Employee Survey

April 2014 | Report 11.206

2013

Washington State
Department of Social & Health Services

RDA Research & Data
Analysis Division

DSHS

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Department of Social and Health Services

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Abstract: 11,390 employees completed the 2013 Employee Survey. They addressed communication, supervisor/manager support, fairness and diversity, job satisfaction, and business practices.

The 2013 survey responses mirror the slow but steady economic recovery. The overall survey trend was upward, and pointed to a gradual lessening of employees' uncertainty and fears about layoffs, pay and benefit reductions, loss of vital resources, and inability to meet client needs. Overall job satisfaction has increased, as have measures of employee engagement, communication, recognition, and support. As in past surveys, employees consider helping clients to be the most important and fulfilling aspect of their work. There remains considerable room for additional improvement in many areas, including communication and employee engagement.

Governor Inslee has made the results of the Employee Survey an important component of the Results Washington data-driven performance management and continuous improvement system. This includes a statewide initiative to address employee concerns and increase employee survey scores in future surveys.

"Climbing in the Bugaboos, Canada" • 1st Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Secretary's Choice
Taken at Pigeon Spire in British Columbia
Also Second Place Winner in the DSHS Employee Category
By John Plotz, with permission

"I cannot view these pictures without recognizing the Herculean efforts they capture."

Kevin W. Quigley, Secretary
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

"A Slice of Duck and Winter" • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Photographers Choice
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

From the photographer:
"Taken along the Spokane River in January right after fresh snow."

"Climbing El Capitan in Yosemite" • 1ˢᵗ Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Secretary's Choice
By John Plotz, with permission

From the photographer:
"My climbing friend and I climbed The Nose on El Cap in Yosemite in June. We climbed the 3,000 foot route in 36 hours of continuous climbing."

2013

DSHS Employee Survey

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

Background, Methods and Response Rates ● Statistical Reports ● Additional Information

"Elated" • Second Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

From the photographer:
"Taken at a co-worker's kid's soccer game, this is a candid photo with his soccer ball."

"Clients Sunflower" • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

From the photographer:
"Patients at Western State Hospital work in the greenhouse. They now grow vegetables and sunflowers outdoors so all patients and staff may enjoy them."

"Contemplating" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Lisa Phelps, with permission

Executive Summary

The 2013 survey reflected the slow but steady economic recovery. The general survey trend was upward, with an overall increase in scores for all state employees. Survey results point to a gradual lessening of staff's uncertainty and fears about temporary or permanent layoffs, pay and benefit reductions, loss of key resources, and inability to meet client needs. They reflect a workforce that is looking forward, and developing a sense of cautious optimism about the future of the economy, the agency, and their personal employment opportunities.

The Employee Survey received special emphasis this year, as its results make up an important component of Governor Inslee's Results Washington data-driven performance management and continuous improvement system. Employee Survey results are used as the primary outcome measure for the goal to "Increase Washington as an employer of choice" under Results Washington Goal 5: Effective, efficient & accountable government. There is a statewide initiative to address employee concerns and increase employee survey scores in future surveys.

Hopeful Trends

Survey scores and comments indicate that employees' overall job satisfaction has risen, and their relationships with supervisors, managers and co-workers have improved.

Overall job satisfaction

Scores on job satisfaction rose in 2013. At the same time, there was a notable increase in positive comments about morale and overall satisfaction, and a marked decrease in negative comments on the same topic. These changes reflect a workforce that is feeling more positive and more hopeful about circumstances in their workplace. With the economy improving, workers' concerns about job security, staff shortages, unmanageable workloads, and lack of resources for clients appear to be diminishing. They are seeing more opportunities to develop professionally, and to have a voice in work-related matters.

- **Job satisfaction increased.** 67% of employees said: "In general, I'm satisfied with my job," up from 61% in 2011.

- **More positive comments, and fewer negative comments, about morale and satisfaction.** There were 34% more positive comments about morale and overall satisfaction – and 32% less negative comments – than in 2011.

- **More like everything about their job, while fewer like nothing at all.** When asked what about their job could be improved, 32% more said "Nothing" in 2013 than in 2011. When asked what they liked about their job, 20% fewer said "Nothing" in 2013 than in 2011.

- **Responses to the survey's open-ended questions point to possible reasons for the increase in employee satisfaction and morale.** These include:
  — 42% fewer complaints about resources for clients.
  — 41% fewer complaints about heavy workloads.
  — 25% fewer complaints about understaffing.

- **Employees' growing belief in the agency's investment in their health may be impacting satisfaction.**
  — 50% said "Overall, the agency supports me in living a healthier life," up from 46% in 2011.

- **Higher scores on three employee engagement questions also shed light on increasing satisfaction.**
  — 56% said "I have opportunities at work to learn and grow," up from 48% in 2011.
  — 51% said "I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work," up from 47% in 2011.
  — 46% said "I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things," up from 44% in 2011.

Connections with supervisors, managers and co-workers

Employee comments indicate they are viewing supervisors and managers more favorably. They are particularly pleased that those in charge are listening to workers more carefully, and including them in workplace decisions and projects. Employees also made fewer critical comments about their co-workers' attitudes, behaviors and expertise in 2013.

- **More positive comments, and fewer complaints, about supervisors/managers.** There were 15% more positive comments about managers – and 12% less complaints – than in 2011.

- **More positive comments, and fewer negative comments, about supervisors/managers listening and including.** There were 47% more positive comments, and 10% less negative comments, than in 2011.

- **Fewer complaints about co-worker competence.** There were 23% fewer complaints about co-workers who lack skills, knowledge, experience, professionalism, or good work habits than in 2011 – when many felt that employee cuts based on seniority eliminated good workers, leaving the less competent.

Ongoing "Bright Spots"

Responses in some areas remained positive, as they were in the last survey. Most employees continue to feel they are treated fairly and respectfully by others in their workplace. They have also retained a strong sense of the agency's mission, and their role in that mission.

Good treatment

The majority of employees report they are treated fairly and respectfully by supervisors and co-workers. Many took the opportunity to praise those they work with on a daily basis.

- **83% said: "My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect."** This is the same percentage as in 2011.
- **Many employees appreciate and respect their co-workers.** One in four of those surveyed had positive things to say about their co-workers. This represents a slight increase from 2011.
- **72% said: "In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination."** This is up from 68% in 2011.
- **68% said: "My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce."** This is up from 64% in 2011.

Agency mission

Helping agency clients makes Department employees feel both privileged and proud. The vast majority of employees are clear about their job responsibilities, and the ways in which their work moves the agency toward its goals.

- **For many employees, helping clients is the most important and fulfilling aspect of their work.** More than one third of those who made comments (34%) mentioned the satisfaction they receive from working with and helping clients.
- **87% said: "I know what is expected of me at work."** This is the same percentage as in 2011.
- **82% said: "I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency."** This is up from 79% in 2011.

Areas of Concern

Although all trends in standard questions were positive, there are still areas of concern. Not all employee comments were positive. In 2013, more employees made comments about need for improvement in three areas: training, personnel, and diversity. Many areas, although trending in a positive direction, still have much room for future improvement. Instability in management and increasing employment options due to the economic recovery also affect employee satisfaction and retention.

Concerns surfacing in employee comments

Employees expressed a desire for more – and more effective – training. They were particularly critical of a new personnel process, and registered more complaints about diversity than in the last survey.

- **More comments about the need for more and better training.** There were 32% more comments about the need for improvements in training than in 2011. Training needs are greater as the Department begins to hire new staff. The increase was also due in part to the perception that trainings focused on workplace respect should have been directed primarily toward management staff and should have resulted in more tangible change in the workplace. Also contributing to the negative comment total was a group of comments that faulted some diversity trainings for implying that Caucasians are racist.

- **More complaints about personnel issues.** There were 16% more negative comments specific to personnel processes. The "loudest" complaints in this area were about the new PERFORM evaluation system, which many employees found confusing and frustrating. There continued to be some criticisms of service from human resources staff, hiring and promotion processes, and the handling of investigations and disciplinary actions.

- **An increase in negative comments about diversity.** As noted earlier, more employees in 2013 reported support for a diverse workforce and fair, non-discriminatory treatment. Conversely, however, there were 18% more negative comments relating to diversity issues – including poor treatment of protected groups, reverse discrimination, nepotism, "good old boy/girl" practices, and sexual harassment – than in 2011. It appears that problems associated with the economic crisis may have become a primary focus of complaints in 2011, and that attention to issues related to diversity has now returned to levels seen in earlier surveys.

Issues with future implications

The Department will face challenges as it strives to further improve employee satisfaction. Management instability and competing job opportunities are two factors that could affect future employee satisfaction and retention.

- **Still room for improvement.** Even though DSHS-wide average trends on the standard survey question were all positive, there is still ample opportunity for further growth. Fewer than 60% of respondents answered "Always" or "Usually" to ten of the twenty standard questions. Also, in this large agency, average scores reflect some workgroups with greater discontent, as well as some with greater satisfaction.

- **Trends are less positive in areas of management instability.** The only large-group exceptions to the overall positive trends in DSHS were in those areas with interim/changing management. Such areas showed a lower rate of positive change, and, in some cases, negative trends. Some management "churn" is a normal part of business, and can be expected to influence future surveys.

- **Fewer are simply "happy to have a job."** There were 41% fewer comments about being glad to have a steady job and benefits - reflecting the improving economy. This means that in the future the agency cannot expect unhappy employees to stay because of lack of options.

Survey Facts

THE 2013 EMPLOYEE SURVEY is the seventh DSHS-wide employee survey

The survey was:

- Available to all employees from October 14 to November 22, 2013.
- Administered in conjunction with a survey of all state employees, sponsored by Governor Inslee.
- Standardized across the Department, with the option to add questions to meet specific needs of individual programs.
- Completed by 11,390 Department employees—a 69% response rate.
- Analyzed thoroughly; 503 detailed custom reports were prepared for workgroups throughout the Department.
- An impetus for future improvements. As of this report's publication date, workgroups at state-wide, department, and division levels are all reviewing results, gathering further information around key issues, and formulating plans to address employee concerns and improve results on future surveys.

Changes from 2011 to 2013: *Percent of Employees Answering "Usually" or "Always"*

COMMUNICATION

I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.*
- 2013: **51%**
- 2011: 47%

I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.*
- 2013: **46%**
- 2011: 44%

I receive the information I need to do my job effectively.*
- 2013: **68%**
- 2011: 66%

I know what is expected of me at work.
- 2013: **87%**
- 2011: 87%

I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency.*
- 2013: **43%**
- 2011: 38%

I know how my agency measures its success.*
- 2013: **54%**
- 2011: 52%

I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency.*
- 2013: **82%**
- 2011: 79%

SUPERVISOR/MANAGER SUPPORT

My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance.
- 2013: **65%**
- 2011: 64%

I receive recognition for a job well done.*
- 2013: **51%**
- 2011: 48%

My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.
- 2013: **83%**
- 2011: 83%

FAIRNESS/DIVERSITY

In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.*
- 2013: **72%**
- 2011: 68%

My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce.*
- 2013: **68%**
- 2011: 64%

THE DAILY JOB

In general, I'm satisfied with my job.*
- 2013: **67%**
- 2011: 61%

I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.*
- 2013: **56%**
- 2011: 48%

A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup.*
- 2013: **67%**
- 2011: 64%

BUSINESS PRACTICES

My agency uses my time and talents well.*
- 2013: **56%**
- 2011: 52%

We use customer feedback to improve our work process. *(Wording changed in 2013)*
- 2013: **39%**
- 2011: 39%

We are making improvements to make things better for our customers.
- 2013: **59%**

I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively.*
- 2013: **65%**
- 2011: 62%

Overall my agency supports me in living a healthier life.*
- 2013: **50%**
- 2011: 46%

*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 2013

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?"

	NEEDS WORK	NEUTRAL/MIXED	SATISFIED

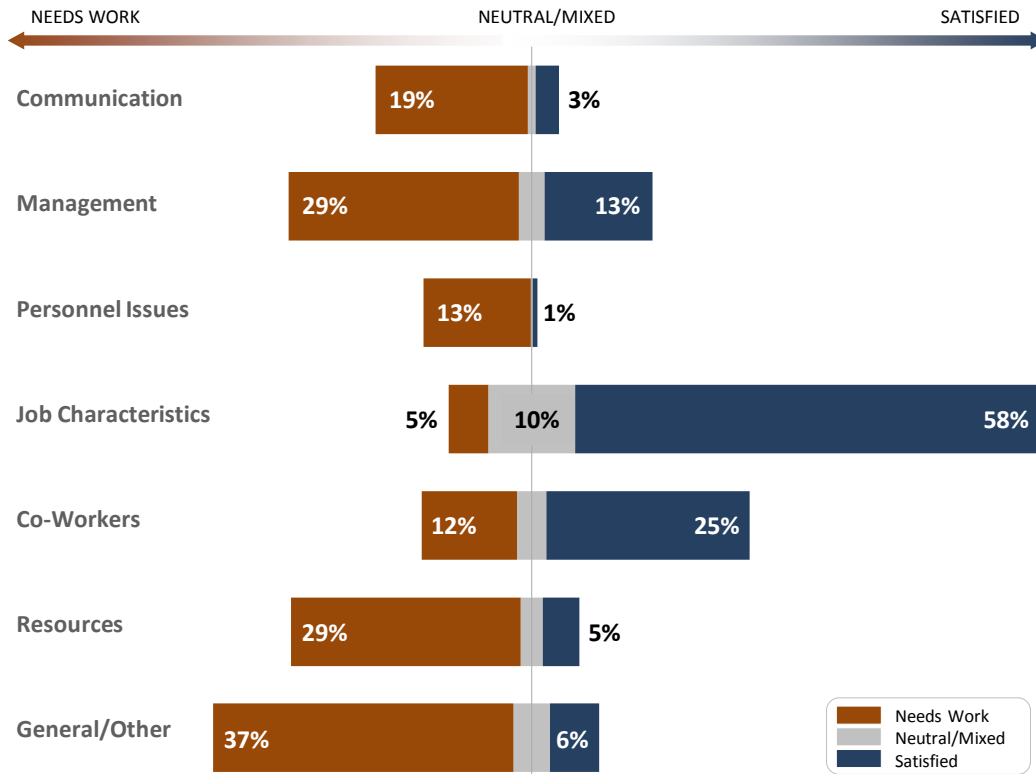| Theme	Needs Work	Neutral/Mixed	Satisfied
Communication	19%		3%
Management	29%		13%
Personnel Issues	13%		1%
Job Characteristics	5%	10%	58%
Co-Workers	12%		25%
Resources	29%		5%
General/Other	37%		6%

