer staff in institutions reported receiving recognition for a job well done.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	23%
Usually	26%
Occasionally	22%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	14%

49% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	41%
Non-Institution	52%

VOICES . . .

Many employees said they received praise for good work
- "My immediate supervisor treats me with true respect and recognizes the value of my years of experience and my contributions to this agency. I have not received anything like a sense of respect or appreciation two steps above her. They seem to be pretty much focused on their own importance."
- "Our manager stands behind the staff and makes staff feel worthy and appreciated."

Others asked for less emphasis on "what's wrong" and increased recognition for "what's right"
- "My boss jumps on you for problems, yet never says 'good job.'"
- "There is a general lack of understanding by our supervisors, up to the highest levels, regarding the need for personal recognition for a job well done."
- "A simple 'You are doing a good job! Keep up the good work!' would be great! Currently, these words of encouragement are few and far between."
- "Everyday, someone tells staff, in countless ways, that they aren't doing their jobs. Workers need more positive energy like 'good job', or 'thanks for taking care of that,' or 'I really appreciate your efforts.'"
- "The only recognition here is for a mistake."
- "I would like to see high performance and honest feedback rewarded. It seems that you reward the dedication of your employees with continuous increase in expectations and lack of clarity from headquarters on down. It is clear that you do not care about your staff in the field. Respect begets respect."
- "I would like to see leadership bring a sense of positive encouragement and excitement to do our best."

Employees like sincere, job and situation specific recognition and appreciation
- "I would like to see personal recognition that is meaningful (i.e. specific to circumstances)."
- "Insincere recognition for a good job is almost worse than nothing at all. Sincere recognition is more than saying 'good job, guy'. To be meaningful, recognition needs to be more specific about what was done well."
- "If a supervisor knows exactly what skills are required and how much effort is needed to do a task, there will be no room for inappropriate compliment or criticism. Supervisors do not always properly recognize workers due to lack of knowledge of the work."
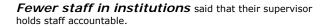
Employees suggested ways to recognize good work
- "There is little or no reward for good job performance. Ineffective workers and great workers receive nearly the same benefits and opportunities for advancement. Merit-based pay would encourage good work."
- "Let's not just give lip service to appreciating line staff, let's actually do it by not allowing bullying by supervisors, by allowing opportunities to promote, and by taking advantage of employee's natural abilities."
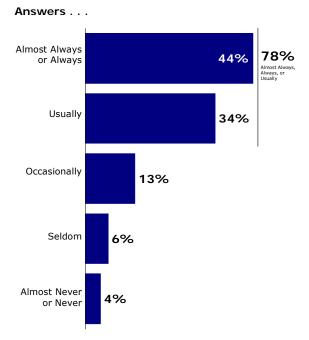

QUESTION | My supervisor holds me and my co-workers accountable

78% of employees indicated supervisors usually hold everyone accountable. 10% said supervisors seldom or never hold staff accountable. Respondents feel that holding all employees accountable is important for workers, clients, and perceptions of DSHS. Employees suggest:

- Supervisors should hold non-performers accountable

- Transferring the work of non-performers to industrious staff is demoralizing

- Upper managers must support supervisors' efforts to hold staff accountable

Fewer staff in institutions said that their supervisor holds staff accountable.

Answers . . .

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	44%
Usually	34%
Occasionally	13%
Seldom	6%
Almost Never or Never	4%

78% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	76%
Non-Institution	79%

VOICES . . .

Employees commended supervisors who hold staff accountable
- "I like being made accountable for the work I do and to come up with ideas on how to improve. I admire and respect the difficulty of the work my co-workers have and know that I contribute to their success."
- "I work in a unit that is professional, hard working and fun. My supervisor is a team builder, gives good advice, sides with us in difficult situations, and is not afraid to hold us accountable when needed."

Employees want managers to hold non-performers accountable
- "Hire smarter, more competent and caring workers…that is key to the future success of DSHS. Currently, managers have little to no authority over a lazy, incompetent worker especially after they have become permanent... It's tragic, but it's true."
- "I'd like the elimination of dead-beat, do-nothing employees who are protected by the union."
- "Employees should be held to the same standard: be on time, get work done, and work a full day."
- "Employees with on-going performance and attendance problems should be held accountable from the top down, with much support and direction for the front-line managers."

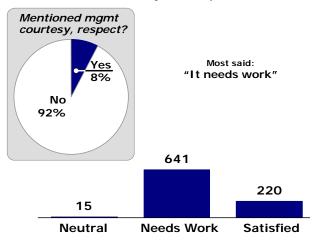**Employees don't like being assigned the work of 'slackers'**
- "There appears to be no management accountability for using-up the good employees who perform, while coddling non-performers and screw-ups."
- "I would like to see people held responsible for lack of work. It is not fair that co-workers have to pick up the slack when others don't."
- "Managers find it easier to ignore weaker workers rather than help them become better or deal with problems. Non-supervision creates resentment/stress as stronger workers are targeted to pick up slack."
- "I would like the term accountability to mean something. True accountability means that employees who are not competent or making meaningful contributions are eliminated if they are unwilling to change."
- "More accountability of employees doing their own assigned duties. I am tired of managers delegating other employee's assigned duties to employees that are doing their jobs."
- "We have employees who don't care about the job, don't do good work, or don't come to work at all. All the hard working employees have to pick up the slack and deal with the backlogs created by these workers."
- "Hold supervisors and staff accountable. Some people do all the work while others are allowed to 'goof-off' and bully others."

Related findings/comments about underperforming co-workers are found in Chapter 4, page 42.

THEME | Courtesy and respect from supervisors/managers

Employees appreciate courteous and respectful management. Of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments, 8% (856) mentioned this aspect of manager behavior.

8% mentioned courtesy and respect *

Mentioned mgmt courtesy, respect?

Yes
8%

No
92%

Most said:
"It needs work"

641

220

15

Neutral **Needs Work** **Satisfied**

The majority (75%) of staff who wrote comments about courtesy and respect said there was room for improvement in the way managers treat staff. Many employees asked that managers show more courtesy and respect. Employees suggested:

- Treat us fairly, equally and with respect
- Treat us as professionals
- Be kind and relate to us personally
- Avoid belittling, gossip, bullying, and yelling
- Supervise us as you would like to be supervised
- Respect sets the stage for hard work

VOICES . . .

Employees appreciate managers who treat them with courtesy and respect
- "I have a supervisor who is encouraging, supportive, open, and honest and is there to back up her employees when necessary. She gives me room to grow and do my best. Our team relationship is mutual responsibility."
- "I am treated with respect and trusted to do my job without anyone breathing down my neck. If I do have a problem I can always seek out the help I need without criticism or reprisal."
- "I feel respected by my supervisor and co-workers. We know how to celebrate the tiny victories."
- "I have a wonderful field manager who shows respect and treats people fairly."
- "My supervisor treats us with utmost professional respect, courtesy, supportive and honesty."

Supervisors who are disrespectful make work difficult for employees
- "Workers are not respected and are treated with the 'if you don't like it go somewhere else' attitude."
- "MORE RESPECT. MORE COMMUNICATION. Supervisors treat us like children, not professionals."
- "Communication is so poor, so fear-driven and/or rigid, it's unbearable. The work environment is disrespectful, toxic (yelling, swearing, inappropriate comments, sexual content)."
- "I know you can get business done and still be kind."
- "We need better leaders and fewer micromanaging bullies."

Some employees reported feeling dismissed, disrespected and even fearful
- "Respectful leadership means to empower staff, trust professionalism, listen to ideas, take meaningful action, set realistic workloads, communicate regularly, and hold everyone accountable."
- "Our new management does not appear to have concern that we are happy, feel respected or appreciated."
- "My supervisor shouts, snaps, ignores, and treats her staff appallingly. We pray for the days that she does not come to work. It is our only respite from her dictatorial attitude."
- "You no longer have a voice. Afraid of retaliation. No support and unfair practices. Afraid to report for fear your job will be worse than it has ever been."
- "Suggested classes for administrators: how to show employees respect, how not to belittle; how to be fair, how not to talk behind their backs."
- "We are in great need of assistance. Please help – we are a great group of people. We are not respected and we are getting treated very badly in this office."
- "I do sense an atmosphere suggesting fear of retribution and intimidation that resides beyond our supervisors. I am so cynical about this system that I am quitting. My last day of work is next week."
- "This is a horrible work environment and it makes me sick to show up everyday, but I do. Some of the supervisors have hit high gear on intimidation, threat, and failure to communicate."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.
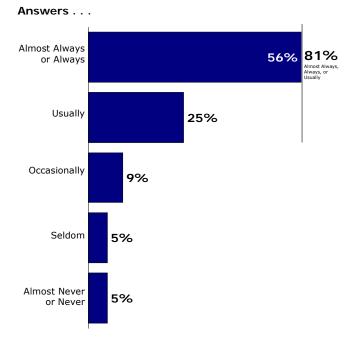
QUESTION | My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect

Eight of every ten DSHS employees reported that their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect most of the time. The comments from contented employees tended to address the dignity and respect issue with short, general phrasing. Many did not address this issue in their comments.

The 10% who reported disrespectful treatment, on the other hand, tended to make colorful and specific comments. While a relatively small number made allegations of fear-based leadership, bullying, and intimidation, such comments are very concerning. Some of these comments are highlighted below.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always **56%** **81%** Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Usually **25%**

Occasionally **9%**

Seldom **5%**

Almost Never or Never **5%**

Fewer staff in institutions reported typically being treated with dignity and respect.

Institution **75%**

Non-Institution **83%**

VOICES . . .

Most employees feel supervisors treat them with dignity and respect
- "My supervisor is respectful to everyone and appreciates differences in personality. He creates a low stress, high morale, and highly productive work environment."
- "I am treated with respect and dignity and I feel that I am appreciated as a hard-working staff person."
- "I like that my direct supervisor utilizes my input and treats me with respect even if our opinions differ."

Some employees suggested that supervisors receive training in respectful and caring management
- "Offer continuing training for supervisors on how to manage employees effectively while still maintaining employee dignity and self-esteem."
- "Management should learn new ways of managing which is not fear, secrecy, and intimidation based. The workplace needs to be more transparent so that it is not such a scary place to work."
- "I would like the Regional Administrator and program manager to get some training on communication and management skills to supplement their repertoire of managing through fear and intimidation."

A small, but concerning, number of employees spoke of feeling bullied, fearful and intimidated
- "Unfortunately the atmosphere in which I work is filled with negativity, fear, and intimidation. When you don't feel valued by your leader, it is difficult to want to come to work everyday."
- "I would like to have most senior managers SMILE at staff and really mean it. I would like to be assured that everyone in my office is safe from verbal abuse and bullying from their managers even behind closed doors. The tenor set by senior manager's trickles down."
- "In the absence of leadership, the only determining factor in motivating staff is 'intimidation.'"
- "Support staff by ending the bullying and intimidation of line staff by supervisors. It's been a year and many complaints have been forwarded up with no action being taken."
- "Stop intimidation of employees by managers. Morale, trust, and respect are at an all time low."
- "Our culture seems to be changing from one that encourages and supports the difficult jobs we are all doing to a culture that is fear and rumor based."
- "I feel like I work for Hitler's regime. I have never been as demeaned and degraded. We work for bullies and badgers. No responsibility for their actions, spinning the truth, or follow through."
- "I would like a boss that would not be so verbal, abusive, and loud about his politics. We do not want to hear his gutter talk. His idea of a joke is to put people down and it is constant and daily. He is a bully."
- "I would like some of the abusive bullies that work here fired. Some are supervisors who verbally abuse patients and staff."
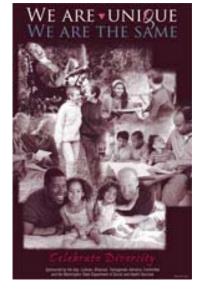
Fairness/Diversity

What Employees Want

Although fewer survey respondents expressed concerns about fairness than other issues, this issue is highlighted for two reasons:

1. DSHS leadership is strongly committed to supporting diversity in the workplace

2. The employees who did have concerns about fairness issues expressed strong feelings

This chapter addresses the three main aspects of fairness addressed by the survey:

- **Fair Treatment** – Equal workload distribution, standards, perks, and discipline for all staff

- **Promotions and Hiring** – A fair chance for advancement in the workplace

- **Diversity Issues** – Fair and equal treatment for employees from all backgrounds

Ester Martin-Ferreria   Lloyd Hoage   Kathy Ward   Solomon Uwadiale

QUESTION | In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

Two out of every three employees reported that they are always or usually treated fairly. About one in five reported a pattern of unfairness.

