

Employee Survey

April 2012 | Report 11.167

2011

"DSHS Customer Service" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
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DSHS

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Information About This Publication

Title: 2011 DSHS Employee Survey

Abstract: 10,289 employees completed the 2011 Employee Survey. They addressed communication, supervisor/manager support, fairness and diversity, job satisfaction, and business practices.

The 2011 survey shows the effects of the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. The overall survey trend was downward – reflecting uncertainty, pay cuts, reduced resources, and greater client need. This is consistent with an overall drop in scores for all state employees. In the eleven years that the Department of Social and Health Services has conducted agency-wide surveys, there has never been such a dramatic drop in morale and employee engagement.

The survey results reflect a workforce increasingly anxious and unsure about the future, worn down by changes and increased workload, feeling left out of important communication, and feeling like they have less “say” in the workplace. However, workers continue to be proud of their contribution to society, and to know what is expected of them. Most employees continue to report fair and respectful treatment, especially from supervisors and co-workers.

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“Frozen Sanctuary” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Secretary’s Choice

By Cindy Rochelle, with permission

This survey report also showcases the talents of DSHS employees by publishing the winning entries from the Department’s photo contest, which was held in conjunction with the survey. All photos are used by permission. Time spent recruiting these photos, taking the pictures, and conducting the judging was done at no cost to the state. The process provides a collection of free photos for our use in various publications throughout the year.

Jody Becker-Green, PhD

Senior Director, Planning, Performance and Accountability

“Lady Rainier” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Monica Medalen, with permission



“Sunrise” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Kimberly Kyler, with permission



2011

DSHS Employee Survey



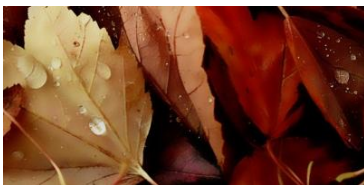
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Appendices are available in conjunction with this report on the RDA Website: www1.dshs.wa.gov/rda

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"Always by My Side" • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Tonya Vaughan, with permission



"Inside the Japanese Maple" • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Beth Krantz, with permission



“All Aboard” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Photographers’ Choice
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Executive Summary

The 2011 survey shows the effects of the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. The overall survey trend was downward – reflecting uncertainty, pay cuts, reduced resources, and greater client need. This is consistent with an overall drop in scores for all state employees. In the eleven years that the Department of Social and Health Services has conducted agency-wide surveys, there has never been such a dramatic drop in morale and employee engagement.

Troubling Trends

The survey results reflect a workforce feeling increasingly anxious and unsure about the future, worn down by changes and increased workload, and left out of important communication, with less “say” in the workplace.

Overall job satisfaction

Scores on overall job satisfaction dropped significantly, accompanied by an increase in negative comments about morale and general satisfaction. These changes appear to reflect a workforce that is discouraged, less engaged, and concerned about high workloads, and lack of staff and resources.

- **Job satisfaction dropped dramatically.** 61% said: “In general, I’m satisfied with my job.” This score is down 8% from 2009; it is 9% lower than the score for state employees from all agencies.
- **Many comments addressed the current economic recession and program/personnel/pay cuts.** 1,158 of the 7,507 employees who made comments (15%) wrote about current hard times and/or cuts. This increased 25% from the comments in the 2009 survey conducted at the beginning of the recession.
- **More negative comments about morale.** There was a 38% increase in comments about poor morale and decreasing overall satisfaction.
- **Responses to the survey’s open-ended questions illuminated the reasons for the decrease in morale.** These include:
 - A 67% increase in people who made negative comments about pay and benefits for employees. Almost all employees had seen pay cuts in conjunction with unpaid leave.
 - A 52% increase in complaints about workload.
 - A 13% increase in overall complaints about or requests for more resources, including a 6.4% increase in complaints about understaffing. Many concerns about staff safety (a 42% increase) were linked to understaffing.

Communication

An increase in concerns about communication appears to focus on employee’s access to information about changes and opportunity to suggest improvements. Communication about change is hindered by two factors:

(1) the rapid pace of changes as the Department’s programs must swiftly propose cuts and deal with increasing caseloads, and (2) uncertainty among local managers, as decisions are made by the legislature or at very high levels in state government.

- **Only 38% of employees said they receive clear information about changes in the agency.** This percentage is down 32% from a similar question in 2009; it is 18% lower than for all state employees.
- **More negative comments about communication.** There was a 12% increase in comments indicating a need for better communication.
- **Engagement questions related to communication also showed a downturn.** The employee engagement questions listed below show that employees feel they are less able to communicate suggestions for improvement than in previous years.

Employee engagement

Scores on the three main employee engagement questions dipped below 50% for the first time since the survey incorporated these questions in 2006.

- **47% said: “I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.”** This decreased 7% from 2009; it is 17% lower than all state employees.
- **44% said: “I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.”** Down 14% from a similar question in 2009; 16% lower than all state employees.
- **48% said: “I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.”** Down 11% from 2009; 11% lower than all state employees.
- **Complaints about how management listens to input increased by 18%.** This qualitative data derived from employee comments further confirms the negative trends seen in the three standard questions discussed above.

Some Bright Spots

The best news was that some areas remained relatively high and unchanged.

The mission

Department employees continue to be proud of their contribution to society, and to know what is expected of them. They respond to current difficult times with suggestions for change.

- **Helping clients is a source of satisfaction and pride.** More than one-third of the respondents who made comments specifically mentioned that they enjoy working with clients. Many said that the opportunity to make a difference is one of the most satisfying aspects of their job.
- **87% said: “I know what is expected of me at work.”** Up 4% from 2006 and unchanged from 2009.
- **61% in the Central Executive areas said, “I know how my agency measures its success.”** This increased 15% from 2009. The upward trend appears related to much central work on the Department’s Strategic Framework and Core Metrics.
- **Since the recession began, there are more specific suggestions about how to save money and increase efficiency.** Suggestions for improvement in program policies and processes increased by 9%.

Good treatment

Most employees continue to report fair and respectful treatment, especially from supervisors and co-workers. They report fewer concerns about discrimination.

- **83% said: “My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.”** This increased 3% from 2006, and is slightly higher than 2009.
- **68% said: “In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.”** Up 3% from 2006.
- **Many employees continue to praise co-workers and immediate supervisors.** 24% of those surveyed made positive comments about co-workers – a slight increase from 2009.
- **Since the 2007 survey, there have been fewer negative comments about diversity.** Negative comments about diversity issues decreased by 17%. Comments specifically addressing discrimination toward protected groups have decreased 28%.

Survey Facts

THE 2011 EMPLOYEE SURVEY is the sixth DSHS-wide employee survey

The survey was:

- Available to all employees from October 12 to November 30, 2011.
- Administered in conjunction with a survey of all state employees, sponsored by Governor Gregoire.
- Standardized across the Department, with the option to add questions to meet specific needs of individual programs.
- Completed by 10,289 Department employees—a 66% response rate.
- Analyzed thoroughly; 471 detailed custom reports were prepared for workgroups throughout the agency.
- Followed up with Action Plans from all parts of the Department. Action Plans and updates will be posted at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda/research/actionplans/default.shtm>.

OVERARCHING ISSUE. Economic downturn

1,158 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments (15%) specifically mentioned the current Great Recession and resultant pay, staffing, and service cuts.

15% commented on this theme (1,158)



Each of the chapters in this report gives examples of comments related to the topic of that chapter. However, comments about the economic downturn spanned all topics. Employees said the recession and cutbacks:

- Increase stress and lower morale
- Decrease our ability to help clients, while making that help even more essential
- Cause financial hardship and uncertainty
- Make new approaches necessary; but too often lead to constant and unsettling change

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Economic and budgetary difficulties contribute to lower workforce morale and increased stress

"These uncertain times do add more stress – you can feel it throughout the agency."

"Employee engagement is something that I see waning at this point, not because supervisors are not doing their jobs, but because the climate right now is incredibly bleak."

"The downgraded ratings I gave this year reflect the overall lowering of morale. Now a lot of the economic influences may be things that management cannot control, but it does affect how staff overall feels and how satisfied they are with their jobs."

"We need to address the issue of being so short-staffed – so many of us frontline workers are now dealing with high blood pressure/depression/anxiety due to the workload. We feel that we give and give, and yet it is costing us more – no pay raises, health insurance cost, etc. Don't get me wrong, we are very thankful we have jobs but our health is a huge concern."

"The present climate due to the economy fosters a cut-throat mentality where people blatantly lie and scheme on others, thinking that this will ensure their job."

"With all the cutbacks many clients are getting desperate and hostile. Also, we have less employees and more clients. This is making the employees overworked and burnt out."

"The stress of large caseloads and pay cuts is getting to us all. I can no longer afford to be a state employee who gets used to balance the budget and plug holes by politicians and lobbyists. I have to get a second job...if the stress of my largest caseload ever and multiple priorities and expectations for exceptional customer service doesn't do me in first."

Pay cuts and lay-offs create hardship and anxiety

"I wish our economic environment was more stable. I believe that most of us are worried about our future and the impact the economy has on us."

"We state workers take the brunt of the economy's downfall. Between taxes and everything taken, I struggle to sustain life even when canceling everyday things - cable, phone, Internet, etc."

"I am earning a paycheck and have health benefits – but wait, the governor and legislature want to take that away...and I know DSHS wants to contract out my position...so never mind."

"Our pay and benefits have been so severely cut it impacts my quality of life and causes severe anxiety."

"I would like management to understand we too have families and we too are struggling in this economy just like our clients."

"Stop cutting our pay, raising medical and making us do more with less."

"Hard to stay positive with patients when everyone is talking about who is getting laid off or transferred, even patients asking about it."

"With more cuts being looked at we will soon be in line with our clients for benefits."

"With the impending budget cuts that might force the State to close wards, I'm afraid of my future and what financial damage it can cause me and my family."

"This year I will need to find a second job to supplement my full time job that no longer supports me, although I have the same bills."

"Shutting our facility down would be devastating to all employees, their families and the whole town in general."

Employees feel that cuts and program changes hurt clients

"I believe in our programs, and I am saddened at the great programs we have built here in Washington state being torn apart."

"I would like to see the safety net be preserved for those less fortunate than me and my family."

"We try to provide as many services as possible to the people truly in need, as the economic outlook and budget cuts reduce programs and services. We have seen the best of times but we have not yet seen the worst of times."

"Stop taking things away from our clients and threatening to take away the only home where they are safe and cared for."

"In times that are tough on all facets of our economy, why are we delaying eligibility, adding more requirements for workers, requesting clients to contact us by phone only for us telephone operators to advise them someone else will complete the work at what date?"

"Add back the flavoring and seasoning to the food that the clients eat daily. Our superintendent told us himself that he had the kitchen staff cut those items to help with cutbacks."

"The reality of the economy is that more needs to be done by less people. Unfortunately, this results in the loss of a human connection...I am not able to spend quality time providing information to clients without fear of exceeding time allotments."

"Now there's talk of closing Rainier School AGAIN. WHAT will happen to these people...to leave the only life they have ever known? Can you imagine being in that place? It's breaking my heart."

They realize that extraordinary times require new approaches, but find constant changes counter-productive

"As our workload continues to increase, and our resources decrease, how our performance is measured must change. Without a profound change, staff will continually fall below expectations, not as a reflection of their ability to excel at the job we do, but rather the dire circumstances that face our agency, state, and nation."

"The base workload in my office has increased by over 30% from last Fiscal Year. The fat is long gone. The best and most skilled employees can no longer achieve all of the diverse expectations and requirements of their position. We need to know what can be set by the wayside in order to get our most high priority tasks and agency needs dealt with."

"Leadership that will prioritize the workload and eliminate tasks that are not essential since we clearly don't have enough workers to do the job half as well as we did in the past."

"Not so many changes...I understand changes are needed to complete the work with less staff, however if something is working, why change and change and change?"

"CHANGE has been the operative word for this agency and the state for the last 2 years. I understand this is due to the budget. However, I think at times there is a knee jerk reaction and panic which leads to changes that are not effective for our clients or employees."

"I would like to see the resources we have be used on what we currently have, and not spend time and money always making changes. When you have a tight budget at home, you don't keep trying to remodel your house."

"Staff morale is very low. I think the economy definitely contributes, but I believe the main cause for low staff morale is the significant service delivery changes we have undergone and continue to go through. The change I would like to see is SLOW down the changes at this point and allow staff to settle into new routines and the new way we do business."

Some employees point to bright spots in current difficulties

"Our programs have been so successful in placing customers in jobs - with disabilities - during one of the WORST economic recessions ever! It says that we are not only respectful, but EFFECTIVE!"

"The staff here at WSH have a fantastic group mentality, and a 'We'll get through this together' attitude, which is phenomenal considering we are getting news every other day about how the entire hospital is going to crumble and go to hell in a hand basket."

"I love when I get to work with my clients and make a difference in their life. With all the budget cuts and higher caseloads that seems harder to do, but when I get the chance to make a difference it reminds me why I do my job!"

"The hiring freeze has been tough, furlough days, higher medical, higher co-pays, and a 3% pay cut have not been easy. But as always CSD workers have come through and worked hard to be sure people get the food they need to feed their families, cash to pay their rent and medical to care for them. No, it has not been easy, but that is why I work here!"

"I like working with the community trying to help them during hard times. Everyone is on survival mode and I enjoy being one that can give them a little hope to make it through another day."

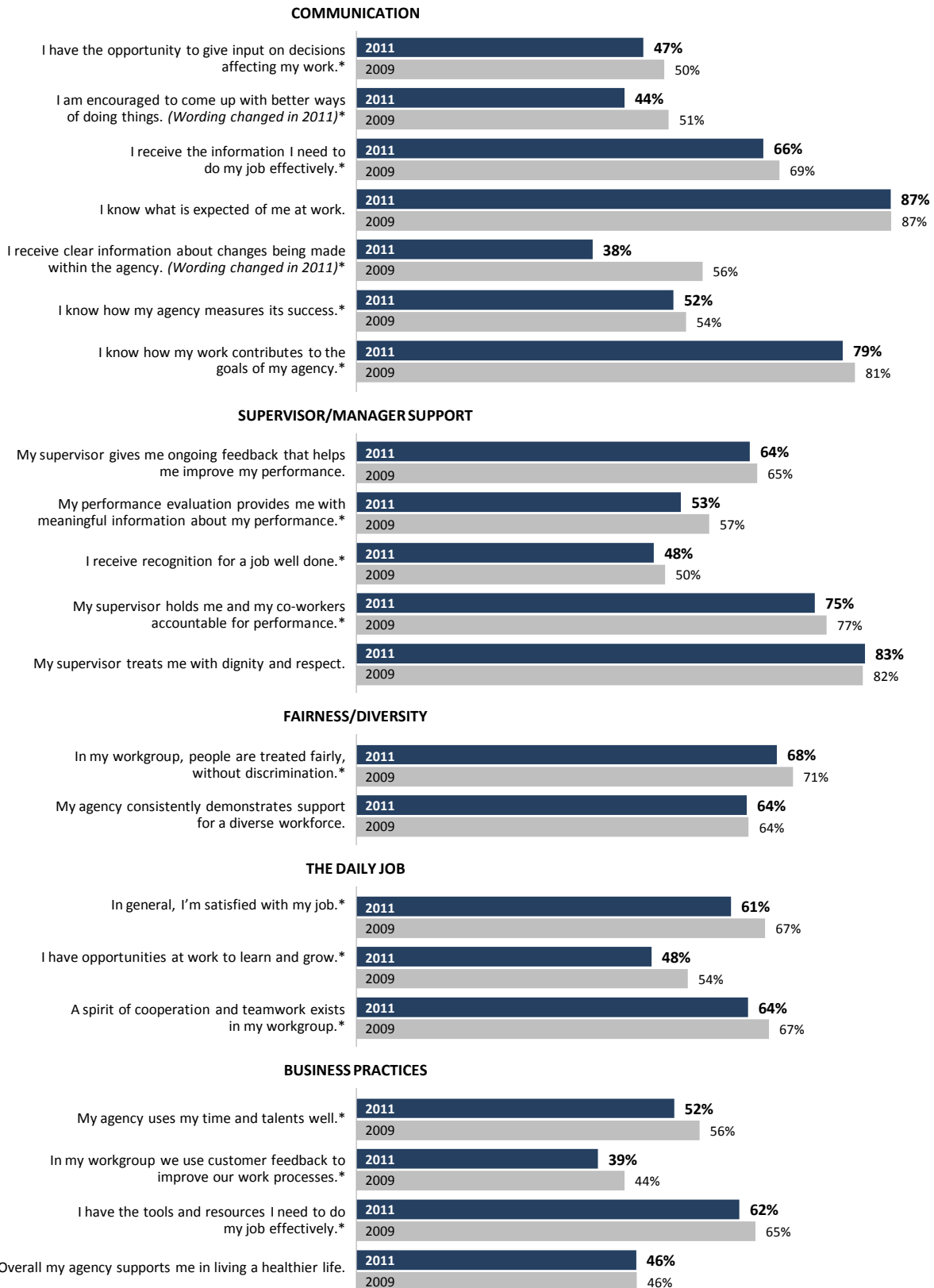
"I realize with the economy we have to cut services and programs, but we can still make a difference."

"I feel the camaraderie amongst my peers remains high even though we are all headed for the food assistance lines ourselves."

"I am up to the challenges that the budget cuts have placed on our agency, and am proud of ESA for the approach that they have taken to redesign the way we do our business so that we are able to continue to operate effectively during these difficult times with as minimal loss of line staff, and as minimal impact to our clients as possible."

"Short of a miraculous recovery of our budget shortfall, I would ask for understanding and support from all of DSHS administration as we do our best to continue to run this facility safely and efficiently despite our reduced resources. I see our staff doing as well as they can under the current circumstances."

Changes from 2009 to 2011: Percent of Employees Answering “Usually” or “Always”

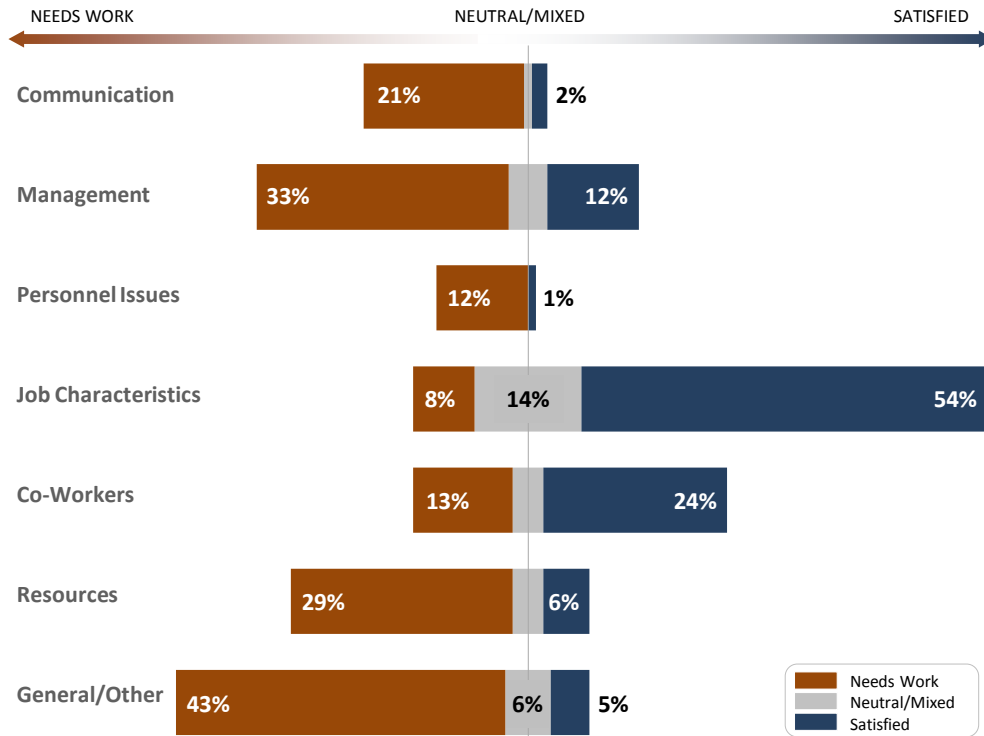


*Change is significant at the .01 level. See Appendix B, Chart F for 4-year trend charts.

Major Comment Themes: Percent of respondents who made comments in 2011

Comments were made in response to these two questions:

1. "What do you like best about your current job?"
2. "What changes would you like to see in your workplace?"



NOTE: Percentages show respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents who made narrative comments. Themes are discussed at a more detailed level in each chapter of the report. A summary of all themes including sub-categories of these major themes can be found in Appendix B, Table J.



"Snohomish Valley" • Third Place
 DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
 By Holly Hanson, with permission



“Westport Shoes” • Second Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Angie Gonzales, with permission



“Falling Leaves” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Jason Ramynke, with permission



“Looking Forward” • Second Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Carrie Jackson, with permission



“Pretty Little Girl” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Cori Nagele, with permission

CHAPTER 1

Communication

COMMUNICATION ISSUES TIED TO REDUCTIONS in budget, staff, and services were the focus of many comments in 2011, as they were in 2009. Fewer employees feel they receive clear and timely information about workplace changes, and fewer feel able to give input on decisions affecting their workplace. Most employees said they know what is expected of them at work, and know how their work contributes to the goals of the agency. Overall, there was a 12% increase in suggestions for improvement in communication-related comments.

Information from management. *The primary communication concerns relate to the numerous changes in the Department during the economic downturn.*

- **Insufficient information about changes.** Only 38% of employees (a 32% decrease from a similarly worded question in 2009) said they receive clear information about changes within the agency.
- **Inadequate job-related information.** 66% of employees (a 4% decrease from 2009) said they receive enough information to do their job effectively.

Staff input. *Staff feel they have little “voice” in their workplace. Typically, measures of employee engagement have been somewhat low, hovering above 50%; but in the 2011 survey they slid below 50%. The increased perception that individual employees have little influence in the workplace may reflect more decisions made at high levels. Program and staff cuts are typically decided by top management or legislators. Programs often make quick changes in response to growing needs and shrinking resources – without time or resources for extensive field testing and input.*

- **Complaints about management listening.** 679 employees (9% of those who made comments) complained that management does not invite, listen to, or act on input from staff. The percentage making such complaints increased 18% from 2009.
- **Fewer opportunities for input.** Only 47% of employees (a 7% decrease from 2009) said they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting their work.
- **Less ability to innovate.** Only 44% of employees (a 14% decrease from 2009) said they are encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.

Goals, guidelines and performance measures. Most employees say they know how their work contributes to agency goals, but staff knowledge of how the agency measures success varies by setting. Comments in this area reflect employees' desire for better information about all plans and decisions affecting their work.

- **Most know the value of their contributions.** 79% of employees (a 2% decrease from 2009) said they know how their work contributes to the goals of the agency.
- **Understanding of success measures depends on the setting.** Overall, 52% of employees (a 4% decrease from 2009) said they know how their agency measures success. The percentage of positive responses from employees in institutions (43%) was 13% lower than from employees working in other settings (56%). After extensive work on the agency's Strategic Framework for the Future and Core Metrics, 61% of employees in Central Executive areas gave positive responses, a 15% increase from 2009.



“In Deep Thought”
Second Place (tie)
 DSHS Photo Contest
 Category: Technical
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THEME. Overall communication

1,829 of the 7,507 employees who made comments mentioned communication.

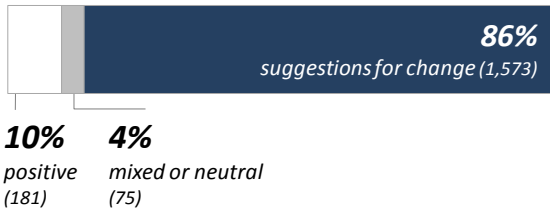
24% commented on this theme (1,829)



In these troubled times, which are forcing workers to negotiate unwelcome reductions and unrelenting change, effective communication at – and across – all levels of the department is more critical than ever. 86% of those commenting on communication suggested improvements for either local offices or management. Of the 1,829* who mentioned communication:

- 810 respondents addressed whether staff has input into workplace changes (pages 12-14)
- 800 discussed the quality of information staff receives from management (pages 15-18)
- 257 referred to communication about agency guidelines and performance measures (pages 19-21)
- 382 mentioned other communication issues, which are referenced throughout this chapter

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees are pleased with communication in their workplace

“My co-workers and supervisor communicate well, which makes for a positive workplace.”

“Communication is always based on reliable information.”