Legend:
- Needs Work
- Neutral/Mixed
- Satisfied

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.
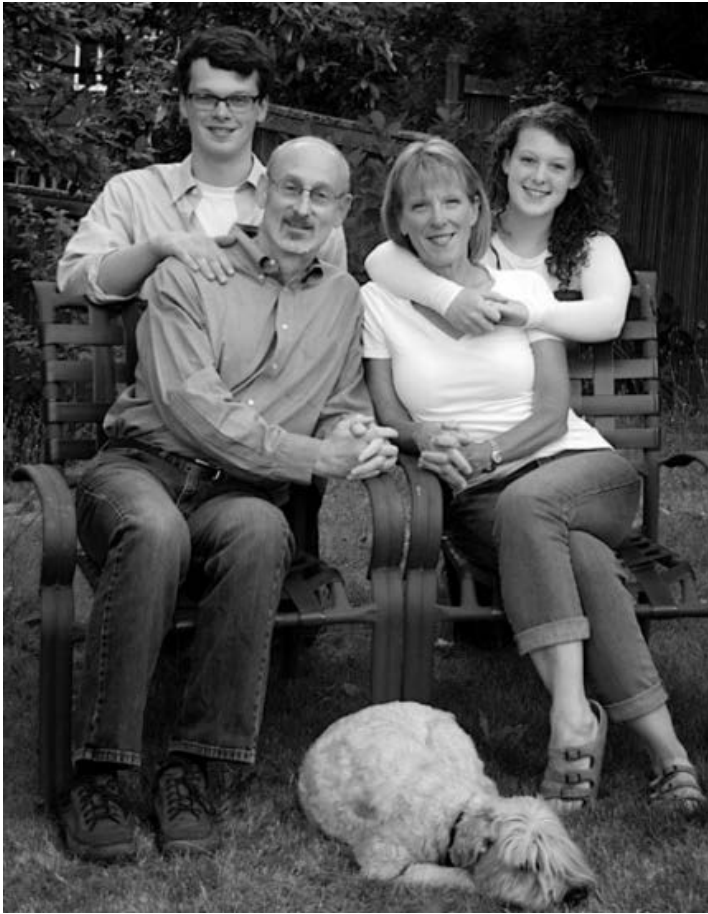
"Gluck Family Portrait" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

From the photographer:
"As part of the Combined Fund Drive, our office organized a silent auction during GLBTQ Pride Month. One of the prizes I offered was an hour family portrait shoot for a lucky winner. The Gluck's won the bid. This was taken at their home in their backyard on a beautiful summer evening in July 2013."

"Regal" • Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Mary M. Warwick, with permission

From the photographer:
"Such a beautiful, graceful, powerful bird to photograph. So regal."

"Rain Reflection" • 3rd Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Amy Robertson, with permission

From the photographer:
"The first real rain of the season was a real downpour, and I love the rain, so I stood on my back patio under an umbrella (the reflection on the ground) and enjoyed the sound and smell of the first rain."

"Early Morning Light"
Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Melissa Hansen, with permission

From the photographer:
"This photo was taken on the Ganges River in India shortly after the sun came up. We had boarded our small boats and set out on our day's journey. With the morning mist temporarily erasing the horizon line, the water and sky truly became one."

"Siblings" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Michelle Butler, with permission

Communication

COMMUNICATION ISSUES REMAIN A CONCERN to staff in 2013, although overall their responses were more positive and less specific to budget, staff and service reductions than in 2011. More employees reported they can give input on decisions affecting their work, and they receive clear and timely information about workplace changes. As in 2011, the majority of employees said they know what is expected of them at work, and how their work contributes to the goals of the agency.

Staff input. Staff consistently report they want a stronger "voice" in their workplace. Measures of employee engagement are typically low, in the 50% range. They increased to 51% in 2013, from 47% in 2011. This may reflect a renewed effort on the part of management to include staff in decisions that affect their workplace. This approach, clearly favored and appreciated by staff, is more feasible in the current improving economy. A few years ago, in the midst of the economic downturn, growing needs and declining resources often forced top management and legislators to implement painful changes quickly without extensive staff input.

- **Fewer complaints about management listening.** 676 employees (8% of those who made comments) complained that management doesn't solicit, listen to, seriously consider, or act on their input. The percentage making such complaints decreased 10% from 2011, while positive comments in this area increased by 47%.

- **More opportunities for input.** 51% of employees (up from 47% in 2011) said they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting their work.

- **More encouragement to innovate.** 46% of employees (up from 44% in 2011) said efforts to create better ways of doing things are supported.

Information from management. As in years past, staff indicated a need for clearer and more comprehensive information from management. However, comments and responses to questions relating to information from management were more favorable than those in 2011.

- **Fewer complaints about information from management.** 702 employees (8% of those who made comments) complained that the quality or quantity of information from management is lacking. The percentage making this type of complaint decreased 13% from 2011.

- **More job-specific information.** 68% of employees (up from 66% in 2011) said they receive enough information to do their job effectively.

- **Ongoing awareness of job expectations.** 87% of employees (the same percentage as in 2011) said they know what is expected of them at work.

- **More clear information about changes.** 43% of employees (up from 38% in 2011) said they receive clear information about changes within the agency.

Goals, guidelines and performance measures. Some employees lack of clear understanding of their agency's direction, and of the measures their agency uses to gauge success or failure. Most report they understand how their own work contributes to the goals of their agency.

- **Continuing need for clarity on agency direction.** 193 employees (2% of those who made comments) indicated they were unclear about their agency's plans and goals. The percentage making this type of comment decreased 15% from 2011.

- **Overall increase in understanding of agency measures.** 54% of employees (up from 52% in 2011) said they know how their agency measures success.

- **More know how their work supports agency goals.** 82% of employees (up from 79% in 2011) are clear about the ways in which their work contributes to the goals of their agency.

"Forever a Big Deal" • Second Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Samantha Simmons, with permission

From the photographer:
"The Olympia Bears Cheerleaders sport their 'forever a big deal' shirts to honor Todd McDougal who was a long time dedicated coach for Olympia High School prior to passing away."

THEME. Overall communication

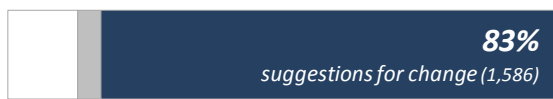***1,908 of the 8,343 employees who made comments mentioned communication.***

23% commented on this theme *(1,908)*

Their comments were:

83%
suggestions for change (1,586)

13%
positive
(243)

4%
mixed or neutral
(79)

In this survey, as in previous surveys, employees expressed a strong desire for clear and effective communication at – and among – all levels of the department. More than eight out of ten (83%) of those commenting on communication suggested improvements for local offices or management. Of the 1,908* who mentioned communication:

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

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees praise the quality of communication in their workplace

"My office practices open communication and fosters a team mentality."

"Communication and respect have increased over the past year in all areas – my office, the region, and headquarters. I am optimistic about the future, and believe we are headed in the right direction."

"My co-workers are supportive and communicate information freely."

"Communication and coordination within our division is improving, and this has improved the overall atmosphere."

"I work on a team where we help each other and communicate our needs and goals as a team."

"Communication is a key to a great working relationship, which we currently have in my office."

Most employees who commented on workplace communication see a need for improvement

"Communication between programs within our agency is an ongoing challenge and one that I feel still needs work."

"Generally I feel communication is lacking. I do not feel I have a communication process that works for me or my co-workers. I find that to be true with other DSHS agencies I work with."

"We receive very little communication from other offices. The right hand truly does not know what the left hand is doing."

"Better communication between divisions regarding changes in practice."

"Improved communication within my work unit. Weekly or monthly check-ins about plans, initiatives, and progress."

"Breakdown of the silos, so all staff who work in one program can communicate with each other for the improvement of the care of the clients we serve."

"Better communication. Lots of communication does not equal good communication."

Meetings are often mentioned in comments about communication

"I enjoy meetings of most types. That may sound unusual, but I appreciate the exchange of ideas and a more collaborative approach to case management and problem solving."

"Fewer back-to-back, long and/or poorly organized meetings."

"We need to go back to that time where we met as a division on a regular basis."

"I appreciate the hospital has current meetings to keep everyone abreast of the new changes."

"Although I appreciate the concept of all staff meetings, I'd like to see those meetings limited to 30-45 minutes tops."

"Meeting every week is helping build relationships. I like the way my boss guides us successfully."

*Issues listed below total more than 1,908, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to communication.
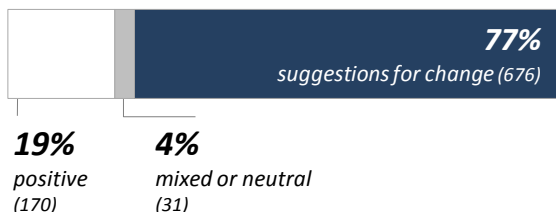
THEME. Listening to input from staff

877 of the 8,343 respondents who commented addressed the issue of managers listening to staff.

11% commented on this theme *(877)*

Their comments were:

77%
suggestions for change (676)

19%
positive
(170)

4%
mixed or neutral
(31)

877 respondents offered comments about staff input. Nearly two out of ten (19%) said they are listened to and their input is taken into consideration when decisions are made. Many positive comments focused on decision-making processes in local offices.

Nearly eight out of ten respondents (77%) who made comments about staff input feel improvements are needed. Many suggested specific changes. Respondents want management to:

- Allow them a real role in making workplace decisions
- Actively solicit their input
- Consider their suggestions carefully
- Use their ideas *and* factor their concerns when changes are made

These issues are discussed further in the Autonomy and Growth Opportunities section of Chapter 4, pages 49-50.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Staff want supervisors and managers who are open to hearing their ideas and concerns

"My supervisor always takes the time to listen to me."

"Respect from management, and for them to really listen to our concerns."

"Colleagues and management listen to my input."

"It would be nice to have our voices/concerns actively heard, followed by an appropriate response."

"I love being empowered to share my thoughts and ideas, and to ask any question that comes to mind – even when that question is, 'Is that seriously what we're going to do?'"

"I'd like to see management listen to the needs of their employees to ensure safety, efficiency, and productivity in our jobs."

"The administrator and supervisor I work for are open to [staff's] ideas."

They also want a real voice in decisions affecting their workplace

"I would like to know about decisions impacting my workload before the decisions are made, so I can give feedback."

"I enjoy opportunities to suggest, recommend, and/or implement improvements."

"Decisions regarding field staff need to include field staff who are currently working in the field, who can report how changes impact workers and clients."

"My supervisor is amazing and really listens to us and includes us in decision-making."

"Line staff should have a voice in matters affecting our day-to-day work processes."

"In my current position I feel I have more of a voice to initiate change."

"Employees should have input about the changes that will affect their lives."

Staff value supervisors and managers who take their input seriously

"My supervisors are amazing, positive and supportive. They listen to their lead workers and take feedback seriously."

"I like having the ability to give input and feedback on agency-wide issues."

"I am appreciated for the work I do, and my input is appreciated!"

"I like the increasing ability to have input into decisions and making the process work better."

"We are always striving for ways to improve, and our ideas are taken seriously."

"I like that my employer listens to my suggestions and recommendations on improving our process and/or results."
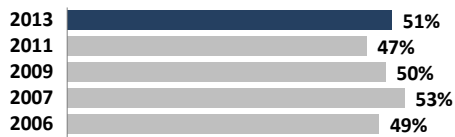
QUESTION. I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

More than half of employees (51%) said they have a chance to give input on decisions in their workplace. Another 26% said they are occasionally given a chance to offer such input.

Nearly one quarter of employees (23%) reported they are seldom or never asked for their input. They indicated they appreciate it when supervisors and managers:
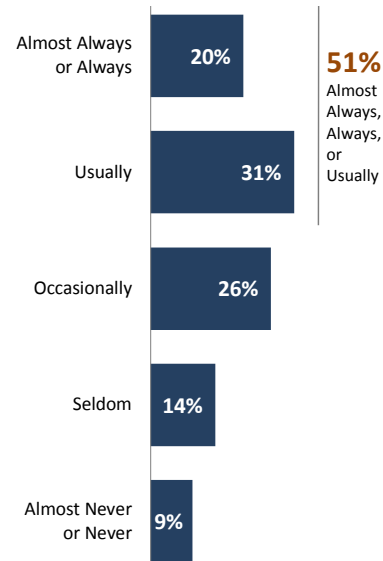
- Seek their input, particularly when the decision under discussion will impact their workplace
- Take their ideas and opinions into account
- Utilize their suggestions, if feasible

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they have input into decisions affecting their jobs.

Year	%
2013	51%
2011	47%
2009	50%
2007	53%
2006	49%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	20%
Usually	31%
Occasionally	26%
Seldom	14%
Almost Never or Never	9%

51% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees feel heard in their workplace

"I like knowing that my opinion matters and that my knowledge is respected, even though I am new."

"My supervisor is easy to talk with, and will listen if you have a suggestion or complaint."

"My administrator listens to me, and works hard to help me grow as a worker."

"I am confident that I can share my thoughts, and they will be heard."

"I feel empowered to have a say in changes, issues, concerns within the workplace."

Others report their input isn't requested, or isn't seriously considered

"Changes to our jobs are being implemented daily, without asking for the input of those people (i.e., line workers) who are being affected by the changes."

"Although I am asked for input or feedback, it is rarely taken or used. I am constantly puzzled why the agency asks for input when 'it, they, you' already know what you want to do and have no interest in taking into consideration the input provided."

"When you work for the state, you realize that any input we have may be worthless due to the political climate that particular year. Goals change with the politics, and that is just the nature of the beast."

"So much of the time we feel that our ideas and opinions are not considered – although we may be asked for them, we feel that decisions are already made before we are asked for our opinion."

"When headquarters implements policies not driven by the legislature, I would like the field to have more input before making the changes. We are 'asked,' but sometimes it seems the decision is already made, and the 'ask' is perfunctory."

Employees want to feel safe in voicing their opinions

"I like not having any fear of reprisal for making suggestions/opinions."

"Staff is fearful of retaliation if they say anything contrary to the administration."

"I've had the opportunity to meet many people from headquarters, and I've been able to voice my concerns without fear that I will lose my job."

"Many employees in this organization have been treated unfairly, but they do not feel comfortable enough for their voice to be heard."

"I have the ability to express any and all concerns that I may have without the fear of retaliation from my superiors."