Some employees spoke about fair treatment in general terms. These general fairness issues mainly focus on the perception that not all employees are held to the same standards or given equal workloads.

Specific concerns about promotions, hiring, and diversity issues are addressed later in the chapter.

Answers . . .

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	38%
Usually	29%
Occasionally	13%
Seldom	10%
Almost Never or Never	10%

67% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Fewer staff in institutions said they are treated fairly, without discrimination.

	%
Institution	59%
Non-Institution	70%

VOICES . . .

Most staff reported being treated fairly and without discrimination
- "The best thing about my current job is feeling that I am going to be given advancement opportunities based on my abilities without any form of personal discrimination."
- "I am treated fairly and feel that I have opportunities to grow."
- "There is no discrimination. Everyone is shown the procedures needed to complete their jobs in a non-threatening environment."
- "I like that there is a quite a bit of cultural diversity in my workplace."
- "The work is measured and everyone gets a fair share. Although some people can't keep up, they are monitored by the supervisors."
- "What I like best about my work place is that everyone is treated with respect, fairly and equally and not because they are best friends or a relative of someone working here."

Some staff offered strong comments about different standards for different workers
- "More fairness between employees. All rules do not apply to all people."
- "I would like to see the same rules for all employees."
- "It would be nice to see equal access to modified work times, equal pay for equal work and equal distribution of work. In the agency I work for, failure is highly rewarded and success is rarely noticed."
- "Staff should be allowed flex-time uniformly across the division. This would boost morale, somewhat."
- "We need consistency in interpreting flex-time. Some people are in and out as they please, while others are monitored for being five minutes late."
- "Managers should be held accountable for employees' poor work ethic. The public's complaints about state workers are very true. We have many staff that come and go with no accountability."
- "We need supervisors who keep track of staff who are consistently late, take long breaks and leave early."
- "Favoritism is rampant throughout the workplace. There is no consistency in rules and regulations."
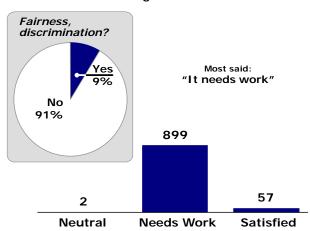
Others suggested that some supervisors are not fair in the distribution of work
- "I can appreciate the fairness of giving everyone raises, but sometimes find that people who work are only rewarded with more work, whereas people who don't have a good record are rewarded with less work."
- "I would like every group of workers to carry an equal share of work."
- "There is a great deal of favoritism in the distribution of work."

THEME | Manager fairness

Nine percent of staff who wrote comments (955 of 11,176) talked about management fairness.

9% mentioned management fairness*

Fairness, discrimination?

Yes
9%

No
91%

Most said:
"It needs work"

899

2

57

Neutral **Needs Work** **Satisfied**

Of the 955 employees who wrote about manager fairness, 94% said there was room for improvement. Six percent said they were treated fairly by supervisors.

Employees like it when supervisors:

- Treat everyone equally and fairly
- Hold themselves to the same standards they set for staff
- Hold everyone accountable
- Are fair with perks
- Don't set policy on the basis of a few

VOICES . . .

Employees would like managers and supervisors to treat everyone fairly
- "Fair treatment for ALL. It's who you know and who you are related to."
- "Some supervisors are whimsical in their approach to different employees and the work that is submitted. There is a lack of consistency across employees who request the same things."
- "I would like to see a consistent treatment of staff including both positive remarks about their work as well as any disciplinary action which may be necessary."
- "Equality of consequences—poor work handled as 'poor' no matter who's your daddy."

Other staff said that upper management should live by the same standards as staff
- "I would like to be treated the same as those above me."
- "Managers should be held accountable for what they do or don't do. Eliminate the bias by work class."
- "Eliminate the double standard of upper management. They breach professionalism, treating others disrespectfully with no consequences. Expectations for subordinates do not allow any lapses in judgment. The agency needs to monitor the monitors."

Some employees ask that supervisors be fair with perks and punishments
- "I'd like consistency with all workers, relating to adjustment of schedule and work days."
- "Stop favoritism in job assignments, promotions, days off, and punishments."
- "Give all staff the same opportunities for training, participation in essential meetings, and advancement."
- "Hold all employees to the same standards: be on time, get work done, and have equal opportunities."
- "I'd like to have equal application of expectations for performance and policies. Treat us all with respect."
- "Hold all employees to the same standard, instead of different standards for different workers."
- "Support employees in their private lives (accommodations and flex for personal, family and educational needs). It's good for employee morale, health, and retention and it's good for the agency."
- "There are many favorites who get whatever they want (flex schedules, time off, being late, etc.)."

Managers shouldn't set policy (or punish everyone) for the problem behavior of one or a few
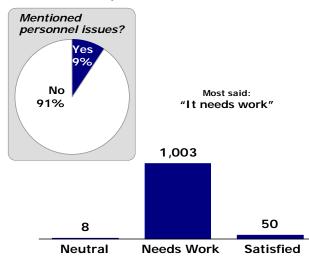- "If there is a problem with a specific employee, deal directly with that employee instead of pulling everyone in and setting up guidelines based on that."
- "Don't punish everyone for one person's error. Correct it without impacting the whole facility."
- "Don't punish all of us. Deal with the problem children."
- "Staff who misbehave should be dealt with individually, by supervisors and management, instead of overreacting by punishing, restricting, rule tightening, and excess controlling of staff who were not at fault."
- "If one person screws up, we all get punished. Deal directly with incompetent staff."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Personnel issues

Of the 11,176 employees who made comments, 1,055 (9%) wrote about personnel issues — mainly about advancement opportunities, hiring, and promotions

9% mentioned personnel issues*

Mentioned personnel issues?
Yes 9%
No 91%

Most said:
"It needs work"

1,003

8
Neutral

50
Satisfied

Needs Work

Almost all the comments about personnel issues (95%) involved complaints or suggestions for improvement. Most of the calls for improvement concerned fairness in recruitment, promotional opportunities, and holding all staff accountable.

Typical employee comments suggested that supervisors:

- Recruit, post, hire, and promote by the rules
- Promote from within whenever possible
- Do not hire friends or relatives
- Hold poor performers accountable

Chapter 5, p. 51 also addresses personnel issues.

VOICES . . .

Employees like it when supervisors recruit, post, hire and promote by the rules
- "I would like to see opportunities for promotion and advancement made available fairly and equitably."
- "Stop the practice of changing or deleting qualifications for some jobs so that certain people get hired."
- "Jobs are promised to certain people before posting. Interview answers are given before the interview."
- It's tough to work in a place where you get a job due to the size of your anatomy and the blondness of your hair, rather than the appropriateness of your work ethic and education."

Some advised promoting from experienced and productive workers
- "The CSO has a tendency to promote mediocre workers to supervisory positions and keep higher performing workers on the front line. The good workers are punished by denying opportunities and growth."
- "Promote people based on merit rather than their ability to brown-nose."
- "Promotion is almost non-existent no matter how well you perform."

Others talked about too much hiring and promotion of friends and relatives
- "Discrimination and favoritism must end. You should only be judged by your work, not your age, sex or if you are cute. Supervisors should always be professional, put clients first and put aside their friendships."
- "Managers should base their judgment of employees on job performance, not on personal relationships."
- "Stop managers from promoting based on friendship and nepotism."
- "I'd like a workplace where people are hired and promoted based on their knowledge, experience, education and work. Not a system where family, friends and lovers are given an unfair advantage."
- "People who date, party and marry other managers are being promoted without objective criteria."
- "Be a buddy with your supervisor, you'll get a good evaluation and a raise whether you do your job or not."

Many employees said that supervisors should hold non-performers accountable
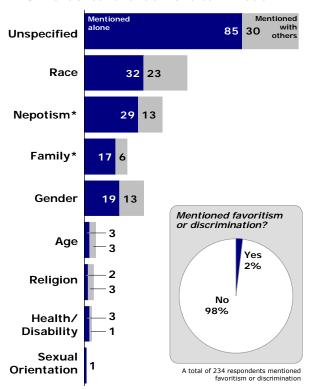- "I'd like consequences for employees whose work quality is poor and negatively affects our clients."
- "Management doesn't want to make the hard decisions to let go of unproductive, ineffective supervisors."
- "Fair treatment of all staff including profound accountability for staff that refuse to meet job expectations and/or continually compromise ethical/professional standards."
- "I'd like more accountability and a thinning out of the dead weight workers who do not pull their share."
- "If an employee fails to do their job, there is no discipline unless you tick off someone enough to get fired."
- "GET RID OF BAD WORKERS. It's no secret. We all know who they are. They are an embarrassment to us all and erode our clients' confidence in us and our agency."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Favoritism or discrimination involving diversity issues

A relatively small group (234 of 11,176 who made comments) mentioned concerns about preferential treatment or discrimination directed toward diverse groups. Even though the number of comments was small, diversity issues are highlighted because of their importance to the agency.

2% mentioned favoritism or discrimination

Caption: A total of 234 respondents mentioned favoritism or discrimination

About one-third of the 234 employees who appeared to address diversity issues did not mention specific groups. They mentioned more general concepts like diversity, favoritism, discrimination, and good old boys/girls clubs. Comments that clearly concerned "favored" individuals rather than groups were not included in this list.

Most of the specific concerns involve either:

- Perceptions or fears of discrimination toward specific groups (based on racel, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation), or

- Reports of favoritism toward such groups or to family members or church members.

A few employees were concerned about "reverse discrimination," feeling that protected groups are given too many accommodations, and that some are too quick to claim discrimination.

*Although favoritism based on family and nepotism would appear to have the same meaning, it is clear from reading the comments that some respondents used the word "nepotism" to mean cronyism - it doesn't always refer to family members. Any case that clearly referred to family members is counted as "family." In 3 cases, the respondent mentioned both "nepotism" and favoritism toward family members.

VOICES . . .

Both positive and negative comments showed a concern about general diversity issues
- "Continue to support and promote creativity and diversity in the agency."
- "Greater emphasis on diversity in hiring, management, and practices. Need to do better than lip service."
- "Respect for diversity; do the walk, not just the talk."
- "More diversity is desperately needed. Staff do not reflect the diversity of this state."
- "Do away with the good ol' boy's club."
- "WSH is full of nepotism and discrimination."

Some allegations concerning discrimination were quite specific
- "Less discrimination, especially disability, religious and racial. The heads need to take a class from Washington Human Rights and find out what classes are protected."
- "The culture of discrimination against minorities regarding hiring, work assignments, sexual and racial harassment that is allowed to happen is intolerable. Minorities are held back from upward mobility, only to have less qualified non-minorities supervise and maintain management positions. Minorities are screened out of potential interviews for key positions; non-minority staff members constantly hire friends. Complaints of harassment and discrimination are minimized and sometimes hidden."
- "If you are a minority, you will not advance at DSHS, particularly if you are male."
- "Hiring process is full of nepotism. Experience doesn't matter...it's a niece of a manager...we'll hire them."
- "There is a subtle and careful discrimination of folks who are perceived as more conservative or of a different political or religious bent."
- "More opportunities for advancement, end of cronyism, end of discrimination against men."
- "Staff to stop using the 'race card' to manipulate and control others."

What Employees Want

For many employees, the day-to-day work and interactions represent the primary source of job satisfaction.

Employees talked about 3 main facets of their daily work that make the difference between a bad job and a good job:

- **Job characteristics** – Autonomy, flexibility, and a manageable workload are important

- **Clients** – Interactions with clients and the opportunity to help clients are the highlights of many employees' work lives

- **Co-workers** – Supportive, cooperative fellow workers can make working a pleasure

BACK: Barbara Kraemer, Dan Schaub, Ryan Pinto, Harvey Perez
MIDDLE: Pleas Green, Patricia Lashway FRONT: Robin Cummings,
Barbara Glass, Patricia Richards

THEME | General satisfaction

Most of the written comments from the employee survey concern specific issues that pleased or displeased the writer. However, 13% of the writers (1,421 of 11,176) made more general comments about morale, the work environment, or overall job satisfaction.