“I like being able to interact with caregivers (foster parents/relatives) and with parents to obtain important information about the child. I like being able to share information and recommendations with all parties to ensure a child’s needs are met.”

“Usually my boss and co-workers communicate well about client needs and services that would benefit them.”

“We are always informed of what happens on our days off.”

“I love my team. We support each other in our workloads, and encourage open and honest communication.”

Most employees who commented on communication see room for improvement

“I would like better communication – more clear and concise and sent by e-mail to everyone, not just word of mouth to whoever happens to be around.”

“Better communication between the divisions. Changes requested by one division will most likely impact the other division and the lack of communication (at times) is frustrating.”

“Not better communication, just flat out communication. For example, we got a new (temp) supervisor and no one tells us – she just shows up one day!”

“If we could somehow slow the pace down so more effective communication can take place, including the opportunity for large group discussions of philosophy, vision, and application of the principles of our work.”

“Better communication. It is the single most challenging thing.”

Meetings are a common theme in communication-related comments

“Meetings are concise, informative, and most of the time successful with a plan in place.”

“Fewer administrative meetings. More time to work with the patients and their families.”

“Regular meetings (we have none!) of my department and occasional interdepartmental meetings that would assist in building community and distributing information about the department’s goals and challenges.”

“We have committees and meetings for things that seem to be just a waste of time.”

“All areas need to have a shift change meeting before every shift. The communication here is poor.”

“Regular scheduled meetings within the workgroup so that everyone gets the same information at the same time.”

*Issues listed below total more than 1,829, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to communication.

THEME. Listening to input from staff

810 of the 7,507 respondents who commented addressed the issue of managers listening to staff.

11% commented on this theme (810)



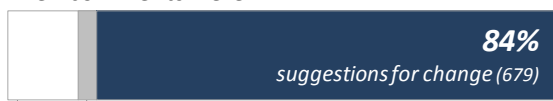
810 respondents offered comments about staff input. Slightly over one in ten (13%) said their input is listened to and taken into account when decisions are made. Many positive comments were about decision-making in local offices.

More than eight out of ten respondents (84%) who commented on staff input see a clear need for improvement. Many comments suggested specific changes. Respondents want management to:

- Be open to their input
- Listen carefully to their ideas
- Involve them in decisions about their workplace
- Use their suggestions when changes are made

These issues are discussed further in the Autonomy and Growth Opportunities section of Chapter 4, pages 51-52.

Their comments were:



13% positive (104)
3% mixed or neutral (27)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff want supervisors and managers to listen to their ideas and concerns

“Our Administrator needs to learn communication skills. He is notorious for not listening, jumping to conclusions, and not letting individuals finish what they are trying to say.”

“Listen to our ideas and suggestions when they concern the clients.”

“We have many layers of management who are completely out of touch with the line staff, and have no interest in talking to staff or listening to line staff’s ideas.”

“NO ONE listens to the staff doing the job.”

“I have had a lot of ideas to help, as do many other workers, but our voices are not heard.”

“No point in providing feedback. The Office, Region and Agency do not listen to our concerns.”

They want their voice heard *before* changes are made in their workplace

“I would like to see more feedback and input from the field prior to implementing major changes.”

“Talk to ward staff BEFORE implementing changes. We are the ones in danger on the wards, NOT supervisors, or their supervisors.”

“I would like to see management include line staff in all planning sessions that impact the way business is conducted and policies are made.”

“Often we find out about changes after the fact, and no input from staff is ever involved.”

“We do the work; we need to be involved in the process of making decisions, or at least be taken into consideration prior to implementation.”

“Ask us what may or may not work before making decisions, because we would know!”

Staff are grateful when supervisors and managers take their input into account

“My boss, despite having so many direct reports, does a good job of listening to us.”

“I like my current management team because they listen, are supportive, take notice of what I have to contribute.”

“My supervisors listen to what I have to say. I feel important.”

“I like the fact that those above us listened when we said we needed more help (manpower) to meet our department’s obligations, and actually pressed to make it happen.”

“I have ready access to my supervisor, who is open to hearing ideas.”

“My supervisor listens when it feels like no one else will.”

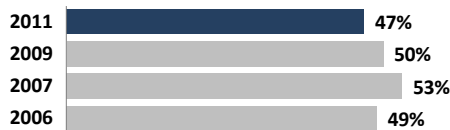
QUESTION. I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

Nearly half of employees (47%) said they have a chance to give input on decisions in their workplace. Another 25% said they are occasionally given a chance to offer such input.

More than one in four employees (28%) reported they are seldom or never asked for their input. They indicated they appreciate it when supervisors and managers:

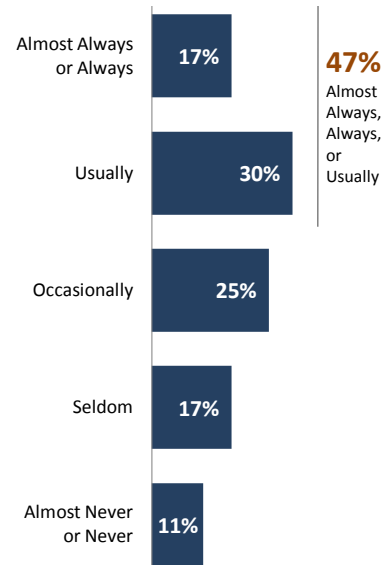
- Ask their opinions, especially when the matter being considered will affect their workplace
- Take their ideas seriously
- Actually *act* on their suggestions, if at all possible

Fewer staff in 2011 than in either 2009 or 2006 said they have input into decisions affecting their jobs.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and also between 2006 and 2011, is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees feel they have a real “say” in their workplace

- “My ideas and suggestions are always taken into consideration.”
- “Staff are valued and encouraged to speak out on issues they feel need attention.”
- “I have a say in what goes on, even though my title isn’t a big one. My opinion matters.”
- “My supervisor lets me express myself, good or bad.”
- “My ideas are treated with respect, and considered important.”

Others report their input isn’t asked for, or taken seriously

- “Workers are rarely asked what works and, when they do respond with ideas, they aren’t seriously listened to.”
- “Management makes decisions without realizing the effects on line staff. Why not get opinions from the people who do the work every single day?”
- “The supervisors do not allow the field staff to have a real say in anything.”
- “Input from line staff is often elicited and encouraged, although rarely taken into consideration when major decisions are made at headquarters level.”
- “Headquarters staff DON’T listen to the field, they placate staff by phony workgroups!!!”
- “My supervisor does not include me in decisions affecting my cases. She makes all the decisions and I am asked to do what she wants on the cases – even if I strongly disagree.”
- “When programs are terminated or new programs are created, input from staff who ACTUALLY DO THE WORK would help.”

Some employees feel unsafe voicing their real opinions

- “People have stopped talking and sharing. It is not safe to voice opinions.”
- “Even minor requests by employees for managers to consider options are received by managers as insubordination.”
- “People are now afraid to come forward out of fear of losing their job, and/or retaliation.”
- “Our workplace has become an arena in which staff is afraid to voice disagreement or alternative perspectives.”
- “People are truly afraid to speak up...There is fear of being demoted or reassigned. It is a wary time in the field.”

QUESTION. I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things*

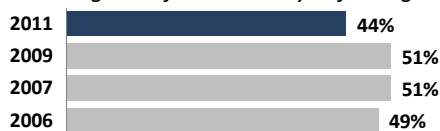
More than four in ten respondents (44%) reported they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.

One third of respondents (33%) indicated they are seldom or never encouraged to find new approaches to work processes. Respondents like it when they are:

- Invited to put forward creative ideas
- Satisfied their suggestions are taken seriously
- Given the opportunity to implement good ideas
- Able to put their skills and experience to work

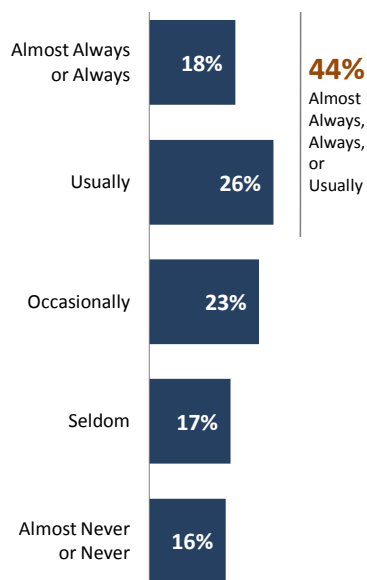
*In 2009, this DSHS-created question was worded, "I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things." In 2011, the Department of Personnel adopted the question for use statewide, and changed it to its present wording. It cannot be determined how much of the notable (7%) decrease in positive responses between 2009 and 2011 was due to the wording change, but the downward trend is consistent with other survey responses.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in either 2009 or 2006 said they are encouraged to find new ways of doing things.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and also between 2006 and 2011, is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff are able to share their ideas for improvements at work

"My supervisor supports my ideas and encourages me to make the child welfare system better."

"I get to have input on how my job is done and what the product looks like."

"We are encouraged to bring any issues or work flow we think may need to be revamped to the Director for review, discussion, and changes if deemed appropriate."

"We are given ample opportunity to give our input and assist with the restructuring of the program."

"I am always given the opportunity to improve processes, and my voice counts."

Others report that their suggestions for process improvement are discouraged or discounted

"Management does not take staff's ideas for process improvement seriously."

"Customer and on-line staff feedback is typically ignored. There is very little effort to improve processes."

"Any comments considered negative are discouraged. The attitude is, 'If you don't have anything good to say, don't say it.'"

"I would like for upper management to listen to the workers when they have a suggestion on how to improve matters in the workplace, instead of immediately dismissing the ideas simply because they personally do not agree with the information."

"Mean it when you say you want ideas to help cut costs."

Staff want supervisors and managers to recognize and utilize their expertise

"I would like to see more value given to my opinions and suggestions, especially when based on what I've learned in other states and agencies prior to working for this agency."

"I feel like my role matters, and I am looked to for my expertise."

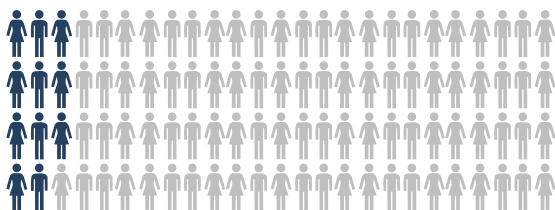
"Since new management has taken over, we feel our experience and knowledge is not appreciated or needed."

"Administration [see staff] as opponents at worst, and problems to be disregarded at best. There is a great deal of experience, knowledge and skill represented in line staff. This is an unrecognized and under-utilized resource."

THEME. Information communicated from managers to staff

800 of the 7,507 employees who offered comments addressed the issue of managers providing information.

11% commented on this theme (800)



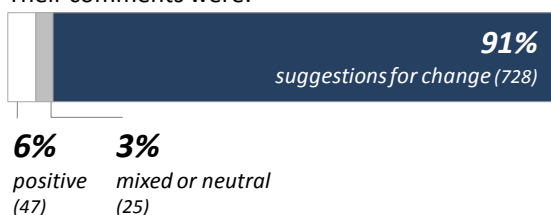
More than nine out of ten of the 800 comments about information sharing by management (91%) were suggestions for improvement. A small number of employees (6%) reported satisfaction with the way information is communicated by supervisors and managers.

The majority of employees want to see improvements – both by local supervisors and managers, and by upper management – in these areas:

- More frequent communications
- Clearer, more comprehensive communications
- More truthful communications
- More targeted, less ‘global’ communications

In these tough economic times, employees want to be advised *in a timely manner* of any and all budget-related changes.

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees think supervisors and managers communicate well

- “I greatly appreciate the openness and approachability of our new Regional Administrator. Her willingness to share any information she has and keep us in the loop has been wonderful.”
- “My supervisor is good at giving information about changes regarding our jobs.”
- “We have a wonderful management team that keeps the unit informed and advocates for us as individuals.”
- “My supervisor is very informative, skilled, and kind.”
- “In my immediate work environment, communication is very good in most cases regarding institutional operations.”
- “My boss is doing her job and communicating well, which makes my job more satisfying.”

Most are frustrated with the quality of communications received by line staff

- “More shared information. You have to know somebody to know what is going on here. Communications from managers to workers is EXTREMELY poor.”
- “The information we get about our jobs is either through gossip or the newspapers.”
- “Sometimes it seems like line staff don’t know what is going on until it happens. I think that staff would be less apprehensive if we had a better communication system.”
- “I’m not happy with the way regional changes have been made and communicated (or not communicated) recently.”
- “While I think that management is doing their best to appear transparent, it would be nice to see them actually be transparent and not tap-dance around hot button issues.”

Many employees think upper management needs to revamp its approach to communication

- “Honest communication by higher ups instead of the BULL we are fed almost daily by management who act like politicians instead of caring individuals.”
- “Senior management needs to talk with the field in a meaningful, detailed, and timely manner far more than they have been doing.”
- “Develop more direct and effective ways to share updates and changes. Sending mass e-mails to ‘lists’ is not an effective way to dispense and share information. It is only one step away from spam.”
- “Changes in staff and supervisors should be fully explained rather than occurring abruptly without explanation, and explanations should be honest and provided in the most ethical manner.”

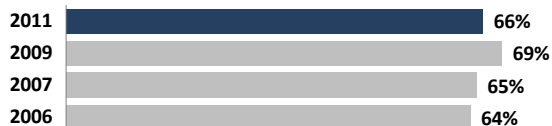
QUESTION. I receive the information I need to do my job effectively

More than six out of ten respondents (66%) said they get the information needed to do their job effectively. More than one out of ten (12%) reported they don't have the information needed to do their job well.

The majority of respondents applauded supervisors and managers for providing staff with meaningful, easy-to-understand information on a regular basis.

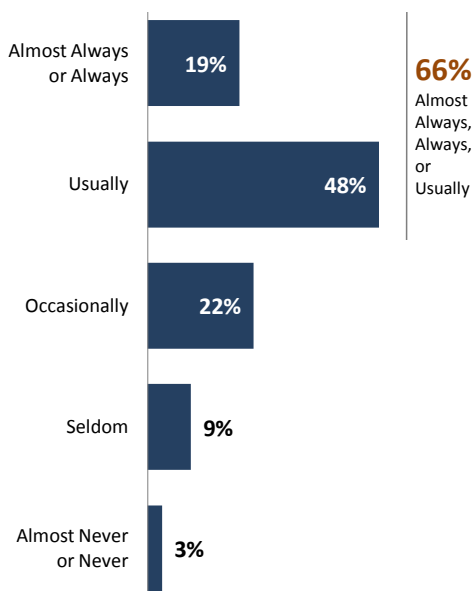
Some respondents feel the information they receive from supervisors and managers is lacking. They especially want to be informed of any changes that pertain directly to their job as soon as the changes are planned.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they have the information they need to do their jobs. However, more staff in 2011 than in 2006 said they have such information.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and increase between 2006 and 2011, are statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff are satisfied with the information they receive in the workplace

"[I like] the information and training that is available to do the best job possible."

"My supervisor is very supportive of our unit's success and provides valuable information for the completion of our duties."

"I like that I know how to do what is expected because of the management bulletins, headquarters sharing information, and managers providing needed updates."

"I'm provided with up-to-date information for the current procedures to follow."

"I know the tasks that need to be done and the expectations regarding timelines, processes, etc."

"[I like] working with people who do their best to make sure that you are up on the most need-to-know information."

Some feel they need, and deserve, more comprehensive information

"There are supervisors in our office who are disrespectful and do not work as a team with their employees. Withholding information that is important to do our jobs is commonplace."

"More information to perform my job duties successfully."

"I feel like some information doesn't get communicated for me to do my job and, when that happens, it makes things seem like they are not getting done when, in fact, the information was never given in the first place."

"Oftentimes I'm unable to do my job correctly because communication is not passed on to me."

"There is a constant change in policies, and little information to clarify. So, more often than not, social workers are trying to figure out what we are supposed to be doing, which takes time away from actually doing our work."

"I would like more honest communication about what is coming down before it happens."

For others, timeliness of information is an issue

"So many changes. Often, how to apply changes comes after the change occurred...which leaves little time to absorb."

"It would be very helpful to get information more timely, and with the right instructions to do the work."

"Change is constant, and that can be accepted. But it would be easier to adjust to if staff is given adequate notice."

"Consolidations have a big impact on our workload. We were given no heads up on the changes...now we're all scrambling."

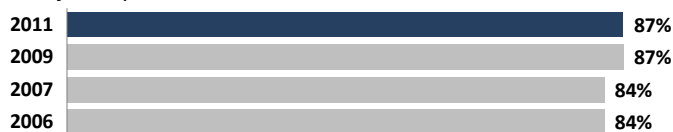
QUESTION. I know what is expected of me at work

Almost nine out of ten employees (87%) indicated they understand the job expectations at work. One out of twenty (5%) said they seldom or never know what is expected of them.

In their comments, some employees expressed appreciation for clear and consistent job expectations.

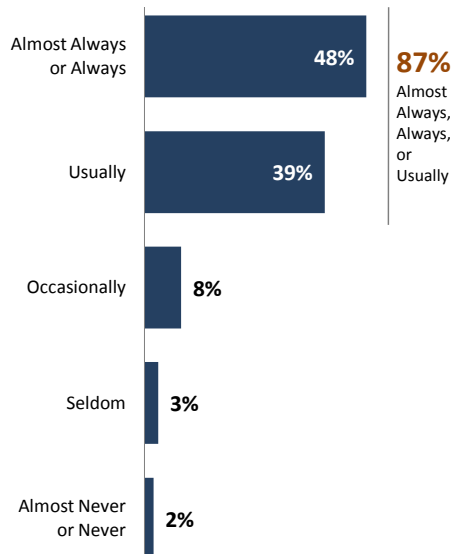
Other employees commented on their displeasure with poorly defined job expectations, or their frustration with the rapid pace at which their job expectations are changing.

More staff in 2011 than in 2006 said they know their job expectations at work. The percentage of staff saying they know their job expectations was the same in 2011 and 2009.



Increase between 2006 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees understand the requirements of their job

"What I like best about my current job/position is that I generally know what is expected of me."

"My supervisor – she is fair and consistent to all workers in her unit, and expectations for work are well established and communicated."

"My boss is open and up front on expectations."

"I know what is required of me, and I am left to do my job without micro-managing."

"[My boss] makes a real effort to let us know what his goals for us are; how we are doing; and what needs improvement."

"My supervisor is easy-going, but is clear about what his expectations are for the work we do."

Some wonder, "What are my job expectations?"

"There is no clear and exact description on how to do my job."

"Stronger written definition of the job requirements, and expectations that are less generic and more position specific."

"I would like to see clearer procedures that are specific to the job, not just a general (global) procedure identified in the Policy or Management Bulletins."

"Inconsistency of practice is my main source of difficulty with this job, and leads to confusion and stress. I believe our agency needs to tighten up and clarify process and expectations."

"Management is inconsistent when providing instructions on performance expectations."

"Better communication of expectations."

"I would like to see consistency in the directives and instructions we are given."

Others want their job expectations to stop shifting

"Expectations are changing faster than we can keep up with."

"Less changes in daily practice of work (including new practice models, computer systems, policy, expectations)."

"The expectations keep changing. It's hard to form a routine with your work when there are constant changes and crises."

"There are so many new policies/procedures every week, staff and supervisors can never meet the expectations of the job."

"It is so hard to keep up with all the new rules and procedures, with no time to read and or take the online trainings that we are supposed complete."

"So many changes - we are always changing the way we do things and it can be confusing."

QUESTION. I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency*

38% of respondents said they have received clear information about recent work-related changes. About one third (34%) reported they have not received the information about changes they want and need.

Some respondents praise supervisors and managers who keep them well-informed about changes, while others feel supervisors and managers should work harder to keep them informed about changes that will affect their job.

There is further discussion of employee reactions to ongoing workplace changes in the Executive Summary, pages 1-5.

*In 2009, this DSHS-created question was worded, "I have received clear information about recent budget reductions and changes being made within the agency." In 2011, the Department of Personnel adopted the question for use statewide, and changed it to its present wording. This served to shift the focus so responses addressed *program-specific* issues as well as Department-wide and budgetary issues, which may account in part for the large (18%) decrease in positive responses between 2009 and 2011.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they have clear information about changes being made in the agency.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff appreciate efforts to provide them information about changes

"I would appreciate continued communication regarding the changes in our Administration and Division. I must say, this has greatly improved over the past year."

"[I like] the way administration in Olympia communicates with us."

"My supervisor communicates as much information about what is going on as he has available (although that's not a lot)."

"The management team always tries to keep us updated with what is going on, and tries to answer our questions the best that they can."

Many staff want clearer, more timely information as changes occur

"I would like to hear about changes first, before I see it on the 7 o'clock news. It seems the media knows more about the budget and cuts than the actual workers themselves."

"If I have a question or process to clarify with the new changes, it takes forever and a day to get an answer."

"Improved communication regarding changes occurring, whether it be region or state."

"Wondering what is going on, and how it might affect me, my office, and my peers, can be demoralizing and frustrating."

In particular, staff want timely and truthful information concerning layoffs and closures

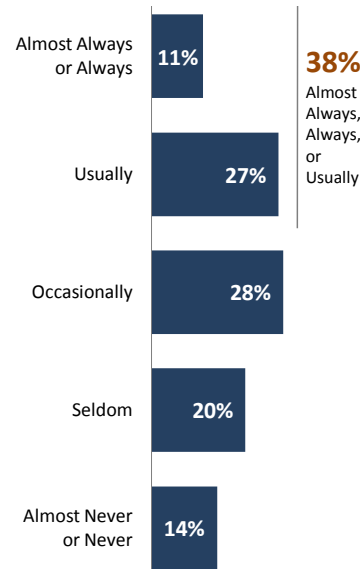
"No more blind sides on layoffs, more up front if they are going to happen."

"Management needs to do a better job of letting us know what their plans are, instead of springing ward closures on us."

"More information passed down from upper management in a timely fashion. Seems like we are left in the dark, hear rumors, then hear nothing, then cuts are made, usually on a Friday."

"More honest communication...We are in difficult times, and many are facing layoff. It would help if we knew more."

ANSWERS



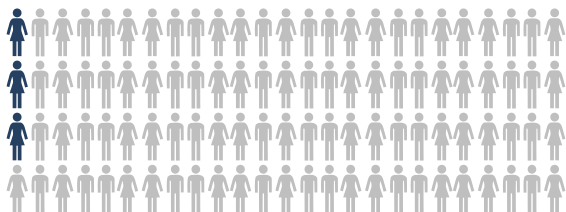
38%

Almost Always, Always, or Usually

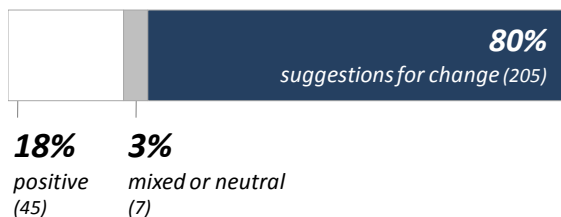
THEME. Clear guidelines from management

257 of the 7,507 employees who commented addressed the issue of clear guidelines from management to staff, which includes communications about policies, roles, expectations, priorities, vision and missions.

3% commented on this theme (257)



Their comments were:



257 employees made comments concerning clear guidelines. Eight out of ten (80%) indicated that communications about guidelines need to improve.

Although some employees are satisfied with the direction they receive, many more feel management should communicate with staff about guidelines more frequently and more clearly. Specifically, they would like:

- Clarity about their agency’s mission and vision
- Concise, consistent communications about goals and guidelines
- Understanding of management’s current priorities, and plans for the future
- Timely updates when changes are being planned or implemented

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees like the clear direction that management provides

- “The agency has come a long way, making goals clear and providing tools to do the job.”
- “I like that our mission is clear, and that my management is always trying to figure out ways to help the social work staff get the job done.”
- “I have the opportunity to contribute toward the agency success, working within clear rules and with clear benchmarks.”
- “With policies in place, staff and patients know what is expected.”
- “The mission is clear, the need is clear, and the expectations are clear.”

Most feel management’s guidance could be clearer and more consistent

- “DSHS Executive Management tends to manage by chaos and in the moment. Priorities are not always clear, and are often without sustained focus. It’d be nice to be more planful in our work and clearer about priorities, both tactical and strategic.”
- “No direction – we don’t know where we’re going in the next 10 years to help families in self sufficiency.”
- “Every field manager wants things done a certain way, and there is little consistency.”
- “Although there is a mission statement which focuses on the needs and care of the patients, there is no organizational commitment to, or implementation for, these goals.”
- “We need to receive clear, concise and realistic expectations from the highest levels.”
- “A great deal of time was spent on a new vision/mission/strategic plan. The moment that came out, highlighting respect, accountability, honesty, communication and transparency, the economy bottomed out. That is also the last time we have really heard from our leadership, despite requested guidance.”