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

46% of respondents reported they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things. Nearly one third of respondents (31%) indicated they are seldom or never encouraged to find new approaches to work processes. Respondents are pleased when they are:
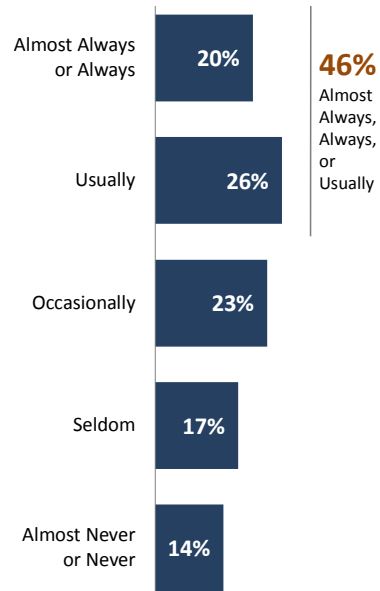
- Asked to contribute their creative ideas
- Feel their suggestions are heard and considered
- Offered the chance to test out new processes
- Given the opportunity to use their skills and experience

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they are encouraged to find new ways of doing things.
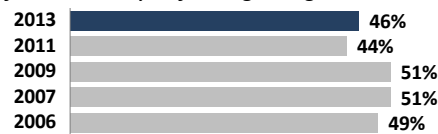
Year	Percentage
2013	46%
2011	44%
2009	51%
2007	51%
2006	49%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01. Wording changed in 2011.

ANSWERS

Answer	Percentage
Almost Always or Always	20%
Usually	26%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	17%
Almost Never or Never	14%

46% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff feel free to share and pursue ideas for workplace improvements

"My current supervisor is expert level at most of our programs, yet she still listens to my suggestions for opportunities to improve our system."

"I am challenged to think of ways to improve outcomes for the customers we serve."

"My supervisor listens to me and lets me try new ways – if it does not work we go back to the old way."

"I like the freedom to give input on how to deliver better services."

"Employees are increasingly being involved in decisions and work process changes that are making our jobs more effective."

"My supervisor is very supportive of any appropriate suggestions that will help in building our team."

Others report being discouraged in their efforts to improve work processes

"Our team members have come up with ideas, but we are not included in developing them."

"I am encouraged to give feedback and ideas, although I feel they are rarely used."

"I feel like my concerns are brushed aside, and it sometimes makes me hope that things will fall apart so I can say 'I warned you and you didn't listen.'"

"I can give input on decisions, but don't really see that it makes any difference."

"We should have a feedback/what's your idea box and management should review them and perhaps adapt some of these changes by setting small groups. Get staff involved in the process of coming up with a solution."

"I would like to see encouragement for process improvement, problem notification coming from the front line staff up to management, versus management always directing the process."

Staff appreciate supervisors and managers who respect – and use – their skills and experience

"My supervisor has respect for my skills, abilities, and competency to do an excellent job. I appreciate my supervisor's willingness to listen and discuss the suggestions I make on how to make improvement in the work process."

"I like having the freedom, for the most part, of using my education and training to complete my work."
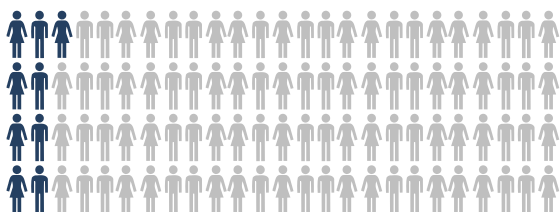
"My position allows me to learn, grow, and use my skills to their full potential."

"I'm viewed as an expert in my field. My feedback and/or assistance is requested by many, both inside and outside the agency. This makes me feel appreciated."

THEME. Information communicated from managers to staff

750 of the 8,343 employees who offered comments addressed the issue of managers providing information.

9% commented on this theme *(750)*

Their comments were:

94%
suggestions for change (702)

5%
positive
(35)
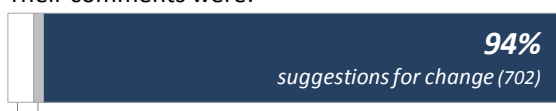
2%
mixed or neutral
(13)

More than nine out of ten of the 750 comments about information sharing by management (94%) were suggestions for improvement. A small number of employees (5%) reported satisfaction with the way information is communicated by supervisors and managers.

Most employees see the need for improvements, both by local supervisors and managers, and by upper management. They would like:

- More consistent communications
- Clearer communications
- More honest communications
- Specific information, not broad statements

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees are pleased with supervisors' and managers' communication skills

"We now have open communication with our RA and Deputy RA. Both work diligently to communicate with everyone, which has created a more positive working environment."

"I have a very good supervisor who communicates very well and is good to work with."

"I appreciate the intentional communication strategies for dissemination of information from the top down."

"My supervisor operates transparently, communicates regularly, and is accessible."

"The senior leadership of CA seem to be making smart, practical decisions and communicating with staff in a straightforward manner. This is much appreciated."

"With my new supervisor, there is a lot more communication between management and employees."

"Our new administrator keeps us well-informed and leads us in a good direction."

Most who commented on communication from supervisors and managers expressed dissatisfaction

"Better communication between the supervisor and us. More efficient communication: solution-focused and direct."

"More open communication from managers to staff."

"Better communication! Let us little people know some of the reason and rationale behind some of these directives."

"Your supervisors are good, but they need to learn to effectively communicate with employees."

"Better communication between field managers and staff."

"Communication with our upper management is horrible."

"Better communication from the Assistant Secretary and my chain of command."

Some are frustrated by *lack* of communication from their superiors

"Adult Protective Services' management does not tell us what is new in our field and what is going on within the Adult Protective Services Program."

"The current administration has lost the communication between employees and employer."

"From the top down, my agency does not give ANY information about changes being made in and around the agency."

"Top down communication within Residential Care Services is nonexistent."

"More communication instead of hearing everything through the grapevine. It would be nice to hear it from management."
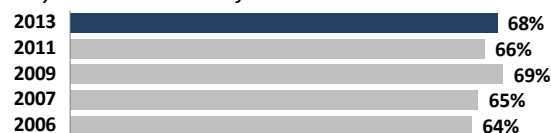
QUESTION. I receive the information I need to do my job effectively

Nearly seven out of ten respondents (68%) said they get the information needed to do their job effectively. More than one out of ten (11%) reported they don't have the information needed to do their job well.

Most respondents praised supervisors and managers for consistently providing them clear, comprehensive, and useful information.
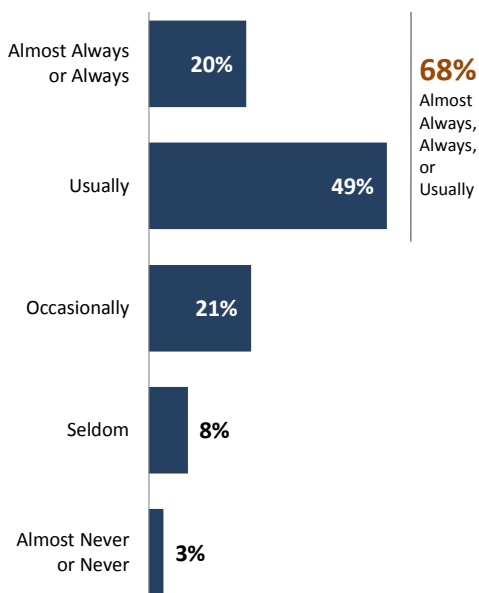
Some respondents want the quality of information they receive from supervisors and managers to improve. They particularly want information about changes affecting their job sooner rather than later.

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 *said they have the information they need to do their jobs.*

Year	%
2013	68%
2011	66%
2009	69%
2007	65%
2006	64%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	20%
Usually	49%
Occasionally	21%
Seldom	8%
Almost Never or Never	3%

68% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff give high marks to information provided in the workplace

"The supervisors give us the information we need, but in a way that we can digest it and use it."

"I like being in the loop, and not being broadsided with a task I knew nothing about."

"My Area Administrator supports us, and provides us with needed information."

"I like the clear expectations that I am given, and that I am given the time and resources to complete my job."

"I like the communication of what is expected, so I know what is needed from me."

"The supervisors here are very knowledgeable, and are always willing to answer questions and help when problems arise."

"I like the daily communication that keeps the entire team in the loop, with each of the residents, daily programming, as well as upcoming events."

Some report the quality or quantity of information is lacking

"Increased communication between headquarters and the field would be more beneficial, especially when there are program or organizational changes that are affecting field operations."

"More and regular communication with my supervisor."

"More communication from management to staff. We don't always get the information we need to do our jobs efficiently."

"Changes to our jobs are being implemented daily. Communication about the changes is nonexistent."

"I would like to see greater top down communication. I experience frustration with this lack of communication and this leads to a sense of lack of leadership because the worker bees are just out here doing out thing - right or wrong."

"There are no unit meetings, no program meetings – no forum to discuss problems, concerns, new directives. New employees are left in the dark!"

Others want more timely information

"There must be a way to ensure honest, clear and timely communication occurs so employees know about changes that will affect them in the workplace and/or duties prior to management implementation."

"Our agency does not always tell us when it is making changes. Changes are sometimes made before we have a chance to learn the ins and outs. Poor communication is an issue."

"Field staff are not given timely training on new policy and procedure. Sending out a management bulletin and expecting staff to take the time to read and understand it is not an effective way for adults to learn."

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.
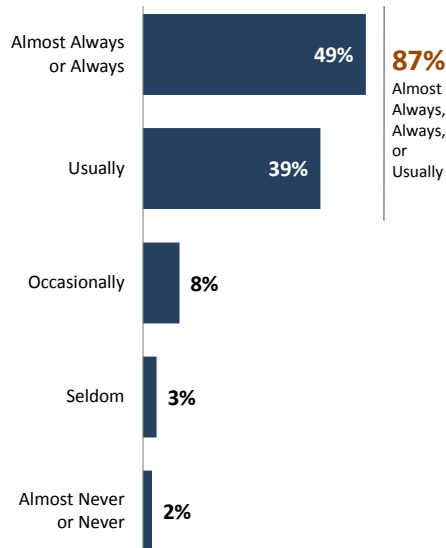
In their comments, some employees expressed gratitude for the clarity of their job expectations.

Other employees expressed frustration with vague or confusing job expectations. Some indicated they find it difficult to adhere to job expectations that keep changing.

There was no significant change between 2011 and 2013 in employee knowledge of job expectations.

Year	
2013	87%
2011	87%
2009	87%
2007	84%
2006	84%

ANSWERS

Answer	
Almost Always or Always	49%
Usually	39%
Occasionally	8%
Seldom	3%
Almost Never or Never	2%

87% Almost Always, Always, or Usually
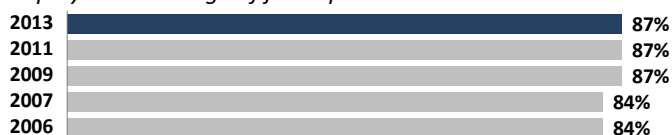
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most employees are clear about their job requirements

"I know what is expected of me – I have no surprises."

"Clear work expectations by use of the computer requirements. Helps to know what must be done."

"We know what is expected of us, so it's easy to produce."

"Most jobs and tasks have clear goals and expected results. I can see the results of my efforts."

"I have a supportive/amazing supervisor who is clinical and organized, and can clearly communicate what needs to be done."

"I like that I know what is expected of me."

"I feel like I know what is expected of me, and feel comfortable asking if I need a decision on something."

"I know what I'm expected to accomplish every day."

Some aren't sure what is expected of them at work

"Better communication from my supervisor regarding changes, expectations, and acknowledgment of accomplishments."

"As a new worker, there is too much confusion about expectations without much clarity on processes."

"Would like to see management bulletins that are clearer when it comes to expectations for the field."

"I really don't know what to expect or what is expected of me."

"Clearer direction when new policies are released."

"Roles and responsibilities need to be more defined. It seems like nobody knows what they are doing."

"Clearer direction and expectations. As a new worker, I thought that it would have been helpful to shadow someone for at least a week who works in the same position I now work."

Others are unhappy that job expectations keep changing

"I want clear and consistent work expectations."

"Fewer changes, more clear and consistent direction."

"Consistency, so we have stability, not continual changes. Going to work and knowing what the expectations are makes me look forward to work. Not knowing causes anxiety."

"There have been huge changes, and the transitions are not seamless, making it seem like a 'chicken without a head' agency."

"Work is constantly prioritized and reprioritized, with no clear consistency in prioritizing from the agency and/or management."

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

More than four out of ten respondents (43%) said they have received clear information about work-related changes. Nearly three out of ten (28%) reported they have not received the information about changes they want and need.
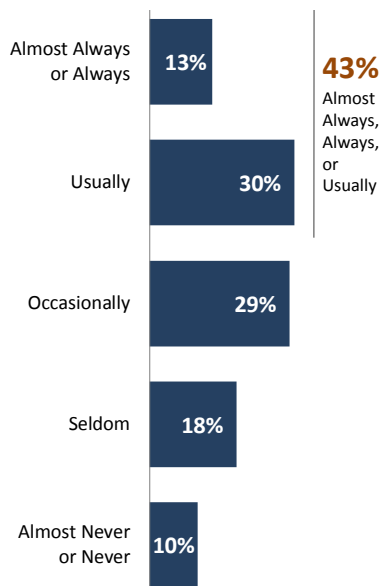
Some respondents are grateful to supervisors and managers who keep them well-informed about changes. Others feel they should do a better job of keeping staff advised of changes that will affect their workplace.

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they have clear information about changes being made in the agency.

2013	43%
2011	38%
2009	56%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01. Wording changed in 2011.

ANSWERS

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	13%
Usually	30%
Occasionally	29%
Seldom	18%
Almost Never or Never	10%

43% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff applaud supervisor and manager efforts to keep them current about changes

"My boss is pretty up front with me, and lets me know if there is change coming."

"I feel I'm in the loop on most important changes, and for such a large corporation this is a big success in my opinion."

"My manager keeps me well informed of changes of work and my surroundings."

"My supervisor does a good job of keeping me up to date on changes."

"I like being kept in the loop with all the upcoming changes I always get."

"I really appreciate the continued communication in our administration."

Others want information about changes to be clearer and more complete

"There is so much information and policy changing coming out daily that it is impossible to keep up with. If we could figure out a way to streamline/highlight information and policy changes sent out to the field it would definitely be helpful."

"Better communication with everyone when changes are made."

"Would like to see better communication in the implementation of changes. Often I feel we get bits and pieces, and then we interpret the best we can."

"Clearer information when there are changes in rules and procedures, especially with the changes in medical programs."

"Better communication and training regarding changes implemented by this agency."

"It would be nice if headquarters would share more openly about changes coming, and how we are addressing those changes."
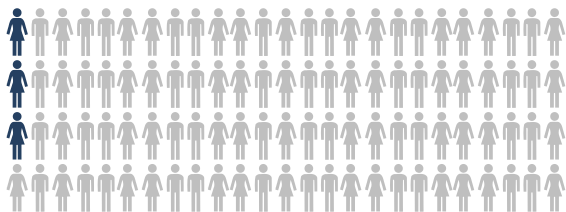
For some, *when* change-related information is shared is a key issue

"More discussion with workers affected by upcoming changes before they are implemented, to give them the best chance of a successful and smooth implementation."