13% **made comments about overall satisfaction***

Morale, overall satisfaction?

Yes 13%

No 87%

Most said: "It needs work"

63 — **Neutral**

837 — **Needs Work**

535 — **Satisfied**

As shown in the sample comments below, many comments that fall into the "general satisfaction" area are quite global in nature. Other comments specifically refer to aspects that affect the work environment:

- The "style" of managers or supervisors
- Hostility or pleasantness in the workplace
- Physical workspaces

Many answers in this category contained a single word. For example:

- What do you like best about your current job? "Nothing." (A negative answer)
- What changes would you like to see in your workplace? "None." (A positive answer)

| VOICES . . . |

Some employees are very satisfied with their workplace
- "I love working here…at the end of the day I feel GREAT!"
- "The staff in the office create a warming attitude from the reception lobby to the cubicles and offices. I enjoy coming to work."
- "The morale is very good where I am currently working. Since coming to my new position my stress level is lower."
- "It's a fair and honest place to work and I get along with everyone I work with."
- "It's great working here."
- "I wouldn't change anything in my workplace. I am a very satisfied employee."

Other employees are dissatisfied with the "tone" of their work environment
- "The morale of DSHS has gotten very low. It's not a happy environment."
- "Staff are treated with indignities and no effort is made to produce a quality environment for clients or staff. Dissatisfaction and fear of management is high."
- "People in our office are afraid to voice their opinion because of retaliation."
- "For the last several years…we have worked in a hostile work environment and have watched our colleagues be taunted, isolated, accused, and written up constantly."
- "The environment is depressing, controlling, and lacks compassion."
- "Mandatory union association…It's causing an extreme amount of divisiveness in the office."
- "Things just keep getting worse and management keeps saying we're getting more satisfied."
- "Our office has become a haven for broken spirits…The statement from our administrator sums it up, 'I don't care whether staff is happy or not as long as the customer gets served.'"
- "Morale sucks."

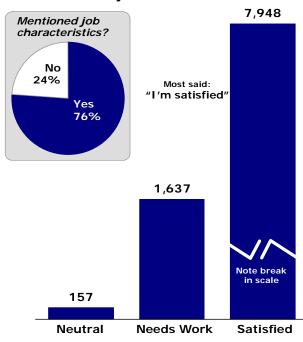**Some are unhappy with their physical workspace**
- "The office I work in is gloomy looking. Some nice colors on the walls and nice work equipment would improve one's mood."
- "I would like to see better ergonomics…such as better chairs, keyboards, phones, etc. It is difficult and painful to work when our stations are uncomfortable."
- "[I would like] an exercise room. It would help morale and make us feel better about ourselves so we can do our work more efficiently."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Job characteristics — an overview

8,521 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments addressed job characteristics, such as interaction with clients, workload, job schedule, autonomy and growth opportunities.

76% mentioned job characteristics*

Mentioned job characteristics?

No
24%

Yes
76%

Most said:
"I'm satisfied"

7,948

1,637

157

Note break
in scale

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

Almost all (93%) of the 8,521 respondents who wrote about job characteristics had something positive to say about their job.

Positive aspects of the job that employees mentioned frequently include:

- The opportunity to work with and help clients (see page 34)
- Autonomy and flexibility in the workplace (see pages 35 and 37)
- Interesting and challenging work assignments (see pages 37 and 38)

Employees dislike having:

- Workloads that are overwhelming (see page 36)
- Rigid work schedules (see pages 35 and 37)
- No "say" in how their workdays are organized (see pages 35 and 37)
- No opportunity to learn new skills and advance in their career (see pages 37-38)

VOICES . . .

Employees want to help others
- "I like knowing that I am helping families and children."
- "I feel good about being able to help people put their lives back together."
- "I enjoy being part of helping individuals become empowered and self sufficient in a variety of ways; it's a wonderful feeling!"

They also want a flexible work environment that allows them to learn and grow
- "[I like] the people, challenge, and opportunity to learn and pursue my career goals."
- "[I like] the flexibility. If I have to meet with a family in the evening I can come in later the next day."
- "I never know what I'm gonna get when I come to work. It may be 15 felons baking cookies, or 4 guys in a fight, an escape attempt, or just a mellow shift…keeps me on my toes. I like knowing I might impact someone in a positive way and help that person make the change for the better in their lives."
- "I like it that I am able to complete various types of projects. It's not boring in the slightest. I like a challenge and would like more challenges given to me."
- "I enjoy the variety and problem-solving aspect of the work, the ability to work both independently and with others in the agency."
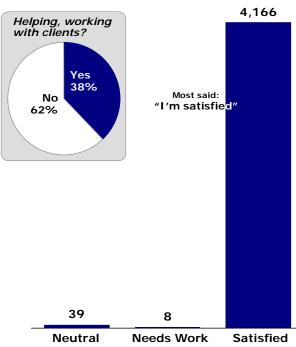
Some see the need for changes in the workplace
- "There is too much work and not enough people to do the work…This makes the job really tough."
- "My supervisor requires me to make a leave slip even if I am 5 minutes late. I take the bus and cannot control whether the bus is on time. I would like to be able to make up the lost time during the day."
- "More opportunities for advancement and professional growth…I'm qualified to supervise people, and I don't get the opportunity to do that."
- "I would appreciate a less rigid "time clock" approach and being allowed flexibility in how I schedule my day in and out of the office."
- "I would like to be allowed to increase and broaden my knowledge and skills, rather than being held back."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Helping and interacting with clients

One of the most important job characteristics for many employees (4,208) is the opportunity to work with and help DSHS clients

38% mentioned interactions with clients*

Helping, working with clients?

Yes 38%

No 62%

Most said: "I'm satisfied"

4,166

39
Neutral

8
Needs Work

Satisfied

"Working with clients" was the most popular answer to the survey question "What do you like best about your current job?" 99% of the 4,208 respondents who discussed interactions with clients were thankful for the opportunity to work with and help DSHS clients.

Employees enjoy:

- Contributing to positive changes in their clients' lives
- Watching their clients' progress
- Learning from their clients' experiences
- Collaborating with other social service professionals to benefit common clients

They are frustrated by:

- Having too little time to work directly with clients
- Clients who do not recognize or appreciate their efforts

VOICES . . .

Employees like to interact with and assist their clients
- "I like that I am helping people that may not be able to help themselves. It makes me feel great to see these guys smile."
- "It is an honor and a privilege to be able to help people with disabilities find meaningful work and enhance their standard of living."
- "I love the customer contact…I love the challenge of helping as many people as I can every day."
- "I am able to give of myself…and I continue to learn every day from our clients."
- "I love the opportunities to work collaboratively in the community with the goal of improving access to services for our mutual clients."
- "That's why I come to work each day…to make a difference in someone else's life!"
- "I like working with teenagers. They are dynamic and interesting and I am hopeful in trying to make a positive difference in their lives."
- "I love the people that live here; I enjoy helping them live life and being a part of that life. I am excited about the milestones they make, however great or small."
- "I like the ability to help people who have hit a bump in the road and need a hand up."
- "My job allows me to help others. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I go home at night."

Employees would like *more* time to work with clients
- "[I would like] smaller caseloads so I could devote more quality time to our customers."
- "I wish I had more time with my residents that I learned to love like my family."

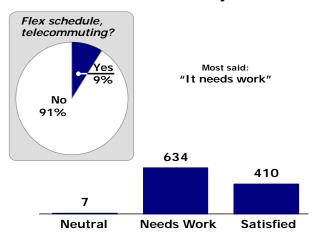**A small number of employees dislike contact with clients or specific client behaviors**
- "[I like] not having to deal with the clients on a personal basis."
- "When clients do not get what they want they write horrible things. We are all doing the best job we can."
- "We get little recognition from clients."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Flexible schedules and telecommuting

1,007 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments talked about flexibility in work hours and the ability to work from home.

9% **mentioned flexible hours and job sites***

Flex schedule, telecommuting?

Yes
9%

No
91%

Most said:
"It needs work"

7
Neutral

634
Needs Work

410
Satisfied

Of the 1,007 respondents who wrote about work schedule/location flexibility, 63% (634) asked for change.

Employees would like to have:

- More flexible work schedules
- More control over mandatory overtime and the use of vacation and sick leave
- The ability to work part-time or job share
- The option to telecommute

They appreciate having:

- A voice in their work schedule
- The ability to balance their work life and personal life

VOICES . . .

Many employees would like more flexible schedules
- "I would love to see 4-10 schedules as this gives staff time to set up appointments for school, dentists, doctors, and car care. I also believe it is a morale booster and productivity could grow."
- "I'd like to see workers taken into account…We are asked to change our lunch time or schedule for agency need, but when we ask to do the same for our need, the answer is no."
- "With the technology that is available, I would like to see support for telecommute work schedules."
- "Please allow flex time, part time, job share. We shouldn't have to plan a year in advance to take vacation."
- "It becomes a real hassle when at the very last minute you can be mandatoried to pull a 16 hour shift. It doesn't matter if you had prior plans, and if you're completely exhausted and can't stay awake."
- "I would like our hours returned!! I am at a loss why we have been stripped of our productive flex time."
- "More flexible start/stop work times. If we had 4 day weeks it would not only provide additional customer service (increase in hours) but would also conserve gas which is what the federal government is proposing."
- "Allow 4-10s and other alternative shifts – they cost the State nothing and were a big morale boost."
- "Less mandatory overtime or elimination of it altogether."
- "[I would like] flexibility to work from home and lessen commute time."
- "I'd like to see the elimination of the so-called 'core hours'…this change has led to increased commute time and has necessitated the increased use of leave time. This can't be good for the agency, for the customers, or for anyone else."

Some employees are satisfied with their current work schedule
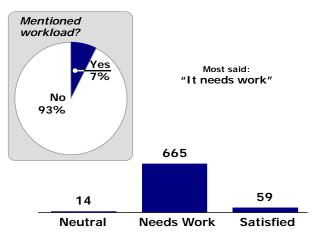- "I work 4/10's which give me renewed energy for the job every week."
- "I can basically work the hours that I need to so that I am able to attend school functions and other activities with my children."
- "Flexibility – I know that I can request annual leave time for just about anything, and even on fairly short notice."
- "My work schedule is flexible to meet my family's needs."
- "The best part about my job is that I am able to work part time."
- "Flexibility. Easy going schedule lets me work when I am most effective…This lets me be the most productive and least disgruntled. Probably the biggest reason I still work for the state when there are higher paying jobs available."
- "[I like having] permission to telecommute."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Workload

728 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments talked about workload, and its effect on their job satisfaction.

7% talked about workload*

Mentioned workload?

Yes 7%

No 93%

Most said: "It needs work"

665 | Needs Work

14 | Neutral

59 | Satisfied

91% of the respondents who wrote about workload voiced complaints about the amount of work expected. Most of them feel their workload is too high.

Many employees believe that heavy workloads:

- Are a disservice to clients
- Have a negative impact on workers
- Contribute to staff turnover
- Are not fairly distributed

A smaller number of employees see heavy workloads as:

- A challenge, or a way to prevent boredom
- Leading to a sense of accomplishment

VOICES . . .

Employees dislike the effects that heavy workloads have on both staff and clients
- "DSHS management needs to control the amount of workload being pressed upon its employees…Staff are becoming tired, worn out and frustrated. If the workload does not at least level out, I'm afraid 'key' players will find a new work place with a more tolerable work environment."
- "A more reasonable caseload size that would allow me more time to work with all the families rather than remain lost in a sea of paperwork."
- "We spend so much time trying to document that we are working with our residents that we have very little time to actually work with residents."
- "I would like to see more manageable workloads. No one seems to care that workers are suffering from health problems because of the overload of work."
- "We are continually being told to do more with less. A nice concept, but when you are dealing with people's lives, you need to have time to TALK to them, to find out what they really need so we can help them. Staff are so worried about meeting the 'numbers' they no longer have time to care about people."
- "Our caseloads are so high that people are burning out quickly and this is a disservice to our clients."
- "So many demands, not enough time. It gets to the point of feeling overwhelmed and then I get even less accomplished."
- "The CEO and higher-ups should come to the wards and WORK them. See how hard it is in reality – they need to know that pulling staff is wrong – keeping wards staff short is wrong."
- "I have noticed a marked decline in employee morale as benefits have declined and workload has increased. Staff don't feel appreciated as they used to."
- "There is TOO MUCH WORK assigned to each worker; burnout is a serious problem."