Employees find frequent changes to guidelines unnerving in these difficult economic times

- “Would like to see the agency stabilize work expectations and settle on ways to do the job. Constant changes, updates, policy, new programs, new ways to do things, etc., has become so common that each day one wonders what will change next.”
- “There is no clear direction for me or my fellow staff. We are in a constant state of change, from one day to the next.”
- “All the changes that keep occurring in ESA are getting very tiresome. I’d like to see some stability provided so we can all be on the same page.”
- “Less reactive change and less change...we need to be able to catch up and catch our breath.”

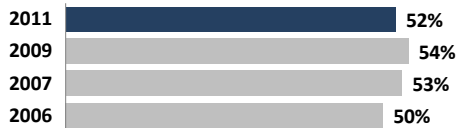
QUESTION. I know how my agency measures its success

More than half of respondents (52%) reported they understand how DSHS measures success. However, about one in four (26%) said they seldom or never know what methods are used to measure success.

Respondents want:

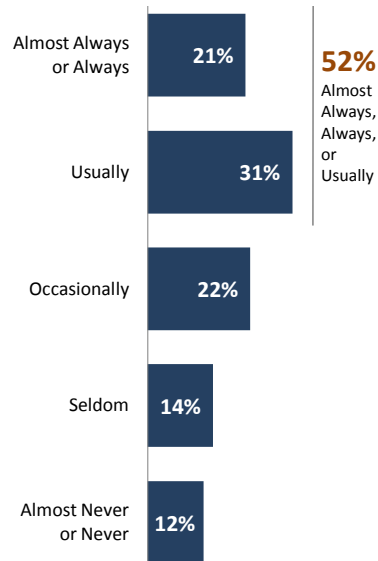
- Performance measures that are accessible and understandable
- Measures that take into account current constraints, including lack of staff and lack of resources
- Measures that are in keeping with good client service

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they know how the agency measures success. **More staff in 2011 than in 2006** said they had this information.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and increase between 2006 and 2011, are statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff appreciate the clear goals and performance measures in their workplace

“Performance measures are clear, and it is satisfying to meet them consistently.”

“I like the fact that there are statistics available for performance for much of our job, and that we are made aware of our own performance using these figures. This gives me an opportunity to try to better myself in the job.”

“Knowing clearly my contribution to performance measures, and meeting them.”

Some believe current goals and performance measures are unrealistic

“I feel that the amount and the length of the tasks that we have to perform are not recognized in the goals that are set out for us to accomplish.”

“Staff are being burnt out making mistakes due to too many unrealistic goals.”

“I think there should be recognition that there is less staff to get more work done, and the goals and measurements should be reasonable to account for this.”

“Upper management understanding that we cannot meet performance goals if we do not have adequate resources or staffing.”

“Anyone really in touch with the workload demands? If 22 employees (13%) did not meet the minimal goal of 625 cases, sounds like a supervisor/management problem!”

Other staff find such measures meaningless or misdirected

“Our agency is not mission driven. It celebrates performance measures as if they’re indicative of child safety, but they’re not.”

“Invest in a service delivery system that uses and measures QUALITY, not just QUANTITY, as an outcome.”

“There is too much attention on checking tasks off for performance measures, and forgetting that there are real children and families behind those measures.”

“The program managers and other upper management want to look at numbers only, and this is frustrating.”

“It would be preferable if those in charge would get those who are unable to keep up with their work and their goals to get their work done, versus pushing the entire office to get their numbers up.”

“We don’t need more arbitrary ‘performance measures’- these in no way capture what I do on a daily basis and they just look good in a bar graph.”

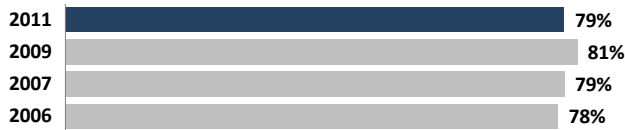
QUESTION. I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency

Nearly eight out of ten employees (79%) said that they understand how their work contributes to agency goals. One in ten (10%) indicated that they don't understand how their work supports the goals of the agency.

Employees are pleased when they:

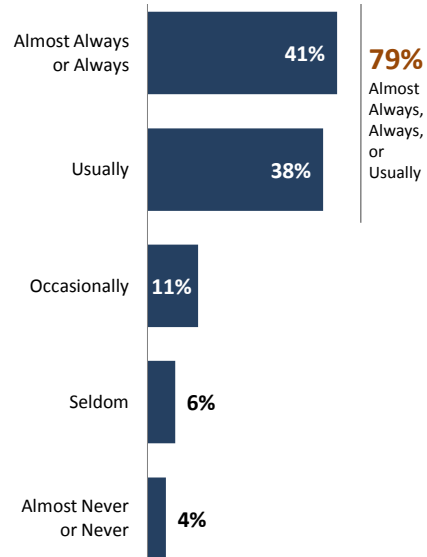
- Have a good grasp of agency goals
- Know how their job connects to those goals
- Have the time and resources to do their best work
- Feel their work truly matters

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they know how their work contributes to agency goals.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees understand, and take pride in, their contribution to agency goals

"I know that what I do directly responds to the mission and goals of JRA. I feel like my roles matters, and I am looked at for expertise."

"I really enjoy that I am in a position to use my talents and gifts in my job performance... I also like feeling I am assisting in achieving the organizational goals at Home and Community Services."

"[I like] assisting to carry out the mission of DDD."

"Advocating for the vulnerable adult; working with caring team members, feeling that I am contributing."

"We are doing important work, and our organization cares about the people we serve."

Some report they can't reach established goals due to a lack of time and resources

"I love the concept of what I do, but it is extremely frustrating when you're faced with expectations you can't possibly meet due to lack of resources, hours in a day, and workload issues."

"We are still being chastised regarding performance measures, with HQ taking away resources and tools to do such a job."

"[I want] to be provided the resources and staff to do our mission well."

"I love working with children, trying to keep them safe, and trying to keep families together. I just wish we had more resources to help these families be successful."

"[I like] the assistance we provide to people who subsist at the edge of poverty, although it is increasingly getting harder to do so due to dwindling resources."

"I feel we set [clients] up to fail because of our limited resources and time limitations."

"[I want] adequate resources to do a good job."

For some employees, the agency's goals are unclear

"It would really be helpful if my agency had a vision. Right now we work in the moment, and do not look to the future and how to make the necessary changes to be successful in the future."

"Better understanding of CA's goals – is it really all about money?"

"DCS has lost its vision and direction. And with that has gone the pride I used to feel about this job. Seems like everybody I talk to feels the same way."

"I feel there needs to be more communication between the director and staff regarding the future of OFA."

"A clear picture of where we as an agency are going. A common vision has not been established."



“Pine, Falls & Mist in Morning Sun” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Mark Tyler, with permission



“Morning on the Stilly” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Cindy Rochelle, with permission

“Waiting for Maddison” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Jan Lewis, with permission



CHAPTER 2

Supervisor/ Manager Support

EMPLOYEES’ VIEW OF MANAGER SUPPORT has changed little since 2009. Employees remain concerned with management-generated changes occurring in the workplace (addressed in Chapter 5), and with managers’ communication of those changes (addressed in Chapter 1). A recurring theme in employee comments is that managers, overwhelmed with chronic budgetary and programming issues, have “forgotten” their line staff. The decline in positive responses to the question about employee recognition appears to send a similar message. On a brighter note, the majority of employees have good things to say about their connection with their immediate supervisor.

Supervisor/employee relationships. *In the midst of budget crises, the majority of employees maintain a positive relationship with their supervisor.*

- **Respect remains strong.** 83% of employees said their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect.
- **Feedback remains constant.** 64% of employees said their supervisor gives them ongoing feedback that helps to improve their performance. This percentage has remained stable for all five surveys.
- **Accountability has decreased slightly.** 75% of employees (a 3% decrease from 2009) said their supervisor holds them and their co-workers accountable. The increased concern about accountability appears to be linked with concerns about staffing cuts and ballooning workloads – ineffective co-workers are more of a concern when staffing is low.

Employee recognition. *Employees appreciate supervisors and managers who recognize their good work. They often prefer simple, personal acknowledgements of their efforts. Most of those who miss more formal employee recognition events understand they may not be possible until the economy recovers. Whatever form it takes, many feel employee recognition should increase.*

- **Fewer feel properly recognized.** Only 48% of employees (a 4% decrease from 2009) said they receive recognition for a job well done.



“Blues Brothers” • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

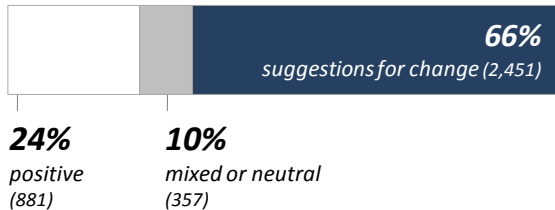
THEME. General treatment by supervisors and managers

Many employees commented on their treatment by supervisors and managers. 3,689 of the 7,507 employees who made comments addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support or other aspects of supervisor/manager behavior.

49% commented on this theme (3,689)



Their comments were:



About one in four employees who mentioned supervisors and managers (24%) made positive comments. However, two thirds (66%) offered ways in which supervisors and managers can improve their treatment of employees.

Of the 3,689* who mentioned supervisor and manager treatment of employees:

- 1,317 (36%) addressed support, mentoring, and feedback (pages 26-28).
- 661 (18%) discussed staff recognition and awards (pages 29-30).
- 468 (13%) focused on courtesy and respect (pages 32-33).
- 700 (19%) wrote about manager fairness (Chapter 3, pages 37-38).
- 2,455 (67%) spoke to other issues concerning relationships with supervisors and managers. These issues are addressed throughout this report.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees value supervisor and manager support

“My supervisor is excellent. She never questions or changes decisions I’ve made or things I tell people. She backs me up 100%. Having that support makes it much easier to do my job.”

“I wish our supervisor was in the office more often. There are too many times when I have questions/concerns that come up during my workday, where I do not have anyone to ask questions, or obtain assistance in completing my work correctly.”

“There is absolutely no support from administration, and staff morale is at an all time low.”

“I like having a supervisor, Chief, and Director who care about the staff, and are dedicated to supporting them.”

They believe supervisors and managers should hold staff accountable**

“I would like to see management get a backbone and stand up to the bullying that goes on and put an end to all the gossip! Quit reviewing and do something about it!”

“Take action against those workers who cannot/will not do the job.”

“Supervisors who will take care of situations involving co-workers, instead of brushing them under the carpet.”

Employees appreciate recognition for a job well done

“I very much appreciate my supervisor. In these hard times, she makes sure to support and validate our hard work.”

“It would be nice to just be noticed for all the hard work and effort put into what we do.”

“The managers/supervisors recognize the quality of work I produce, and expound on their pleasure.”

They also appreciate courteous and respectful treatment from those in charge

“We now have a supervisor that we can respect, and who treats us with respect.”

“Our new Chief Financial Officer treats people with respect and dignity.”

“[I like] the respect I receive from supervisors and managers. I am not used to it.”

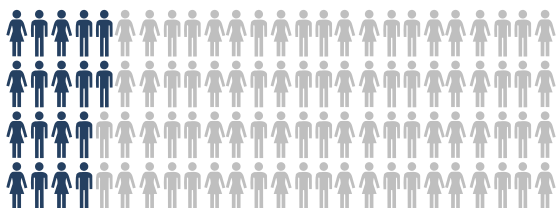
*Issues listed total to more than 3,689 and more than 100%, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to management.

**See p. 31 for further discussion of accountability.

THEME. Supervisors and managers support and mentoring

1,317 of the 7,507 respondents commenting addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support and mentoring – including availability, helpfulness, and feedback.

18% commented on this theme (1,317)

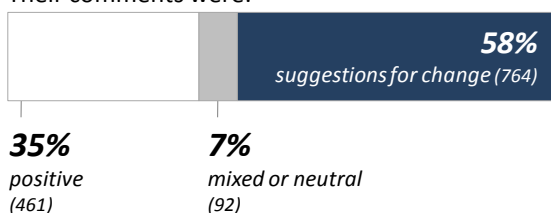


Of the 1,317 respondents who wrote about supervisor and manager support and mentoring, just over one third (35%) expressed satisfaction, and nearly six in ten (58%) saw a need for improvement.

Staff appreciate supervisors and managers who:

- Are available when staff need help
- Stand by their staff, in good times and bad
- Don't micro-manage
- Encourage their staff's positive efforts
- Note and reward staff accomplishments
- Are skilled, knowledgeable, and generous in sharing their expertise

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff want strong support from supervisors and managers

"My supervisor makes every effort to keep a positive, encouraging, supportive, stress-free work environment. I wish we had more supervisors like her."

"I highly value the support and encouragement I receive from management."

"Consolidation has negatively impacted my ability to have connection with a supervisor. The supervisor is now 'too busy' or 'too overwhelmed' to make contact with me."

"My team does the best it can considering the hostile, non-supportive, unpredictable administrators we work under."

"I have a wonderful supervisor, regional administrator, and financial services administrator who are available, approachable, and always willing to discuss ideas, hear feedback, etc."

They appreciate guidance as needed, but don't want to be micro-managed

"My supervisor is excellent – allowing me autonomy to do my job and providing resources and information when I need it."

"Some supervisors take over situations rather than teaching the employees how to handle the issue, and allowing them the opportunity to resolve it."

"[I like] the balance of working independently, while being supported and provided constructive feedback from my manager."

"I would like to see less micro-managing, and more trust between management and employees."

"Micro-management from upper management is draining for the whole work force."

"My supervisor does not stand over my shoulder watching my every move. She allows me to do my job and I can go to her without ridicule if I am having problems. She helps me work through them."

They are pleased when supervisors and managers function as mentors

"My supervisor has provided me with excellent mentorship, and trusted me to take on projects and tasks that stretched and expanded my skills."

"Managers need to be role models, and set better examples on how to be productive and proactive in the workplace."

"My Director is a wonderful mentor, and I am learning a lot from him."

"I would like to see supervisors take more interest in what I have to offer this agency, and care about what direction my career is going."

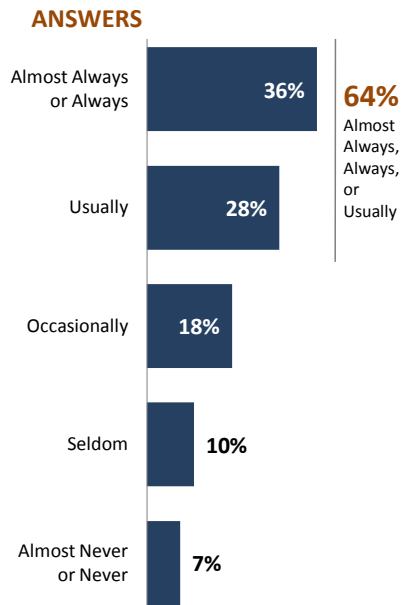
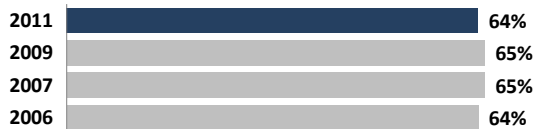
"I have a great boss who supports me and mentors me, and because of this I have grown in my job and I feel happy and well-rounded."

QUESTION. My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance

Nearly two thirds of employees (64%) said their supervisor provides regular, ongoing feedback. However, 17% of employees reported they seldom or never receive feedback from their supervisors. Employees like supervisors who:

- Have the knowledge and skill to provide useful feedback
- Take the time to offer such feedback
- Willingly serve as their employees' coach and mentor
- Care about their employees' development and well-being
- Consider themselves to be 'part of the team'

There was no significant change between 2009 and 2011 in employee receipt of ongoing feedback.



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees welcome clear and constructive feedback from supervisors

"My immediate supervisors are great. Always answering questions and giving positive feedback. They are supportive, not condescending."

"My Program Manager is a good listener, and gives constructive feedback and support."

"My supervisor is the best I've worked for. He lets you know where you stand, always."

"When I need clarification, direction on a specific issue, or need to talk through something, my supervisor is available and very willing to provide constructive feedback to ensure I feel confident about performing my job duties."

"I now have a great supervisor who is supportive, collaborative, and provides feedback on work products."

"My supervisor and lead are supportive, and do a great job giving me constructive feedback about my performance."

They see feedback as an opportunity to improve their work performance

"I have really great supervisors who give me many opportunities to learn new things, and provide feedback so I can improve."

"Our supervisor supports us, and challenges us to improve our practice."

"I am encouraged by management to stretch and grow; I am given appropriate feedback and direction."

"My direct supervisor provides quality feedback in a constructive manner that promotes professional development."

"I get input from supervisors who know their job – positive, constructive criticism that allows me to grow in my practice."

"My supervisor is there as a facilitator of my learning – someone I can truly trust and staff cases with."

Some employees are unhappy with the quality, or the quantity, of supervisor feedback

"My supervisor usually answers questions with 'I don't know,' and she doesn't come back later with an answer."

"I'd prefer an in-office supervisor, not an out-of-office supervisor. Communication is consistent with an in-office supervisor."

"More support from our supervisors – we rarely get any feedback unless it's negative in nature."

"My office needs a supervisor who is supportive, and has the time to participate in shared decision-making/staffing cases."

"More feedback on how I am doing a good job, or how I can improve my work processes."

"I have a part-time supervisor like a lot of people, but even when my supervisor is here they don't have much time for my unit issues because they are too busy with the other office."

"I would like my supervisor to MAKE time to meet us individually and give us feedback."

QUESTION. My performance evaluation provides me meaningful information about my performance*

Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) indicated their performance evaluation provides meaningful information. However, nearly one in three (28%) said their evaluation seldom or never includes meaningful information. The small number of employees who commented on this topic indicated they like performance evaluations that:

- Are completed on a regular basis
- Include honest and specific feedback
- Help them to attain their individual work goals

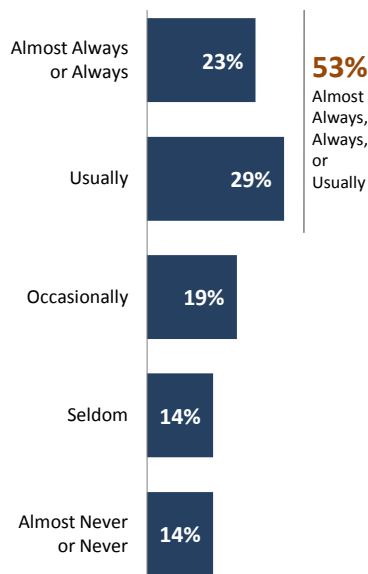
*The 2011 survey took place near the end of a one-year department-wide moratorium on performance evaluations. Many employees completed the survey *before* receiving an evaluation at the end of October 2011. It is anticipated that the next survey will provide better insight into the success of the new performance evaluation system.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 felt their performance evaluation provided them meaningful information.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff want their performance evaluated on a regular basis

"Provide regular and meaningful feedback...including adherence to providing formal performance evaluations."

"My supervisor takes the time to give our unit monthly performance evaluations. I love knowing where I'm at and not being surprised somewhere down the line. I find this to be valuable feedback!"

"Start doing performance evaluations again. I haven't had one in years, so I doubt anyone else has had one."

"I would like to see regular PDPs, because I have been here for over 3 years and have not received one."

"How can we hold staff accountable if supervisors can't keep up with the monitoring or auditing of their performance?"

Some would like performance evaluation process to change, or to disappear

"Evaluations should be tools used for areas of improvement, rather than simply a required piece of paper."

"I would get rid of the annual evaluations. I think my supervisor is capable of communicating my strides and struggles in our monthly supervisions. The annual supervision is generally a recap of things that are no longer relevant."

"Evaluations are too vanilla, rarely reflecting personal growth."

"There is no reward for good work, and no sanction for bad work. This makes PDPs meaningless."

"I don't gain much from the performance evaluations because my supervisor lets me know without having to put it on paper. Seems like too much extra time is spent doing them, considering they have no EXTRA time in the climate we're currently in."

Others believe their opinions have a legitimate place in supervisor evaluations

"Managers higher up than supervisors never ask the field workers how they feel about the job performance of supervisors or program managers. It seems to me that field workers would have a lot to say about whether or not a supervisor or program manager is doing a good or complete job."

"I would like an opportunity to rate our supervisors, which would provide input for their evaluations (bottom up)."

"Supervisors/managers/directors should be evaluated by the employees they supervise. Otherwise, how would their supervisor/manager know the quality of supervision that is being given?"

THEME. Recognition and awards

661 of the 7,507 employees who made comments addressed the importance of supervisors and managers recognizing and praising the good work of employees.

9% commented on this theme (661)



Of the 661 employees who commented about employee recognition, about one in five (19%) are satisfied with the recognition they receive. However, more than three quarters (76%) feel the current methods of recognizing employees need improvement.

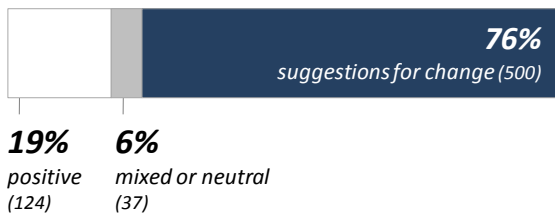
Employees desire:

- Consistent acknowledgment for good work
- Special recognition when they perform particular tasks well, or make notable contributions to the success of particular programs

In these trying times, employees want:

- Thanks for excellent work under difficult circumstances
- More efforts to show they're truly appreciated

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees like supervisors and managers to acknowledge their efforts

"Employee recognition may not mean anything to those making 70 grand a year. For the regular wage-earning employee, it represents a thank you, pride in your work, and it helps on future interview possibilities."

"I like working with a supervisor who verbalizes his appreciation of my ability to do my job well."

"You never get told that you do a good job, or that you are working hard to get everything right."

"You WILL NEVER leave my manager's cube without her thanking you for the work that you do."

"I rarely hear any positive feedback about my performance. I do hear that I should be grateful that I have a job, and 'Put in your leave slip.'"

"Give more kudos for a job well done, and more praise for going above and beyond daily expectations."

"I love that my boss takes the time to tell me I am doing a great job!"

They want recognition for doing hard work during these challenging times

"I understand the economy and the need to cut, but I think it would be perceived better if higher-ups took the time to thank their employees for a job well done."

"There is a huge lack of appreciation for staff doing more with less at all levels of employment."

"With the declining economy, the loss of jobs for employees, reduction in pay and heavier workloads due to lost jobs, there is low morale. More needs to be done to recognize, motivate, and inspire people to continue to do the great work they do."

"Recognition for a job well done in spite of increasing workloads and decreasing support."

"Morale is low because we keep taking hits with pay, benefits, and are still expected to perform with no real recognition other than an occasional, 'Atta girl, we're proud of ya,' from the Governor on down."

Many employees feel under-valued and under-appreciated

"Most state employees do not feel valued and appreciated right now – doing more with fewer resources and for less money, with no end in sight."

"It seems the only time appreciation is expressed is before or after negative news or during the holidays."

"With the consolidations and downsizing, staff do not feel valued or appreciated for their hard work."

"Real (not token) ongoing demonstrations of appreciation for work well done."

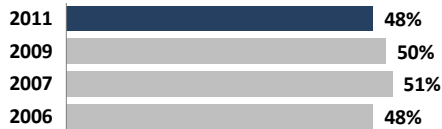
"More recognition as a valued employee. Somebody actually giving a shit about us."

QUESTION. I receive recognition for a job well done

Nearly half of respondents (48%) reported they receive recognition for excellent work. About three in ten (29%) said they seldom or never receive recognition for good work they accomplish. Staff believe:

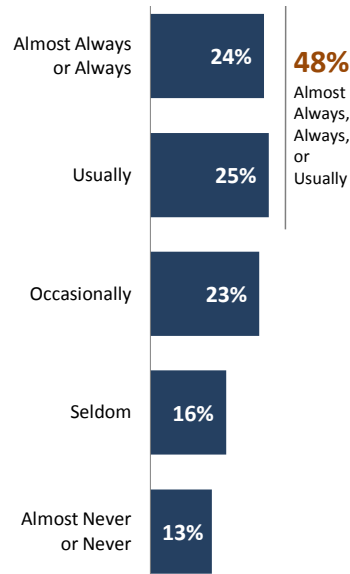
- Consistent, positive recognition from supervisors and managers is important
- Lack of appreciation for good work has a negative effect on staff morale
- Individual achievements and milestones deserve to be recognized

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they received recognition for a job well done.