"There are a lot of changes going on lately and I feel we are always in the dark, to be told at the last possible moment."

"Information sharing is seriously lacking. We are generally informed of changes way after they have occurred."

"I want to be apprised of changes that affect my work in a more timely fashion."

"Communication about change needs to come early and often. We should not be notified the day of or after the fact."

THEME. Clear direction for the agency

256 of the 8,343 employees who commented addressed the presence or absence of a clear direction for the agency, administration or program. Their responses included comments on the quality of communications about agency visions, missions, goals, priorities and policies.

3% commented on this theme *(256)*

Their comments were:

75%
suggestions for change (193)

21%
positive
(53)

4%
mixed or neutral
(10)

256 employees made comments concerning clear direction for DSHS, administrations, and programs. Three quarters (75%) indicated that they need to know more about current initiatives and future plans.

Although some employees are satisfied with their knowledge of agency direction, most feel they could benefit from additional information. Specifically, they would like clarity about:

- Vision and mission
- Primary goals
- Current priorities
- Plans for the future
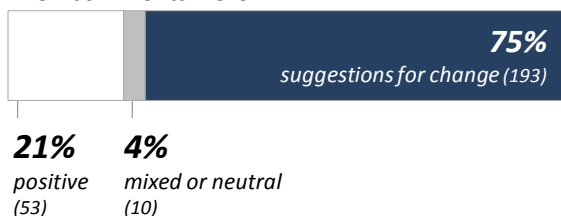
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees feel well-informed about the direction the agency is taking

"Internal communication about goals, outcomes and initiatives has improved."

"We know 'why' we do what we do, and focus on this."

"I understand the vision and mission, and want to be part of moving our agency forward to improve our services."

Most commenting on agency direction want clearer information about the agency's "big picture"

"The big picture needs to be explained to state employees."

"A change that I think is critical to the overall health of our agency is for our leaders on all levels to spend less time talking about process, and more time discussing the meaning of our work."

"Everybody needs to know what the big picture is – what the vision and mission are and why."

"Offering a constant message of 'why' we do the work is proven across industries to energize staff and give us a common purpose. Sharing real stories of how our agency makes a difference is what our staff needs to hear."

"More general overall information that helps us understand the big picture of how we fit/function within DSHS."

"Everyone is hunkered down in their silos – more about the total picture is lost at times."

"A little more information on direction and changes within our agency."

"More communication about the direction of ALTSA, and decisions impacting our leadership."

They are uncomfortable with frequent changes in agency direction

"The agency seems to swing back and forth with politics. The workers are not sure which way the swing is coming until something happens, and then it looks like they did something wrong. The agency quietly changes their position without informing the workers."

"Many new division staff have no clue how our work fits together internally, let alone how we fit into the agency as a whole."

"Greater overall recognition of the 'big picture.'"

"A little more feedback regarding the big picture of what is happening, beyond just my own area."

"More communications about the new ADS organization. How the three administrations fit together. What the future might bring to the organization."

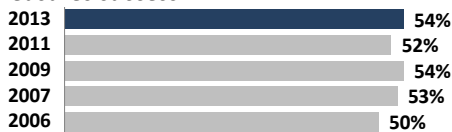"To have clear cut communication between management and staff about the mission and how to get there."

QUESTION. I know how my agency measures its success

More than half of respondents (54%) reported they understand how the agency measures success. However, nearly one quarter (23%) said they seldom or never know what methods are used to measure success.
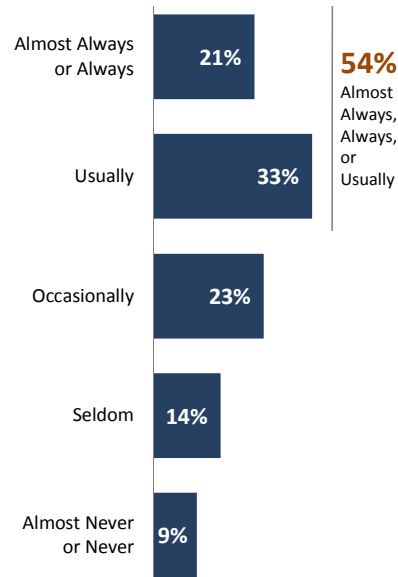
Respondents want:

- Performance measures that are easy to access and understand
- Measures that "match" the agency's established goals
- Less attention paid to numbers, and more attention paid to excellent client service and supporting staff in their work

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they know how the agency measures success.

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	21%
Usually	33%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	14%
Almost Never or Never	9%

54% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Year	%
2013	54%
2011	52%
2009	54%
2007	53%
2006	50%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff are satisfied with the performance measures used in their workplace

"I believe in what we do, performance measures are clear and it's satisfying to meet them."

"I like performance measures, and the flexibility to get there."

"It is measurable, and it feels good to be able to see how many clients you have assisted."

"I like to see my 'numbers' at the end of each month so I know where I stand, compared to my co-workers."

Some feel current performance measures are inadequate or flawed

"This agency has gotten really invested in quality assurance, but they are not being focused on the quality of the work. It feels like it is more important to have the box checked off than that something is done."

"Social work caseloads need to be counted differently so that social workers who do not carry caseloads (i.e. run locators) don't get considered when looking at average caseload."

"Get rid of time tracker. It's worthless garbage and impedes progress in accomplishing the goals we are supposed to meet. Ridiculous! Not to mention it was an instant blow to staff morale in that we feel like we are under a microscope."

"I'd like to have concrete measures in place to address reducing disproportion."

"Administration/management needs to quit 'fixing' numbers that falsely shows we are meeting the performance measures just so a specific Region or Office 'looks' good."

"Improved performance and accountability measures."

Others believe there is too much focus on numbers, and not enough on client and staff needs

"Less focus on performance measures, and more on the needs of each case."

"We need to value our workers, and not push them to be hitting the numbers so much."

"I would like to see the agency focus on children and families and what we can do to safely leave or reunite children with their parents. The agency's focus seems to be more focused on what measures they can meet."

"Expectations need to be realistic and achievable so that staff can experience 'success,' as opposed to constantly trying to meet performance measures, etc."

"A lot of focus on numbers/data and not focus on real social work. Performance measures that don't seem to reflect the reality of people's lives."

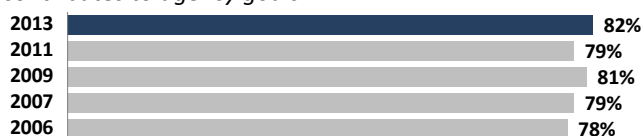"Numbers are more important than people, both clients and employees."

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

More than eight out of ten employees (82%) said they understand how their work contributes to agency goals. Less than one in ten (8%) indicated that they don't understand how their work supports the goals of the agency.
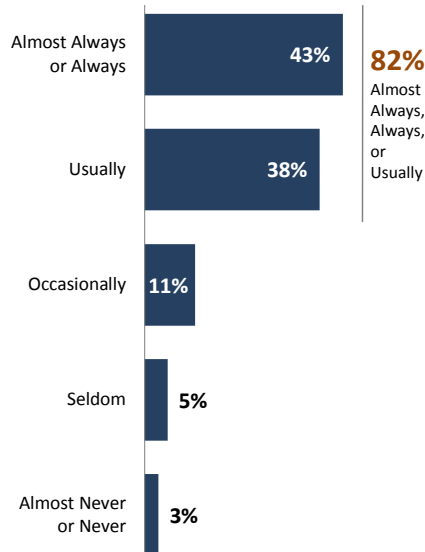
Employees like having:

- A clear understanding of agency goals
- Knowledge of how their job relates to those goals
- Enough time and resources to do excellent work
- A sense that their work is important

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they know how their work contributes to agency goals.

ANSWERS

Almost Always or Always	43%
Usually	38%
Occasionally	11%
Seldom	5%
Almost Never or Never	3%

82% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Year	
2013	82%
2011	79%
2009	81%
2007	79%
2006	78%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees understand the agency's goals, and how their work "fits" with those goals

"I like knowing that the work I do supports the mission/vision of the Administration and the Agency."

"I personally know how my core work fits into the goals of the division/agency."

"The purpose and outcome of my unit's work is very clear to me, and I know our program has a crucial impact on the safety of a vulnerable population in our state."

"I understand how my work relates to the goals of the agency."

"I know how my work contributes [to agency goals]. My leadership does not."

"I get a lot of satisfaction knowing that my work has contributed to a lot of the progress in our organization."

"I am committed to the administration's and agency's mission, and remain fulfilled that I am part of a solution to providing services for those who are unable to advocate for themselves."

Others know what agency goals are, but say they lack the time or resources to attain them

"We support these goals and values already. Help me do my job better by giving me time to do what really matters, don't act like I don't know what I should be doing."

"Less work (or more staff) so that we have more time to be thoughtful about the changes we are making."

"More help or a reduced workload. [With] the current workload, it is impossible to manage child safety."

"I'd like to see additional staff hired to improve the goal of the agency, which is to provide quality customer service."

"We are all killing ourselves just trying to stay afloat and as line workers, we will NEVER be able to accomplish what is expected of us under the current conditions. We either need more social workers in EVERY office (not just the large ones) or eliminate some of the expectations on us. Otherwise, quit complaining when performance standards are poor!!"

Some aren't clear about agency goals, or how their efforts contribute to those goals

"The division employees need to know what direction we are moving toward."

"More clarity on who our customer is. Is it all Washingtonians, the clients the agency serves, the caregivers of clients, the legislature, my co-worker, another agency? All of these have been described as 'customers.'"

"Better understanding between the regions and headquarters related to their respective roles and responsibilities."

"Better communication about plans, goals, and expectations from every level above me."

"I would like to see a global/systems view of all the initiatives and projects we have in place. I believe we need to weave together all of these so that employees can see the connections on what we are doing and why."

"Communication" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Brenda Boles, with permission

From the photographer:
"This is a DSHS/DVR [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation] customer. He has wonderful communication skills. This photo is intended to represent his delightful personality and telephone skills."

"Early Morning Safety Training" • Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Alli Smith, with permission

From the photographer:
"DSHS employees, along with state employees from other areas, are offered the chance to take various trainings including this one on responding to emergency situations – note the hard hats and grey dummy. Through the training, employees learn how to communicate with others whom they may never have met or worked with before and how to respond safely to disaster situations in order to provide as much aid to others as possible."

"Patriotism" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Trisha Mason, with permission

From the photographer:
"I am a US Navy Veteran. I served 8 years. I am now back in the civilian world but a part of me is still connected to our brave military. I am a single mother but I have instilled my pride for my country on to my daughter. This picture was taken on 4th of July. I was hanging my flag and my daughter had wrapped it around her shoulders like a security blanket. This reminds me of how our military is like a security blanket. Our soldiers, seamen, airmen, and marines make it easier for our countrymen to be able to sleep at night knowing that they have covered us with their bravery to face any threat that might occur. I am so proud to have served and now that I work for the State of Washington, my service to our people can continue."

CHAPTER 2

Supervisor/Manager Support

EMPLOYEES' OPINION OF SUPERVISOR AND MANAGER SUPPORT rose between 2011 and 2013. Although they believe the information received from management (addressed in Chapter 1), and management-driven decisions about the workplace (addressed in Chapter 5) could be improved, they are generally more satisfied with treatment by supervisors and managers than they were in the last survey. In addition, most are pleased with the connection they share with their immediate supervisor, and with the recognition they receive from supervisors and managers for the good work that they do.

General treatment by supervisors/managers. Employees' overall assessment of the treatment and support they receive from supervisor and managers was higher in 2013 than in 2011.

- **A positive trend in comments about treatment by supervisors and managers.** 2,400 employees (29% of those who made comments) complained about the treatment they receive from supervisors or managers. The percentage making such complaints decreased 12% from 2011. 1,123 respondents made positive comments about treatment from supervisors and managers – a 15% increase from 2011.

Supervisor/employee relationships. In spite of ongoing - and often frustrating- workplace issues, most employees have positive things to say about their supervisor, and their connection with him or her.

- **More praise for support and mentoring.** 587 employees (7% of those who made comments) commended the support and mentoring they receive from supervisors and managers. The percentage of employees making positive comments on this topic increased 15% from 2011.

- **Feedback remains constant.** 65% of employees said their supervisor gives them ongoing feedback that helps to improve their performance. This percentage is consistent with results in all previous surveys.
- **Respect remains high.** 83% of employees reported their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect.

Employee recognition. Employees are grateful when supervisors and managers acknowledge their good work. Some prefer simple, personal recognition of their efforts, while others would like to see more formal recognition of exceptional employee accomplishments. All agree that employee recognition is important to employee satisfaction.

- **Most employees feel their work and their efforts are recognized.** 51% of employees (up from 48% in 2011) said they receive recognition for a job well done.
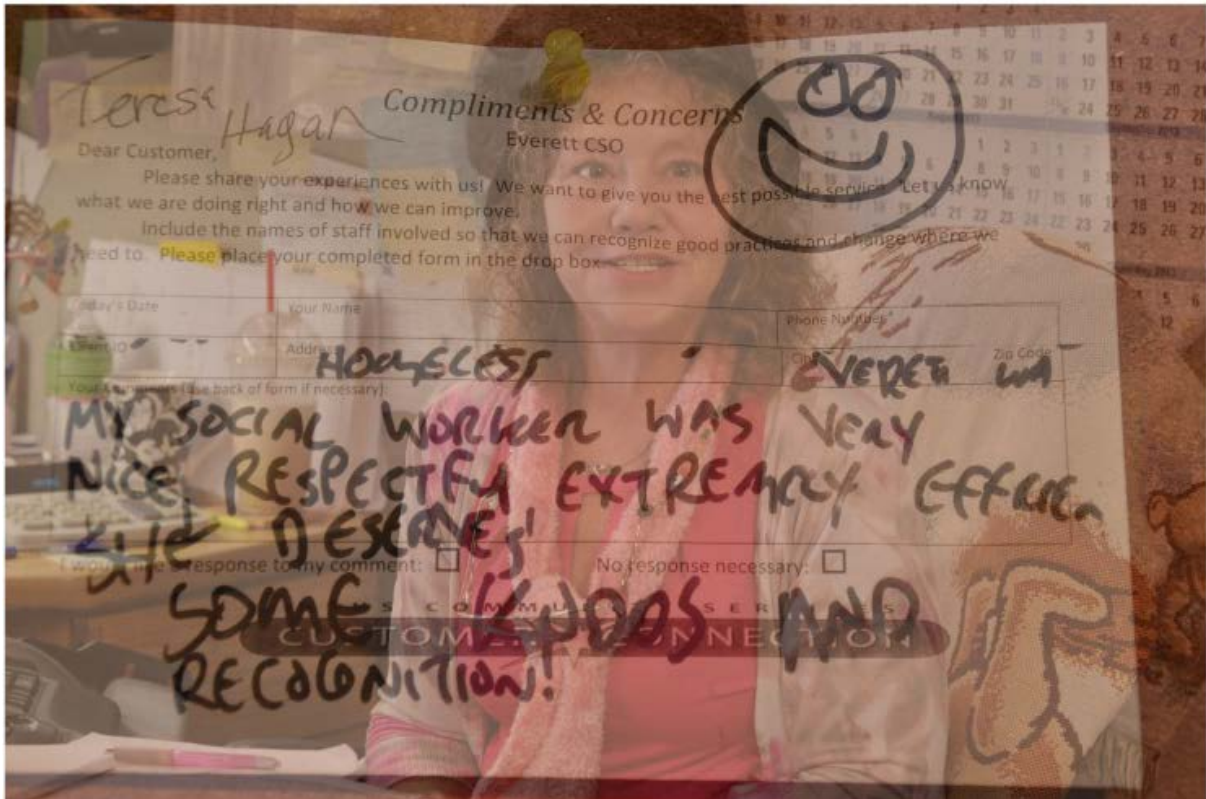
"The Heart of It" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Cindy Rochelle, with permission

From the photographer:
"In the almost 30 years I have worked for the state I have witnessed so very many people who have given their lives to improve the lives of others. I have an unending respect for each of them. She is a symbol for them all."