They would like to see workload distributed fairly
- "Staff who are inept don't get asked to do any more work. Hard workers get more and more piled on."
- "I strongly feel that Management needs to stop ignoring the unequal distribution of caseloads (some units have at least 50% more cases than other units)."
- "Some of us are so busy we don't even get breaks, while some people blatantly read the newspaper, do crossword puzzles, knit, and various other things that are not work related."

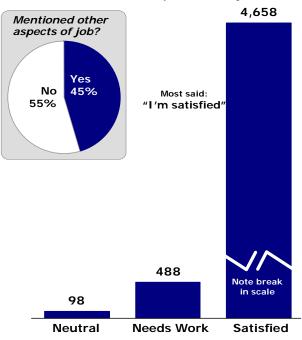**A small number of employees welcome heavy workloads**
- "I am always busy and feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day."
- "I have plenty of work to do; boredom is NEVER a word in my vocabulary."
- "I am never lacking for work to do. It is a challenge…especially when you can see good results."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Other important aspects of the job

5,049 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments talked about other important aspects of the job, such as autonomy, flexibility, and variety.

45% mentioned other aspects of the job*

Mentioned other aspects of job?

No 55%

Yes 45%

Most said: "I'm satisfied"

4,658

488

98

Neutral   Needs Work   Satisfied

Note break in scale

92% of the 5,049 respondents who wrote about other aspects of their job made positive comments.

The majority of employees appreciate:

- Independence in thought and action
- Flexibility in regard to tasks and schedules
- A variety of challenging tasks
- The chance to use their skills and experience
- A strong sense of purpose

A smaller number of employees desire:

- More respect for, and use of, their skills and experience
- More flexibility in scheduling and prioritizing
- Less oversight

VOICES . . .

Employees like to have variety and "voice" in their work
- "[I like having] independent judgment and the ability to prioritize and organize independently…ability to use many skills and do many varied things in a day."
- "There is never a dull moment and it is challenging and satisfying."
- "I believe I am doing something important."
- "[This job] engages my interests and abilities…sense of mission and purpose."
- "My job is very dynamic and there is always something interesting to work on. I have a lot of autonomy."
- "I like the flexibility of the job; that it is part desk work but also includes field work and client contact."
- "There is a tremendous variety of topics that I get assigned to work on in my job. This fits my personality and skill set."
- "[I like] the fact I can perform my duties without someone 'looking over my shoulder' all the time."
- "[I like] the responsibility for setting my own schedule, the feeling I am doing something that matters."
- "I am able to be independent and innovative in the things I do."
- "I like the degree of independence I have and my ability to devise my own schedule and work methods."

Some employees see a need for improvement
- "I would like more control over management of my time and prioritization of work flow."
- "More opportunities to use independent judgment. Not so much redundant oversight – it makes me feel like a brainless robot."
- "More latitude in organizing my daily and weekly schedule so as to optimally serve our clients."
- "I'd like to be given opportunity to grow, be productive, and use the many talents that I have."
- "The constant QAs and monitoring of our every decision is demoralizing. After many years of service I have less autonomy and an ever increasing micromanagement of my work and no allowances made for my best judgment as an experienced social worker."
- "I would like to be able to work more using my strengths (the things I am best at)."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

QUESTION | I have opportunities at work to learn and grow

More than half of respondents reported that they have opportunities to learn and grow. However, almost one quarter reported problems in this area.
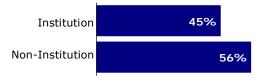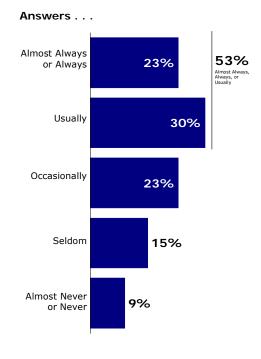
Employees appreciate the chance to:

- Obtain new knowledge
- Learn new skills
- Take on challenging work assignments

Some employees want more opportunities to:

- Expand their knowledge and skills
- Approach their work creatively

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	23%
Usually	30%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	9%

53% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Fewer staff in institutions reported opportunities to learn and grow

Institution	45%
Non-Institution	56%

VOICES . . .

Many employees enjoy the growth and challenge their job provides
- "I like the fact that no matter how long I have been working for the agency I am constantly learning new ways of doing things."
- "I appreciate the challenges, the opportunities to learn."
- "New job duties challenge me to grow in different directions."
- "I like the diversity of my work, being able to work directly with clients, case planning, court, etc…I also enjoy the opportunities to learn from others and improve my own skills."
- "[My job] provides the opportunity for on-going learning."
- "The respect from my boss…allowing me the opportunity to enhance my skills and continue my growth."
- "I have a lot of freedom to be innovative and creative."
- "I'm always learning and I feel like I'm making a real difference in the community."
- "Challenging each and every day…I can use my skills as a professional social worker."
- "I really enjoy my job. It is challenging and rewarding most of the time. It is packed with excitement as each day brings a new experience."
- "I am given opportunities to grow and do different things."
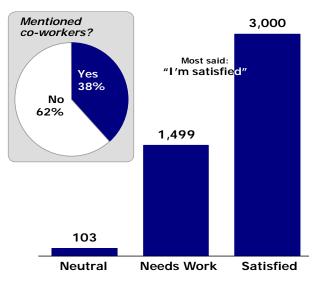- "Every day is filled with challenges."

Some employees would like more chances to expand their knowledge and skills
- "More room for growth, training directed to my position, more opportunities."
- "More opportunities for transfers, to learn new jobs and gain more experience."
- "More opportunities to grow…Introduction to management related training."
- "More opportunities to work in and learn new programs or projects."
- "Educational opportunities and funding that would count towards post-secondary education."
- "More opportunities for growth and learning – I'm in a dead end job."
- "Opportunities for growth and development based on ability."
- "We are NEVER encouraged to come up with better ways to do things. It is only met with criticism. There are so many things I could improve and so many things I have talent in, but it doesn't matter because I'm 'just' an LPN."
- "Never seem to have the opportunity to learn more than what I am already doing."

THEME | Co-workers – An overview

Thirty-eight percent of staff who wrote comments (4,269 of 11,176) mentioned their co-workers.

38% mentioned co-workers*

Of the 4,269 employees who talked about co-workers, 70% (3,000) made positive comments.

Employees appreciate:

- Teamwork and support (see pages 40 & 41)
- Competence and professionalism (see page 42)
- Friendliness and caring (see page 43)

While the majority of employees reported that they enjoy interacting with their co-workers and appreciate their positive qualities, many (1,499) also shared that the behavior of some co-workers makes their work experience less rewarding.

The majority of employees have positive feelings about their co-workers
- "I like the work I do, and I love the people I work with."
- "The office I work in, all of my co-workers are like a family and that is just a plus."
- "If an emergency comes up it is always dealt with immediately by any or all of the staff in the unit. We work together as a team, and that is very important to each of us and also our clients."
- "My co-workers are supportive in a stressful job."
- "The people I work with are wonderful – respectful, loyal, hardworking, creative, fun, and committed. They go above and beyond what is expected of them everyday."
- "My current position allows me to do what I enjoy and therefore it almost doesn't feel like 'a job. What I really like the best is the people I work with – 99% of the experiences I have with co-workers are pleasant and professional."
- "I appreciate my co-workers' passion and zeal for the work we do; I always enjoy my individual workgroup who give me support, allow me to learn and grow and move forward even when the 'day' has been tough."
- "I work with wonderful people. They all work incredibly hard and are extremely dedicated."
- "The people on my team are supportive and mesh well to form a very comfortable environment in the midst of Chaos at times because of the clientele we deal with."
- "DSHS staff are the very best co-workers."

Some felt that their co-workers should behave differently in the workplace
- "There is too much political crap that goes on here."
- "I would like to see all those folks who do not embrace diversity have a mute button installed."
- "Less offensive conversation in the office."
- "A better work atmosphere, with less negativity when changes are made."
- "I would like to see some of the abusive bullies that work here fired. Some are supervisors who verbally abuse both patients and staff. Most are line staff who yell and insult both patient and peers."
- "More uplifting people hired, less medicated employees."
- "No fragrances allowed in the workplace AT ALL due to sensitivities/allergies of co-workers."
- "More positive interaction between staff – less petty personality conflicts that have nothing to do with the task at hand."
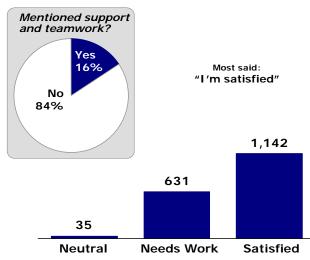
*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Teamwork and support

Employees appreciate co-workers who are supportive team players. Of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments, 16% (1,764) mentioned co-worker teamwork and support.

16% spoke of co-worker support/teamwork*

Mentioned support and teamwork?

Yes 16%

No 84%

Most said: **"I'm satisfied"**

1,142

631

35

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

The majority (65%) of the 1,764 employees who commented on teamwork praised co-workers who work as a team and support each other. They indicate:

- They like working with a strong team
- They appreciate the support of co-workers
- Teamwork raises morale

A smaller number of respondents (36%) expressed concerns about teamwork and support. They said:

- Certain co-workers are not "team players"
- Gossip, pettiness, and cliques are too often part of the work environment

VOICES . . .

Employees appreciate a "team" approach at work
- "I like the team work that exists in our work areas. There is very little or no effort spent on gossip or bad morale."
- "My immediate team is strong and dedicated to the work. We support each other very well."
- "My co-workers are wonderful. We know what needs to be done and cooperate together to get it done. We can rely on each other if one of us is ill, or to take over if there are pressing matters that need to be dealt with immediately."
- "Everyone works as a team and we all get along with each other very well. It feels more like a family atmosphere."
- "The people I work with are bright, hard working team players that make my job easier."

Employees also value their co-workers' support
- "I enjoy my immediate co-workers. We work well together, and cover each others' backs."
- "My unit is wonderful. We all work together very well in serving our clients' needs."
- "My workgroup is very supportive and we step up to help each other out during crisis, etc. No one is left to deal with stressful situations alone."
- "I really like my co-workers. We cooperate and help each other out."
- "My immediate workgroup/unit is very supportive and fun."
- "Good camaraderie with colleagues where we all stand together and help each other succeed."

Some employees feel that teamwork is lacking
- "I can't believe the 'It's not my job' attitude that I see so much of."
- "Less of a 'ME' attitude, more of an 'US' attitude."
- "More teamwork and less prima donna attitudes."
- "Less backstabbing, less gossiping."
- "More teamwork, less pettiness."
- "Co-workers are not willing to do what is necessary for the good of the unit."
- "What bothers me is the meanness most of my co-workers display to those not in their particular 'clique.'"
- "There has to be some kind of resolution to this bickering towards each other."
- "Much more team work instead of crabs in a bucket."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

QUESTION | A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exist in my workgroup

Two out of every three employees reported that their workgroup is cooperative and works as a team. However, 17% of staff reported problems in this area.
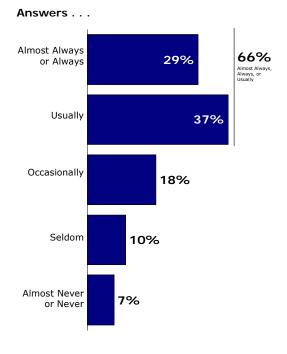
Employees appreciate:

- Co-workers who are helpful and hard-working
- Co-workers who are respectful
- A pleasant, supportive work environment

They would like to see a reduction in:

- Selfish behavior on the part of co-workers
- Gossip and "backbiting" among co-workers
- Tolerance of employees who cannot function as team members

Fewer staff in institutions report teamwork and cooperation.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	29%
Usually	37%
Occasionally	18%
Seldom	10%
Almost Never or Never	7%

66% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	59%
Non-Institution	68%

VOICES . . .