Decrease from 2009 to 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff receive credit for the things they do well

- “I feel appreciated and respected by my supervisor for the work I accomplish.”
- “My co-workers and I receive great feedback and positive recognition for a job well done.”
- “I have the satisfaction of knowing my specific set of professional skills, knowledge, and experience is recognized and appreciated by many in Children’s Administration, including headquarters.”
- “I work with a great group of people and supervisors who invest in me, and frequently praise me and my team.”
- “My co-workers and supervisor often express appreciation for my work (especially after I get back from vacation!)”
- “My supervisor is helpful and kind, and always has a positive word to say.”

Others would like more recognition for good work

- “Mass e-mails saying ‘Good job’ to everyone don’t reach me on any personal level, and I doubt they reach anyone else either.”
- “It would be nice to be recognized for the hard work we do, instead of taking us for granted.”
- “This office has had no employee recognition ceremonies. The person who meets a milestone gets a certificate handed to them by their supervisor – this is a slap in the face.”
- “I have never seen a secretary get Employee of the Month...being a secretary here makes me feel like being a dishwasher in a restaurant.”
- “A little more acknowledgement of individual achievements when people go above and beyond for the customer/client.”
- “It would be great to have a supervisor who gave credit where credit was due.”

Some offered suggestions for recognizing staff accomplishments

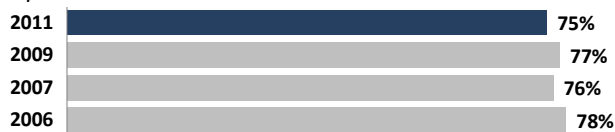
- “More staff recognition by buying coffee, doughnuts, chocolate. Nice pens! Little things actually mean a lot!”
- “I believe that a financial reward system for employees that demonstrate good performance should be created. I also believe that a financial compensation award should be given for milestone year achievements.”
- “When somebody has worked for the state for 20 years they deserve more than a letter. You could spend a couple bucks and give them something.”
- “More team-building activities. More social time with co-workers. Examples: lunchtime barbeques, potlucks, coffee times.”
- “Student loan forgiveness after so many years of service, regardless of the area studied, like other government staff.”
- “The new HRMS rules allow managers to give time off as a reward for a job well done...[this] would greatly increase morale.”

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

Three quarters of employees (75%) said supervisors hold their staff accountable. However, 12% indicated their supervisor seldom or never holds staff accountable. Employees feel strongly that:

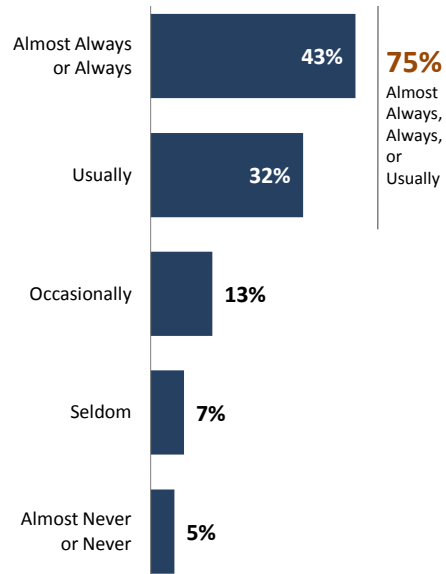
- Staff should be held accountable
- Difficult staff should pay a price for poor attitudes, poor conduct, or “slacking” on the job*
- The same standards should apply to all staff, *including* supervisors and managers

Fewer staff in 2011 than in either 2009 or 2006 said their supervisor holds them and their co-workers accountable.



Decrease from 2009 to 2011, and from 2006 to 2011, is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees want supervisors to hold staff accountable

“[I want] supervisors to hold employees accountable for poor time management, poor performance, and unmotivated attitude toward the clients we serve.”

“I like that the currently supervisory staff is holding line staff accountable.”

“Some of our supervisors want the job, but don’t seem to want to do the job. It’s not easy to deal with the ‘less than good employee.’ But it is a supervisor’s job!”

“I am fortunate to have a supervisor who...holds each worker accountable for doing their job efficiently, respectfully, and thoughtfully.”

“There is some serious dead weight lingering in many offices simply because supervisors don’t have enough time or, honestly, the guts/ability to take action.”

They feel poor performance and poor behavior deserve consequences*

“The individuals that cause problems for the majority should pay for those problems: attendance issues, excessive tardiness, poor job performance.”

“[I want] management to properly discipline staff for inappropriate harassment and bullying.”

“Sleeping on the job and making excuses for not working should not be acceptable. Disciplinary action needs to be taken.”

“I would like lazy, goof-off staff to receive disciplinary action and possible termination.”

“If a worker does something mean or rude to another co-worker, I would like them to be held accountable for this, and reprimanded for this. This is not happening now.”

“IT SUCKS TO CARRY THE WEIGHT WHEN OTHERS ARE CONTINUALLY SLACKING AND NOTHING IS EVER DONE ABOUT IT.”

They think supervisors and managers should be accountable, too

“Supervisors need to be held more accountable for their mistakes, unavailability and their own workloads.”

“I would like to see removal of incompetent supervisors and people in management.”

“I would like to see management held accountable for the stuff they do wrong.”

“Supervisors being held to the same rules as line staff, such as not taking long lunches or taking adjust time they did not earn.”

“Hold the managers, supervisors, directors, superintendents, etc. accountable for their actions.”

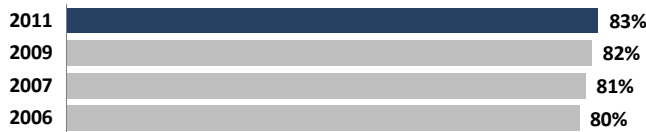
*See p. 66 for a discussion of the problems of seniority-based reductions and the difficulties of removing incompetent staff.

QUESTION. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect

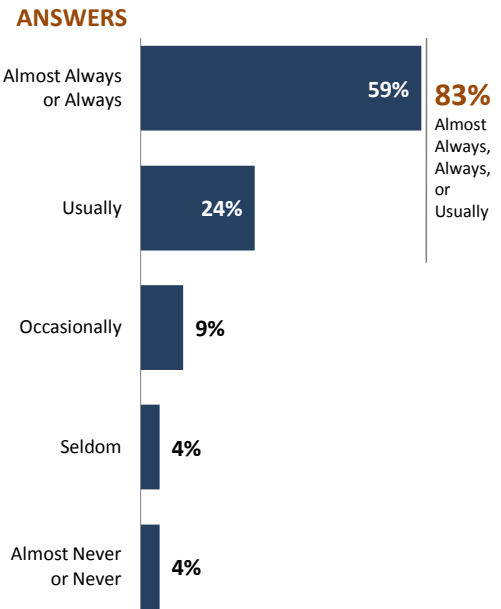
More than eight out of ten employees (83%) indicated their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect. Many expressed gratitude for the consideration they receive.

Although fewer than one out of ten employees (8%) reported their supervisor seldom or never treats them respectfully, a small number of staff described supervisors who are rude, condescending, or notable for their absence. Some of these comments can be found in the box below.

More staff in 2011 than in 2006 said their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect. There was no significant change in this area between 2009 and 2011.



Increase between 2006 and 2011, is statistically significant at $p < .01$



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff feel their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect

- "My supervisors are very kind and respectful."
- "My direct supervisor treats me and my peers with respect, and models the attributes of a truly effective leader."
- "I have a supervisor that I respect, and I feel respected back."
- "[I like] being treated as an adult by my supervisor, being treated with respect."
- "My current supervisor appears to be one of the best...she treats us respectfully, which is a rarity in this office."
- "We have a great CSOA/Supervisor who sets a respectful and friendly/open tone and environment for the workplace."
- "My new supervisor treats everyone with dignity and respect."

Some staff wish their supervisor would treat them with more respect

- "Our supervisor is very rude; does not treat employees with respect or dignity."
- "It would be really nice if supervisors treated the social workers they supervise with respect, not as numbers they manage."
- "[I would like] to have a boss who doesn't micro-manage everything, is not condescending, doesn't bark his 'orders,' and then justify his behavior by telling us that he's ex-military."
- "I am supervised from a distance. I love my workplace, but I am completely disrespected by my distant supervisors."
- "My supervisor does not treat me with respect. I am belittled and talked down too often."
- "I would like to be treated with respect and dignity, not treated like a nobody who knows nothing."

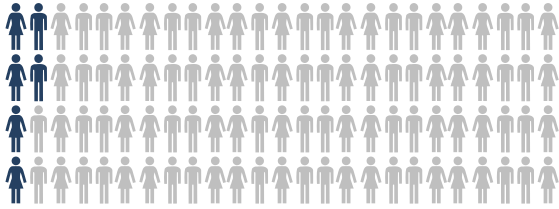
They want to be treated like the professionals they are

- "[I would like] to stop being treated like a child. I have extensive experience in my line of work, but I have to ask permission on how to work a case."
- "I have a boss who has confidence in my work and treats me like a colleague, not a subordinate."
- "I would like staff to be treated like professionals, instead of like student interns."
- "My direct supervisor trusts me and treats me as a professional. I'm motivated as a result to do the very best job possible!"
- "I have the respect that I am an expert in my field, and I have a voice in the decision-making process."
- "We are all adults, and don't need to be treated like little kids that can't think and see what needs to be done."
- "[I like] my new supervisor and her confidence in my abilities. She treats everyone with dignity and respect."

THEME. Courtesy and respect from supervisors/managers

468 of the 7,507 respondents who commented addressed this aspect of supervisor and manager behavior.

6% commented on this theme (468)



Of the 468 respondents who wrote comments about courtesy and respect, just over one in five (21%) said supervisors and managers treat them respectfully. However, more than three quarters (77%) see a need for improvement in this area.

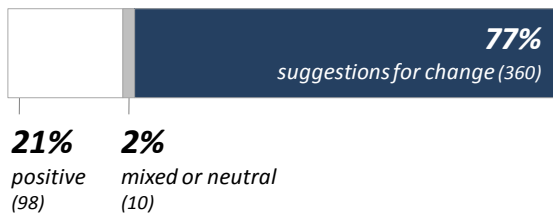
Staff want to be:

- Treated with consideration, each and every day
- Truly *seen* and *heard* by their superiors
- Credited for their professional expertise

Staff resent:

- Being treated like cogs in a wheel
- Being demeaned, or discounted
- Having a “bully” for a supervisor

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff appreciate supervisors and managers who treat them with courtesy and respect

- “I really like my direct supervisor. She treats our whole team with dignity and respect.”
- “I am now treated with dignity and respect, and as a valued employee, by all three PAT directors at Rainier School.”
- “My supervisor is fabulous to work with, I never feel that I can’t ask a question and I always feel respected.”
- “What I love best in my current job is the POSITIVE ATTITUDE exhibited by managers and staff, with the emphasis on courtesy and respect.”
- “My supervisor always makes a point to say good morning and good evening, always asks how I am doing, which is nice.”
- “From our director on down, we are treated with respect.”

They are frustrated by disrespectful supervisors and managers

- “There is nothing I like about my job right now. My supervisor has no respect for me as a worker or a person.”
- “Genuine respect [for workers], especially when you are terminating them or laying them off. At least act like it matters.”
- “Managers need to remember that workers are people, first and foremost, and that customer service not only applies to constituents and stakeholders, but also to the staff who work for them.”
- “[I would like] to be treated like a human being, not an automaton.”
- “If line workers treated clients the way upper management treats staff, they would be fired in a heartbeat!”
- “I would really like to see some common respect displayed by our supervisor. Snideness and moodiness is not for the workplace. If your supervisor only cares if she looks good or she is recognized, morale can really suck.”
- “I would like management to treat us line staff as human beings instead of just a tool at their disposal.”

A small, but concerning, number of staff feel bullied by their supervisor

- “One of our supervisors bullies people with degrading comments and shunning.”
- “Our unit is like a high school. The boss is a cheerleader and whomever does not buddy up is bullied.”
- “Supervisors bringing out your personal business in front of staff is very cruel.”
- “My supervisor’s favorite thing to do is to belittle people and intimidate. Unless you’re one of her pets.”
- “Less hostile workplace – less persecution from supervisors.”
- “Why are supervisors allowed to belittle, harass, single out, target, and treat staff unprofessionally?”



“Father & Son” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Mary Calderon, with permission



“Monument to Remember” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Jan Lewis, with permission

“Fall” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Kim Karu, with permission



CHAPTER 3

Fairness and Diversity

MOST MEASURES OF FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY HAVE MOVED IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION since 2007, although the changes from 2009 to 2011 were mixed. The most recent trends appear to reflect fewer concerns about diversity issues, but some ongoing, and possibly increased, concern about management fairness and support.

***Comments about fairness and diversity.** Complaints about diversity and discrimination against protected groups have moved steadily downward, while complaints about management fairness have remained relatively steady.*

- **Few comments about protected groups.** 136 of the 7,507 employees who made comments in 2011 (less than 2%), expressed concern about discrimination against protected groups. The percentage making such negative comments has decreased 28% since 2007.
- **All negative comments about diversity issues also decreased.** The proportion of critical comments with any relationship to diversity also decreased – down 23% from 2009. These comments include the protected group comments cited above, reverse discrimination, nepotism, sexual harassment, and “good old boy” practices.
- **Comments about manager fairness held steady.** 9% of employees made critical comments about manager fairness – the same percentage seen in the 2009 survey.

Standard questions about fairness, discrimination, and support for a diverse workforce. The survey includes two questions that reflect employee perceptions of discrimination – one in the context of fair treatment, and one addressing support. Scores have increased since the questions were first asked, although more recent scores have hovered around the same range.

- **Support for diverse workforce increased from 2007.** 64% of respondents agreed, “My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce” in both 2009 and 2011. This is higher than 2007.
- **Fair treatment retreated to 2007 level.** 68% of employees said, “In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.” This matched the 2007 level of 68%, after an uptick to 71% in 2009. In 2006, 66% had agreed.



“Happy Home = Happy Heart” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Sarah Chea, with permission



“Soccer Fun” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Aurelia Segura, with permission



“Fun Days in the Sun” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Jessica Graham, with permission

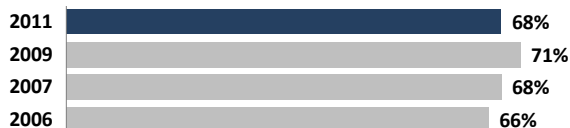
QUESTION. In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

68% of employees said they are treated fairly. 18% reported a pattern of unfairness. Fewer staff in residential facilities feel they are treated fairly (63%) compared to other staff (71%).

Some staff made general comments about unfair treatment. Others were concerned that not all employees are held to the same standards, given equal workloads, or offered the same opportunities. Some expressed fear of retaliation.

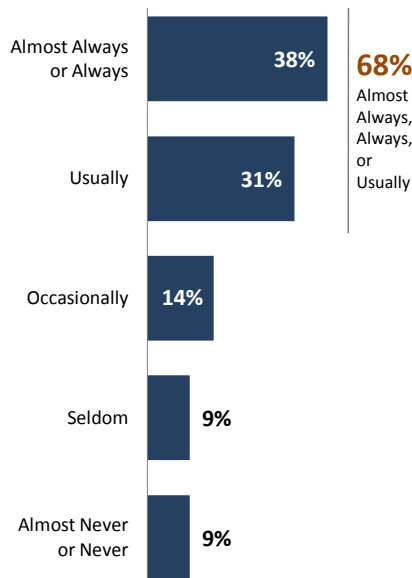
Specific concerns about diversity issues are discussed later in the chapter. Concerns about fairness in promotions and hiring are addressed both in this chapter and in the Personnel Issues section of the Business Practices Chapter, pages 65-66.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009, but more staff in 2011 than in 2006, said they are treated fairly, without discrimination.



Decrease from 2009 and increase from 2006 are statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff feel they are treated fairly and without discrimination

“My supervisor lends support and is always consistent. All staff are treated the same – with respect and support.”

“[I like] the fact that we all work as a group. The fact that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. No discrimination whatsoever.”

“My supervisor is very respectful to staff and you always feel like you are treated fairly.”

“I have a wonderful supervisor who is a very positive force in our department. She is extremely fair and encouraging of me and my co-workers and appreciative of our efforts.”

“What I love most about my job is my boss. She treats everyone fairly and truly cares about all of her employees.”

Some feel strongly that not all are treated fairly, that there are different standards for different workers

“I would like my supervisor to hold EVERYONE accountable! I believe there are different standards for different employees.”

“Less favoritism, less attitude from management, fair treatment for all employees, not just the 'management favorites.' All department rules apply to everyone, not just to those that don't belong in the 'non-favored' group – the 'management favorites' group seems to be able to make & follow their own rules with no consequences.”

“Have rules to apply to all staff (i. e., not allow some to get away without charting, leaving early often, call in often, not having to escort patients, etc.).”

“Please hold each employee to the same work expectations as everyone else.”

Others said some supervisors do not distribute work fairly

“I feel the state is losing and will continue to lose hard working competent professionals unless work productivity is leveled out equally. The current climate is if you work hard – you get more work (with no reward) and if you're a less productive person then you remain less productive (with no consequences). This is not a smart way to manage people. What is the incentive to work hard, fast & productive? The answer right now is none.”

“It doesn't seem fair for the workers who actually are capable of doing their own jobs having to take the brunt of those who can't seem to get a handle on their own work.”

“Our problem is a discrimination that our supervisor's practicing. If you're not a friend of them and you're always obedient in any task, you're kind, you're not complaining, the more you're given. Not FAIR.”

THEME. Manager fairness

700 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of management fairness.

9% commented on this theme (700)

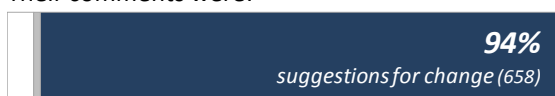


Of the 700 employees* who wrote about manager fairness, 94% said there was room for improvement. 6% made positive or mixed/neutral comments.

Employees like it when supervisors:

- Treat everyone equally and fairly
- Hold everyone accountable
- Distribute perks fairly
- Don't offer opportunities to only a select few
- Don't threaten retaliation when staff speak up

Their comments were:



5% positive (34)
1% mixed or neutral (8)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff complained about favoritism in opportunities for growth, hiring, and promotion

"It appears the same employees receive the opportunity for advancement, educational training, DJAs, and other special treatment for them to advance."

"Genuine opportunity for (workplace-related) educational growth and the opportunity to grow professionally – and not just for the golden chosen!"

"More fairness in selection of experienced, deserving employees to be considered for promotion, or special training for better positions. Management has demonstrated favoritism in this regard, without fair consideration for those most experienced and deserving."

"Fair and balanced hiring and promotional opportunities. The practice is tilted toward hiring or promoting those you know and like, but not the person most qualified and has earned the opportunity. Personal biases get in the way of sound judgment way too often."

Some staff feel supervisors aren't fair with perks

"The availability to have an alternate schedule/flex schedule needs to be equal across the board within the program each person is working."

"Flex schedules and telework should be considered for staff. However, management is not very supportive around this area when it comes to their staff doing this, and yet management often teleworks from home most of the time or at least a few days out of the week."

"When co-workers are sent to outside training/CE opportunities, it is always the same one or two people, even if the training would be more appropriate for someone else (i.e. because of their discipline, who they work with, etc). Give everyone in work area a chance to apply for seminars, conferences, etc. and base decisions on who is the most appropriate person for each opportunity."

"I would like to see equal treatment concerning sick time and vacation time."

Others fear retaliation for speaking up

"Employees speak about the stress and workload issues with one another and the feeling of helplessness that exists among employees due to fear of retaliation from the administration."

"[Would like] safety issues actually taken care of, not just mentioned; ergonomic equipment at all work stations – not just to those 'brave' enough to ask for proper items and 'ready' to take on the repercussions of bringing medical issues to attention and also be considered a difficulty."

"More opportunity for giving feedback without fear of reprisal."

*This count does not include complaints specifically about unfairness in regard to diversity issues, addressed later in this chapter.

QUESTION. My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce

64% of employees said their agency shows support for a diverse workforce.* 17% reported a lack of such support.

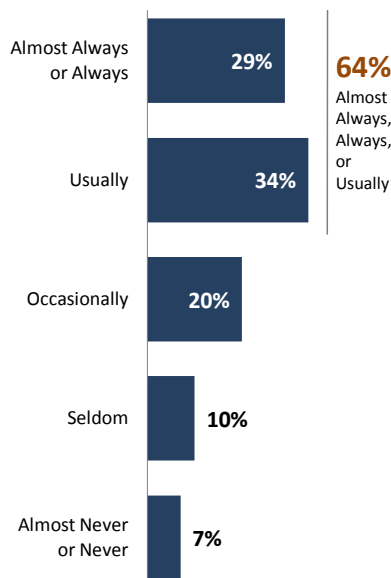
Employees appreciate:

- Working with diverse staff and clients
- Managers who respect and are inclusive to staff with diverse backgrounds
- Fairness and equity in recruitment, hiring, promotional opportunities, and accountability

The percentage of staff saying their agency supports a diverse workforce was the same in 2011 and 2009.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff praised DSHS for its diversity

"I love the different cultures that work together. You are able to learn different ways to care for our residents based on their cultures."

"Local management really does have an open door policy. This office is very diverse and supportive of diversity."

"I enjoy working with a culturally diverse workforce."

"My unit gets along well with each other. We each have open enough minds to accept one another despite diverse lifestyles and world views. I appreciate the diversity in my office and the Director's support of diversity."

"I like that we are a supportive, fun and festive office that celebrates different cultures and respects lifestyle differences."

Some employees would like more staff diversity especially at management levels. Some staff want a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community they serve.

"I would like to see more diversity in the workplace, I find it is very lacking, and would be a new change for the workplace."

"More diversity in management and upper management."

"At the highest level in the organization INTENTIONALLY create a diverse work force where people are different, and utilized to build strong alliances where trust, open communication nets win-win for the State. People with different experiences and ideas who can engage in discourse and disagree without being disagreeable; where differences are treated with respect and dignity."

"I wish DDD would hire a more diverse work group. I want to see more people who reflect the diversity of our community."

Some staff believe more training is needed to promote diversity

"Management should be better trained on diversity issues."

"More diversity and more knowledge regarding working with diverse populations."

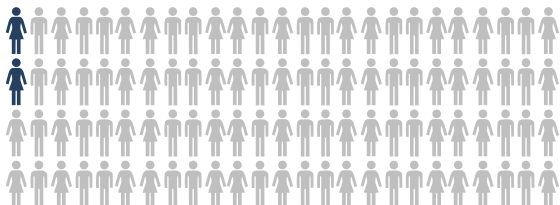
"Mandatory diversity training for all staff. The majority of managers and staff seem to believe diversity is limited to gender and race. It would be refreshing to see DSHS, from the top down, mandate a culture in which ALL persons are valued for their diversity, including but not limited to gender, race, age, life experience, IQ."

*Interpretation of this question is somewhat problematic. Most respondents answering "seldom" or "never" to this question probably focused on the phrase "diverse workforce." They may feel their agency does not work hard enough to recruit a diverse workforce, does not embrace diverse approaches in the workplace, or does not teach cultural competency. However, some respondents may have instead focused on the word "support," and answered negatively because they feel their agency fails to support the workforce (which happens to be diverse).

THEME. Favoritism or discrimination involving diversity issues

172 of the 7,507 who made comments addressed discrimination against protected groups.

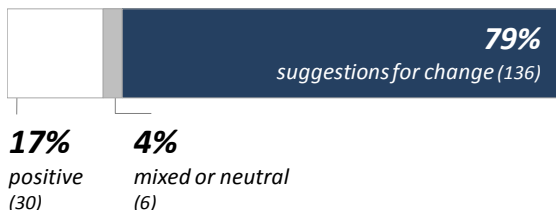
2% commented on this theme (172)



30 of the 172 respondents commended agency diversity. 6 made mixed or neutral comments. The majority (136*) expressed concerns about discrimination related to protected groups:

- 71 comments addressed diversity or discrimination without specifying the type of issue
- 56 addressed unfair treatment related to race, ethnicity, culture, or language
- 20 spoke about unequal treatment based on gender. Comments on sexual harassment are included on page 41 and are not included in total
- 19 were concerned about age discrimination
- 8 made comments about other types of discrimination, including 4 about disabilities and 4 about sexual preference

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees wrote about discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture, or language

"More diversity at higher levels. I would like to see DSHS make a commitment to addressing institutional racism at a very fundamental level as the inherited situation that it is, not something to be ignored, denied, nor taken personally."