THEME. General treatment by supervisors and managers

Many employees commented on their treatment by supervisors and managers. 3,789 of the 8,343 employees who made comments addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support or other aspects of supervisor/manager behavior.

45% commented on this theme *(3,789)*

Their comments were:

63%
suggestions for change (2,400)

30%
positive
(1,123)

7%
mixed or neutral
(266)
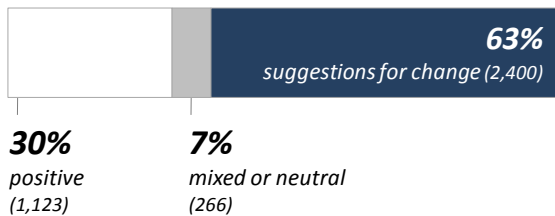
Three out of ten employees who mentioned supervisors and managers (30%) made positive comments. However, more than six out of ten (63%) suggested ways in which supervisors and managers can improve their treatment of employees.

Of the 3,789* who mentioned supervisor and manager treatment of employees:

- 1,477 (39%) addressed support, mentoring, and feedback (pages 26-27).
- 708 (19%) discussed staff recognition and awards (pages 28-29).
- 614 (16%) focused on courtesy and respect (pages 30-31).
- 779 (21%) wrote about manager fairness (Chapter 3, pages 35-36).
- 2,246 (59%) spoke to other issues concerning relationships with supervisors and managers. These issues are addressed throughout this report.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees want the support of their supervisors and managers

"We are lacking supervisor direction and support."

"My supervisor is very supportive and willing to help me advance in my current position."

"Support from management. We have none!"

"Our AA is very supportive and always gives good advice and is easy to talk to."

"I would recommend that supervisors and administration provide the respect and support that we as employees need in order to improve our performance and grow."

"I like that my supervisor is there to support me when I need it."

They also want recognition for their workplace accomplishments

"I'd like to see more positive feedback from supervisor/manager to line staff, especially when an assigned task is done well."

"We have a great team, and [supervisors] give us praise for a job well done."

"I would like to see morale boosters, awards and recognition given to line workers regularly."

"I like the respect and appreciation for initiating and completing needed tasks/projects."

"I must be doing great because I rarely speak with my supervisor, but some recognition of a job well done would be nice."

They appreciate supervisors and managers who are courteous and respectful

"Our supervisor respects what we do and how we do it."

"I feel that management and supervisors respect employees and want us to succeed and enjoy our job."

"I would like more trust and respect from management."

"My current supervisor is very respectful, courteous and supportive."

"I feel there are supervisors that use their authority to 'belittle' staff and make them feel incompetent."

*Issues listed total to more than 3,789 and more than 100%, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to management.

THEME. Supervisors and managers support and mentoring

1,477 of the 8,343 respondents commenting addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support and mentoring – including availability, helpfulness, and feedback.

**18%** commented on this theme *(1,477)*

Of the 1,477 respondents who wrote about supervisor and manager support and mentoring, four out of ten (40%) expressed satisfaction. 56% saw a need for improvement.

Staff are grateful for supervisors and managers who:

- Offer strong and consistent support
- Provide guidance *when needed*
- Avoid micro-management
- Freely share their knowledge and skills
- Encourage and enable staff in positive efforts
- Acknowledge staff accomplishments

Their comments were:

56%
suggestions for change (820)

40%
positive
(587)

5%
mixed or neutral
(70)
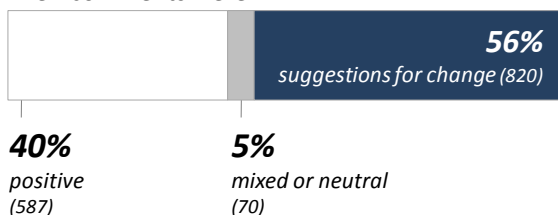
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Staff like supervisors and managers who are willing and able to support them

"My supervisor is very supportive, always encouraging. He tells me he appreciates the job I do and my dedication to clients."

"More support and guidance from the Senior Leadership Team."

"New leadership team is WONDERFUL! Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Deputy and our Director. Very supportive, acknowledge work well done, good at balancing the human inside the job and the job, listen well."

"I would like to see more moral support from supervisors."

"My supervisor is very supportive and helpful. He is always helping others in the office."

"That management be more supportive to the line workers. When we need help nobody is here, but they keep finding faults in our work."

"My supervisor is the best. She is strength-based, and steps in to provide utmost support to me at any time."

They dislike being micro-managed, but want support when it's needed

"I like the supervisor I work with. He gives you guidance, but lets you do your job and does not micro-manage."

"I would like the manager to be more nurturing and caring, instead of acting like a micro-managing tyrant."

"My supervisor trusts me and leaves me alone to do my job. She is there if and when I need her."

"Less micro-management by lead workers; treat me like an adult, support my needs, and don't breathe down my neck."

"My supervisor is very supportive, encouraging, and available for questions and assistance. She allows me independence and an appropriate amount of autonomy in my work."

They appreciate supervisors and managers with strong mentoring skills

"My supervisor is extremely knowledgeable about our entire work unit and always takes the time to support, instruct and lead anyone in our department who needs help."

"There could be more effort put into coaching and mentoring in my position."

"My direct supervisor is a great advocate and support. I am encouraged to pursue my interests."

"I would like to have more supervisors who have time and are available for staffing and work-related support."

"I appreciate my supervisor and know that her door is always open. She is a great mentor."

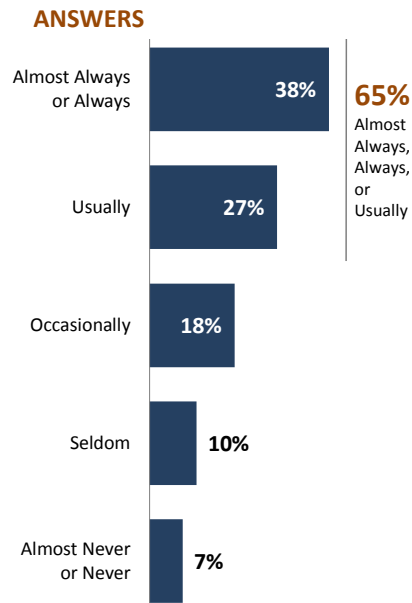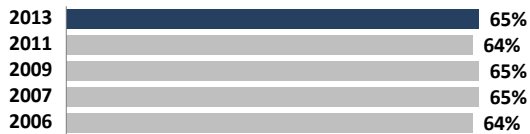"Management has resigned themselves to high turnover, so they do not take active effort to train and mentor staff."

"My supervisor models respect, appreciation and getting along, so our unit really enjoys working with each other."

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

Nearly two thirds of employees (65%) 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:

- Can provide useful feedback, based on their knowledge and experience
- Are consistent in offering such feedback
- Balance constructive criticism with well-deserved praise
- Are energetic and effective mentors
- Are committed to employees' development and well-being

There was no significant change between 2011 and 2013 in employee receipt of ongoing feedback.

Year		Percent
2013		65%
2011		64%
2009		65%
2007		65%
2006		64%

ANSWERS

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	38%
Usually	27%
Occasionally	18%
Seldom	10%
Almost Never or Never	7%

65% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees praise supervisors who provide clear and consistent feedback

"My supervisor does her best to see that all her team members can do their best job. Her constructive criticism is delivered very cleverly and appropriately."

"I like the ongoing feedback and support from my supervisor."

"My AA is energetic, supportive and involved. I feel very supported. He does not shy away from letting one know when they are in need of a correction and is the first to praise when one is doing a good job."

"I like the support I get from my supervisor and lead workers. They are very helpful and provide positive criticism and feedback."

"I have a wonderful supervisor who treats me like a professional and provides feedback and guidance."

They believe constructive feedback improves work performance

"I greatly appreciate my supervisor. I feel supported in decisions I make, and she gives me supportive feedback which has made me a better counselor."

"I'm able to grow and develop my skill set because my manager is an approachable, fantastic teacher."

"I like how I am given tools, feedback and encouragement to grow in this job."

"My supervisor assists me in thinking of other ways to do things."

"My supervisor is very supportive and provides positive feedback, as well as assistance when there is an opportunity to improve my skills."

Some employees would like more – and more useful – feedback from supervisors

"I would like feedback from my supervisor, good or constructive criticism."

"When I ask for direction from my supervisor, I get the 'You'll be fine' or 'I'm sure you're doing great' kind of feedback."

"I feel very disconnected from my supervisor, and do not get regular feedback."

"A supervisor should bring the weak areas of a worker (and everybody has them) to their attention and assist them in making improvements."

"There is little or no feedback on job performance, especially recognition for a job well done."
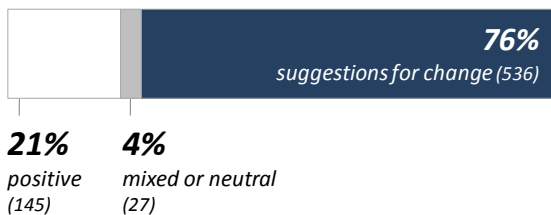
"I would personally like more feedback from my supervisor."

THEME. Recognition and awards

708 of the 8,343 employees who made comments addressed the importance of supervisors and managers recognizing and praising the good work of employees.

9% commented on this theme *(708)*

Of the 708 employees who commented about employee recognition, just over one in five (21%) are satisfied with the recognition they receive. However, more than three quarters (76%) feel the current methods of recognizing employees need improvement.

Employees value:

- Frequent acknowledgment of their good work, and their strong work ethic
- Special recognition for exceptional efforts and achievements
- Kudos for consistent positive contributions to specific projects or programs
- Praise for excellent work accomplished under trying circumstances

Their comments were:

76%
suggestions for change (536)

21%
positive
(145)

4%
mixed or neutral
(27)

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees want supervisors and managers to appreciate their hard work

"My work is appreciated and acknowledged – the value of this should never be underestimated."

"Supervisors need to acknowledge the hard work that we do."

"I appreciate my supervisor, my co-workers and the environment I work in. I receive encouragement all the way up the line on a job well done."

"Let staff know that they have done a good job and are appreciated."

"I feel my skills and contribution are appreciated."

They also want their skills and efforts to be recognized and rewarded

"Recognize staff contribution (in years past there was employee recognition – that doesn't happen anymore)."

"My immediate supervisor supports me and encourages me to do my utmost best. He gives kudos to his crew on a monthly basis and points out our achievements."

"I would like to see individuals be recognized for their efforts throughout the hospital more often."

"My skills are valuable to the office, and I am always recognized for doing a good job."

"I would like to get recognized for what I have done, not for what I did not do. I find my workplace very punitive."

"I like the support from my supervisor and appreciation of my skills."

"Recognize workers' contributions when they happen."

"My manager respects my opinions and recognizes my contributions to the team."

Many who commented on employee recognition feel unappreciated and unacknowledged

"It would be nice, if only once a year, to hear you're doing a good job. I do hear this quite often from social workers and co-workers, but NEVER from management."

"It would help to receive a little more appreciation for what I do."

"We never hear about our good work, or acknowledgment of our continued struggles against what seems like impossible odds. The 'Thank you for all you do' feels superficial, and more like an advertisement slogan with no feeling behind it."
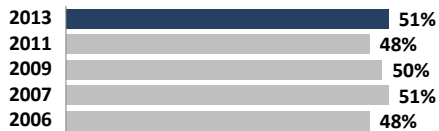
"An 'atta boy' every once in a while would be nice."

"Staff who show up every day for work, who have a near or perfect attendance, who rarely have unscheduled sick days, who show up even when the weather is bad, who are dedicated to their work, should be recognized and not taken for granted."

QUESTION. I receive recognition for a job well done

More than half of respondents (51%) reported they receive recognition for excellent work. Nearly three out of ten (27%) said they seldom or never receive recognition for good work they accomplish. Staff feel strongly that:
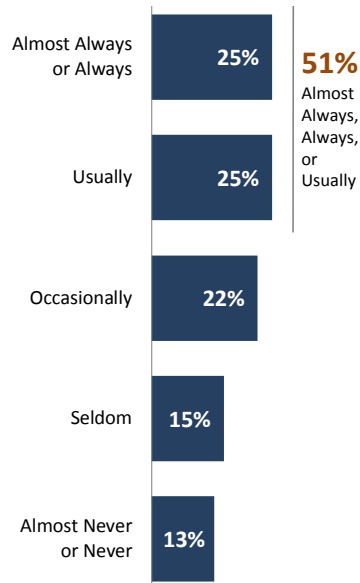
- Ongoing positive recognition from supervisors and managers matters
- Staff morale suffers if good work is not acknowledged and appreciated
- Individual accomplishments deserve to be noted and celebrated

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 *said they received recognition for a job well done.*

Year	%
2013	51%
2011	48%
2009	50%
2007	51%
2006	48%

Increase from 2011 to 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	25%
Usually	25%
Occasionally	22%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	13%

51% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Many staff feel their good work is recognized

"The past 5 years have been ones where I have been treated [by my supervisor] with respect, dignity and appreciation for my reliability, stability and calmness in handling clients and the workload."

"My supervisor is very good, always checking in, and recognizes and praises good work."

"I appreciate the recognition I receive for my work."

"Being told by supervisor that I am doing a good job is very encouraging to me."

"My leadership team is very supportive, and recognizes staff for a job well done. This makes me feel valued and motivated to do my best."