Most employees reported a strong and positive connection with their co-workers

- "My co-workers are friendly and everyone is willing to help each other out."
- "I work in an office in which everyone is cooperative, enthusiastic, and does their job well."
- "I get along well with the people I work with and we try to support and back each other up when necessary."
- "The main thing I like best is the co-workers on my unit. We are team players and respect each other."
- "I work with knowledgeable, dedicated staff who are respectful and hard working."

Many value their work "team" and their role as a team member

- "The people in my unit have bonded together as a good team and I can trust them. I feel that I can talk with them and they support me."
- "I really like the attitude of our office. We are truly a team. We work together and help each other."
- "I work with a great group of people who have good chemistry as a team."
- "I love the teamwork in my office. We have an amazing group of people and it is a pleasant, supportive environment."
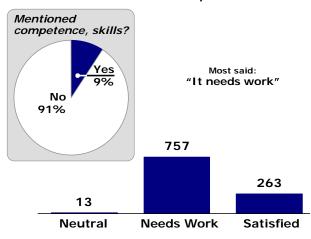
Some employees see the need for *more* cooperation and teamwork on their job site

- "More teamwork. Less 'us against them.'"
- "I would love everyone in the office to be on the same page."
- "Complete elimination of 'cliques,' which can be quite damaging."
- "Less interpersonal friction between peers."
- "Less selfishness. More of a spirit of self-sacrifice."
- "There are many staff here who have bad attitudes, sabotage team decisions, are unethical, are unprofessional, and even refuse to do things that are part of their job."
- "Employees who cause discord by gossip, or worse, should be held accountable."
- "I would want to see more teamwork and less attitude."

THEME | Co-worker competence

Of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments, 1,022 (9%) discussed the competence or incompetence of their co-workers. They addressed skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

9% mentioned co-worker competence/skills*

Of the 1,022 who commented on co-worker competence, 74% discussed problems with co-workers' job performance. Many resent co-workers who:

- Complain or waste time on the job
- Take too much vacation or sick leave
- Don't care about doing good work
- Aren't made to face consequences for problem behaviors**

A smaller group of respondents (26%) praised these co-worker traits:

- Knowledge and skill
- Reliability and trustworthiness
- Ethical and professional behavior

Mentioned competence, skills?

Yes 9%

No 91%

Most said: "It needs work"

757

263

13

Neutral **Needs Work** **Satisfied**

Many felt that their co-workers' performance could improve

- "I have never seen so many whiney, complaining caseworkers in all my life."
- "Everyone is careful with supplies and items like that, but don't seem to value the time that they waste."
- "Some just don't care and take every minute off that they don't feel well or they don't want to be here."
- "People that complain constantly about just about everything need to move on and find other work. There is no place for this in the workplace. Develop some enthusiasm for the work we do."
- "There is an awful lot of chit-chat and socializing in the office and concentration in a cube-space is difficult."
- "It seems people who struggle with their jobs either get promoted or others have to take on their responsibilities."
- "A lot of time is spent trying to get people to a level of competency needed for the job when…they will never get there."
- "People who don't want to be here or want to retire should do so, so some who want to work can!!"

Some felt that troublesome co-workers should face consequences

- "Make everyone follow the rules, not just SOME people based on popularity or color or nationality."
- "A few people who have been here awhile need to be let go…they are ethically and morally wrong but nothing seems to happen."
- "Get rid of the people who are 'deadwood.' Some people talk a good talk but really do very little work."
- "I would like to see problematic, belligerent, even abusive employees dealt with more effectively."
- "Get rid of people who are lazy or waste time complaining."

Employees appreciate co-workers who do their job well

- "My co-workers are professionals, who care about their job and the clients they serve."
- "I work with caring, extremely competent and intelligent people who are dedicated to providing quality results."
- "I like the knowledgeable professionals I work with. I believe they are some of the best staff in the state."
- "The people in my work unit are very skilled, experienced, and dedicated to the work we do."
- "I work with people who know their jobs and are trustworthy."
- "I have a great group of co-workers. They are all professional, reliable, and seem to enjoy working with each other."
- "All (work team) members are highly ethical, professional, and competent."
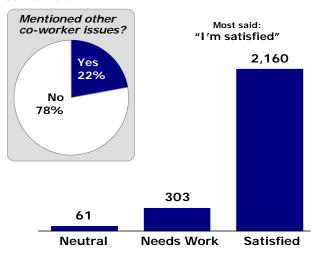
*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.
**See also Supervisor/Manager Support | Accountability (page 22)

THEME | Other comments about co-workers

2,478 of the 11,176 employees who wrote comments mentioned some other issue related to co-workers.

22% mentioned other issues related to co-workers*

Mentioned other co-worker issues?

Yes 22%

No 78%

Most said: "I'm satisfied"

2,160

303

61

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

In addition to issues of teamwork, competence, and dedication, 2,478 respondents commented on other co-worker issues. The majority (87%) of such comments were positive. Many employees appreciate co-workers who:

- Are friendly and helpful
- Are courteous and caring
- Have a sense of humor
- Contribute to a positive work environment

A few (12%) have concerns about co-workers who:

- Act out in anger or "bully" others
- Overreact to minor matters
- Are too "stressed out"

Employees appreciate their co-workers' positive qualities
- "The people I work with are all nice, fun, and just plain great to be around."
- "The best thing about my job is that I can be a part of a group that wants to improve the lives of children."
- "The social workers in my unit are very caring and very skilled. I enjoy working with them."
- "My co-workers are friendly, courteous, and helpful."
- "I am inspired to do better social work because my co-workers work so hard and are good social workers."
- "Most of the people I work with are extraordinary people, and care for each other."
- "Most people within my workgroup are very willing to help others that can't work as fast or are having other problems."
- "The staff I work with are very kind and caring."
- "I work with people who are helpful and hopeful. They may not always get a specific action right, but their hearts are in the right place."
- "I like the staff I work with, especially those with a good attitude and sense of humor."
- "The people are amazing! Smart, caring, visionary, and fun to work with."

"Good" co-workers contribute to a positive work environment
- "The work environment is friendly; I enjoy coming to work. My health has improved due to the positive interaction."
- "My co-workers make my job fun."
- "I love the environment and the staff. It's friendly and encouraging."
- "I like the team I am in. We work cooperatively with each other, make the best of our work environment."
- "The people here are great! Professional environment, but not stuffy."

Some employees have concerns about their co-workers
- "It's like a schoolyard around here. People bully with impunity."
- "Less drama about the details."
- "Stop co-workers threatening other co-workers."
- "Training for those who throw temper tantrums when they are stressed so they don't take it out on others."
- "Less hostility, less manipulation, less retaliation."
- "I wish people weren't as stressed out as they are."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

Business Practices

What Employees Want

Employees who participated in the survey addressed two main aspects of business practice:

- **Policies and Decision-Making** – Many employees addressed specific policies and practices, but some spoke more to senior leadership and the process through which policy decisions are made.

- **Resources** – Staff pointed to needs for staffing, pay and benefits, training, facilities, and resources for clients.

Tiffany Bliven, Dylan Oxford, Molly Ennes, Erin Scholl, Kay Gedrose, Anna Bowman
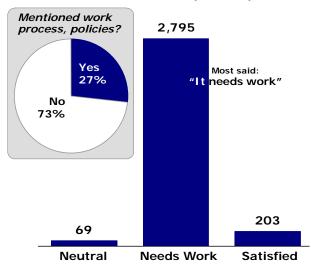

Audrey Adams, Edwina Dorsey, Debbie Schomer, Ken Stark

THEME | Work processes and policies

2,988 survey respondents (27% of the 11,176 who made comments) addressed specific work processes and policies.

27% made comments about process/policies*

Almost all of the comments about work processes and policies (94%) were suggestions for improvement.

These suggestions cover a broad range. Some of the most popular:

- Clear policies and procedures help
- Constant change impairs client services and staff efficiency
- Quality, not quantity, should be the standard

There were enough suggestions concerning personnel issues, safety, and unions to count these separately. See page 51.

Mentioned work process, policies?

Yes 27%

No 73%

2,795

Most said: "It needs work"

69

203

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

Some staff offered general observations and suggestions about work policies and procedures
- "More consistency and conformity to policy. Confusion about policy creates unnecessary rework."
- "It is hard to accomplish anything under ever changing and increasingly heavy workloads/caseloads. Stop changing work policies and procedures – poor work conditions result in poor case work and more lawsuits."
- "The basis for good practice remains the same but gets overshadowed by increasing requirements to document everything. Some of this is useful and some is to generate data. Technology makes it easy to create new forms, policies, and statistics. This was supposed to free up social workers but it stands in the way of good social work. Just because we can gather tons of information doesn't mean we should."
- "Policies are nebulous and the manual is not user friendly. The manual changes occur so frequently that we cannot even come close to reading all the new information. Policy interpretation varies from office to office."
- "HQ staff is revising many policies in the manual. In a quest to make things easier, key details are left out. This makes the policies ambiguous and causes different interpretations of doing things."

Other employees said too much change is not good
- "DSHS consistently implements policy changes before training and informing staff. This leaves managers in the dark as well. Some managers may make up an answer or give a curt response."
- "ESA keeps changing the stats to evaluate how we are doing."
- "Too many unofficial changes, e-mails, mandates, policies, and procedures reduce quality client services."
- "Change for the sake of change is meaningless and a huge waste of time – not to mention the toll it takes on human initiative and self-worth. Someone at the top needs to explain how the changes will improve the lives of those we're trying to serve."
- "I support change. What change I'd like to see is management being realistic. They add duties and expectations and then take positions for specialization which in turn dumps higher workloads. It sometimes feels like someone is handing me a cinderblock and asking me to swim. I wish that they were more forth coming ahead of time so that our input could really mean something and not be lip service."

Many staff argue that quantity standards sacrifice quality client services
- "Just because you meet the timelines doesn't mean that one has done the best job. The goal is the stats not the safety and well being of children and families."
- "Our whole purpose has turned into a numbers game rather than what is in the best interest of the child."
- "More emphasis on people than on production. I used to feel that I was helping people, but now I feel like I am on a production line and the bottom line is meeting percentages."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Specific work processes and policies

Some suggestions were very specific to the individual workplace and DSHS services. The suggestions below are samples of specific comments and do not necessarily represent the views of the majority of employees. Issues like these can be addressed in each administration's Action Plan or at the division, office, or institution level.

Some employees offered positive comments about work policies and operations

- "The program I work in delivers vital services quickly and effectively to those in need. The majority of the bureaucratic headache is on the worker, not the elderly/frail or disabled clients."
- "I enjoy the WorkFirst program. It is exhilarating to see clients change their lives and become self-sufficient. I feel the program has enhanced our communities and I am proud to tell the pubic what I 'do.'"
- "The program is balanced: evidenced based practices, ongoing program development, responsive to legislative mandates, but most of all focused on helping to keep kids safe, healthy and stable."
- "I like that the agency has finally increased their use of technology and offered these resources to workers."
- "The clients have more input and decision making opportunities that affect their lives."
- "We are really doing good things with our clients. JRA's focus on treatment not punishment is great."
- "The comprehensive nature of the CARE tool encourages social work practice at its best."

Some employees call for a balance in paperwork and time with clients

- "I like interacting with kids. That time is now drastically reduced due to increased, mindless paperwork."
- "Use automation to increase the efficiency of the front line worker, not just to gather statistics. Eliminate duplication of inputs, feed information between processes, track documents, eliminate filing, 'field filling' for needed reports and documents. Make changes and information reference quick and less cumbersome."
- "Quit adding more documentation to our workloads. Please get this straight; some cases require lots of work and some cases require little work, so the number of cases means nothing. Get it? Got it? Good!"
- "There are so many reports and requirements for the WorkFirst program there is limited time to serve clients…components, meetings, standards, all create mountains of paperwork for employees. Clients can barely understand the mail they receive or the requirements. In addition, policies are always changing."
- "Too much emphasis on worker statistics negatively affects the quality of work to get 'better' statistics."

Other staff argue for better access to important data and technology

- "Since nothing happens unless it is recorded, all social workers should have laptops for immediate data entry. The notes would be fresh, it would reduce mileage, and the workers could be more efficient."
- "We MUST get an updated computer system to research the backgrounds of clients and providers who work with children. Getting criminal history is not an easy task. One person should know the process and forms."
- "We NEED access to complete criminal histories of applicants: data on federal felony and other states' convictions, juvenile court decisions, and local law enforcement."
- "Significantly more input from line workers into technology advances BEFORE they are implemented."
- "I am shocked that we do not have access to NCIC criminal records."