"A more diverse ethnic workforce - and no favoritism for Ethiopians!"

"More diversity training as it relates to race and ethnicity, and it to be mandatory for all employees and management to attend 'Undoing Racism' trainings and workshops to UNDO the ongoing systematic racism that is often 'swept under the rug.' This is done by bringing less than adequate trainings to address all other 'isms,' rather than focusing on the systematic racism and the ongoing disproportionate number of children of color who remain in care due to the system overlooking real issues."

"[I would like] that my co-worker would treat me fairly despite that English is my second language."

Other respondents were concerned about unequal treatment related to gender

"[There is] way disproportionate gender discrimination 'good ole girls club.' Statistically speaking, men are WAY underrepresented in DSHS management positions. There seems to be a continued political correctness that won't even ALLOW the discussion to be seriously addressed. What a shame that the very agency that espouses diversity has BLATANTLY and WILLFULLY discriminated against men."

"There seems to be much less expectation of the male, than the female employees. Men are promoted quicker; it seems men are promoted faster because there are less of them, and there seems to be a belief that a man can manage a group of women better than a woman can."

"The supervisor demonstrates favoritism towards the male staff. As a result, some of the men are unwilling to do the work they are supposed to do. Discrimination and retaliation have been prevalent towards the female staff."

Some staff complained of age bias in promotional opportunities and productivity standards, while some believe unfair treatment was due to a combination of age and race

"I would like to see more senior staff get promoted. It is a shame they get bypassed for younger staff. It is sad they are asked to train staff when they come in, but are not hired as supervisors; the younger ones are. This practice needs to end."

"More diversity in ages of management team, not just people in the 30-40 year old age range. It would help improve staff morale to see some older, experienced case workers promoted."

"There are numerous employees in DCS who are near retirement who are not meeting productivity standards (whether drunk, ill, or just tired) but are protected from any consequences because of their age. This discrimination in their favor is not acceptable."

"The upper management structure continues to be very white and promotional opportunities seem to go to young, white employees rather than staff of color. We don't walk our talk."

*Individual areas of concern will add to more than 136, as 36 employees mentioned more than one protected group. This count does not include groups discussed on page 41.

Related THEMES. Unfair treatment based on issues other than discrimination against protected groups

Some employees made critical comments related to diversity, but not focused on discrimination against protected groups.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

37 employees feel family members of other employees receive preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, or supervisory practices

"The continued and widespread hiring of friends and relatives is often at the expense of getting better qualified and/or educated workers who would be more apt to do their job instead of being so focused on promoting the aspirations and interests of their kin and friends they have known for most of their lives. Furthermore, for the few who had been hired on their own merits and qualifications, they work day-to-day as an outsider in a hostile environment in which their actions are continuously scrutinized and are routinely not considered for opportunities for advancement as well as suffering constantly in other work activities."

"Relatives not working the same house same shift because it is a conflict of interest."

"Better hiring practices (less friends and relatives)."

"I can't believe how many people have their (now adult) children working in HQ."

"Get rid of bad supervision – too many family members in this department – the family members are PROTECTED and never do anything wrong. If this was in the private sector, these people would be fired. The supervisors are part of the family. Double standard of supervision within this department."

22 employees referred to "nepotism" and 15 protested "good ol' boy" practices – without clarifying any relationship to protected groups. These are counted separately from the family member and gender comments, because some use the words "nepotism" and "good ol' boy" to mean cronyism.

"Opportunities for professional advancement or growth should be open to everyone; there should be no favoritism, cronyism and nepotism."

"Decisions about hiring, promoting, evaluating, awarding salary increases, and terminating employees are not based on qualifications but more than likely nepotism. They should be more focused on qualifications than anything else."

"Hire people in manager positions who actually have leadership skills rather than 'GOOD OLD BOY.'"

"[I would like] to see promotion opportunities to be fair rather than playing favorites in the good old boy system."

25 complained about "reverse discrimination" or preferential treatment for protected groups

"Quit hiring people just because of their ethnic group; just hire the qualified candidate. I understand we need diversity. It just seems like the most qualified is overlooked because they are not of color."

"There is a great deal of nepotism, reverse discrimination (the Filipino supervisors only hire Filipinos and also give their 'countrymen' special favors, special treatment, more vacation privileges, etc.)."

"I would like to see a fair work place where promotions are given based on talent and skill instead of ethnicity and favoritism."

"[I would like] that things are no longer driven by race. Diversity is more than the color of your skin. We are all diverse and all bring unique experiences to the workplace. This diversity should be embraced."

"De-emphasize the priority of racial 'diversity' when it comes to hiring practices, and the retaining of lesser tenured staff to maintain diversity when the downsizing of personnel becomes necessary. This agenda appears to favor diversity over experience/competence."

"I believe that we have become too strong with our diversity. Other nationalities are starting to get much more preference. Some culture's practices are interfering with work performances. Morale of white women and men is decreasing."

"Caucasian people are now being the ones who are discriminated against and that doesn't seem to matter."

11 employees expressed concerns about sexual harassment

"One time recently, a worker was sexually assaulted at our front counter in front of customers by another worker. The other worker thought it would be a funny joke. Well, it was not, management was informed, and nothing was done."

"I would like all supervisors to be held to a very high standard of personal practice - to not EVER make inappropriate comments to or about their subordinates, and to immediately be written up for an infraction."

"We currently have an employee who has a long history of sexually inappropriate behavior as well as violent issues at our workplace. This has been documented. I do not feel safe coming to work. I am afraid to even leave my desk."



“Meeting Challenges” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Cindy Rochelle, with permission



“Fallen Fence” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

CHAPTER 4

The Daily Job

JOB SATISFACTION DECLINED OVERALL in 2011, due in part to stress caused by heavy workloads and lack of resources. However, there were also positive indicators. As in previous years, employees reported taking great satisfaction in helping clients, in their interactions with the majority of their co-workers, and in having flexible work schedules and chances to learn and grow on the job.

***Overall Job satisfaction.** Overall job satisfaction declined. This decline was accompanied by an increase in negative comments describing job dissatisfaction.*

- **Overall satisfaction decreased.** 61% of employees (a decrease of 8% from 2009) said they are satisfied with their job. In their comments, many employees indicated that – in the face of ongoing budget cuts and the possibility of further layoffs – they are simply happy to still be working.
- **Negative comments about satisfaction increased.** 1,000 employees made negative comments about job satisfaction and morale in the workplace – an increase of 38%. Many addressed the current economic downturn, and resulting cuts in programs, pay or personnel. Employees often referred to stress created by heavy workloads, lack of resources, and co-workers who fail to do their fair share.

Job Characteristics. *As in years past, employees greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with their clients and – with some exceptions – their co-workers. They are also pleased with flexible schedules, and chances to telecommute. However, they struggle with heavy workloads, incompetent co-workers, and decreasing chances to learn and grow on the job.*

- **Helping clients remains a source of satisfaction.** 2,807 employees (37% of those who made comments) addressed the positive aspects of their work with clients. They outlined the many ways they find purpose and pleasure in helping clients achieve their goals.
- **Heavy workloads are a source of frustration.** 818 employees (11% of those who made comments) outlined ways in which they, and their clients, are burdened by increasing workloads. This represents a notable 52% increase in complaints about workloads.
- **Co-workers are a “mixed blessing.”** 3,079 employees (41% of those who made comments) mentioned co-workers. The majority of these comments commended co-workers for support, teamwork, and professionalism. However, there were 738 complaints about co-worker competence, many about co-workers who fail to “pull their weight” in understaffed worksites. In addition, 64% of employees said a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in their workgroup, which represents a 5% decrease from 2009.
- **Opportunities to learn and grow are decreasing.** Only 48% of employees (an 11% decrease from 2009) said they have opportunities to learn and grow. Comments indicate employees want more access to education and training, skill-building, and advancement opportunities, all of which are currently limited by economic realities. Despite this, some employees greatly value the autonomy and chances to grow they experience on the job.
- **Flexible schedules and telecommuting are highly valued.** 743 employees (10% of those who made comments) wrote about their current schedule or ability to telecommute. Of those, about half made positive comments about their schedule or telecommuting, and the other half suggested that more workers should have these options.



“Office Friendly Sweetness” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Wendie Collins, with permission



“Cactus Flower” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

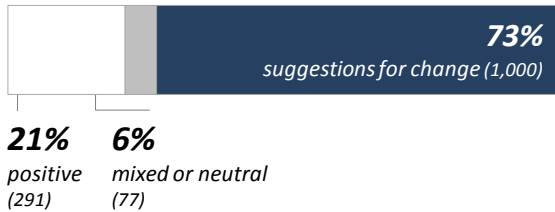
THEME. General satisfaction

The majority of comments from the employee survey outlined specific things employees were pleased about, or thought should be changed. However, 1,368 of the 7,507 employees made more general comments about workplace atmosphere, worker morale, and overall job satisfaction.

18% commented on this theme (1,368)



Their comments were:



Many comments in the “general satisfaction” category speak to the overall environment and morale in worksites throughout DSHS. However, some comments pertain to specific aspects of work settings, such as:

- Welcoming or hostile atmospheres
- Calm or stressful environments
- The impact of the economy on workplace morale

Many answers in the “general satisfaction” category contained only one 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)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees praise the environment in their workplace

- “My office is professional and comfortable, and I am proud to work there.”
- “The atmosphere is cooperative and upbeat.”
- “I like the working environment, which includes respect and dignity for one another and the patients we serve.”
- “I like how my work environment is safe and fun.”
- “Good work environment – building filled with bright people – very collegiate atmosphere with good camaraderie.”
- “The environment – even during tough times, floor staff continue to strive to give 100%.”
- “Our office has a warm and inviting atmosphere – it’s a place you like to be!”

The majority of those who commented have concerns about their working environment

- “My work environment is hostile, unproductive... the supervisor and certain employees act in completely inappropriate ways.”
- “The demand is high, morale is low, people are having mental breakdowns from the stress.”
- “In my direct department there is not unity and teamwork – everyone dislikes everyone and it is really hard to work.”
- “My workplace is hostile, and management won’t - or can’t - deal with the situation, so they do nothing.”
- “My regular workplace has some deeply entrenched severe dysfunction. The only hope for improvement would be to dissolve the ward and reassign everyone.”
- “There’s not much left in this job to like. It’s a negative environment, and we’re verbally abused daily by clients with ever-increasing demands on us that continue to grow as our resources lessen.”

Many see a clear connection between the poor economy and poor morale in the workplace

- “Morale is very poor due to the budget cuts, and the constant and consistent negative economic news and outlook.”
- “Since all of the cutbacks, morale is at an all time low. People are scared of what the future may hold for their jobs and the lives of the disabled people we care for.”
- “We work hard, often above and beyond the call of duty, and now we feel we are getting jerked around by management and this possible ward closure...There is a limbo feeling that has morale low.”
- “Morale is in the gutter...It’s sad to see good employees leaving for other jobs because of the constant stress and threat of potentially losing their job.”

QUESTION. In general, I'm satisfied with my job

61% of respondents said they are generally satisfied with their job. However, 18% outlined problems in this area.

Staff want:

- Meaningful work
- Challenging and diverse work assignments
- Positive connections with clients and colleagues

They dislike:

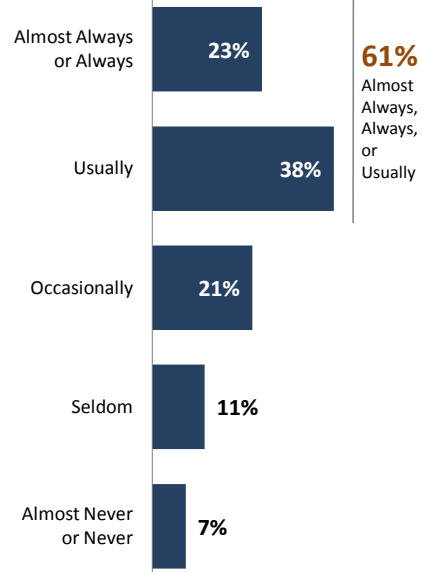
- Lacking the time and resources to provide good services
- Facing constant work-related changes
- Job insecurity

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said they are satisfied with their job.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff are happy with the work they are doing

- “I am able to make a true, positive difference for my clients and community.”
- “It is not the same thing day after day. It definitely keeps me challenged.”
- “The best part of my current job is my supervisor and the others on my team. They are intelligent, caring, and supportive.”
- “My clients are better off because my job exists. It’s very fulfilling.”
- “I love the interaction with DD clients, and am close to many of them.”
- “We have strong workers with good integrity in our office, and it is a joy to come to work. I always feel like others are aware and supportive if I have a rough case. My supervisor has my back.”
- “I like being fully engaged in challenging work that provides opportunities to learn, and contribute to my agency.”
- “I have the education and experience to do a good job in serving our residents and providers. This makes my work meaningful and rewarding.”

Some are dissatisfied with their current work situation

- “I don’t have time to do the things that make this job important: time to meet with families, build rapport, and work on strong reunification plans.”
- “It is impossible to work with accuracy when the method for doing my work changes so often.”
- “Due to constant changes and uncertainty of closures/lay-offs, I am always stressed out.”
- “With the number of reductions and increase in workload, it seems there’s never time to work on goals, improvements, etc. A lot of the time, it feels like we are just trying to keep our head above water.”
- “The direction is now changing daily, and there seems to be no logic to it. I realize there is a lot going on with budget cuts requiring reorganization, but it has reached a ridiculous point.”
- “The climate here is chaotic at best, with staff being displaced and shuffled around like they don’t matter. Administration states they care, but they continue to give us more and more responsibility with little or no direction and less and less people to do the job.”
- “We need more workers, so we’re not in such a hurry that we feel we have to take shortcuts and do crap work.”
- “It is very difficult to continually do my job while wondering if I will have a job tomorrow.”

THEME. Job characteristics – an overview

5,690 of the 7,507 employees who made comments addressed job characteristics, such as helping clients, work schedules, workload, and autonomy and growth opportunities.

76% commented on this theme (5,690)



More than seven out of ten (71%) of the 5,690 employees who offered comments about job characteristics said something positive about their job. One in ten (10%) offered suggestions for change.

Employees like:

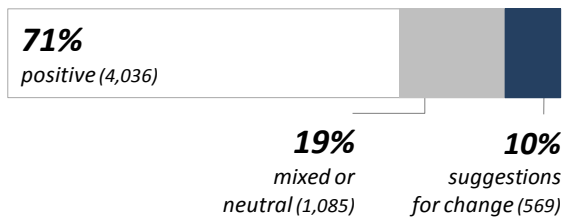
- Working with and supporting clients
- Manageable workloads and flexible work hours
- Challenging - and varied - work assignments
- Chances to learn and grow on the job

They dislike:

- “Unrealistic” workloads
- Rigid work schedules
- Lack of opportunity to grow professionally

These job characteristics are discussed in more detail on pages 48-53.

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees value their ability to make a difference for clients

- “I love working with the clients, supporting their goals and helping them live as independently in the community as possible.”
- “The ability to have an impact within the community to keep children safe.”
- “I love seeing someone grow and succeed. It takes time, but it happens enough to keep me going.”
- “[I like] that I actually make a difference in the lives of vulnerable adults and their families.”
- “Know, when I finish my shift, that I’ve taken care of these individuals like I’d like to be taken care of if I was in their place.”
- “My job consists of helping people with their lives, which makes me very happy.”

They like having reasonable workloads and flexible schedules

- “The workload demands of the job really need to lighten up. It’s OK to have special projects now and then, but to have the ongoing extreme high pace takes a toll on health and being able to enjoy life away from work.”
- “My workload is reasonable and doable.”
- “I don’t have an unmanageable ‘to do’ pile waiting for me when I arrive each morning.”
- “I would like to have the ability to get the work done. Drowning in work and gasping for air is not fun.”
- “I like that I have the opportunity to telework. This is very helpful in balancing work/home life.”
- “I would like to see more alternative work schedules, and options of voluntarily working less hours.”
- “This is a good job! What it lacks in pay it almost makes up for with flexible work hours.”

They also like jobs that offer them autonomy, challenges, and chances to learn and grow

- “I like that my supervisor trusts my judgment, and affords me some autonomy in managing my time and activities.”
- “Have the people that are actually doing the work figure out how to best do it.”
- “I’m allowed to work independently, and I’m allowed to make my own decisions on how to complete specific tasks.”
- “I like that my work is flexible, and gives you responsibility to make your own decisions.”
- “I would like to have more opportunities to grow within the organization.”
- “I enjoy the challenges and variety of my current job. I enjoy learning and growing as a professional.”

THEME. Helping and interacting with clients

2,830 of the 7,507 respondents who commented mentioned working with and helping clients.

38% commented on this theme (2,830)



Their comments were:

99%
positive (2,807)

1%
mixed or neutral (19), or
suggestions for change (4)

Over 99% of the 2,830 who made comments about working with clients consider the opportunity to help clients to be the highlight of their work life. As in previous surveys, the most common response to survey question, “What do you like best about your current job?” was “Working with clients.”

Staff enjoy:

- Spending time with clients
- Making a difference in clients’ lives
- Supporting their clients during difficult times
- Sharing their clients’ successes

They are frustrated when:

- They lack the time to serve their clients well
- Clients and families are uncooperative or intimidating

► What DSHS employees said . . .

For most, helping clients is a pleasure and a privilege

- “I love working with people and helping people, and that is what I do ALL day long!”
- “[I like] being able to help vulnerable people achieve their goals, live happily and overcome difficulties.”
- “I enjoy providing services for the residents – each person is unique, and I learn a lot from them.”
- “I really love working with my families and seeing them succeed. I love to see my children thrive.”
- “I help people have choices in their lives when they often feel they have none. I believe in the mission of my agency.”
- “My clients are why I come to work. I enjoy visiting them, identifying their goals and problems, and providing them with resources to enhance their quality of life. It just feels good to help people.”
- “Everyone I work with is passionate about the work we do protecting children and helping families.”
- “I enjoy making a difference in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.”
- “This agency is very client-focused. I appreciate being of assistance to our clients. I believe in our mission and fully support it.”

Some staff are frustrated by their lack of quality time with clients

- “There is not enough time to work closely with clients to help them better their lives. Seems we just push people through.”
- “I enjoy the relationship that I have built with my clients. However, I don’t like the fact that I am truly no longer able to case manage them or spend quality time. They are just numbers.”
- “More staff, so we can spend more time letting clients have quality of life (going on trips, anything they enjoy).”
- “I would like staff to be able to spend more one-on-one time with clients. Our clients are older and fragile, and need to slow down on what they have to do.”
- “Paperwork and documentation take up about 90% of my work day, and the rest is spent in court. This does not allow for the attention and time for meeting clients at their level of need.”

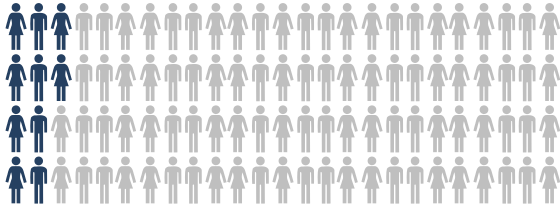
A few reported negative interactions with clients or their families

- “There have been instances of customers being inappropriate with staff (verbally). Personally, it has affected my anxiety levels at work, my productivity, and sometimes my attitude...I just want to feel safe and secure coming to work.”
- “[I don’t like] clients who threaten to write you up when you remind them to follow their diet.”
- “We continually get pressure from parents due to lack of resources, getting things done quicker, and it comes from all sides.”
- “I’ve reached my burned out stage due to the verbal abuse and the ungrateful attitude that clients have toward employees.”

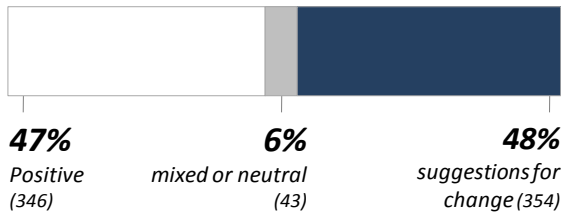
THEME. Flexible schedules and telecommuting

743 of the 7,507 employees who made comments addressed the issues of flexible work schedules and the ability to work from home.

10% commented on this theme (743)



Their comments were:



Nearly half (48%) of the 743 employees who made comments about work schedules or telecommuting suggested improvements. Close to the same number (47%) reported satisfaction with their work schedule.

Many employees would like:

- Alternative work schedules
- More flexibility in scheduling daily work
- Limitations on mandatory overtime
- Less “hassle” when scheduling/taking *earned* leave
- More part-time and job-sharing opportunities
- The option to telecommute

Employees with flexible schedules like having:

- Some control over their work schedule
- Some balance between their home and work lives

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees would like to adjust their work schedule

- “It would be nice to work 4 10-hour days, both to help with the budget and with the workers’ stress level.”
- “I would like to see mandatory overtime changed to 4 hours only, making a work shift that is 12 hours long, not 16 hours.”
- “We are not able to get breaks when we need them, and it is hard to get vacation time.”
- “I would like to see more support for alternative work weeks (9/80 and 4/10) to reduce commute costs.”
- “As a nurse, I would like to see condensed scheduling, working 10-hour or 12-hour shifts.”
- “For staff who generally show up to work when assigned, less harassment about using earned sick leave.”
- “It would be nice to have the opportunity to work part-time, or job share with another employee.”
- “More flexibility in my work schedule, enabling me to do my job and also address obligations/needs for my personal and/or home life.”

They would also like to work from home, or be out-stationed

- “More acceptance of work-from-home options...The emphasis should be on getting the job done well, not where the worker is when doing it.”
- “Save money and accommodate workers by allowing telecommuting from offices nearest the workers’ homes.”
- “Tele-commuting would make a huge difference for me and my family, even just a few days per week.”
- “Tele-working – with all the budget cuts, this should be a no-brainer.”

Some employees are very pleased with their current work schedule

- “I’m taking care of an elderly mother. I’m allowed to be flexible with my work schedule so I can drive her to doctor appointments as needed and still perform my job full time.”
- “I work graveyard, so I like being able to just come in and do my job and then go home, without management involved.”
- “The ability to adjust my schedule, so I can continue my education.”
- “Tele-working from home I have less distractions, I’m more productive than ever. It helps my budget, as I don’t have to spend as much on transportation. I have more quality time with my children as my commute time was eliminated. Thank you.”
- “[I like] opportunities for overtime.”
- “I’m very thankful that I can work as a permanent part-time, as this is well-suited to my family and child care needs.”

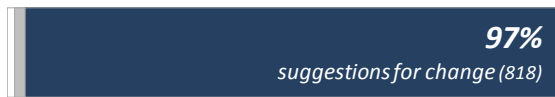
THEME. Workload

846 of the 7,507 respondents who commented addressed the issue of workload, and its effect on their job satisfaction.

11% commented on this theme (846)



Their comments were:



3%
Positive (12), or
mixed or neutral (16)

Nearly all (97%) of the 846 respondents who made comments want a reduction in their workload. Their comments clearly connect workload issues to increasing caseloads, staffing cuts, and added job responsibilities.

Staff believe heavy workloads:

- Cause workers stress and anxiety
- Have a negative impact on employee health, and workplace morale
- Make workers less productive
- Decrease the quality of client service

A small number of staff described their workload as:

- Reasonable and “do-able”
- Heavy and hectic, but full of positive challenges

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff feel burdened by heavy workloads

“I would like to see workloads reduced to a manageable level, so you could actually feel like you had the time and energy to do your best work, instead of constantly treading water.”

“The pressure on the line is enormous. I want to do a good job, but the workload, the constant changes, and the lack of support are ruining my health.”

“Workload issues have become impossible to manage. We are constantly asked to do something new, and nothing is ever taken off our plate.”

“The burden of work on the field offices and on social workers is unreasonable. Staff look exhausted, and report feeling downtrodden and hopeless that things will improve.”

“I have never felt or seen my co-workers so overloaded. Staff crying in their cubicles from stress is a daily occurrence. Morale is lower than low.”

“We are encouraged, almost required, to continue to provide the same level of service with far fewer resources. We are running our staff ragged!”

They are concerned that larger workloads lead to poorer client service

“The caseloads are way too big, and it’s impossible to keep up...It’s dangerous because we can’t address urgent needs, and vulnerable people are at risk.”

“With dramatically increasing caseload sizes, we struggle to meet the basic needs of clients.”

“I’m currently a WorkFirst case manager, but feel that I’m not given the time to case manage. This is frustrating to me, as I care about people and want to serve them.”