"My supervisor has taken the time to get to know all the team members and does not hesitate to praise staff for our time and efforts."

"My supervisor shows appreciation for my hard work."

"Things are, for the most part, going in the right direction since the last survey. There is more employee recognition."

Others would like to see more acknowledgment of staff accomplishments

"Line workers need to be supported by their Administration staff. Even small words of encouragement help a lot."

"I would like to be recognized as a valued member of my team by my supervisor."

"I do not receive praise from my supervisor or AA for a job well done."

"I would like to be treated with respect, and appreciated for the hard work that I do."

"I'd like to see supervisors pointing out positive things workers do, rather than constantly blaming them for things that aren't done."

"I would like to see, in my local office, more appreciation given to those who do an excellent job."

Some suggested specific ways to recognize staff

"Celebrate at the All Staff meeting with snacks or small awards, it builds a more positive atmosphere."

"An incentive program where staff get rewarded for making timelines."

"Because the division may not have the opportunity or resources to provide financial rewards, I would like to see the division recognize employees through other gestures, such as alternative work schedules, growth opportunities, and training."
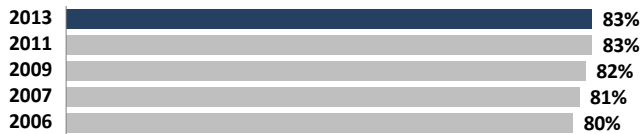
"Employee recognition needs to be more organized, and with more celebration. It should be a big deal."

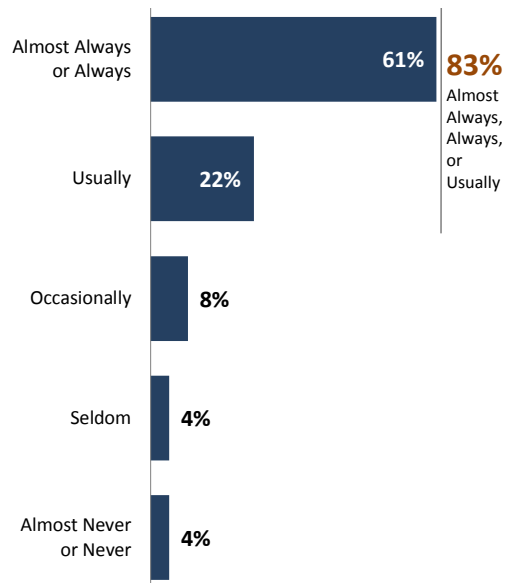# QUESTION. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect

More than eight out of ten employees (83%) reported their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect. Many are pleased by their supervisor's consideration.

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, patronizing, or accusatory. Some of these comments can be found below.

There was no significant change between 2011 and 2013 *in employee receipt of dignity and respect from supervisors.*

Year	
2013	83%
2011	83%
2009	82%
2007	81%
2006	80%

ANSWERS

Answer	Percentage
Almost Always or Always	61%
Usually	22%
Occasionally	8%
Seldom	4%
Almost Never or Never	4%

83% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff feel well respected by their supervisor

"I am treated with dignity and respect by my current supervisors, not just as a 'lackey dog.'"

"My supervisor supports, listens, is courteous and respectful of staff."

"I finally have a supervisor who respects me and works with me."

"My boss respects me and counts on me."

"My current supervisor treats me as a person, and not just a tool to get the job done."

"My supervisor and lead worker are exceptional leaders. They are extremely helpful in a respectful and kind manner."

"My direct supervisor and section manager are wonderful to work with. Both of them treat everyone with respect."

Some consider their supervisor's behavior to be disrespectful

"I would like a supervisor who knows and respects what we do. One who doesn't yell or cuss at us (as she does)."

"My supervisor. She reacts, and does not act proactively. Her first response to staff is distrustful or lacks respect – asking, 'Where have you been?' or, 'What are you doing' in tones that accuse."

"I would like a supervisor who knows what she is doing and doesn't treat workers as inferiors."

"I want a supervisor who isn't disrespectful."

"When my supervisor talks to me, I feel as if it isn't in the most appropriate way. I feel as if I am being talked down to and am not even given the benefit of the doubt. I work hard every day and feel like I should not be talked to this way."

"I would like to be treated with respect and dignity by my immediate supervisor."

"I would like my direct supervisor to treat me and my co-workers with respect, to stop harassing staff, and lead by example."

Staff want to be recognized and treated as professionals

"I would like to see us treated as professionals."

"I enjoy being treated as a professional, and respected for my professionalism."

"I would like to see social workers treated as professionals who know best how to manage their time."

"I appreciate being treated with respect, as a professional."

"More professional courtesy given to me from my supervisor."

"I enjoy having a higher level of responsibility, and being treated like a professional employee."

THEME. Courtesy and respect from supervisors/managers

614 of the 8,343 respondents who commented addressed this aspect of supervisor and manager behavior.

7% commented on this theme *(614)*

Their comments were:

74%
suggestions for change (455)

23%
positive
(142)

3%
mixed or neutral
(17)

Of the 614 respondents who wrote comments about courtesy and respect, nearly one quarter (23%) said supervisors and managers treat them respectfully. However, nearly three quarters (74%) see a need for improvement in this area.
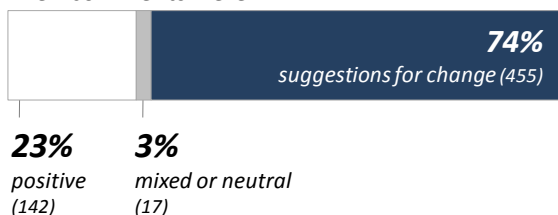
Staff want:

- Respect and kindness from their superiors
- Serious consideration of their ideas and opinions
- Recognition of their skills and expertise

Staff dislike:

- Being denied the respect they deserve
- Being demeaned or distrusted by their superiors
- Being supervised by a "bully"

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees like supervisors and managers who treat them with courtesy and respect

"It is like a breath of fresh air to work with a supervisor who leads with respect."

"If I'm not able to reach all of my goals by the timeline that has been set, I'm not demeaned or abused, but supported to continue working and managing the revolving tasks that are coming in."

"I especially like that local leadership is kind to their workers."

"My new supervisor and AA – I feel I'm really being heard/respected, and staff and their thoughts are important to them."

"I like the positive support of my supervisor. Everyone is treated with respect, dignity and kindness."

"My manager is awesome. She treats everybody with respect and dignity. She is kind, gentle but firm."

They dislike working for those who disrespect them

"Management has put into practice a demeaning way of treating staff in all areas. No one feels trusted or respected anymore. It is a very sad workplace these days."

"If a worker begins to struggle or have a hard time with a certain aspect of their job, for whatever reason, they are treated punitively. Rarely is any effort made to assist the worker in resolving the issue in a respectful manner."

"Line staff should be treated in a more respectful manner."

"I would like supervisors to respect us, showing professionalism instead of yelling at employees, persecuting employees for the littlest things such as not being at their desks when supervisor walked by (we also use restrooms, they should know that)."

"Management needs to treat field workers, especially our senior workers, with respect so they could do quality work."

"Would like workers treated with respect. Would like supervisors not to cuss at workers. Would like supervisors to explain what needs to be done, rather than assuming the workers know."

Some employees see their supervisors or managers as bullies

"We all make mistakes, but I feel that the way that supervisors talk to me and some other employees is like being bullied."

"I want the Area Administrator to stop bullying workers/supervisors with rude comments."

"Stop the bullying and intimidation about how you can be replaced. Change the mind set of many supervisors and AAs that bullying, disrespect and intimidation are a healthy way to run a company."

"I'd like my supervisor to stop being a bully and take some 'sensitivity' training."

"Change management. They continue to bully staff, and look the other way when supervisors bully staff."

"Foggy Morning at the Dog Park"
Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS
Employees
By Louise Bohe, with permission

From the photographer:
"DSHS employees at play. As the fog dispersed, a lovely fog rainbow remained."

"School House" • Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By James Parry, with permission

From the photographer:
"Bike ride on HWY 2, East of Waterville, Washington."

"Predator" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Mary M. Warwick, with permission

From the photographer:
"I have a personal passion for the Eagles when they come nesting here in the great Northwest area. This was taken in March the beginning of the winter thaw."

Fairness and Diversity

CHANGES IN FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY MEASURES ARE MIXED, BUT GENERALLY POSITIVE. The responses to two standard questions about fairness, discrimination, and agency support for a diverse workforce are the most positive in the history of this survey. The vast majority of comments about manager fairness were critical, much the same as in 2011. The percentage of negative comments about favoritism or discrimination connected to diversity issues rose in 2013 after a dip in 2011, returning to previous levels. The number of comments on this topic remained relatively small.

Standard questions about fairness, discrimination, and support for a diverse workforce. The survey includes two questions that reflect employee perceptions of discrimination – one relating to fair treatment in the workplace, and one relating to agency support for a diverse workforce. As noted above, the scores in 2013 are the highest since the survey began.

- **Fair treatment reached a new high in 2013.** 72% of employees said, "In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination." This is up from 68% in 2011 and slightly higher than the previous high of 71% in 2009.

- **Support for diverse workforce also set a record in 2013.** 68% of respondents agreed, "My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce." This is an increase from the previous high of 64%, recorded in both 2011 and 2009.

Comments about fairness and diversity. Complaints about manager fairness were consistent with earlier surveys. Complaints about discrimination against protected groups, and negative comments about diversity issues in general, both increased from 2011, returning to the levels of the 2007 and 2009 surveys.

- **Comments about manager fairness held steady.** 9**%** of employees made critical comments about manager fairness – the same percentage seen in both the 2011 and 2009 surveys.

- **Few comments about diversity; negative comments returned to previous levels.** 185 of the 8,343 employees (2%) made negative comments about treatment of protected groups. An additional 115 made other negative comments related to diversity, including reverse discrimination, nepotism, "good old boy/girl" practices, and sexual harassment. These comments were more numerous than in 2011, returning to previous levels.

"Close-up Water on Leaf" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Peggy Quade, with permission
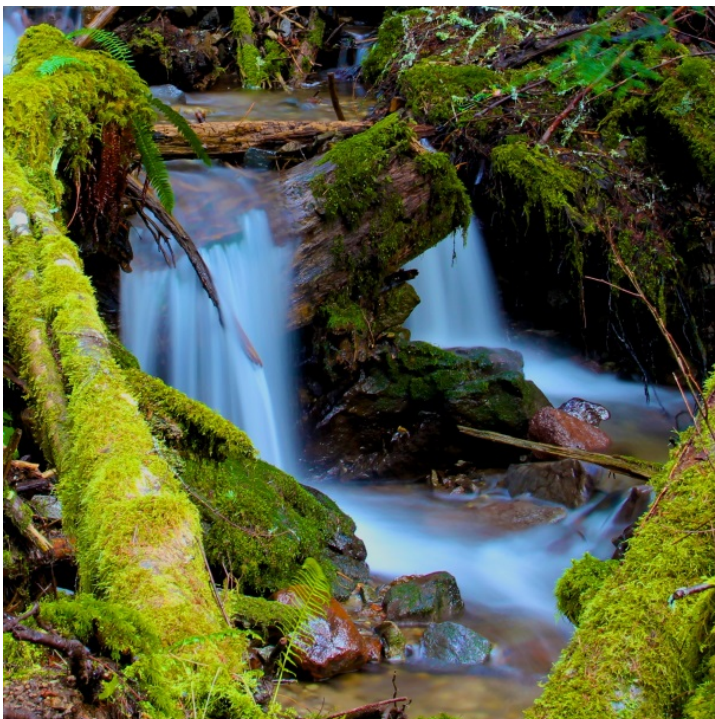
"Mossy" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Doug Gentry, with permission

From the photographer:
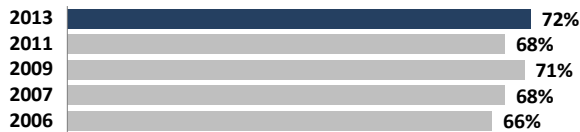*"I'll drive around in the mountains on a weekend and look for little streams like this. Each one has its own beauty."*

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

ANSWERS

72% of employees said they are treated fairly. 15% reported on unfairness in their workplace. Fewer staff in residential facilities feel they are treated fairly (64%) compared to other staff (76%).

In commenting about unfair treatment, some staff made general observations. Others pointed out supervisors and managers have "favored" workers. These workers receive better treatment, are held to less rigid work standards, and are expected to complete less work than their co-workers.

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 64-65.

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	42%
Usually	30%
Occasionally	13%
Seldom	8%
Almost Never or Never	7%

72% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they are treated fairly, without discrimination.

Year	%
2013	72%
2011	68%
2009	71%
2007	68%
2006	66%

Increase from 2011 to 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01
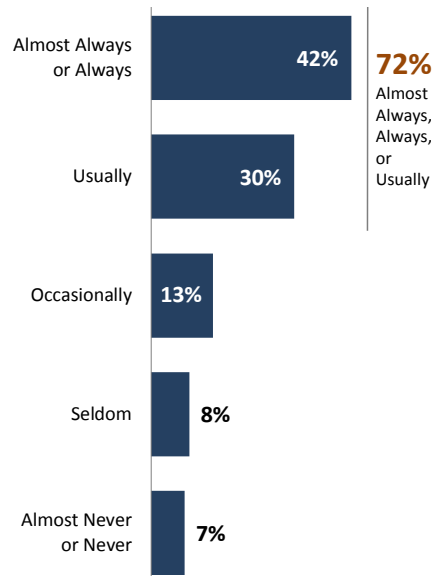
► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff feel they are treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner

"The managers are fair and consistent."

"I have a new supervisor that doesn't show favoritism. It's a relief!"

"I appreciate that I am held to the same standards as anyone else within my section."

"People are treated fairly, without discrimination."

"The supervisor and lead worker treat us with fairness, dignity and respect."

"I like the non-discriminatory atmosphere being practiced by the management."

Some staff report that not all workers are treated the same, or held to the same standards

"There are definite 'cliques' in this office, and a lot of favorites."

"If a line staff even acts like he is thinking about violating policy, then they are sanctioned. Unless, of course, they are buddies with those in management, then they get to do what they want."

"The leadership team is inconsistent with the treatment of staff. Extreme favoritism is a never-ending issue."

"I have seen certain staff be reprimanded for errors, while other staff are not reprimanded for the same errors."

"The area administrator has targeted specific employees for her ire. She treats employees in my workplace very different, depending on her personal relationship with that person."

"I would like to see a more consistent, fair application of discipline across the hospital. Many people get preferential treatment."

"There are favorite employees who can never do anything wrong."

Others see some workers shouldering more than their fair share of the workload

"More equality in the workplace in terms of assignments and expectations."