Employees offered specific ideas to improve services, increase client safety, and save money

- "Review the 'trend' toward relative placements. Are relative placements as dangerous as the families from whom the children are being removed?"
- "Transform the volunteer transportation officers to paid positions and include extensive criminal background checks. Drivers should keep a journal of daily activities. The drivers see the kids more than the workers; their input would be useful in court (i.e. the child who cries every time they to go for a family visit)."
- "Some think that call centers are the answer. I believe they are the downfall."
- "Get rid of the call center. The person responsible for the work on the case should answer the clients' phone calls. Workers should be held responsible if they do not call the person back in a timely manner."
- "Clients must be accountable for their own future. We provide resources for them to have a better life. We shouldn't be working harder for their successes than they do."
- "SCRS and CRCs are paid for a number of 'beds' per night regardless if there is a youth placed in that bed. It would be more fiscally responsible to pay for number of youth served. Provider payments go unchecked."
- "Use universal forms throughout the life of a case to eliminate duplicity and confusion. Use e-mail to communicate between units instead of the endless copying."
- "I think many of the letters and forms each case manager creates could be standardized and shared."
- "The clients are daily exposed to excessive noise. The radio and TV usually begin at 5:30 a.m. and are not turned off until 10:00 p.m. In many rooms the radio is never turned off."
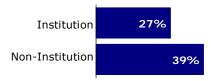
QUESTION | I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in my program
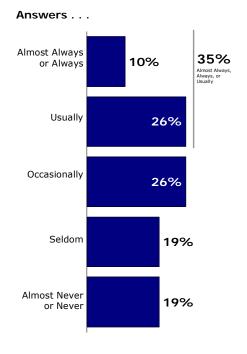
Questions about senior leadership tend to score low in any organization's employee survey. * In DSHS, 35% of employees often have confidence in senior leader decisions, while 38% seldom or never have such confidence.

Comments show no consistent definition of who is a "senior leader." However, it is clear that most opinions about senior leaders have their roots in issues previously addressed in this report.

- Communication – Tell us what is going on and give us input into changes.

- Support – Let us know you value our work; be available and helpful; set realistic expectations.

Far fewer staff in institutions reported confidence in senior leader decisions.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always	10%
Usually	26%
Occasionally	26%
Seldom	19%
Almost Never or Never	19%

35% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	27%
Non-Institution	39%

Employees want to be valued and asked for input

- "[I'd like] A leadership (above my immediate supervisor) that empowers its staff, trusts our professionalism, treats us with dignity and respect, listens to the issues identified, considers the solutions offered and takes meaningful action — Rather than one that micromanages, creates unrealistic workload expectations despite feedback from line supervisors and staff, makes us feel incompetent when issues are identified, creates an atmosphere of fear, and quickly dismisses input."

- "Upper management might be surprised at how many good ideas the workers have that are never heard."

- "The administrative/management team has done a remarkable job in allowing all employees to provide input and have been sensitive to concerns and challenges we face."

- "Central Office is very smart people, but often far removed from the reality of the work and clients."

- "When will the higher ups learn to ask the people that are doing the work?"

- "While 'Olympia' always talks about having input from the field, this seldom happens. The field is left to implement decisions made with very good intentions, but not much working knowledge of the impact."

- "In the last few years they have decided that line staff is too stupid to be included in the decision process."

They want management decisions based on in-depth knowledge and realistic expectations

- "At this time the top administrators are clueless to the needs of the line staff."

- "Senior management that actually know what's going on. They sit in their offices expounding that we have to do more with less; we have to tighten our belts; we have to 'step up to the plate.' All the while the increasing workload, staff reductions, poor/dangerous working conditions, in-fighting, micromanaging, and the amazing ever-shrinking paycheck make line staff very wary of anything senior management says."

- "The people who make the decisions sit behind closed doors and have no idea what we really do or need."

- "Staff in Olympia need to understand that field staff have things to do besides jump at their every beck and call, and field staff need to understand that staff in Olympia really don't just sit around and think up the most miserably complex way to do tasks."

- "HQ is making these demands from too far away and not showing they understand or care. HQ needs to prove to line staff that they are invested and care about what happens to kids and families AND to staff."

- "We want you (upper management) to visit the CSO and see what we do and the types of clients we serve."

- "Staff in the field have no confidence in upper or middle DSHS management. We have tightened our belts regarding staffing and have now reached the point where it is impossible to meet all goals all the time."

*Connolly, P.M., and Connolly, K.G. (2005). *Employee Opinion Questionnaires*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
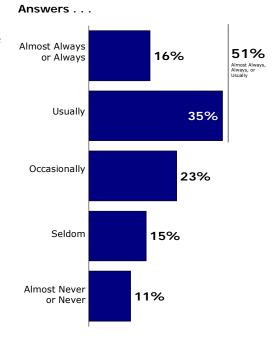
QUESTION | My agency uses my time and talents well

Fifty-one percent of employees reported that DSHS uses their time and talents well most of the time. However, 26% of staff feel that their time and talents were seldom or never used. Employees who wrote comments shed light on these findings by suggesting that the agency:

- Minimize clerical work for professional staff

- Treat professional staff as professionals

- Always consider the impact of changes on employees and clients

- Avoid making changes in processes without involving the staff who do the work

Answers . . .

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	16%
Usually	35%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	11%

51% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Fewer staff in institutions reported that the agency uses their time and talents well.

Institution	44%
Non-Institution	54%

VOICES . . .

Front line staff say they spend too much time on clerical tasks
- "Do not require social workers to spend increasingly large percent of the day doing clerical task which deprives clients of contact with professionals."
- "Taking hand notes and then having to transcribe later is a time waster. I could decrease redundancies with a laptop. It could be phenomenal time saver!"
- "Social workers in CA need clerical support and lower caseloads, so we can focus on social work and not clerical work. Currently clerical tasks take up 50% of our time."
- "Determine what is unnecessary and streamline that process (there are way too many details – we are drowning in paper pushing). I feel like a highly paid file clerk and NOT A PROFESSIONAL social worker! Eighty percent of the time is paper pushing and only about 20% is face-to-face client contact."

Employees appreciate being treated as professionals
- "Management seems completely uninterested in developing staff to really USE our talents and skills."
- "The RA does not reward individual thinking. Staff are discouraged from any individuality in their work."
- "If employees are productive and doing their job well, leave them alone! Employees will not act like professionals if they are not treated as professionals who are trusted to do their jobs. The state will never get and retain the best if employees are treated like children instead of professionals."
- "For the first time in the 25 plus years with this agency, this is a very unfriendly place to work. Management appears to need to control everyone and make them into clones. No wonder morale is the lowest it has ever been! It would be nice to be treated not only like adults, but as professionals."
- "When the state hires professional people, they should be given latitude to exercise that professional skill in the performance of their job, instead of having job tasks dictated."
- "The talents and intellects of a lot of very good people are simply ignored. I would like to see this agency use workers to their best talents and abilities. The agency is a big system of enforced mediocrity."
- "I don't believe my talents or experience are recognized or put to use."

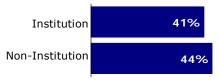**They would like to see routine methods to involve all staff in problem solving**
- "Implement routine ways of eliciting ideas and engaging all staff in system problem solving."
- "We are allowed to give input, but does headquarters listen and understand what the field does?"
- "Actually, my biggest problem is when ideas and direction come from headquarters without enough research into how that really does impact the field."
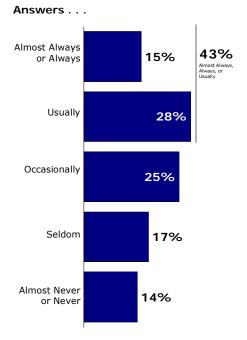
QUESTION | In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes

Four out of six employees (43%) often use customer feedback to improve services. However, 31% of staff report problems in this area.

Only a few employees wrote directly about the use of customer feedback to improve services. Most employees who commented expressed great concern about improving client services. Many arre concerned that demanding paperwork, output-based performance measures, high workloads, increasing caseloads, and staff reductions could diminish the quality of services to clients.

Answers . . .

Almost Always or Always **15%**

43%
Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Usually **28%**

Occasionally **25%**

Seldom **17%**

Almost Never or Never **14%**

Slightly fewer staff in institutions reported that their workgroup uses customer feedback for improvement.

Institution **41%**

Non-Institution **44%**

VOICES . . .

A few employees talked about use of customer feedback
- "I would like data driven decisions based on timely customer feedback."
- "I'd like more direct customer input into the processes that affect them."
- "Customer feedback is used to beat up workers, not inform practices."
- "All I ever hear is 'customer service.' Has management EVER thought about making their own staff happy?"
- "Use more customer comment cards."

Other employees suggested ways to improve client services
- "Our office runs 8 to 5, period. This is not customer services for customers or employees."
- "More clients are requesting to be seen before 8 am or after 5 pm so they do not get in trouble at their work. Some can only have a certain number of occurrences before they get fired."
- "I would like to see a receptionist at the front counter to greet our clients and answer simple questions."

Some fear that the emphasis on performance measures takes away from quality customer services
- "We used to do social work but now we are robots meeting time lines."
- "Performance measures typically focus on the speed and time it takes to perform certain tasks. I appreciate timely service delivery, but it is not the only measure of quality. Meeting the rights and needs of customers may slow the process but result in better quality services."
- "I don't feel that the quality of my work is recognized – just the numbers."
- "Too much paperwork and tracking instead of making sure clients get help. Our clients are not cattle that we can push through in herds so our numbers look good, but individuals who need our help. DSHS says they care about the people but they only show they care about the paperwork."
- "Years ago my focus was helping seniors. Now most of my time is spent trying to meet extensive job expectations and there is less time for clients. High caseloads lead to poor services and potential liability. Management should stop crunching numbers and pay attention to the population they claim to serve."
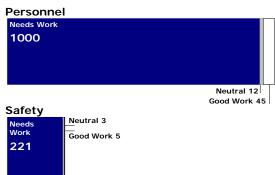- "Get rid of the bean counters and get back to working with kids."

Employees said high workloads and too few front line staff result in poor client services
- "We rarely get patients outside for walks, bus rides, bowling or a movie."
- "People are having to wait too long to get assistance. Supervisors could step in and help."
- "When I am not overwhelmed with menial paperwork, mailing, and filing, dealing with SSPS provider payments, I get to contact clients and do real social work to address their needs."

THEME | Other policy/practice issues

Some employees wrote about specific policy and practice issues. 1,057 respondents addressed personnel issues and 229 wrote about staff safety.

13% mentioned personnel or safety *

Personnel

Needs Work
1000

Neutral 12
Good Work 45

Safety

Needs Work
221

Neutral 3

Good Work 5

Almost all of the comments about personnel policies (95%) and safety (97%) were suggestions for improvement. Employees asked for:

- Fairer hiring and promotion opportunities (discussed in chapter 3, pages 28-29)

- A speedier process to hire new and replacement staff

- More attention to safety issues (67% of these comments came from Mental Health, 11% from DD, 9% from Children's Administration, 7% from JRA and 4% from SCC)

VOICES . . .

Employees expressed concerns about advancement, recruitment and hiring practices
- "[I would like] more opportunities for advancement!"
- "We are short staffed and have been told to expect it to take up to 7 to 8 weeks to get a register."
- "I'd like BIG changes so we are not working with supervisors with family members in the same office. Husbands, wives and children of supervisors are hired; non-relatives are passed by for promotions."

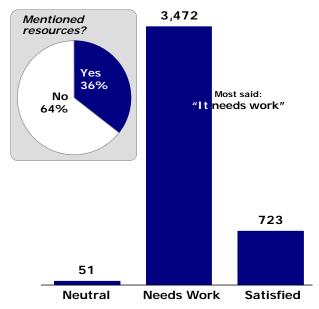**Safety issues were mainly a concern in the institutions and in Children's Administration**
- "Less coddling and more accountability for residents. No more tolerance for numerous staff assaults."
- "The money that could be saved in lower L & I premiums (last year it was $6 million) could be used to improve our accident/prevention program and allow money for a 'true return to work' program."
- "We should have a poster in the office stating that any threats will be taken seriously - police will be called."