“Our ‘peak’ is 75 cases. It should be less to do a good job with clients.”

“Workers in this office have extremely high numbers, and aren’t able to ensure child safety.”

A few staff see their workload as manageable, or see value in a heavy workload

“Enormous workload gives me ample opportunities to improve my skills.”

“The workload is manageable, and I receive the support I need to do my job well.”

“There is so much work to do that we can’t get to it all, but I like the challenge of trying to get as much as possible done.”

“I am lucky enough to work in a unit with adequate staffing to do quality work – very rare these days.”

THEME. Autonomy and growth opportunities

1,006 of the 7,507 employees who made comments addressed the issues of autonomy and growth opportunities in their workplace.

13% commented on this theme (1,006)

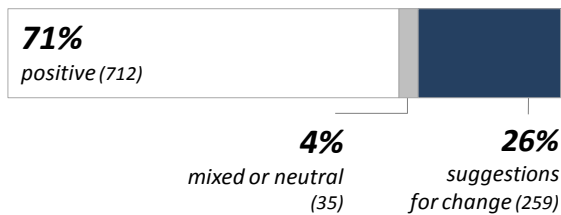


Just over seven out of ten (71%) of the 1,006 employees who commented on autonomy and growth are grateful for the independence and growth opportunities they find in their workplace. More than one out of four (26%) mentioned a need for improvement in this area.

Employees like to:

- Make their own work plans and schedules
- Make good use of their skills and experience
- Be creative and innovative*
- Learn and grow on the job

Their comments were:



They dislike:

- Supervisors who micro-manage
- Rigidly organized work settings
- Limited opportunities for professional growth

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees want autonomy in the workplace, with support as needed

- “I like the autonomy to prioritize my work, set appointments, and go and come during the workday as I accomplish my tasks.”
- “I love having the freedom to do my work at my pace, and having my supervisor there when I need her.”
- “I would like a greater degree of autonomy and trust from management. The need to account for every second of every work day often distracts from the very real tasks of assisting clients, co-workers, and agency/community partners.”
- “My current Area Administrator gives me the latitude to be creative, and is supportive of new ideas.”
- “We need to be given more leeway to perform the job, not told by headquarters how to do the job.”
- “I like the independence we are allowed to organize and manage our own caseload.”

They also want to develop new skills and assume new responsibilities

- “We are constantly changing and growing to learn new procedures, take on new challenges...I love this part of my job!”
- “I like the ability to learn new things, and the flexibility to put these newly learned things into my work.”
- “More opportunities to learn, grow and advance in my workplace.”
- “I like being responsible for my own errors and fixing them, which comes with having a caseload. I learn more that way.”
- “More trust and responsibility given for the experience that I have. I’m treated like a rookie, with years of experience.”

Employees don’t like to be micro-managed in the workplace

- “I like the fact that I’m not micro-managed. I’m treated like an adult that knows how to do my job.”
- “My supervisor is a control freak and micro-manages me, to the point where I can’t have a conversation with anyone without her interrupting me and correcting me.”
- “I’m able to work independently, and am trusted to carry out my work without micro-management of my time.”
- “We have a lot of micro-managing supervisors in this office. They wreak havoc on the morale of those they supervise.”
- “This environment is very rigid, it needs more flexibility. We are constantly being monitored like children.”
- “I really like my boss. She gives me lots of room to work, and doesn’t micro-manage.”
- “The workplace is increasingly micro-managed. In an attempt to provide ‘uniform’ services to our clients, we are losing the flexibility to do our job well.”

*See also the Staff Input section of the Communication chapter (pages 12-14)

QUESTION. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow

Nearly half of respondents (48%) reported they have opportunities to learn and grow. However, nearly three in ten (28%) said they would like more support in this area.

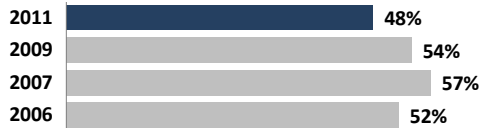
Staff appreciate chances to:

- Expand their knowledge
- Attain new skills
- Use their creativity

Some staff want more opportunities to:

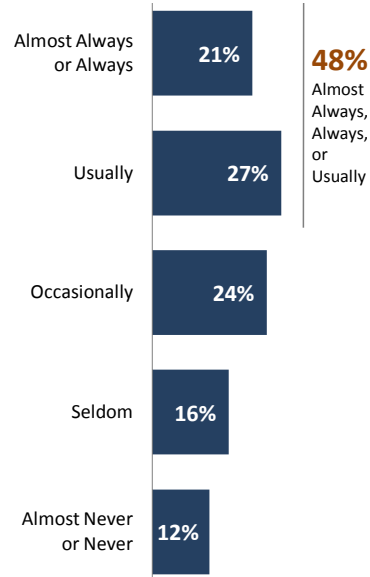
- Make full use of their personal strengths
- Increase their work responsibilities
- Take on new leadership roles

Fewer staff in 2011 than in previous surveys said there are opportunities to learn and grow.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and also between 2006 and 2011, is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff like work that is challenging, and expands their professional knowledge

"The clientele is challenging, and every day is a new adventure. I like being able to use my creativity."

"I like the variety in the workload, and the way I am supported for future professional growth."

"I love that my job gives me flexibility in my job duties, and continually challenges me to provide the best practice to children and families."

"My job challenges me every day to be my best, and practice my counseling skills so I can continue to improve."

"I feel supported and encouraged by management to learn and grow my skills and knowledge."

"I am able to grow professionally and personally. I learn each day from the people I work with, such as my supervisor, co-workers, and the people I come in contact with."

"I am fortunate to work for DVR, where we are encouraged to continue learning for professional development in our field."

"I like that I am constantly challenged to grow professionally."

"I feel very supported and blessed to have an opportunity to grow within my work environment."

Some staff would like more opportunities to grow in their work setting

"More opportunities to grow, and possibly move up in the organization."

"I believe that my employer, and all employers, should provide more opportunities for young people to advance and reach their full potential."

"More opportunities for advancement, growth, and to utilize my talents to the fullest."

"I would love to have some input into my daily work, making choices in how I manage my workload to be effective and efficient, not like a cog in a widget factory."

"There has been no opportunity to learn new functions or positions in my office."

"I am not given the chance to learn more, and take on more work."

"I would like to see more opportunities for growth and improvement for the clerical staff and support staff."

"How about line staff and direct staff be given the chance to prove they can develop community connections and resources?"

THEME. Other important aspects of the job

3,261 of the 7,507 respondents who commented addressed other important aspects of the job, such as variety, flexibility, and working with others in the community.

43% commented on this theme (3,261)



More than eight out of ten (84%) of the 3,261 employees who mentioned other aspects of their jobs made positive comments. 8% suggested changes.

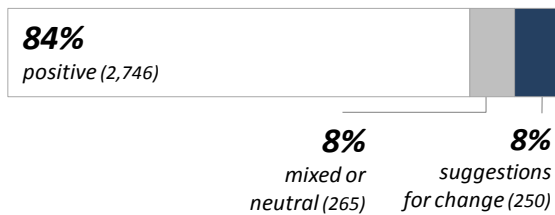
Most employees enjoy:

- Variety in work assignments
- Having some “say” in how and when to complete assigned tasks
- Partnering with agencies and individuals in the community

Some employees would like:

- More challenging work
- More chances to use their skills and experience
- Fewer changes in the workplace
- A less stressful work environment

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees appreciate having variety and flexibility in their work

- “The flexibility in my schedule allows me to give my best effort and accomplish my tasks without feeling burned out.”
- “My position has a great variety of duties, which is enjoyable.”
- “I like that my job is flexible, and gives you the responsibility to make your own decisions.”
- “I enjoy the variety...I am in the office, out of the office, on the telephone, in the community, and there are always changes.”
- “I like that I can be flexible with my own schedule, allowing me to take lunch when it is convenient and to work late when needed to accompany families.”
- “I enjoy coming to work every day because my work is challenging, detailed, and is full of variety.”

They like collaborating with community partners

- “I enjoy getting out in the community and helping to connect my clients with community members.”
- “I really like working with the various agencies my job puts me in touch with.”
- “I like collaborating with community partners around support and resources for adolescents and youth at risk.”
- “[I like] working with a diverse population, and getting to meet and partner with community professionals.”
- “I enjoy working with other agencies, law enforcement, hospital staff, parents, etc.”
- “I like collaborating with different organizations. I like to be out in the community, and not sitting at a desk all day.”

Some employees are frustrated with certain aspects of their job

- “More opportunities to use my skills and strengths, and be noticed for these.”
- “I would rather spend time making patient assessments than copying paperwork.”
- “Too much stress, overload of work. No support from management... Lots of staff burnout.”
- “I’d like to participate in more challenging projects, rather than mundane data entry and clerk duties.”
- “I would like more flexibility to go out into the community to work directly with customers.”
- “There is way too much stress on the workers to see every client that walks through the door each day.”
- “There are a lot of things I could be doing as an RN (lab draws, starting IVs, wound care) that I’m not allowed to do.”
- “What used to be enjoyable is now very stressful, because you have no real security anymore.”

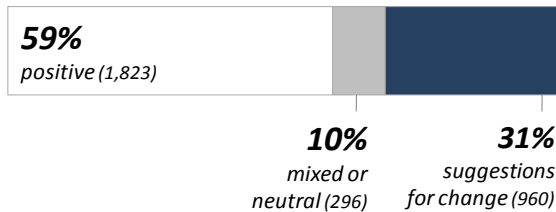
THEME. Co-workers – an overview

3,079 of the 7,507 respondents who commented mentioned their co-workers.

41% commented on this theme (3,079)



Their comments were:



Nearly six out of ten (59%) of the 3,079 respondents who made comments about co-workers had something positive to say. However, close to one third (31%) noted a need for improvement in their co-workers' behavior.

Staff commend co-workers for:

- Teamwork and support
- Competence and professional integrity
- Friendliness and caring

They criticize co-workers who are:

- Incompetent or unmotivated
- Poor "team players"
- Bullies – to clients, or colleagues
- Negative in the workplace

Co-workers are discussed in more detail on pages 55-58.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff are grateful for their co-workers

- "The people in my section are exceptionally motivated, talented, and professional."
- "I have a good team of co-workers who support each other and assist at work, or outside work if necessary."
- "My co-workers genuinely care about children and families, and work tirelessly to make families safer and healthier."
- "I can rely on my co-workers in good and bad times."
- "The people I work with are wonderful, and have great attitudes and ideas that help my job, daily."
- "My co-workers are great, and make work a fun place to be."
- "I value the team I work alongside – they are family."
- "[I like] the 'can-do' spirit of most employees within the office. This is an important asset in any organization, but especially important here and at this point in history."
- "I have people around me that care about the work, and the quality of the work."
- "Coming to work and seeing my co-workers is a pleasure, each and every day."
- "I work with a superb group of people doing incredibly challenging work, at an incredibly difficult time."

Some are troubled by co-workers' actions and attitudes

- "There are people in my office who are not mentally stable and get away with bullying, lowering morale, and not keep up with their own workload because they socialize all day long. Administration is not doing anything about this."
- "People are sick and tired of being harassed by other co-workers."
- "More working together, less pointing the finger at others."
- "Some workers do not follow protocol, and I believe this endangers the safety and welfare of children."
- "No teamwork, staff seems to be working against each other."
- "I get frustrated listening to co-workers belittle their clients to their face, or over the phone."
- "I would appreciate it if my co-workers were less toxic (complaining, negative), and if they spent less time on personal business (phone calls, etc.)."
- "Hold staff members who are not doing their jobs accountable. It is extremely frustrating with all the budget cuts when people sit around, read books, text and/or play on their phones, and generally do not perform their job duties."
- "People that are not happy should not stay and make everyone else miserable!"

THEME. Teamwork and support

1,425 of the 7,507 employees who made comments mentioned teamwork and co-worker support.

19% commented on this theme (1,425)



More than six out of ten (62%) of the 1,425 employees who commented on teamwork spoke favorably about their co-workers' capacity to work together as a team and offer each other consistent support. One third (33%) suggested that teamwork could improve.

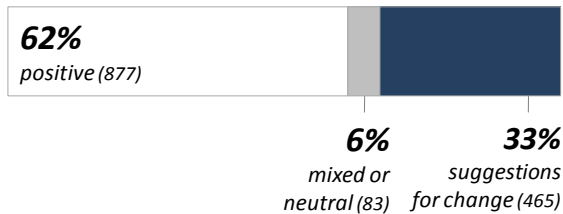
Employees appreciate:

- Belonging to a strong team
- Feeling connected to co-workers
- Trusting in co-workers' support

They do *not* appreciate:

- Unsupportive, untrustworthy co-workers
- Hostile and negative co-workers
- Lack of teamwork in the workplace

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees like being part of a “team” at work

“The crew I work with has great teamwork skills. We enjoy what we do while getting the job done.”

“I work with a great group of people who embrace the team concept. I can count on them to assist me with sometimes difficult clients.”

“Our workgroup works well together as a team to get the job done.”

“The people I work with are what I like best about my job. We feel like family and work as one.”

“My co-workers work together as a team, and support each other tirelessly.”

“Our office/co-workers work together as a team. It makes for a great environment to work in.”

They value the support of their co-workers

“My fellow co-workers are wonderful! They are supportive of my endeavors, both professionally and personally.”

“My unit is cohesive and we all get along. We support each other and enjoy working together.”

“The people in my unit are always willing to step up and help each other out.”

“My co-workers are a thoughtful, caring group, and rally around their fellow co-workers when they are struggling. This makes the ups and downs of the job more bearable.”

“My team is supportive and giving. We all help each other, and leave no one hanging.”

Some employees report a definite lack of teamwork in their workplace

“There is chaos, back-stabbing, mistrust and an overall air of negativity in my workgroup.”

“I would like to see less bickering, less judgmentalism, more cooperation.”

“We often forget we are a TEAM and, although we may not like each other or agree with each other, we need to find ways to include everyone and work together despite any differences.”

“Everybody is at each other’s throat, creating an unreal and hostile work environment.”

“Less of a ‘cover your butt’ atmosphere, and more of a ‘We’re in this together’ teamwork atmosphere.”

“I would love to see people get along with each other and work with each other. They treat each other in a very negative way, and it is not a healthy way for staff to work.”

“We all need to come together and function as a team. Those that do not get with the program need to get out.”

“Less complaining, and more collaboration.”

QUESTION. A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup

Nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) said their workgroup is a strong and cooperative team. However, about one in five (19%) feel cooperation and teamwork could be improved.

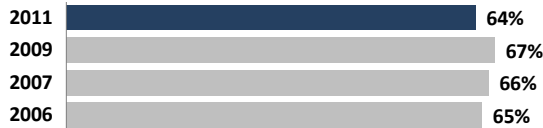
Staff speak highly of:

- Co-workers who are caring and collaborative
- Co-workers they can count on, even in hard times
- Warmth and humor in the workplace

They are critical of:

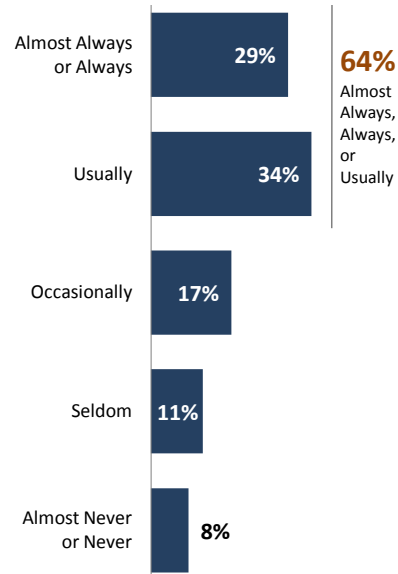
- Co-workers who aren't committed "team players"
- Co-workers who create conflict
- Bickering and back-biting in their workgroup

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 reported teamwork and cooperation in their workgroup.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff have a strong bond with their co-workers

"My co-workers are awesome! We are like a family."

"I really enjoy working with my unit. We are a close-knit and hard-working team."

"My co-workers care about each other, and will go the extra mile to help one another whenever needed."

"I appreciate the honesty and trust I feel with my co-workers."

"We do a very difficult job...the only thing that gets you through each day is the atmosphere of support and humor that comes from your co-workers."

They feel the support of co-workers is especially important during difficult and stressful times

"We all work together well and help each other, therefore keeping our work current and our morale as high as it can be in these hard economic times."

"I enjoy my colleagues. Even though we have been through tough times with constant changes in direction, we have kept each other above water."

"I like the way our small group gets along. Even with the bad news of reduction, we always find things to laugh about."

"Even when things are crazy and it seems like there are new projects coming in daily, or changes being made to the changes that were made yesterday, we always manage to support each other."

Some staff would like more connection and collaboration in their workplace

"I am working with staff who argue and disagree on almost everything...Why can't people just do their job and get along?"

"I would like to see more TEAM effort across different types of work. There seems to be a lot of 'It's not my job' attitude."

"More camaraderie, less hostility and back-biting."

"More encouragement in sharing skills and methods...It's like 'pulling teeth' to get another team member to share how they solved a problem."

"I would like the office to get back to its team atmosphere. Since we have been 'hammered' due to budget cuts, the workers are bickering and arguing over stuff that never mattered in the past."

"WE NEED TO BUILD UNITY IN THIS COMMUNITY."

THEME. Co-worker competence

1,061 of the 7,507 employees who made comments mentioned the competence or incompetence of their co-workers. They addressed skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

14% commented on this theme (1,061)

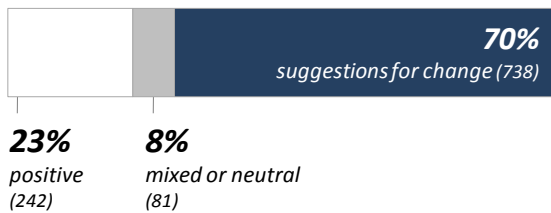


Seven out of ten (70%) of the employees commenting on co-worker competence see room for improvement in their co-workers' performance. Nearly one quarter (23%) made positive comments about their co-workers' competence.

Employees are unhappy with co-workers* who:

- Fail to complete work, or produce poor work
- Waste work time on personal activities
- Behave in an unprofessional manner
- Are not held accountable for problem behaviors*

Their comments were:



They are pleased with co-workers who:

- Are knowledgeable, skilled, and hard-working
- Produce excellent work, despite obstacles
- Truly care about their work and their clients

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees are frustrated with their co-workers' behavior and performance

"Most people are lazy, spend too much time visiting and not working."

"We have staff in our office that regularly sleep during meetings, surf non-work related websites for hours at a time, and run their own private businesses on state-owned computers and networks."

"Several times a day I end up fixing mistakes that have been made by workers before me."

"Staff need to re-evaluate how they treat and speak to the clients. They are NOT dogs, they are HUMANS."

"Some staff routinely arrive late to, or leave early from, work, with no consequences."

"It's frustrating and disheartening to watch people screw off, and still collect a full paycheck and benefits."

They feel problematic co-workers should be reprimanded or removed*

"I would like to see people that can't do their job or keep up with their workload talked to, or replaced."

"Don't allow employees to be passive aggressive, hostile, and giving one another 'silent treatment' while on the job. Provide severe penalties for this."

"I'd love to see staff who routinely use L & I time off, let go. They're not part of the team if they're misusing the program."

"We have a very large percentage of staff that goof off...weed out the goof-offs."

"I would like to see inefficient and incompetent workers be fired, instead of keeping them on...They're sinking the ship."

"We focus too much time on the problem children – and we have some problem children. With limited staffing resources, we don't have the luxury to carry the deadwood or the ineffectual any longer."

Employees applaud competent and committed co-workers

"The people I work with are motivated, caring and professional."

"My co-workers are amazing people – struggling through huge demands and obstacles to produce high quality work."

"All of my co-workers at every level of the agency are hard workers, conscientious, client-focused, kind and creative."

"I work with incredible people who put their full effort into servicing individuals and families. I deeply appreciate their demonstrated knowledge and skill."

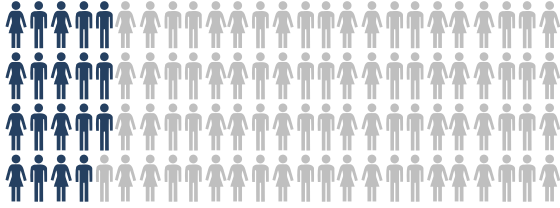
"It is astounding that despite enormous cutbacks, triple caseloads, and loss of key people, those left are doing so much to maintain excellence without adequate supports."

*See p. 66 for a discussion of the problems of seniority-based reductions and the difficulties of removing incompetent staff.

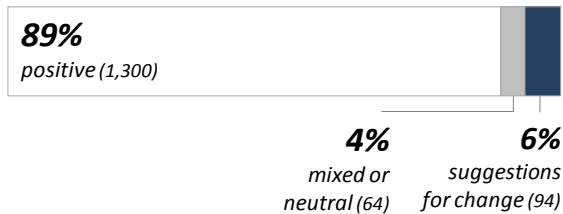
THEME. Other comments about co-workers

1,458 of the 7,507 respondents who commented addressed some other issue related to co-workers.

19% commented on this theme (1,458)



Their comments were:



Nearly nine out of ten (89%) of the respondents who made comments about co-worker issues, not related to teamwork or competence, spoke positively about their co-workers. Only 6% described problems caused by their co-workers.

Respondents spoke highly of co-workers who:

- Are talented, and willing to share their talents
- Are caring and compassionate
- Are friendly, positive, and able to laugh
- Work hard, and don't complain

They are frustrated by co-workers who:

- Are thoughtless or disrespectful
- Have a negative attitude
- Don't concentrate on, or care about, their work

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff speak highly of their co-workers

- “I have the opportunity to work with a wonderful, spirited, and compassionate group of people.”
- “My co-workers are friendly, helpful, and don't complain a lot.”
- “I appreciate the positive attitude of staff, and the fact they've been giving their 'all' through the state's budget crisis.”
- “I have excellent co-workers! They are very flexible!”
- “Each and every person I work with has something to bring to the table. This helps me do a better job.”
- “My co-workers are all very supportive and professional. In addition, they are just great people to know!”

Good co-workers make work easier, and more enjoyable

- “The staff I work with are the best, and make it a pleasure to come to work.”
- “I do love the fact that I work with some great people that make me laugh.”
- “Good team. It makes for a comfortable place to work.”
- “I really enjoy working with, and learning from, others on my shift.”
- “I enjoy my co-workers. They make the difficult days easier.”
- “My co-workers are the best part of my job.”

Some staff are displeased with co-workers' conduct in the workplace

- “Employees who engage in petty squabbles and chronic negativity poison our whole office environment.”
- “Some people seem grouchy and miserable to be at work.”
- “More co-workers silence their cell phones at work! It's bad enough to listen to all the private phone calls I shouldn't hear, but the ring tones are even worse.”
- “Less politics and gossip. More concentration on clients.”
- “I wish staff would actually spend time at their desks, and not walk around and gab all the time.”
- “Less drama, less mind games, and less apathy.”
- “Some staff seem to get joy out of finding ways to hurt customers – cutting off benefits, sanctions, not returning calls.”
- “I would like to see less complaining about the workplace. People should be grateful they have a job.”



“The Streets of Home” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Lora Jones, with permission

CHAPTER 5

Business Practices

THE POOR ECONOMY AND BUDGET CONCERNS continued to have a strong influence on business practices in 2011. Many employees suggested changes in work processes or policies to save state money or resources, or to benefit staff or clients. Although thankful for their jobs, they expressed concern about decreasing pay and benefits, inadequate staffing (and the safety issues that creates), and poor use of staff’s time and talents. As in 2009, staff indicated a desire for more support in living a healthy life.

***Policies and procedures.** There was an increase in suggestions for improving business practices in the 2011 survey. Fewer employees feel their time and talents are well-used, and fewer reported that their workgroup uses customer feedback to improve work processes. The percentage of comments about personnel policies and practice remained much the same.*

- **More suggestions for improvements.** 2,817 employees (a 9% increase from 2009) offered suggestions for improvement in program policies and procedures. Many of these were specific, proactive ideas to save money or other resources, or to reduce employee or client stress.
- **Fewer feel their expertise is fully utilized.** 52% of employees (a 7% decrease from 2009) said their agency uses their time and talents well. This decrease mirrors other questions about employee engagement, including questions about opportunities to give input in Chapter 1 and opportunities for learning and growth in Chapter 4.

- **Fewer workgroups use customer feedback.** Only 39% of employees (a 10% decrease from 2009) said their workgroup uses customer feedback to improve work processes.
- **Personnel issues remain constant.** 701 employees (9% of those who made comments) made suggestions for improvement around personnel issues, the same percentage as in 2009.