"Now that we can fill vacant positions, work assignment should get spread out more, versus only giving employees that do good work more work."

"Reasonable caseloads and equal distribution of cases. I have 26 cases, whereas my unit colleagues have 15-19."

"If we do good work we get more work, those who can't do it or are not 'trusted' get less work."

THEME. Manager fairness

779 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of management fairness.

**9%** commented on this theme *(779)*

Of the 779 employees* who wrote about manager fairness, 94% said there was room for improvement.
6% made positive or mixed/neutral comments.

Employees dislike managers who:

- Favor some staff over others
- Limit the opportunities of some staff to advance in their careers
- Hand out perks and privileges unevenly
- Offer more perks and privileges to some staff, and fewer to others
- Retaliate against staff who speak their mind

Their comments were:

94%
suggestions for change (729)
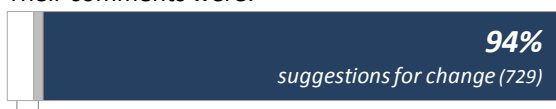
5%
positive
(37)

2%
mixed or neutral
(13)

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees resent unfairness in hiring, promotion and growth opportunities

"If you are not 'in the clique' or 'on the homecoming court,' so to speak, you will not get promoted. Higher-ups handpick friends to hire into support roles."

"They have a hiring process that does not hire the best, but continues to hire their friends and family members."

"The request by the Secretary for persons to sit on streamlining committees, focus groups and other such 'workplace improvement groups' are filled with handpicked 'yes people' by management."

Some feel supervisors distribute perks and privileges unfairly

"Flexible schedules are only offered to some people, and are not available for others. As long as there is coverage, there should not be an issue with having flex schedules."

"Everyone should be able to have vacation time when they want, not just a select few."

"My own supervisor has favorites and allows some workers in my unit to NOT ANSWER phones even when our unit has multiple calls coming in."

"Fairness with scheduling. The same workers always get overtime."

"I'd like to see people fair on benefits. Regarding school, the staff has right to improve his/her education. However, some of them forced to quit their work and continue their school, but others are favored and arranged schedule for them."

"My supervisor never has to fill out a leave slip when she comes in late, but myself and another subordinate do."

Others fear retaliation for voicing their concerns

"There is such fear of retaliation by the director that very few people will take the risk of making comments."

"No one dares to show opposition to [area administrator], as she excels in documenting every mistake and excessive monitoring to find ways to fire people."

"If you speak of something that is concerning to you, you are not a team player, and you are then treated badly."

"When [the supervisor] is advised that things are not correct, he retaliates against whomever is questioning his authority."

"My voice is NOT heard. When I do speak up, I end up in trouble, labeled, or ignored."

"Staff don't feel safe expressing themselves to supervisors, because people who did were picked on and bullied into silence."

*This count does not include complaints specific to unfairness related to diversity issues. These are addressed later in this chapter.
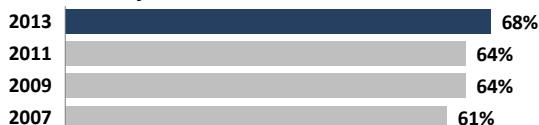
QUESTION. My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce

68% of employees said their agency shows support for a diverse workforce.* 14% reported a lack of such support.

Employees want to work with diverse staff and clients, and to have supervisors and managers treat all workers in a respectful and inclusive way. They also want fairness in hiring, promotions, and staff accountability.
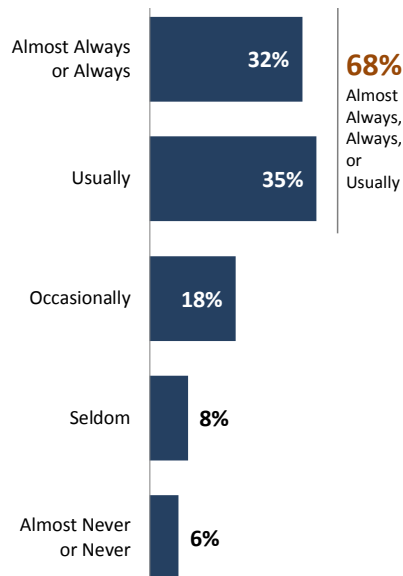
Some employees indicated their desire for more diverse supervisors, managers and co-workers; a workforce that reflects the clients and communities they serve; and increased diversity training.

***More staff in 2013 than in 2011** said their agency supports a diverse workforce.*

Year	Percent
2013	68%
2011	64%
2009	64%
2007	61%

Increase from 2011 to 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	32%
Usually	35%
Occasionally	18%
Seldom	8%
Almost Never or Never	6%

68% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff are pleased to be part of DSHS's diverse workforce

"The cultural diversity in our office is superb. There is a rich flow of ideas, comments and suggestions from a diverse group of workers. I do not wish for this to change."

"I enjoy working with a diverse group of individuals who have helped to broaden my horizons, professionally and personally."

"I enjoy the diversity within the workforce, as well as clientele."

"I love doing my job. It gives me the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people from different nationalities and backgrounds. This includes staff members and clients."

Some want more staff diversity, particularly at the management level.

"It is critical to community relationship building that there are minorities in key positions that are able to dialogue with community leaders about the department's practice focus."

"I'd like to see a commitment by this agency to hiring a diverse group of individuals to work at all levels of the agency."

"More men and women of color promoted to supervisor/management positions."

"More of an ethnic mix in the worker composition and leadership."

Others want a workforce that mirrors the diversity of their clients and communities

"We have no ethnic minority supervisors in our office, and very few ethnic minority or bilingual staff. This does not make sense when you look at the population we serve. Our office should reflect our community."

"I would like to see minorities in supervisory, consultant, as well as management positions in order to have a staff that mirrors the clientele."

Some staff see a need for more and better diversity training

"More staff training offered/required to encourage cultural sensitivity/cultural competence within the workplace."

"I would like to see supervisor/manager training in ethics, discrimination, favoritism, diversity, communication and overall respect for subordinates."

"I would like workers to have more ongoing Diversity/Cultural training (real training, not just sit and watch a video)."

*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).
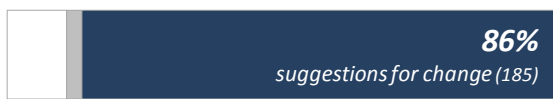
THEME. Favoritism or discrimination involving diversity issues

214 of the 8,343 who made comments addressed discrimination against protected groups.

3% commented on this theme *(214)*

Their comments were:

86%
suggestions for change (185)

11%
positive
(23)

3%
mixed or neutral
(6)

23 of the 214 respondents are satisfied with agency diversity. 6 made mixed or neutral comments. The majority (185*) addressed discrimination related to protected groups:

- 76 commented in general terms on the need to improve diversity and lessen discrimination
- 74 mentioned unequal treatment due to race, ethnicity, culture, or language
- 26 referred to unfair treatment based on gender. (Comments on sexual harassment can be found on page 39, and are not included in the total)
- 21 spoke about age discrimination
- 20 made comments about bias against employees with disabilities
- 3 addressed sexual preference

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

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

"Institutional racism is a huge problem that continues to be covered up at every level."

"I don't know how many negative, derogatory comments I have heard about Indians or Tribes, far too many to count."

"If you're white and get into trouble you get to stay, but don't be black and get into trouble, they will get you out of here so quickly, or have the police at the other side."

"One of my co-workers speaks Spanish, is certified, and is not being paid for his interpreter skills. He has done all the paperwork and gets the runaround from management. That behavior does not support the diversity of our staff."

"Cultural diversity focus seems to be overlooking Hispanics and Asians."

Others are disturbed by unequal treatment related to gender or sexual preference

"Too many men, that were not good line staff, are promoted to upper management and coordinator positions. I would like to see more women and female minorities in upper management, or other positions that pay over $50,000 per year."

"Still some intolerance for LGBT – staff have overheard negative comments, and continue to hide their orientation."

"I feel discriminated against. I am a white male, and it seems those who are advancing or have advanced are female and/or other classifications that are considered special (I am not referring to race)."

"The only people hired here are friends and family, no chance if you are black, gay or a female."

"Less discrimination against men!"

"The men are treated better, and differently, from the women in my unit."

Some staff reported on bias directed at employees because of age or disabilities

"Younger workers are treated well. Older workers are not treated well. Younger workers have more privileges and are treated well by supervisors, promoted, while older workers are rejected."

"I have seen supervisors treat employees unfairly when they have a disability. This needs to change, especially because we are supposed to have a culture of respect."

"Stop the age discrimination for those 35 and younger, who are capable of doing their jobs despite their age."

"She's a horrible supervisor – disrespectful, hostile, discriminates against certain staff because they have some type of disability."

"They are actively trying to get rid of the senior seasoned workers by intimidation and harassment."

*Individual areas of concern will add to more than 185, as some employees mentioned more than one protected group. This count does not include groups discussed on page 39.

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

Some employees criticized diversity within the agency, but did not focus on discrimination against protected groups.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

55 employees complained about "reverse discrimination," or favoritism toward protected groups.

"There is work toward diversity within our workforce, which I agree with, but the manner in which this takes place often seems like it discriminates against the Caucasian staff."

"Cessation of mass e-mailings of videos which insinuate that all white people are racist."

"There is a large divide in our office between Hispanic and other cultures. It's encouraged by management who speak Spanish in unit meetings, all staff meetings, and in the lunchroom. I think sometimes people forget diversity works both ways."

"Diversity seems only to apply if you are not white."

"Stop illegal hiring practices such as targeting specifically Latino, African American, or any other race who will be hired regardless of whether or not they meet minimum qualifications and are the best candidate."

"There is a reverse discrimination issue happening where minorities get away with more negative behavior for a longer period of time, while 'white' people' are held to a higher standard and are dealt with more harshly than their minority co-workers."

"Address discrimination/racism directed towards whites."

"I would like to see a culture of inclusion on issues of race and ethnicity in the office, and drop the agenda of name-calling and finger-pointing at white people."

32 employees believe family members of other employees are given preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, or supervisory practices

"Do away with the nepotism – this is a common practice with DSHS. Just look at the number of spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, sons and daughters that get hired into this agency."

"The most qualified candidate should be hired. Not the person related to so-and-so."

"Stop the nepotism. If you aren't related, you aren't respected."

"I would love to see a division that isn't hiring based upon family relationships, and I would like to see family members of managers have to do the same workload without special privilege or having jobs handed to them."

"How does DDS justify promotions of family members and friends when their performance, education and attitude are lower than other candidates?"

"Stop the nepotism already. How many relatives – blood, in-laws, or 'by marriage' – can one administration handle anyway?"

18 employees mentioned "nepotism," and 18 criticized "good ol' boy/girl" practices, without explaining the connection to protected groups. (These comments are counted separately from the family member and gender comments, because some use the words "nepotism" and "good ol' boy/girl" to mean cronyism.)

"They have a good old boy network that doesn't hold its members accountable for anything."

"Move away from the favoritism and nepotism that is rampant out here."

"The 'good old girls' around here need to move on, and a fresh new outlook on who we are, what we do, and how we do it needs to happen."

"An end to nepotism."

"The 'good old boy' way of doing things; the 'it's not what you know but who you know' way some workers get promotions. It needs to stop. Workers that are truly qualified need to be in these positions."

"Way too much nepotism in the way hiring is done."

5 employees commented on religious discrimination, and 4 employees expressed concern about sexual harassment.

"People who reveal any shape or form of their faith – even through some silly decorations – are targeted, threatened, and face the consequence of possibly losing their job."

"Less sexual harassment."

"I would like to see greater across-the-board acceptance of persons of faith."

"I wish co-workers, especially supervisors, wouldn't curse or say sexually inappropriate things. Even in sexual harassment classes I've heard co-workers joking around. It seems like the majority don't care. Some of us do, but we're outnumbered."

"Really Sweet" • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

From the photographer:
"Honey and bees removed by beekeepers from a historical cottage inside wall at Western State Hospital."

"I Love My Kinky Hair" • Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Tawny Hembry, with permission

From the photographer:
"Kinky Coily Hair. Kinky Coily hair is my natural hair. I wouldn't have it any other way. Kinky Coily hair can be Molded Twisted Braided. Kinky Coily hair loves to be watered like a flower. Kinky coily hair needs lots of moister so my curls will define. Kinky coily hair does not need a comb or brush just your fingers will do. Kinky coily hair can be worn big and proud. Kinky coily hair."

"Riding Baja" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Scott Jones, with permission

From the photographer:
"I took this picture while on a bicycle tour of the Bajan Peninsula in Mexico. This was a supported tour riding from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas in about 12 days. The afternoon I took this picture we has picked up a tail wind which was really helping with riding so I was fairly relaxed and a bit bored. I held the camera with my right hand, keeping my bike under control with my left hand and snapped a few pictures as I was riding, thus the ground gives the perception of moving, being blurred, when actually it is the bike that is moving."

CHAPTER 4

The Daily Job

JOB SATISFACTION INCREASED OVERALL in 2013, due in part to the slowly improving economy and a gradual lessening of employee concerns about growing workloads, diminishing resources, and job loss. As in all previous surveys – but to an even greater degree – employees are pleased with the opportunity to help clients, have positive connections with most of their co-workers, and have chances to learn and grow on the job.

Overall Job satisfaction. There was general improvement in employees' satisfaction with their jobs between 2011 and 2013.

- **Overall satisfaction increased.** 67% of employees (up from 61% in 2011) said they are satisfied with their job.
- **Negative comments about satisfaction decreased.** 790 employees (9% of those who made comments) complained about the workplace atmosphere, morale or job satisfaction. The percentage making such complaints decreased 29% from 2011.

Job Characteristics. As in previous surveys, employees expressed gratitude for the chance to work closely with clients, the support they receive from most of their co-workers, and chances to learn and grow in the workplace. Some are pleased with flexible schedules and telecommuting, while others want these options. Fewer complained about incompetent co-workers, heavy workloads, and limits to their professional development.

- **Helping clients remains an important source of job satisfaction.** 2832 employees (34% of those who made comments) spoke of their positive experiences working with clients. They outlined numerous ways they find meaning and satisfaction in helping clients improve their lives.

- **Co-workers – at least *most* co-workers – make the job easier.** 3,417 employees (41% of those who made comments) mentioned co-workers. Most of these comments (62%) applauded co-workers for their support, teamwork, and professionalism. In addition, 67% of employees said a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in their workgroup, up from 64% in 2011. The proportion of workers citing concerns about co-worker competence fell by 23%.

- **Opportunities to learn and grow are increasing.** The majority of employees (56%, up from 48% in 2011) said they have opportunities to learn and grow. 820 employees (10% of those who made comments) expressed appreciation for the autonomy and chances to learn and grow available in their workplace. 250 employees (3% of those commenting) reported they want less micro-management at work, and more opportunities for professional growth and expanded responsibilities.