*Numbers in bars are unduplicated. Employees who made both "Good Work" and "Needs Work" comments are counted as "Neutral." Good Work" and "Neutral" comments together count as "Good Work." "Needs Work" and "Neutral" comments together count as "Needs Work."

THEME | General resources

More than one-third of employees who made comments (3,965 of 11,176) addressed resource issues.

36% made comments about resources*

Mentioned resources?

Yes 36%

No 64%

3,472

Most said: "It needs work"

723

51

Neutral　　**Needs Work**　　**Satisfied**

As might be expected, the majority (88%) of the resource-related comments are suggestions for improvements. Of the 3,965 who addressed resources:

- 1,264 mentioned staffing (page 54)
- 1,006 talked about pay and benefits (p. 55)
- 936 addressed training (p. 56)
- 628 spoke about facilities and work environment (p. 57)
- 304 mentioned resources for DSHS clients (p. 58)

The survey also asked one standard question about resources: "I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively." The results for this question are discussed on page 53.

VOICES . . .

Many employees made eloquent pleas for more resources
- "I would like to be given the resources necessary for doing my job. That is what I want. Not more money. Not bigger cubicles. Not a refrigerator or touchy-feely gatherings. I just want another person to help me and the physical tools to accomplish the tasks I have been given. Is that too much to ask for?"
- "More resources are needed for the increasing mandates that are made by Headquarters and Legislatures."
- "Our equipment is so old and used so often it breaks down on a regular basis. Many of the data base systems we use are primitive, which creates many hours of unnecessary trouble-shooting and waiting for computers to unfreeze."
- "It's pretty sad that we can't get what we need to do our jobs appropriately and as expected. We have strict expectations, not enough $$ or people to complete the expectations as written and then are reprimanded and/or penalized for just doing our best."
- "Need proper, reliable equipment, better trained staff…reliable equipment (yes, twice – it's really that bad)."
- "Certain issues are not dealt with due to lack of staff."
- "If I were king, I'd make sure everyone knew what was expected of them and they had the resources to meet those expectations."

Usually staff concerns were focused on their ability to help the client with limited resources
- "When we do not make the resources available to do the work, we become part of the barrier to the success for our clients."
- "This is an important job where children's lives are on the line. By having so many things on your plate, it is putting children last. You are not able to put children first."
- "Less administration/more people actually doing the job would be incredibly advantageous to all we serve."
- "The workload is too high to provide quality services. Poor quality leads to less effectiveness and efficiency. The whole organization and the clients suffer."
- "The state keeps taking things away from the patients."
- "Resources are far and few between for my children."
- "There needs to be more emphasis on helping our clients and not just making 'the numbers look good' so that our manager looks good. It is people we serve, not numbers."
- "We are at least trying to help people in need. Although we need better tools to do the job."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

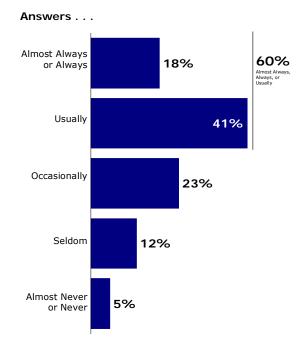## QUESTION | I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively

Three out of every five employees reported that they are provided the tools and resources needed for their job. However, 17% report frequent lack of needed workplace resources.

It is no surprise that those with adequate resources made a few, short comments. Those who feel they lack appropriate resources wrote more detailed descriptions. They want:

- Existing equipment updated and improved
- New and/or additional equipment provided
- Basic supplies more readily available

Fewer staff in institutions reported having adequate tools and resources.

Answers . . .

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	18%
Usually	41%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	12%
Almost Never or Never	5%

60% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Institution	53%
Non-Institution	62%

VOICES . . .

Many employees reported that they are satisfied with the tools and resources available to them
- "I do appreciate having the new technological tools to do a more effective job."
- "We have the resources to do our jobs."
- "I appreciate that I can really depend on my computer to run well and quickly."
- "I like the tools that the State has provided for staff to help people."
- "We have very good equipment and most of the resources we need to do our jobs."

Some feel like they could be more efficient if given the right tools
- "Not able to perform job because of lack of supplies."
- "Management needs to start listening to the employees in the field office regarding our needs to perform our job to the highest standard; stop telling us that we don't have enough money in the budget for that."
- "We need technology!"
- "I would like to see appropriate work equipment to support the size of the office, specifically, enough copy machines – and in working order."
- "I would like to see a sufficient amount of tools and resources to work effectively."
- "We're stuck having to rely on old equipment and surplus scraps, but we manage. It's hard to be the best you can when all you are given is garbage."
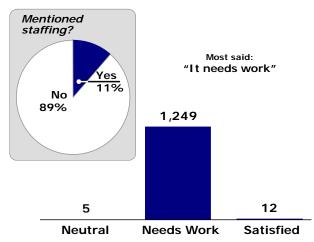- "I would love to see more updated communications tools that would streamline my work."

Employees also expressed frustration over lacking the simple basics
- "I have to use the evaluation process to ask for cleaning supplies to do my job."
- "We have to beg for basic supplies."
- "I would like to see my office equipped with the basic tools we need to do our jobs (stock room supplies)."
- "Our equipment is unsafe and unreliable. It took about 6 months to repair an electrical outlet, about 3 months to repair ovens and steamers. Steamers are broken, dangerous and don't heat the food properly."
- "We pick up pens and pads from conferences and training, because we don't have supply support."
- "We are forced to take short cuts to cover the necessities. This is not good for families or for us."
- "We often run out, forcing staff to furnish our own supplies with our own money."
- "I would like to see supplies, equipment, etc. be a priority instead of making the worker feel like it is a burden."

THEME | Staffing

Adequate staffing was mentioned by 1,264 employees (11% of those making comments).

11% commented about overall satisfaction*

Most said:
"It needs work"

Mentioned staffing?

Yes 11%

No 89%

Neutral	Needs Work	Satisfied
5	1,249	12

Virtually all of those who mentioned staffing commented on the lack of adequate staff.

These employees feel that inadequate staffing is a critical situation, resulting in:

- Inability to give the types of service our clients deserve
- Unsafe conditions for clients and staff
- Chronic stress, resulting in fatigue and physical illness
- High rate of burnout and staff turnover

VOICES . . .

Most employees mentioned problems caused by lack of adequate staff
- "Taking time off is no fun because of the punishment in workload upon return."
- "I would like to have reassurances that we are at some point going to stop squeezing ALL of the life and blood out of our human resources."
- "Many times the clients are deprived of their programs because there is not enough staff."
- "I could only wish that we were able to work in an environment that the supervisors and other upper management respected their staff more by staffing the facility better, and stop using the excuse that there is no funding to hire more staff."
- "More FTE's. It's difficult to take pride in a job where I bust my butt and still can't get a lot done."
- "At this time, we are dangerously understaffed and overworked."
- "It seems when there is a crisis, instead of creating more FTE's, more responsibilities are given to the workers on the line with less resources, which creates higher burnout and greater turnover and in the end the opposite of creating more safety."
- "We are way over the recommended number of referrals per worker and good people are consistently leaving our CPS unit as they have had enough."
- "Please hire enough [staff] to reduce mandatory overtime and turnover."
- "We have a cart loaded down with programs/expectations/mandates and not enough horsepower to pull the cart and its load."
- "The workloads continue to increase, while the staffing levels continue to be reduced."
- "I feel administration needs to do a better job filling the vacant positions at the SCC. The mandatory overtime does nothing but burn employees out, and burnt-out employees make for disgruntled employees."
- "The caseload is way too high to provide real quality of service on all cases."

Some commented on specific help needed (usually clerical/support or line staff)
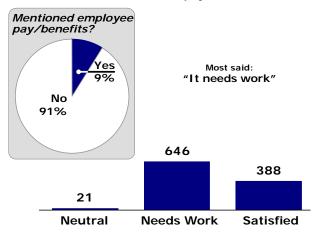- "More support staff - it makes no sense to have Social Workers doing some of the tasks they do, instead of direct work with children and families."
- "We need more social workers per unit to level out the amount of caseloads. Caseloads are too high."
- "Staffing levels that allow for teaming on investigations to assure safety."
- "Provide support staff for clerical functions."
- "Less management and more field workers to appropriately serve our clients."
- "More volunteers and/or interns to assist."
- "We need more line workers and less people getting paid more to sit in meetings and decide what changes they can make that are usually more disruptive than anything else."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Pay and benefits

Slightly less than 10% (1,006) of those commenting mentioned pay and/or benefits.

9% made comments about pay and benefits*

Mentioned employee pay/benefits?

Yes
9%

No
91%

Most said:
"It needs work"

646

388

21

Neutral　　　**Needs Work**　　　**Satisfied**

About two-thirds of the 1,006 mentioning pay and/or benefits would like to see changes:

- Regular and fair raises
- Wages competitive with private sector
- Merit-based increases reflective of performance and/or workload
- Pay differential for "urban" areas

Many of these unhappy employees pointed out that increases in the cost of living, health insurance costs, gas prices, and union dues had all reduced the value of their take-home check.

Nearly 40% (including some of the above) made positive comments about pay and benefits. Most of these mentioned they were happy to have a secure job with benefits.

VOICES . . .

Employees made many comments about feeling underpaid
- "I am under-compensated for all the WAC's and rules I must know."
- "Work is a challenge, the pay sucks."
- "On top of having a heavier caseload, we are working for less money than even a couple years ago. With changes in the medical coverage, I am making over $200 LESS than two years ago."
- "1.4 billion in the kitty and we get meager pay raises... who's kidding who?"
- "I am at the point where I cannot afford to work here anymore!"
- "Do I feel over STRESSED and overworked and underpaid...YES."

Some mentioned changes they thought would make pay more equitable
- "Urban pay differential, to compensate for much higher cost of living in urban areas, so we can attract and keep the strongest staff possible."
- "Pay adjustments to coincide with county and private sectors."
- "Pay commensurate with the ever increasing complexities of our duties!"
- "I would really love to see raises based on performance."
- "Better medical/dental coverage for employees in rural areas. (I don't have a choice, Uniform is the only plan offered.)"
- "Comparable pay for comparable work, compared to peers in other sections."
- "Fair pay increases, rather than the decreases received the last few years due to rising medical and forced union dues."
- "Less money for managers and supervisors and more money for those who actually do the work."

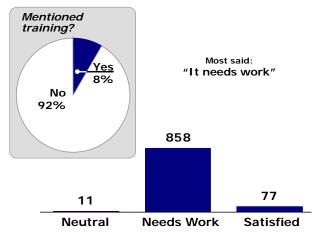**Many staff appreciate having a job and getting the benefits associated with it**
- "Employee grumbling about the cost of health care aside, our package is still above average."
- "The state has helped me put two and a half children through college without a hitch. I very much appreciate having been given the opportunity to work in state service."
- "I appreciate the fact that I have a job, period."
- "I like the fact that I have job security not for only me, but my kids also."
- "First and foremost, I love the benefits and security I have working for a state agency."
- "I especially feel secure about the retirement benefits here and feel I will be well taken care of when I retire from the state. I'm very thankful to be here."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Training

About 8% (936) of those who made comments specifically mentioned training issues.

8% made comments about training*

Mentioned training?

Yes 8%

No 92%

Most said:
"It needs work"

Neutral	Needs Work	Satisfied
11	858	77

Of the 936 employees who mentioned training, 92% requested changes. They would like to see more training available:

- Locally, especially in Eastern WA
- When implementing new policies
- For new hires and line workers
- That is job/software specific
- For supervisors with poor management skills

<div style="background:navy;color:white">**VOICES . . .**</div>

Employees made both good and bad comments about training quality
- "The trainings have been excellent."
- "We do not receive consistent training to complete our jobs."
- "I also like the training opportunities made available, as it helps link my own goals with the agency's."
- "I just wish that the training that they say we get, we actually got."
- "The trainings are valuable and very helpful!"
- "Improved training upon hiring (Academy and on-the-job training were insufficient)."
- "I applaud, thank and congratulate upper management for the long overdue focus on training for all."