***Resources.** Employee concern about lack of resources increased in 2011. Overall, there was a 13% increase in comments complaining about lack of resources, or requesting additional resources. Fewer employees reported they have the tools and resources to do their jobs effectively, and more commented on inadequate staffing in their workplace and a variety of other resource issues. There was an increase in both negative and positive comments about pay and benefits.*

- **Tools and resources.** 62% of employees (a 4% decrease from 2009) said they have the tools and resources to do their job effectively.
- **Staffing issues.** 952 employees commented on understaffing – a 6.4% increase in negative comments on staffing. The comments made it clear that morale suffers greatly in work units with too few workers trying to accomplish too much work over an extended period of time.
- **Pay and benefits.** There was a 67% increase in negative comments on the subject of pay and benefits. These comments often addressed the 3% pay cut – in the form of unpaid leave – that affected almost all state employees in 2011. Other comments suggested increased pay for increased responsibility, or for advanced degrees; performance-based pay systems; reinstatement of cost of living increases; and a stop to the rise in the cost of health benefits. There was a 15% increase in positive comments regarding pay and benefits, most of which came from workers grateful to have a job in tough economic times.

***Health and safety.** The percentage of employees reporting that their agency supports them in living a healthier life, and the percentage of employees who commented on this subject, were much the same as in 2009. There was an increase in the number of employees who commented on their concerns with staff safety.*

- **Wellness support.** 46% of employees (unchanged from 2009) said their agency supports them in living a healthier life. The vast majority of comments on this subject were suggestions for improvements, such as defined areas for wellness activities, more ergonomic equipment, access to fresh food and water, and improved air quality. Wellness comments also addressed the impact workplace stress is having on worker health.
- **Staff safety.** There was a 42% increase in comments about staff safety. These comments indicate that employees’ increased concern about safety is interconnected with their growing concern about understaffing.



**“DSHS Customer Service”
First Place**
DSHS Photo Contest
Category: DSHS in Action
By Lyn Adair, with permission

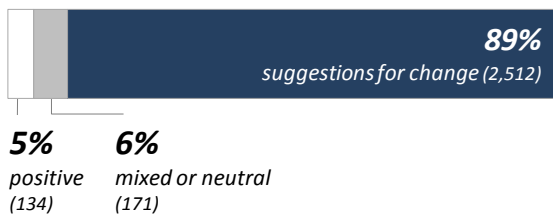
THEME. Work processes and policies

2,817 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed work processes and policies.

38% commented on this theme (2,817)



Their comments were:



Of the 2,817 respondents who wrote comments about work processes and policies, 5% (134) indicated their satisfaction with how DSHS does things.

The majority of those making comments (89%) offered suggestions for improvement. The 2,512 employees who requested change covered a wide variety of topics. They frequently noted they want:

- Processes and policies that benefit their clients
- Reasonable workloads
- An end to constant change in the workplace

Comments concerning personnel issues, safety, and wellness are reported separately. See pages 65, 66, 75, and 76.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees want policies and procedures to serve their clients well

- “What I like best about my job is the supportive atmosphere in my cottage, and the effective treatment we provide.”
- “Feels like we can do less and less each day for the client. I know it is the economy – that answer does the client no good.”
- “My job helps TANF parents to move forward. I like the programs that are available to help parents help themselves.”
- “Numbers are important, but they’ve taken on a life of their own and they seem to be more important than serving the client.”
- “What I like best is that I’m able to help people as they walk through the door. They get the services they need, ASAP.”
- “Unfortunately, due to short staffing, groups are not able to be done and patients’ needs aren’t always met.”
- “We provide excellent customer service. Our job sometimes means the difference between someone eating or not eating.”

Many employees struggle to attain increasingly ‘unrealistic’ expectations

- “Due to the difficult budget circumstances that have and will affect the operation of our facility, I sometimes find it difficult to comply with the existing policies we have in place to ensure the health and safety of our residents.”
- “The caseloads are getting way too big, and it is impossible to keep up. We need to reduce the amount of work done on each case, or reduce the workloads.”
- “More realistic demands... we’re working so very much harder with less and less resources and staff.”
- “More and more work is being pushed on us with no time to do it in. The expectations of the amount of work we can get done are unreasonable, which is increasing my stress level.”
- “The mantra is, ‘Do more with less,’ but at some point there has to be a realistic estimate of the time it takes to do the work.”

They are disheartened by constant changes in their workplace

- “I enjoy the job less and less as the days go by, with changes occurring that cannot be kept up with by the staff, and expectations that we should.”
- “The lobby fills up; the return call list grows; the office and call back wait times get longer. In the meantime, we have new pools and quests, and another process replaces the previous change.”
- “Change is difficult and we (the Department) have had a lot of change in the last couple of years. That is not a value statement, just an observation. Many of the people I work with and around appear to be feeling the pressure of these multiple changes.”
- “I am tired of the constant changes, moving and consolidation... This is frustrating and a waste of resources.”
- “The constant changes are becoming overwhelming. I am flexible, but people can only bend so far before they break.”

THEME. Specific work processes and policies

Some comments offered suggestions related to individual workplaces or particular DSHS services.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff are grateful for improvements in business practice

- “I appreciate that the call center is trying to streamline processes and make things more uniform.”
- “Motivational Interviewing has made a huge difference in how I navigate challenging situations.”
- “I like the changes I’m seeing in going from case management to process management. I believe this change has made it possible to handle the increased volume of customers better.”
- “I like where we’re going with Solution-based Casework...I can really see how it will help families. It’s the right thing to do.”
- “It’s happening – video-conferencing!”

Some feel certain practices have only made their work harder

- “Get rid of FamLink...It puts children’s safety at risk by having lost so much history and information in the conversion from CAMIS. It consumes ridiculous amounts of time in meaningless programs that no one pays attention to.”
- “Replace the Supports Intensity Scale assessment tool with something more effective, time efficient, and less intrusive and embarrassing for clients and their families. There is no social service assessment that should take 4 hours to complete.”
- “Since the merger of the regions, there have been many changes, VERY FEW of which have been thought out or useful.”
- “I think the Adult Family Home inspection process is cumbersome; it doesn’t help you collect the data you need to write a citation or organize you for hearings.”

Others have mixed feelings about specific work processes

- “I wish we had more time to work on cases and get to know our clients. The 10-minute or less handle time while on phones is sometimes unrealistic - but then also perfectly fine for other calls.”
- “Webinars are great for meetings, when it works! Is it possible to get someone to really work the bugs out of that system? I have participated in only a few that have been successful, and the rest were just a mess.”
- “State standardization is a good thing. However, the way it is currently being done is equal to taking someone who has a low caseload and telling them to conform to the work processes of the person with a high caseload. It makes no sense to slow everyone down to the least common denominator.”
- “Service Delivery Redesign has changed the way we do business in the CSO, which has helped to streamline some processes which get services to clients faster. Unfortunately it has also taken away all flexibility to make decisions on a local level.”

Many employees suggested ways to improve policies and procedures

- “Make paperwork easier for clients to understand, especially auto-generated paperwork.”
- “Have the families visit in a set visitation room outside the cottage. This is a safety and security measure.”
- “I would like DDS to fix the computer problems with the systems it uses...FIX THE TOOLS YOU WANT US TO USE!”
- “I would like to see changes in how contracts with the state are done. Any contractor can buy at wholesale (45-50% off of retail). The state contracts are set up to get a discount of 14-20%.”
- “Have a medical review board to protect the clients and advocate for them, regarding medical treatment and procedures.”
- “Go back to 6 regions, where management has the time to focus on one region and continue to build teamwork, accountability, excellent customer service, all for the benefit of the client.”
- “The change pool has over 67,000 documents. Those poor people are having issues that need attention, but seem to be forgotten. These documents have been sitting in our office since July without being worked.”
- “Use drug-dog on work boats when staff have shift changes...help cut down on contraband coming into the facility.”
- “Start meetings ON TIME! Get the phone conference calls working.”
- “The constant interruption by the telephone makes it extremely difficult to complete tasks efficiently...please remove the ‘zero out’ option that allows someone access to a live body immediately when their officer is not available.”
- “Look at the way Exception to Rules (ETRs) are processed. It can take a very long time to get an ETR through, and can delay nursing facility discharges.”
- “Office policies and procedures in writing, in a centralized area so all staff can access them. Currently, our AA forwards everything by e-mail, which leads to hit-and-miss compliance because new and intermittent staff may not receive e-mails.”
- “It would be extremely helpful and save sooooo much time if we could get rid of the paper files. Filing paperwork in individual files does not seem like a good use of social workers’ time.”

QUESTION. My agency uses my time and talents well

Just over half of employees (52%) said that DSHS uses their time and talents well most of the time. However, more than one quarter (26%) indicated their time and talents are seldom or never used well. Employees feel the Department should:

- Acknowledge workers' strengths and skills
- Assist workers in developing their talents
- Allow workers to use their expertise on the job
- Ask for – and use – worker input on workplace changes

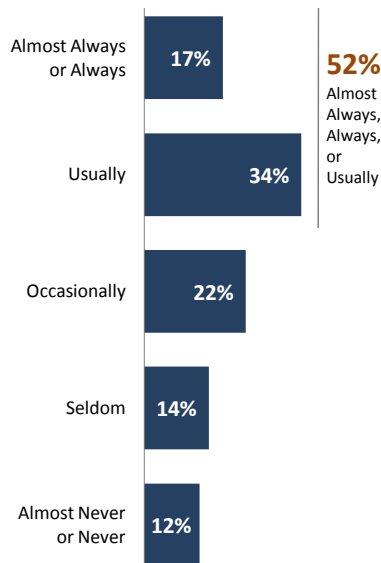
These issues are discussed further in this report's discussions of communication, job characteristics, and management.

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009 said the agency uses their time and talents well.



Decrease from 2009 to 2011 is statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees appreciate supervisors who recognize and encourage their talents

"My supervisor and the superintendent have encouraged my growth at the facility."

"The support of my direct supervisor...she has faith in her staff. Recognizes the good work that is being done."

"My supervisor is supportive, and protective, of my work."

"My supervisor encourages me to take on new projects, and learn new things."

"[I have] the support of my supervisor to broaden my horizons. I'm encouraged to be visible and active in the community, and also to attend trainings and education opportunities."

They want the chance to make good use of their skills and experience

"There is opportunity to use the skills we have to make a positive difference."

"A statewide process where a case can be worked by basically any worker in the state is in the right direction. I believe there needs to be a better way of using the strengths that workers have to make the process more efficient."

"[My agency] is doing a good job at listening to its workers and giving them tasks based on their likes and skills."

"I would like to see people placed in positions that will utilize their strengths properly. Community Services Division would greatly benefit from doing this, and would likely see an increase in productivity."

"We have way too many Masters and PhD level staff doing work that support staff could be doing."

"[I have] flexibility to take initiative and do more than just my job description, thereby improving the overall atmosphere and productivity of the work group, the effectiveness of the team, and increase my skills at the same time."

"Expertise is highly overrated at times, because we are not given the opportunity to be more proactive for the clientele. That saddens me, because I know this could be so much more helpful to the patients."

They also want to be a *real* part of change processes in their workplace

"There are talented people on office management teams who are not being utilized to their full potential, and are frustrated because their voices are not being heard...the only time input is asked of them is after a decision has been made."

"I would like to see more planning and testing with field staff prior to implementation or adoption of new systems."

"Creative approaches to problem solving, brought to management, are usually quashed or transformed into moribund, stalled bureaucratic and/or political processes."

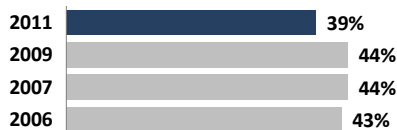
"We are given little opportunity to make positive changes, and are rarely asked for ideas to make these changes."

QUESTION. In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes

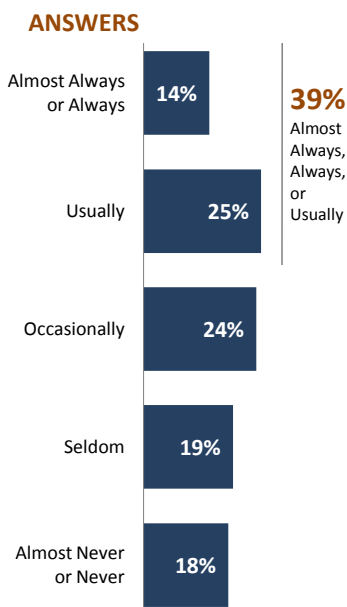
Less than four in ten respondents (39%) said their workgroup uses customer feedback to improve services. More than one third (37%) indicated customer feedback is seldom or never utilized to make improvements. While few employees made specific comments about the use of customer feedback, many spoke of their concern about meeting client needs. Employees feel DSHS could improve client service by:

- Spending more one-on-one time with clients
- Paying closer attention to clients' individual needs
- Making specific changes to improve service quality

Fewer staff in 2011 than in either 2009 or 2006 said customer feedback is used to improve work processes.



Decrease from 2009 to 2011, and from 2006 to 2011, is statistically significant at $p < .01$



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff want what is best for their clients

"We are committed to trying to figure out how to best help our clients."

"I like talking with my clients and problem-solving, finding resources and supports."

"We are creating positive change in many families' lives."

"[I like] interacting with my DDD clients, helping them expand their world, and assisting them to reach their goals."

"Staff are dedicated, and typically work very hard to meet client needs."

"When they come to DVR, I feel good about doing everything I can to help my customers achieve their goals."

Some feel more attention should be paid to clients, and client needs

"Focus on client needs...rather than letting clients slip through the cracks."

"Less paperwork and more face-to-face with the clients, so we can have a better rapport with them."

"Having more contact with our clients...would help in identifying possible future risk or safety concerns."

"The time spent focusing on [workers'] individual performance goals could many times be better spent doing meaningful casework that has the potential to positively affect the lives of our clients."

"I would like more focus on good customer service and relationships with people, rather than # of plans done and # of rehabs."

"I need to have the time to work with clients to ensure their success."

Others suggest specific steps to improve client services

"LOWER CASELOADS. Caseloads are getting impossibly high...a social worker can't effectively engage and assess client needs."

"More treatment-related work with the kids that would open their eyes to the situations they will be placed in once released from JRA, and help prepare them to handle those situations."

"More client contact. Our clients are confused about the new changes, and the elderly and disabled can't access our automated services."

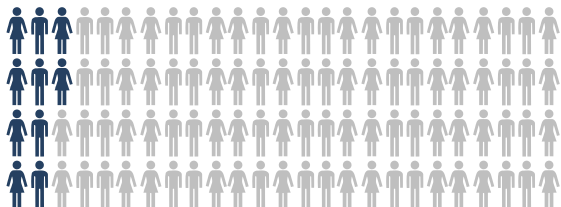
"Allow workers to have caseloads, and serve only the clients in our demographics, not statewide."

"I would like to see us transition towards providing services in the neighborhoods we are most needed in...Take the services to the people."

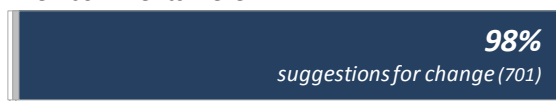
THEME. Personnel issues

716 of the 7,507 respondents who made comments addressed personnel issues.

10% commented on these themes (716)



Their comments were:



1% positive (7)
1% mixed or neutral (8)

The vast majority of the comments about **personnel policies** (98%) indicated improvement is needed in this area. The 701 staff suggesting changes asked for:

- Fairness in hiring and promotions
- Changes in the investigation process
- Faster filling of vacant positions
- Confidential HR procedures
- An end to hiring restrictions

See the next page for personnel issues directly related to the current economic downturn and budget cuts.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees see unfairness in the current personnel system

“Unless you’re a favorite, you’ll get nowhere, even when you possess excellent evaluations, intelligence and initiative.”

“Instead of dealing with problems straight on, people are put on ‘investigation’ for very menial issues.”

“Quit giving jobs to those that can’t make it somewhere else just because you owe a favor to some other administrator or department head. It’s a real morale buster to see these people time and time again get promoted for doing poor work.”

“The perception is that management promotes based on your relationship with management. Not on merit.”

“One employee has been on administrative work restrictions for almost a year. This has added extra work to my workload...I can understand the investigation process, but a year? Either let her do her job, or let her go.”

“Positions are advertised when available, yet they know who they want to hire before they publish it, and only do that because they’re required to. Gets people’s hopes up thinking they can advance when they can’t.”

Some offered specific suggestions to improve the personnel processes

“Fill vacancies quicker. The current process is resulting in increased stress, as remaining co-workers absorb additional work.”

“I’d like to see a workplace where your HR issues are private, and not shared with other staff.”

“Give promotions to individuals with experience, instead of requiring college credits.”

“Lift the hiring freeze – manager discretion to manage the resources.”

“Pay the Y-rated social workers for the job they’re doing now, instead of the higher rate they were being paid in the past.”

“The old people who are double-dipping and on Social Security and still in the workplace need to be forced to retire.”

See the next page for personnel issues directly related to the current economic downturn and budget cuts.

THEME. Personnel issues related to economic downturn/budget cuts

The current economic downturn and resulting State budget cuts were frequently addressed in comments about personnel practices. Employees expressed their discontent with methods used to select staff to be cut. Many staff are displeased with reductions based on seniority, feeling the system too often protects “bad” workers, while more recently hired “good” workers are laid off. They feel it takes too much time and effort to remove workers with poor performance records from their positions. They also feel that line staff have been unfairly targeted in recent layoffs, and the focus should turn to reducing management.

This issue is discussed in several other areas throughout the report - in the Supervisor/Manager Support chapter under Accountability (p. 31), and in the Daily Job chapter under Co-worker Competence (p. 57).

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff think seniority-based personnel actions are poor policy

“You’ve got lots of dead weight in high-seniority employees who don’t like to work, and collect paychecks for very little to no work during their work day. Instead the State is laying off the younger and harder workers who show up and actually produce without complaining of old age symptoms.”

“I think the employees being laid off should be the ones that don’t do their job or have bad attitudes, and not be determined by seniority.”

“Employees should be RIF’d based on position qualifications, not seniority.”

“The new hiring system based on seniority seems completely unfair. I don’t see how it’s practical or effective. It seems like down the line eventually everyone will get someone else’s ‘problem child,’ because that person has more seniority over the person who can actually work well with others and complete the job expected of them.”

“I would like to include measures other than seniority in determining who gets promoted, laid off, etc.”

“I’d like to see ineffective workers get laid off. I think performance should far outweigh seniority.”

“Staff who cannot do their jobs ethically, responsibly, and properly should be let go. Many hard-working staff were laid off in the last three layoffs, while those who sleep, waste state resources, don’t come in on time, and leave hours before scheduled time cause hardships on others.”

They believe poor performers should be removed from the system more quickly and easily

“More ability of management to get rid of workers who are doing a poor job, and are neglectful and harsh with clients. Many complaints are made, but nothing gets done.”

“We need a stronger HR department...we need to get the dead weight out of the organization. There are far too many employees who don’t do their job and they have a cancerous tumor effect on all the good hard-working employees.”

“It shouldn’t be so difficult to fire those who refuse to work, sleep on the job, and expect others to do their job for them.”

“Even if the will was there to terminate employees who do not perform, the problem is exacerbated because of freezes on hiring. If staff are terminated they will not be replaced - which encourages managers to keep non-performers - which is so bad for morale that it doesn’t solve anything.”

“Get rid of Labor and Industry deadbeats abusing the system. A good worker should be kept, not because of how long they have been here, but because of the excellent job they do.”

“There is no consequence for not doing your job, and supervisors being unwilling to create the necessary paper trail in order for some kind of action to be taken.”

“Termination of employees who are chronically delinquent in work.”

Some feel any future cuts should focus on management, *not* line workers

“Lay off unnecessary supervisors instead of moving them around and creating new positions for them. Leave hands on employees alone.”

“I’d like to see the cuts in staff start at the administration level, and not on the front lines like they have been doing so far.”

“Many management positions could be consolidated or combined.”

“Management looks out for itself. We need someone to take a hard look at management and eliminate much of it. We need to fire people in management instead of hiding them in other agencies.”

“Mid-management personnel need to be reduced... Some supervisors are kept on the payroll who hardly supervise anyone.”

“I want our management to decrease upper- and middle-management to save money, rather than laying off those who barely make enough money to get by and do the most direct patient care.”

THEME. General resources

2,929 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resource issues.

39% commented on this theme (2,929)



Their comments were:



16% positive (467)
10% mixed or neutral (287)

The majority of the resource-related comments (74%) suggested improvements. Of the 2,929* respondents who addressed resources:

- 976 spoke about staffing (page 69)
- 922 mentioned pay and benefits (page 70)
- 626 addressed training (page 71)
- 383 talked about facilities and work environment (page 72)
- 126 commented on resources for wellness (page 76)
- 248 mentioned resources for DSHS clients, and 474 mentioned other resources (page 73)

The survey also asked one standard question about resources: *I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively.* This question is discussed on page 68.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees are frustrated by the lack of resources in their workplace

"I know these are tight times. But it is difficult to ask staff to continue to perform at a high level without proper resources."

"The State is cutting so much – travel, equipment, employees, etc. – that it makes it difficult, at times, to be a good investigator, without the tools or resources to be able to achieve the very best results possible."

"It's difficult to provide quality services when we don't have the resources to assist us, such as visitation support, adequate equipment to perform our duties, and clerical support."

"I'd like to have policies get implemented with resources to support them, rather than tell us what to do, but not give us the resources to do it."

"Child Protective Services workers are overwhelmed, and aren't given the tools necessary to do their job completely and effectively."

"The workload expectations are too extreme to meet with so little resources and staff."

"I am bringing my own pens, pencils, calendars, and calculator paper from home."

"The equipment is old and falling apart. It can take me 15 to 30 minutes to get my computer working in the morning... Then I print something and the printer is down and I send to another, and another, and time is lost trying to accomplish this."

"Never has the opportunity for change in how we do business been greater. We just don't have the time or resources to improve our processes while the opportunity exists."

They are concerned that lack of resources is having a negative effect on clients

"Budget cuts compromise quality patient care. These cuts do not enhance patient care, no matter how you wrap the package."

"We are very resource scarce right now. It's tough to assist families with literally no resources."

"Without the ability to provide our families actual services – or services in time – children are suffering."

"I am very concerned about what will happen in the next year or two to our clients, our programs and our staff."

"More resources for the kids, instead of taking them away. Keep parole going to give these kids something to focus on, and stay positive and out of trouble."

"Not having funding and resources for the families we serve is a barrier to the work we do."

"All the budget cuts are not only affecting the employees but our customers. It is hard to tell a customer that the program they were receiving has been cut."

"More money for our programs – stop taking away benefits from people who need them."

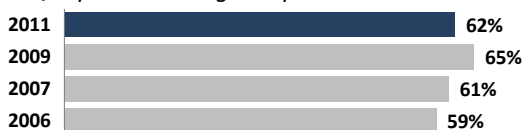
*Issues listed below total more than 2,929, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to resources.

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

About six out of ten employees (62%) said they are provided the tools and resources needed for their job. 16% said they lack needed tools and resources, which makes it more difficult to do their best work. They requested:

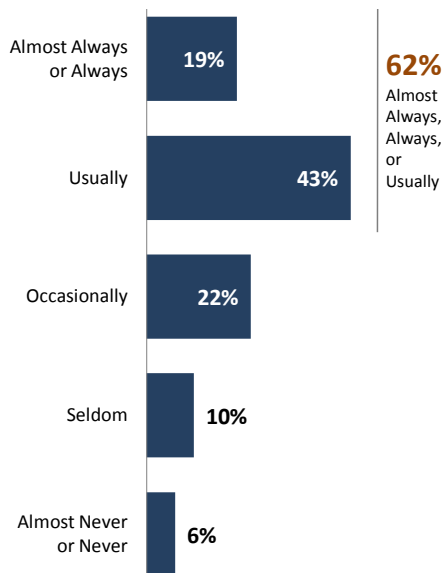
- Computers, laptops, and iPads
- Cell phones, scanners, and cameras
- More state vehicles
- More reliable office machines
- Updated medical equipment
- Basic office supplies

Fewer staff in 2011 than in 2009, but more staff in 2011 than in 2006, reported having adequate tools and resources.



Decrease between 2009 and 2011, and increase between 2006 and 2011, are statistically significant at $p < .01$

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff are happy with the tools and resources at their disposal

"I have all the tools and resources I need to do my job."

"I like the computer programs that we use. They have gotten a lot more effective over the years, and I really appreciate it."

"We have state vehicles, and can take clients out for recreation and daily needs like appointments, shopping, etc."

"[I like] the additional computer monitors and the sit/stand raiser, so you can alternate sitting/standing while working."

"[I like] having the resources and tools to help people in need."

Some reported a need for better computers and computer-related resources

"Updated/new computers. Mine freezes up all the time."

"I spend many hours at court, just waiting...We should have wireless Internet so we can work on our laptops while we wait."

"I would like more up-to-date equipment (computers, projectors, etc.) to enhance staff training."

"A device such as an iPad would save a great deal of paper, time and money."

"If I had access to a computer and FamLink in the field, I could have notes done in the field."

"Technology support for telecommuting."

Others mentioned additional tools and resources they need to do their best work

"We don't have enough state cars for our office...cars have to be booked a week or two in advance, and that isn't how things work in Child Protective Services, where we have 24-72 hours to respond to referrals."

"Access to a state-provided cell phone. I use a cell phone in the field most of the day, and I have to provide this myself."

"Newer equipment (oximeters, temperature monitors, stethoscopes, BP cuffs). Our equipment is old and doesn't work well."

"The bare necessities...tissues for clients (they often cry); pens (we purchase our own); writing tablets (for phone messages)."

"Our office doesn't have a fax machine that works with any consistency...I need to be at my desk working, not standing by a fax machine for 20 minutes only to hope that it was successfully transmitted."

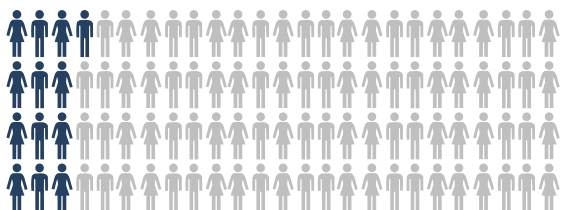
"Digital cameras, and scanners for copying files when we are out in the field."

"Upgrade in technology. We have copiers/printers that jam often and slow down the flow of work."

THEME. Staffing

976 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of adequate staffing.

13% commented on this theme (976)

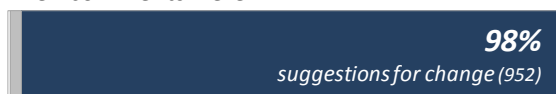


Of the 976 employees who wrote about staffing resources, 98% indicated they are troubled by the lack of adequate staff.

In the midst of layoffs and a hiring freeze, most staff are experiencing the negative effects of decreasing staff levels. The developments that cause them the most concern are:

- Inability to provide clients needed services
- Inability to give clients personalized attention
- Unmanageable workloads
- Unreasonable expectations and timelines
- Decreasing staff morale
- The possibility of losing their job

Their comments were:



2%

positive (5), or
mixed or neutral (19)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees are concerned that low staffing levels deny clients the help they need and deserve

“Increase staffing on the houses. Allow staff the time and opportunity to interact in a meaningful way with the clients.”

“I truly feel rewarded and lucky to serve my clients. I want to continue to be able to provide a good quality of life for them, and I feel where the cuts are being done makes that more and more difficult.”

“More staffing, so opportunities to teach and nurture are not missed.”

“Since the severe cuts, I haven’t been able to proceed as quickly as I used to. This delays placement into adoptive homes.”

“More staff so that caseloads could be more manageable, and staff could spend some time working with clients who are disadvantaged, instead of just looking at them as a number.”

“There are more people applying for benefits, more now than ever, with less people to process these cases and no money available in the budget...How can anyone possibly come out on top?”

Some are frustrated by unrealistic timelines and expectations related to reduction in workforce

“With added activities and basic staff numbers reduced, it is a constant struggle just to get your duties finished.”

“We are trying to do impossible jobs with ever-decreasing staff. This is horrible for morale, disrespectful to staff, and makes it more and more difficult to do the best work we want to do for the clients.”

“I feel really overwhelmed with all the work that I’m expected to do, and would like to see more staff hired.”

“Need time to do this job. Receiving 5 intakes in one week, or even 4, and being expected to meet time frames and close cases is absolutely unreasonable. We need an increase in staff.”

“I understand budget cuts, but the answer is not to reduce employees and pile more work on your existing ones.”

“We’re at the point where there are not enough staff to keep doing everything, let alone do it well or on time.”

Others fear their jobs are in jeopardy

“We are currently working in a state of fear. Fear that our jobs may go away at any given moment.”

“We are short-staffed and working hard to help those we can, all while being afraid that we could be on the other side due to layoffs and cuts.”

“Morale is suffering. People question whether they will continue to have a job.”

“Everyone’s anxious about the economy...stressed out and scared that they are going to lose their jobs.”

“Let us do our jobs without the threat of being laid off...Thanks.”

THEME. Pay and benefits

922 of the 7,507 respondents who made comments addressed the issues of pay and/or benefits.

12% commented on this theme (922)

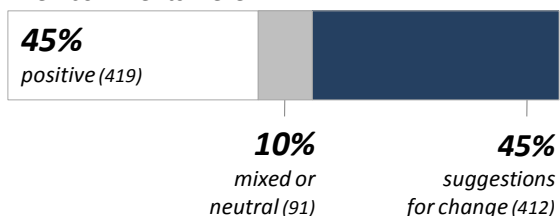


45% of the 922 respondents who mentioned pay and benefits made positive comments, indicating they are pleased to have a job and the benefits it provides.

In a year when the majority of state employees took a 3% cut in pay, it is no surprise that 45% of respondents suggested changes in the pay and benefits they receive. The changes they would like to see include:

- A halt to cuts in pay and benefits
- Increased pay for increased responsibility
- Compensation for advanced degrees
- A performance-based pay system
- Cost-of-living increases
- Across-the-board pay cuts, if they must occur

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff are grateful to have a job with benefits

"I am happy to be working in these tough economic times."

"I like the fact that I have a job. I can provide for my family. I have health/dental insurance, and a retirement plan."

"I accumulate a generous amount of annual and sick leave...I've needed it a lot over the last two years. I'm grateful to have it."

"I'm thankful to have a job that allows me to pay my mortgage and go on nice vacations."

"In these difficult times, with the nation in economic turmoil, I'm VERY grateful to be employed."

Some want compensation for added responsibilities, advanced education, and performance

"If your duties change and you're now doing more work...higher pay to reflect the increased workload."

"Better pay for people who deserve it more - work harder than most, are reliable (on time, don't call in sick a lot), do their work on time, carry their weight in work - not just based solely on seniority."

"Compensation for Masters Degrees."

"Pay and benefits increased commensurate with education, training, and experience, comparable to positions in the private sector where wages are paid more than twice as much."

Others wish for increased – or reinstated – pay and benefits

"NO MORE WAGE CUTS. I am a single income household and am struggling financially."

"Getting our full salary back, as well as annual COLA raises that reflect current Washington State prices."

"Give us back our 3% (it really did hurt when you took it away)."

"Stop decreasing our pay and playing games with our retirement...Stop cutting our pay and benefits to balance the budget."

"The state I started working for paid their employees a fair and reasonable salary and had a fair and reasonable benefits package to make up for anything lacking in pay. All of this is being stripped away."

Staff resent it when pay cuts aren't shared by management

"The pay cuts should start at the Top, with people who can afford it, not with people already struggling."

"Stop abusing the line workers and support staff through furloughs and pay cuts, while giving cost of living raises to Washington Management Services staff."

"I'm not happy about the fact that Administration continues to get pay increases as we get more cuts and furlough days."

"Don't like that people who don't do, just oversee, give themselves raises, and say everyone else needs to take a pay cut."

THEME. Training

626 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed training issues.

8% commented on this theme (626)

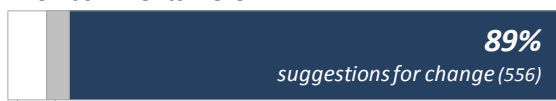


Of the 626 respondents who commented about training, nearly nine out of ten (89%) made suggestions for change. 7% made positive comments about training issues, and 4% made mixed or neutral comments.

Changes suggested by employees included:

- More and better training when job responsibilities change for individuals or work units
- More on-the-job training for new hires
- More cross-training and mentoring programs
- Improving, or doing away with, online trainings
- Employing more effective trainers

Their comments were:



7% positive (44)
4% mixed or neutral (26)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees are pleased with the training they receive

- “I enjoy the opportunity to receive specialized training to increase specific skills and knowledge for professional development.”
- “I like that we go through training or receive one-to-one coaching instead of being expected to just ‘know it.’”
- “The training I received this year regarding communication skills was outstanding. I learned several very useful techniques.”
- “I am being trained in an area new and challenging for me, which I like.”

Many employees asked for more training

- “Training is nonexistent. I would like to see a training program put into place, and possibly a mentoring program to guide us through our training. At this point, we are just thrown in and expected to know everything.”
- “More cross-training into ‘specialized’ areas.”
- “Training ALL staff in how to have business meetings, discussions, and conversations, and how to work and behave in a group.”
- “More trainings on evidence-based practices.”
- “More timely and accurate training regarding new processes and changes.”

Others recommended improvements in existing training

- “When training takes place it should not only describe the general framework of a change, but should address the actual change in the workplace, i.e., get to the details.”
- “Training online is a poor way to teach, if not followed by effective on-the-job training.”
- “Better training options. It’s a waste of our time and energy to be sent to mandatory training from a trainer who knows less about the program than those of us who work with it every day.”
- “Proper training...as a new employee I want the opportunity to shadow before having to plunge in. I feel undertrained and unsafe with my current knowledge.”

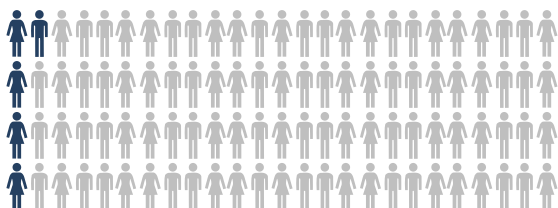
Some suggested training for supervisors and managers

- “I would like to see my supervisor receive training to learn how to support her employees, create a spirit of teamwork, focus on my strengths instead of my weaknesses, and stop placing barriers to career growth.”
- “Managers should receive formal training in management, even a few classes would help them be more flexible, less authoritarian, more open to considering alternative solutions, more proactive than reactive, and generally less hostile.”
- “Would like supervisors to get additional training on how to manage, without micro-managing and without attitude.”

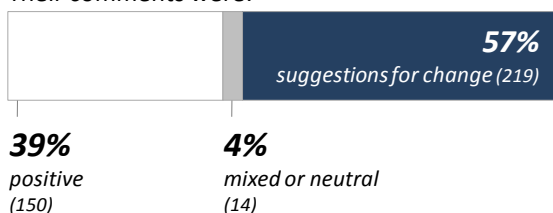
THEME. Facilities/environment

383 of the 7,507 respondents who made narrative comments addressed their work environment. These comments touched on offices, institutions, parking, commutes, and surroundings.

5% commented on this theme (383)



Their comments were:



Of the 383 respondents who wrote comments about the facility they work in, 39% were satisfied with their physical work environment. Most of these positive comments came from staff who like the building they work in, the area where the building is located, or their commute to work.

The majority of respondents (57%) suggested some improvements are needed. They indicated they would appreciate:

- Cleaner, better-maintained buildings
- Improved temperature controls
- Access to natural light
- Pleasant, functional break rooms
- More, and more private, work space
- Less noise
- Shorter commutes, and better parking

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff are very satisfied with their workplace

- “I like my office, and the community in which it resides.”
- “I am close to home and the commute is easy.”
- “I can shut my door when I need quiet time.”
- “I love having a garage to park in.”
- “The setting here is just beautiful, with the deer, autumn colors, and the woods.”
- “We have nice facilities in a safe part of town.”

Many would like to see some changes in their work environment

- “My workplace is filthy. I’d like to see all offices cleaned thoroughly at least on an annual basis.”
- “It’s always so hot in our work area – a true sweat shop.”
- “I drive 86 miles and day, and in the winter the drive is bad sometimes.”
- “MORE PARKING, and not on gravel.”
- “More natural light from windows, or at least ‘natural light’ bulbs.”
- “This place needs a paint job really bad.”
- “A break room that has a sink, and proper places to clean out our dishes.”
- “The restrooms are inadequate, smelly and dirty.”
- “Be stationed closer to home. Gas prices are a financial burden. Commute time takes time away from my family.”

Staff want adequate space and privacy in which to do their work

- “Working in a cubicle is noisy, distracting and non-confidential. I would like an office.”
- “I would like to have more organization/storage space.”
- “The cubicles are tiny, and the aisles are narrow.”
- “Offices or cubicles with walls, so I’m not so distracted by the noise of others when trying to focus.”
- “Work spaces could be improved – there’s very little privacy, for clients or for staff.”

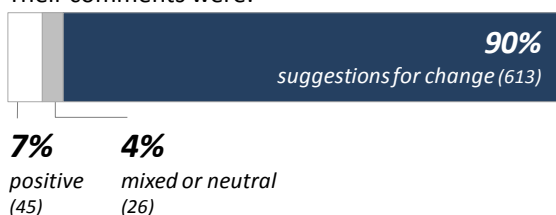
THEME. Resources for clients and other resources

684 of the 7,057 respondents who made narrative comments addressed other resource issues, including resources for clients.

10% commented on this theme (684)



Their comments were:



Of the 684 respondents who wrote comments about other resource issues, 90% requested increased resources. These requests can be grouped into two main categories:

- 248 commented on resources for clients. 221 expressed concern about the lack of adequate resources. 16 were satisfied with the resources they have to help clients, while 11 made mixed or neutral comments. Some of these comments appear in the box below.
- 474 commented on other resources. 428 asked for more tools or resources to do their job. 33 were appreciative of the available resources, while 13 made mixed or neutral comments. Examples of these comments can be found on pages 62 and 63.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees worry about the impact of budget cuts on clients' well-being

- “The economy is obviously the biggest problem, because we are not able to meet the needs of our clients.”
- “We are so short-staffed due to budget cuts that our clients are suffering...now it’s clean them and move them to an activity.”
- “I try to work within the counties’ resources to help the people we serve and become creative. This may help me grow as a person, but not the people we serve.”
- “The budget cuts are causing serious concern about how we will offer services that are VITAL to helping families overcome their challenges, in order to safely reunify children with their parents.”
- “The limited resources are a struggle, and seeing the effects that our state budget is having on the clients we serve is difficult.”
- “Our caseloads are rising and our services are shrinking. We have no time and fewer and fewer ways to help people.”
- “It is very difficult to turn people away that are in need of services.”

Some want to see cuts in management, not client services

- “Look at budget cuts to come from management waste, rather than programs that directly impact the clients we provide for.”
- “Cuts in administrative spending, rather than needed services for our clients.”
- “Get rid of ½ of administrators and take those resources and direct them to direct care. We have consultants getting \$75K who do nothing. What a terrible waste of resources.”

Others are concerned about limitations on activities for residents in state facilities

- “Give our clients back the things that management took: staff that teaches life skills, their swimming pool, their bowling alley, field trips, and their seasonal festivities.”
- “[I’d like] for Nursing Home Facility clients to enjoy more off-ground opportunities - movies, plays, concerts, games, etc.”
- “Need to have more activity outside Rainier, or on the grounds. Dances, picnics, outings. I feel clients don’t get out enough to go places outside of Rainier. It’s a shame this was taken away.”

A few employees are happy with the resources they can offer to clients

- “Working in this agency provides me with the ability to access valuable resources to assist the patients.”
- “[I like] having the resources to provide meaningful services, when many agencies in the state are cutting back.”
- “It’s exciting to have such an incredible array of long-term care services that we can offer our clients.”

QUESTION. Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life.

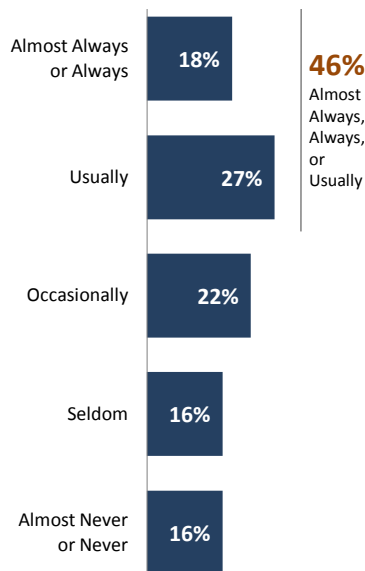
Less than half of employees (46%) said DSHS supports them in living a healthier life. Nearly one-third (32%) indicated that the agency seldom or never supports their efforts to be healthier. Respondents who commented on this issue believe:

- Management should increase efforts to assure safe and healthy workplaces for all workers
- In this time of budget cuts and increasing stress, supports for healthy living should *increase*, not decrease
- Safety should exist both at the workplace and in the field

The same percentage of staff said their agency supports them in living a healthier life in 2009 and 2011.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff are pleased with safe and healthy workplaces

“We have a place to exercise to relieve stress, and clean and nice facilities in which to work.”

“We have an excellent safety program.”

“[I like] the Wellness Center and my supervisor’s commitment to a healthy lifestyle.”

“The security officer makes me feel better.”

“I love having clients and staff pick up the principles of healthy choices that we advocate and encourage.”

A small, but concerning, number view their workplace as unsafe

“Safety wise, I don’t feel safe, clients and workers are all about to snap.”

“Staff are unprotected in our office. Last month it took police 2 phone calls and 40 minutes to respond to an assaultive client.”

“I’ve been threatened by animals on properties where I’ve had to make health and safety visits. There is no consideration for the danger that I work in every day, armed only with my trusty cell phone that gets inconsistent service.”

Many staff think management should be more supportive of health issues

“I would love to see the Department offer ‘self care’ opportunities for staff. Staff are so broken at the end of the day. It would be a great help for them to believe the Department really did care about them.”

“More administrative support for those who exercise at work – there’s an attitude that people who jog, swim, or do aerobics on lunch break are somehow abusing the rules, while smokers enjoy 4 to 5 15-minute breaks *and* lunch, without concern.”

“I would like my workplace to support my physical health by encouraging exercise and healthy nutrition.”

They believe increasing workplace stress is undermining workers’ health

“We are doing more, a lot more, with a lot less, but look at the cost – our health.”

“How many intakes is a person supposed to do in the CSO on a daily basis? Does ANYBODY care about the toll this is taking on workers’ health? There is truly no rest for the weary.”

“Doing more with less is killing office morale. I’ve noticed more and more people are missing work due to lack of motivation, stress, and illness.”

“Many of us frontline workers are now dealing with high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety due to the workload.”

“Give us more staff...we are overloaded, everybody gets sick and stressed out. This job will shorten our life.”

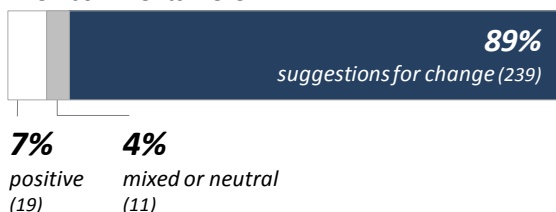
THEME. Safety issues

269 of the 7,057 respondents who made narrative comments addressed safety issues.

4% commented on this theme (269)



Their comments were:



Of the 269 respondents who wrote comments about safety issues, 7% said they consider their workplace to be safe.

The majority of comments about safety issues (89%) were suggestions for change. Employees requested:

- Improved safety-related policies and procedures
- Improved security in buildings and on grounds
- Safety upgrades for older structures
- An end to staff cuts, as they have a negative effect on the safety of remaining staff

Safety issues most frequently arise in institutions – where 7% of respondents mentioned safety. Large caseloads and field work also increase safety concerns. Both Children’s and Economic Services Administrations added survey questions to further address safety issues.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees suggested specific ways to make the workplace safer

- “Closer employee parking - it takes a minimum of ten minutes to walk from the parking lot to the office, and during the winter months may be unsafe, as it’s dark at 5PM.”
- “If a patient decides to assault staff or other patients, they should be charged with that crime, and not be able to continue to get away with it over and over again.”
- “Cell phones for all field workers for safety reasons.”
- “Metal detectors so clients can’t bring weapons into the office.”
- “Building is over 100 years old, made of wood and brick. A more earthquake/fire safe building would be a welcome change.”
- “The new walls in the unit pods knocked down, so I’m not locked in a pod by myself with 12-16 juvenile offenders.”
- “Security guard in lobby, or screens. It is too easy for clients to jump over the counter.”

Many see a clear connection between staff reductions and unsafe work environments

- “Our staffing levels have been cut to an unsafe and unreasonable level...We need more staff.”
- “It has become a very unsafe environment to work, with only 3 staff to 32 clients.”
- “No more cutbacks to WSH. The layoffs that have already taken place, and those about to take place, put our patients and employees at a serious risk.”
- “Due to cuts in JRA, it has become very dangerous. The layoff process has left us with employees that have been with the state for many years, but are unable to keep up with changing times or the physical requirements necessary for an institution, leaving me feeling unsafe most of the time.”
- “More staff to ensure the safety of both clients and staff.”

Some want management to pay stricter attention to their safety concerns

- “I work for DCS. I do not feel enough is done to keep us secure from CLIENTS. We have a very confrontational career, and I feel the leaders of our department do not understand the dangers we can, and do on occasion, face.”
- “STAFFING/SAFETY is a huge issue that needs to be addressed. I should NEVER feel that I have to beg for safe staffing.”
- “The navigation station should NOT be in the lobbies of the CSOs. It is only a matter of time before someone is hurt. It is a shame that an agency isn’t proactive in ensuring a safe work environment for their staff.”
- “My workplace is not safe and I feel threatened daily, yet when these actions are brought to upper management they are met with doubt and a condescending attitude...THIS IS A CRY FOR HELP!”

THEME. Wellness resources

126 of the 7,057 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resources for wellness and health.

2% commented on this theme (126)

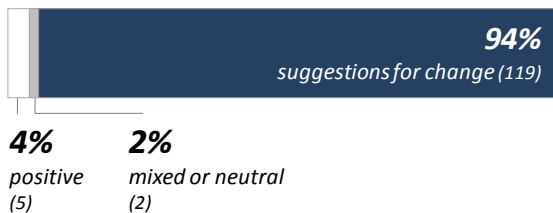


Of the 126 respondents who commented on wellness, the majority (94%) suggested changes. 4% made positive comments, and 2% made mixed or neutral comments.

Employees expressed a desire for:

- More – and different – ways to stay healthy at work
- Established areas for wellness activities
- Ergonomic equipment
- Access to fresh food and pure water
- Improved air quality
- Office locations that allow staff to walk/bike to work

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff want designated areas for wellness activities

“A wellness room designated for staff to retreat to when a few minutes of relaxing or exercising would help them relax, refocus and reenergize - a very good organizational investment.”

“A staff area to relax, and lay down during breaks.”

“When designing the floor plans for the various offices, could there not be a specific area designated for employee fitness throughout the day? Maybe just an open space, with mats, maybe some jump ropes, or whatever any employee would choose to bring. The space being promoted as ‘fitness-friendly’ would not only improve our overall health, I believe it would improve the overall morale and production of each participating office. Thank you.”

Others would like more options for healthy activities during the workday

“With the cold, rainy weather it would be great to have a treadmill to walk/jog on at lunch.”

“More emphasis on healthy living - exercise programs, incentives, contests, discounted gym memberships, stress management information, massages, etc., available in the workplace.”

“It would be nice if there was some sort of group led by a professional (and paid for by the agency) where we could talk about the stressors and occasional ‘hopelessness’ we feel in this job.”

“Work-out equipment to use during lunch. Meditation groups meeting throughout the day. Self-care classes in the workplace.”

Staff suggested numerous ways to increase wellness in the workplace

“Give everyone a comfortable chair, a keyboard tray, and a mouse tray that do not cause pain, and a sit/stand workstation. Why do we wait for people to be in pain before we adjust their workstation? Can't we be proactive about this?”

“I would like a clear scent-free/fragrance-free policy for all DSHS/DVR offices.”

“Forbid state workers from smoking on campus. They're exposing me to secondhand smoke and creating garbage.”

“I would like healthy options in the vending machines, like V-8, apples, yogurt, items without added sugar.”

“More commitment to the ergonomic needs of employees, without the requirement of a physician's recommendation.”

“Serious investigation into air quality, material content of cube walls, carpet, etc. Serious health issues have occurred.”

“I would like a treadmill at my computer so I can walk and work at the same time.”

“I would like to have fresh and clean water available to me throughout the work day...Even installing a filter would do.”

Employee Survey 2011