Many requested additional training for themselves and/or for their supervisors
- "More training when changes are made."
- "We have no idea how to actually do our jobs once academy is over."
- "More training for supervisors on how to supervise, motivate, team build, etc."
- "Annual training would be helpful."
- "More training that pertains to my position and what my position could be."
- "See that those in supervisory positions receive training in order to increase their effectiveness."
- "I would like to see a 'shadowing' training experience for top managers to give them current, practical awareness of the multiple complicated tasks, challenges, and time requirements that line staff face."
- "We still continue to take risks without proper training."
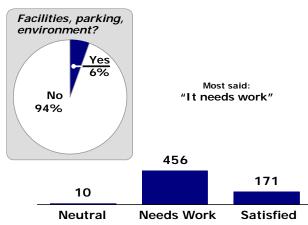
Staff mentioned how difficult it is to get training
- "I have literally gotten a chuckle from my supervisor when asked if I could take a class to improve my stress level at work that only costs $39."
- "Training options: should be for ALL, not just the chosen few. My supervisor will not approve any training, 'because we are already short handed.'"
- "It is not cost-effective or reasonable to have Region 1 go to Seattle instead of providing training here."
- "Support for continuing education (training is NOT supported!)."
- "Trainings offered to the rural office."
- "I need additional training, but am afraid to go because there is no one to take on my workload when I'm out of the office and all just piles up waiting for my return."
- "Some trainings are only offered to certain people. Others don't hear about it until after the fact."
- "Why can't I be informed of training ahead of time?"
- "The superintendent has denied our requests for leave to attend mandatory continuing education."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Facilities/environment

628 of the 11,176 survey respondents (6%) discussed their work environment. Comments touch on offices, institutions, parking, neighborhood, and surroundings.

6% made comments about facilities*

Facilities, parking, environment?

Yes 6%

No 94%

Most said: "It needs work"

456

171

10

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

Although 27% of the 628 who commented on the workplace environment gave positive feedback, more of the comments (73%) are requests for improvement. The key areas that concern employees are:

- Lack of space and light in work area
- Bad air quality/poor heating system
- Need for safety measures/noise reduction
- Exercise rooms, break rooms, and other changes that would improve employee health and fitness
- General maintenance and cleanliness

VOICES . . .

Employees did express appreciation for the location of their workplace
- "The 4-person open cubicle my co-workers and I are situated in is very well-suited to our job duties and work methods."
- "I like working in the regional office, closer to helping real people with real needs."
- "It is located near my home."
- "Close to home, so I don't have to travel."

Lack of adequate space causes problems for many employees
- "Our dept is a mess in regards to floor space, clutter, the stuff in the hallways. It is a fire safety issue."
- "More space. We are so crowded that when we have all-staff meetings we overflow."
- "Higher cube walls for confidentiality & noise control."
- "The place is like a jail. Low ceilings, tiny cubicles, no fresh air (actually toxic air)."
- "Not comfortable the way my module is set up. No room for clients. They are basically on my lap."
- "The cubicles are too small and the layout of the floor is not designed to maximize the lighting or space. Walkways are cluttered and there are boxes stacked all over."
- "I would like professional looking interview rooms in which to take clients for an interview, not the junk room full of storage and file cabinets, etc. that we currently have. One interview room is not sufficient and it is quite a distance from front counter and very hard for our clients with disabilities to walk."

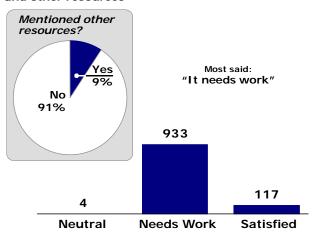**There were a number of requests for building improvements**
- "A healthier, upgraded kitchen in which to heat up/prepare lunch/wash dishes. We have linoleum countertops and walls peeling off, and about 40 years old (it truly is in very poor condition with rips, tears and holes)."
- "Better work environment - you can go to one part of the building and freeze to death and another part and take off the coat or sweater you just put on because it's too hot."
- "Facilities for exercise during lunch hour will contribute to overall well-being, morale, and productivity."
- "If you really want to know what kind of physical environment would improve my well being, it would be an environment that has lots of natural light and plants; one that is clean with warm, cheerful colors instead of the dark, drab, dingy and depressing building in which I work."
- "Better office lighting and air quality. People in our office are always sneezing and hacking."
- "An exercise room, a better place to walk on breaks, more emphasis on 'a healthy workplace.'"
- "There is NO parking for our clients and very limited parking for staff. Why would anyone pick such a place when there were better places to be had that INCLUDED parking for all?"
- "Better security is needed in and around my workplace to alleviate concern about my personal and property safety while at work."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

THEME | Resources for clients and other resources

Nine percent of the employees who wrote comments (1040 of 11,176) mentioned other resource issues, including resources for clients.

9% made comments about resources for clients and other resources*

Mentioned other resources?

Yes
9%

No
91%

Most said:
"It needs work"

933

4

117

Neutral   **Needs Work**   **Satisfied**

Nine out of ten of the comments that fall into the "Other Resources" category are requests for more resources. Employees would like to see:

- More resources for clients – 304 employees mentioned client needs

- More tools for doing their jobs effectively (previously discussed on page 53)

Excluding the "other resources" comments related to tools and equipment discussed on page 53, the balance of the few (117) who made positive comments mainly praised DSHS programs that assist clients.

VOICES . . .

Employees made both good and bad comments about resources available for clients
- "I am proud of the services we are able to provide and the impact we can have on people's lives."
- "We are doing drive-by CPS, not social work. We have no resources for children."
- "I feel that I can make a difference in people's lives because I have the resources to connect them to the help they need."
- "I would like to see more money to allow me to give needed services to the families that I serve."
- "I know of no other program that has the resources to help people the way we do."
- "It is impossible to help families without the proper services."
- "I touch the lives of many people with the help of our generous State and Federal programs."
- "It is difficult to expect change when you are not able to provide all of the tools the families need in order to make the changes."
- "We are lucky to have the funds that we do to help so many people in need."
- "We do not and have not for years really provided GOOD services to children."

Many expressed concern for clients and mentioned specific resources needed
- "More resources for parents - parenting classes, anger management classes, domestic violence treatment and MORE foster homes."
- "We have no resources to place children in this region!!!!!!!"
- "Increase the resources, especially in the areas of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Treatment."
- "We need to pay foster parents better and recruit more foster parents."
- "I would like to see the state put more money into recreation programs and activities."
- "There needs to be more funding for upfront services prior to children entering into a dependency action."

Others simply commented on lack of resources in general
- "I feel we are asked to motivate our clients with less and less tools or resources."
- "I'd like to see more money going into programs and projects that work, and less, or none, going into things that aren't working."
- "More money needs to be allotted to Social Services."
- "I would like to see more resources put into rural areas."
- "No more taking from one pot to add to another."
- "More resources spent on services, less on middle management."
- "The 'Git-r-done' mentality, without adequate funding and staffing needs to be addressed."

*Some employees made both positive and negative comments. Category totals will be higher than the number of employees who made comments.

Follow-up/Action Plans

The Survey is Only the Beginning

Survey completion was followed by activity throughout DSHS.

- **Distribution and Discussion** – Survey results were distributed to 529 workgroups

- **Encouragement** – Secretary Arnold-Williams and the Executive Leadership Team stressed the importance of following up on survey issues

- **Action Plans** – Each administration developed and published a plan

Tanya Biehler, Kim Kirkland, Janet Logan, Lisa Glassmeyer

Renee LeMier, Karen Robinson, Esther Neal, Becky Fernandez, Dawn Shuford

Analyzing, Discussing and Following Up on Survey Findings

In addition to their strong support of the survey process, DSHS Secretary Arnold-Williams and the Executive Leadership Team have emphasized the importance of analyzing, discussing, and following up on survey findings.

Distribution and Discussion of Results. Survey results were distributed to all levels of the organization. Detailed reports showing the workgroup's responses to standard questions, major comment themes, and comparisons to the DSHS average were sent to 529 different workgroups at all levels throughout DSHS. Many of the higher level reports were posted on administration web sites. These findings spurred discussion throughout the agency. Many administrations, divisions, regions, institutions, and offices formed committees and focus groups, and implemented other creative measures to address and clarify survey findings.

Formal Action Plans. To ensure follow-up and monitor response to the survey, Secretary Arnold Williams required each DSHS administration to submit an action plan addressing survey findings. Updates showing progress toward accomplishing the planned actions are required at regular intervals.

The action plans and periodic updates are posted on the web in conjunction with this survey. To view the action plans and updates, go to www1.dshs.wa.gov/rda/research/ActionPlans.

Each administration chose some key focus areas for their action plans; it would be impossible to address all the issues surfaced by the employee survey. These focus areas are shown in the table on the next page. The action plans are relatively short and simple. They attempt to address major issues without a complex bureaucratic process that takes time away from the primary mission – a concern highlighted in the survey responses. Although these issues surfaced in the employee survey, most administrations conducted focus groups or used other methods to get more information about the important issues and to discuss possible solutions.

Sample Results from the Action Plans

- Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration adjusted the case reporting schedule and reduced documentation requirements in order to give employees more time to interact with JRA clients.

- Health and Recovery Services Administration instituted a flexible employee recognition program to encourage innovations in the employee recognition process, and to share best practices throughout the administration.

- Management Services Administration redesigned its website to include more training information to meet employees' critical training needs. The new Kudos page on this website also allows employees to publicly recognize contributions of their colleagues on an ongoing basis.

- Aging and Disability Services Administration gave supervisors talking points to share with field staff - to help make the connection between the employees' work, agency goals, and performance measures. New talking points will be provided each quarter.

- The Special Commitment Center developed a newsletter to share staff milestones, welcome new staff, and share kudos and appreciation.

Executive Leadership Initiatives in Response to the Employee Survey. In addition to requiring each administration to submit action plans, Secretary Arnold-Williams and the Executive Leadership Team have responded to concerns expressed in the Employee Survey with changes at the agency level.

- In response to concerns about employee recognition, they created a cross-administration workgroup to develop a more flexible agency-wide employee recognition program.

- They also responded to concerns about communication and information flow by opening up their own meeting to the DSHS community. Summaries of the Executive Leadership Team's twice-monthly meetings are now available to all employees in the *Inside DSHS* online newsletter. At these meetings, the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, and other key leaders share information, discuss issues of concern, and host guest presenters.

2006 DSHS Employee Survey Action Plan Topic Areas

Focus areas chosen by the administrations reflect the key themes that form chapters in this report:

Topic Areas	ADSA	CA	ESA	HRSA	JRA	DVR	SCC	MSA	ISSD	HRD	FSA
COMMUNICATION*											
Staff Feedback and Communication	X	X		X						X	
Measuring Success	X				X						
Improving Communication Between Units									X		
MANAGER/SUPERVISOR SUPPORT											
Employee Recognition		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Performance Evaluations		X						X			
Expanding Performance Accountability									X		X
THE DAILY JOB											
Employee Morale										X	
Teamwork						X			X		
BUSINESS PRACTICES											
Confidence in Senior Leadership	X	X		X						X	
Use of Staff Input in Decision-Making			X				X				
Sharing of Data and Decision-Making	X										
Innovation		X									
Integrated Treatment Model					X						
Use of Time and Talents											X
Use of Customer Feedback									X		X
Tools and Resources to Do the Job Effectively		X			X						
Training Opportunities								X			

* Communication issues appear under several other categories. See especially these topics under Business Practices: Use of Staff Input in Decision-making, Sharing of Data and Decision-Making, and Innovation.

2006
DSHS Employee Survey

The 2006 employee survey is the third DSHS-wide employee survey. The 13,344 employees who completed the survey had much to say.

The Most Common Themes

Employees appreciate:

- The chance to work with and assist needy residents of Washington State
- Supportive, dedicated co-workers
- Supervisors who support, respect, listen, encourage autonomy, and reward good work
- Clear information and guidelines
- Fair treatment – especially in hiring/promotions

Employees would like to see management decisions that are based on:

- In-depth knowledge of the realities and pressures of line work
- Input from line workers who will be impacted by decisions
- Respect for employees' time, expertise and dedication
- Accountability for all levels of the organization
- Concern for the welfare of both clients and employees, rather than "bean counting" and "number crunching"

**Washington State
Department of Social & Health Services**

RDA Research & Data Analysis Division