- **Flexible schedules and telecommuting are coveted.** 795 employees (10% of those who made comments) addressed schedules or work location. Of those, about half were pleased with their schedule or ability to telecommute, while half suggested they want more workers to have the option to flex their schedule or work location.

- **Complaints about heavy workloads are decreasing.** 537 employees (6% of those who made comments) shared feelings that they, and their co-workers, are burdened by excessive workloads. This represents a 41% decrease in the frequency of complaints about heavy workloads between 2011 and 2013.

"Pose" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Lauren Mills, with permission

"Buck 2" • Honorable Mention (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Debbie Shepardson, with permission

From the photographer:
"This is our big guy on the Echo Glen campus. He helps create the beautiful little fawns that resident and staff enjoy watching."
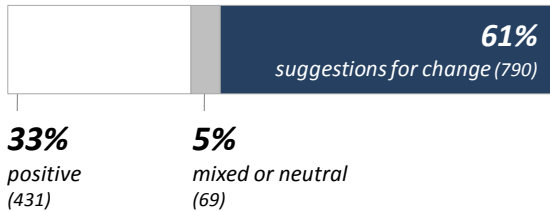
THEME. General satisfaction

The majority of comments from the employee survey outlined specific things employees were pleased about, or thought should be changed. However, 1,290 of the 8,343 employees made more general comments about workplace atmosphere, worker morale, and overall job satisfaction.

15% commented on this theme *(1,290)*

Their comments were:

61%
suggestions for change (790)

33%
positive
(431)

5%
mixed or neutral
(69)

Many comments in the "general satisfaction" category speak to the overall environment in job sites throughout DSHS. However, some comments are quite specific in their description of work settings that are:

- Calm and comfortable
- Supportive and encouraging
- Negative and nerve-wracking
- Unsupportive and unsatisfying
- Demoralizing for staff

This category contained many "one word" responses. 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 are well satisfied with their workplace

"There is no unnecessary drama at work. I think I love that the most. It is a comfortable place, and I feel appreciated."

"I am currently in an extremely supportive environment where people are valued as human beings."

"The work environment is very encouraging. The people I work with are both professional and personable."

"There is a level of comfort and welcome in the workplace that is nice to be around."

"The environment is positive and upbeat! Everyone supports one another, and feels supported by management."

"Minimal emotional stress. A positive work environment."

Most who commented on job satisfaction feel their work environment needs improvement

"There is nothing satisfying about being in the office. The atmosphere is negative and frustrating."

"The workplace is frequently non-supportive to the point of hostile."

"Most Children's Administration employees are in burn-out mode. There is simply too much work to do it all well."

"The work environment has been very stressful, with a lot of disrespectful comments and talking behind people's backs."

"We work in a fear-based environment with little support from upper management."

"There is such an atmosphere that no one knows who to trust, or who is going to stab you in the back."

"My office is a terrible place to work. I think a lot of the employees feed off the negativity customers bring in with them."

Some see strong ties between certain workplace issues and poor morale

"I have never seen morale so low. This is brought about by high workloads, no training, and social promotions."

"If one person gets in trouble, everyone gets punished, and cliques are bad around campus. This all brings down morale!"

"It would raise morale to have pay raises on a regular basis. I make less now than when I started many years ago."

"The workload is unmanageable, even for the most skilled of workers. This creates an experience of failure that is brutal for social workers and crushes morale."

"Morale is low. Workers don't feel appreciated or valued."

"When there is such a separation between upper management and line staff it does very little to increase [office] morale."

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

67% of respondents said they are generally satisfied with their job. However, 14% registered some complaints.
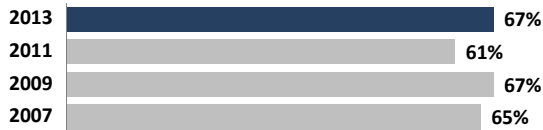
Staff like:

- Serving others in meaningful ways
- Work that matches their skills and interests
- A workplace - and a work pace - that suits them
- Positive connections with clients and colleagues
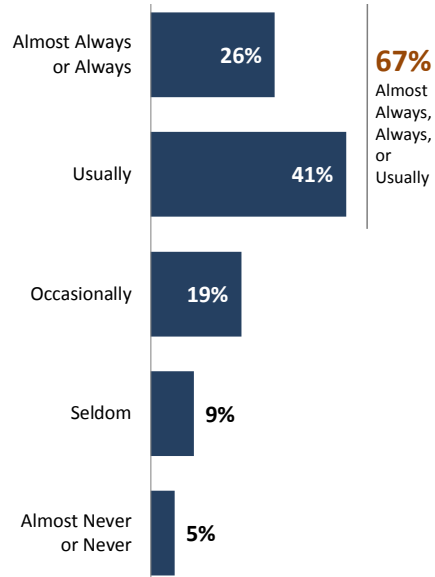
They are frustrated by:

- Lack of time and resources to provide good services
- Lack of opportunity to use their skills
- Constant work-related changes
- A negative or stressful work environment
- Feeling discounted, and lacking a "voice"

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said they are satisfied with their job.

2013	67%
2011	61%
2009	67%
2007	65%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Almost Always or Always	26%
Usually	41%
Occasionally	19%
Seldom	9%
Almost Never or Never	5%

67% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff are pleased with the work they do

"My office is a fun place to work. I love working with the clients and their families."

"I like being a financial worker, and having my own work space."

"It is gratifying to help disabled clients obtain the help they need to stay in their homes as long as possible."

"I like the simplicity, quietness of my job. I have set tasks to do, and I do them efficiently and effectively."

"I love being able to assist families and come up with plans in order to keep kids safe in the home, or out of the home."

"After many years of carrying a caseload, it's nice to be able to do a resource job well! This was really a perfect fit for me."

"Working with clients and families is challenging and rewarding. I like being able to use my skills and knowledge to make a difference."

"My supervisor is outstanding! My co-workers are all a close second. Everyone in the agency is extremely friendly and helpful."

"I love my job – just the right amount of responsibility to always keep me hopping, but not so much to feel overwhelmed."

Some are unhappy with specific aspects of their work situation

"I pride myself on a strong work ethic. The workload of my job is just too great to complete well in 40 hours each week."

"I'd like to see fewer changes. Between FamLink, streamlining, region shifts, policy changes, etc., it's hard to keep it all straight."

"My strengths and skills are not utilized in a meaningful way."

"Morale in the office is horrible. Employees feel like they are not part of the equation."

"Sufficient staff and resources to do the vast array of needed work to maintain the service system, and to respond meaningfully to those we are supposed to serve."

"I would like to have time to do group and individual sessions with patients."

"The way the DSHS call center is currently structured is exhausting and unhealthy. It's isolating and depressing."

"Most of our team feel disrespected, treated like children, not able to make choices."
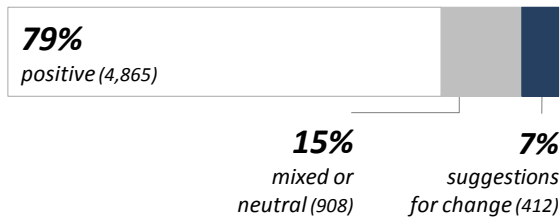
THEME. Job characteristics – an overview

6,185 of the 8,343 employees who made comments addressed job characteristics, such as helping clients, work schedules, workload, and autonomy and growth opportunities.

74% commented on this theme *(6,185)*

Their comments were:

79% *positive (4,865)*		

15% *mixed or neutral (908)* **7%** *suggestions for change (412)*

Nearly eight out of ten (79%) of the 6,185 employees who made comments about job characteristics described their job in positive terms. Less than one in ten (7%) offered suggestions for change.

Employees appreciate :

- Working with and assisting clients
- Flexible work hours and reasonable workloads
- Control over *how* they do their job
- Opportunities for professional learning and growth

They don't like:

- Rigid work schedules
- "Impossible" workloads
- Jobs that don't allow for self-development or self-direction

These job characteristics are discussed in more detail on pages 46-51.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees are grateful for the chance to help their clients

"I enjoy working directly with clients, and assisting them in getting services in place."

"I like being able to take care of patients, and contribute to their well-being."

"I enjoy the fact that my work matters, and I get to help people who are vulnerable and need a voice. "

"I love that I am able to help people in the community, and hopefully better their lives."

"I like knowing that my job contributes to the safety, well-being and permanence of children and families."

"It feels good to make a positive difference in the lives of our clients."

They want flexible work schedules and manageable workloads

"I like being able to make myself available to our clients during hours that they (the clients) are actually available. This is often outside of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM."

"More flexibility in schedule – work from home, work on weekends, work at night."

"I can telecommute and work from home. It's a huge plus, and has made a difference in my overall health and wellness."

"I would like to have a manageable caseload. I thought we were supposed to follow Braam mandates."

"I have plenty of concrete work to do, but I am not overly stressed."

"There is too much to do. There is not enough time to get the work done. I would say that the work demands are 'merciless.'"

They also want work that provides autonomy, challenges, and opportunities to learn and grow

"I like the autonomy that's been granted to me to shape the job as I see fit. That autonomy allows me to quickly adapt to client/customer needs."

"My position has absolutely no room to grow or get promoted. I will literally stay in the same mind-numbing job until I retire, with nothing but my meager yearly raise to keep me going."

"I like that I'm not micro-managed. I'm allowed to use my good judgment, training and knowledge to get the job done."

"More staff empowerment to make decisions in their area of expertise."

"I like that the job is always challenging. I learn new things all the time which helps me grow professionally and personally."

THEME. Helping and interacting with clients

2,842 of the 8,343 respondents who commented mentioned working with and helping clients.

34% commented on this theme *(2,842)*

Their comments were:

99.6%
positive (2,832)

0.4%
*mixed or neutral (8), or
suggestions for change (2)*

Nearly all of the 2,842 employees (99.6%) who commented on working with clients consider their ability to connect with clients, and to help those clients, to be the most important and gratifying part of their work life. As in previous surveys, when employees were asked, "What do you like best about your current job?" they most often spoke of their interactions with clients and their families.

Staff value:

- Getting to know their clients
- Giving clients access to needed services
- Helping clients make positive changes
- Being a part of their clients' successes

They are frustrated when:

- They don't have time to provide their clients the attention and service they deserve
- Clients' behavior is entitled, demanding or aggressive

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff who commented on working with and helping clients find it a positive and rewarding experience

"I like making a difference in residents' quality of life, safety, care, services, and their living environment."

"The clients are very interesting. Getting to know them is the best part of the job."

"Helping someone who is not able to help themselves makes me very happy. Even if the person I'm helping doesn't appreciate what I'm doing, I feel rewarded."

"I enjoy working with youth, helping them transition from institutional settings to community-based programs."

"I love my interaction with disadvantaged youth. I like to believe that the work we do helps them heal."

"I like helping clients who are going through difficult times process their application, with a respectful attitude and an empathetic ear."

"We're directly helping families to improve their economic situation by collecting child support. I'm proud of the work we do."

"I like helping our clients get services that are medically necessary."

"I do get through to some of our patients. It's very rewarding when someone thanks you for helping them in their recovery."

Some would like more time to spend with clients and families

"I used to like my job a lot more when I was able to connect more with my clients, their children, service providers and foster parents. I liked helping families improve their quality of life and assisting them with resources and services."

"Spending more time with clients. Giving them more staff attention. Staff are too busy to just BE with them."

"I enjoy the patient contact, which unfortunately I don't have adequate time for."

"Smaller caseloads so we can have time to provide actual counseling and personalized services."

A few expressed frustration or concern about interactions with clients

"Our clients are very demanding, as if they are entitled and we must provide for them and meet all of their needs."

"I feel like I have a target on my back for patients to hit me. There is very little I can do to protect myself."

"Issuing benefits is a way of helping, although sometimes that is hard to do when clients expect it, or don't get what they think they are entitled to. I have a problem with that."
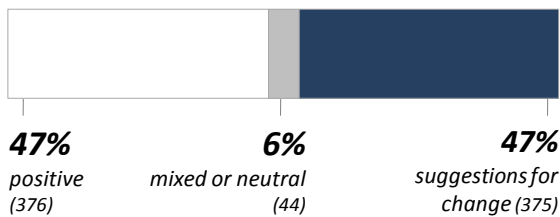
THEME. Flexible schedules and telecommuting

795 of the 8,343 employees who made comments addressed the issues of flexible work schedules and the ability to work from home.

10% commented on this theme *(795)*

Their comments were:

47%	**6%**	**47%**
positive	mixed or neutral	suggestions for
(376)	(44)	change (375)

Nearly half (47%) of the 795 employees who made comments about work schedules or telecommuting suggested changes. The same percentage (47%) indicated they were pleased with their work schedule.

Some employees want:

- Alternative work schedules
- More part-time and job-sharing options
- More "flex" in scheduling their daily work
- The ability to take leave, or work overtime, when *they* choose
- The ability to telecommute, or be out-stationed

Those with flexible schedules and work locations appreciate their ability to:

- Control their work schedule
- Control their work environment
- Balance their personal and work lives

▶ *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees are quite satisfied with their current work schedule

"I get to work part-time, still have medical benefits, and spend the rest of my time with my children while they are young."

"I appreciate that I can work overtime once in a while to make ends meet, since the furlough days wreaked havoc on my budget during the last couple of years."

"I like working 4 days a week, 10-hour days."

"Working graveyard affords me the luxury of not having to deal with the management of day shift."

"I can work when I'm not in school, and change my schedule accordingly."

"I like being on-call, and being able to choose my work schedule."

Some would like their schedule changed in some way

"Due to office coverage, I'm discouraged from using vacation time on Fridays. I'd like to use annual leave to take Fridays off."

"More flexibility to allow part-time work. It is made very clear this agency doesn't support that."

"I would like to feel supported when overtime or flex time is needed. I should not feel shamed or 'put down' when I have a justifiable and necessary overtime request."

"Offer opportunities for employees to consider 9-80 or 4-40 work schedules, to prevent so much burn out."

"More flexibility on work schedules. It seems okay to use flex when an emergency comes up and it benefits my employer, but often I'm asked to use sick time or vacation time rather than be allowed to flex an hour when it is my emergency."

"Stop the mandatory/forced overtime due to scheduling or lack of staff. This problem has been going on for nearly a decade."

Working at home – or working in an out-station – is a popular option

"I telework from home. I don't have to deal with the daily drama of working in an office full of people, don't have to worry about being on the roads or being late for work, don't have to deal with any political or job-related issues that might arise."

"I like that I am out-stationed, and don't have to be in the CSO every day."

"Individuals should be encouraged to telecommute, instead of re-working the cubicles to make room for more workers. There are MANY employees who could do their jobs from home, which would save money and would help with morale."

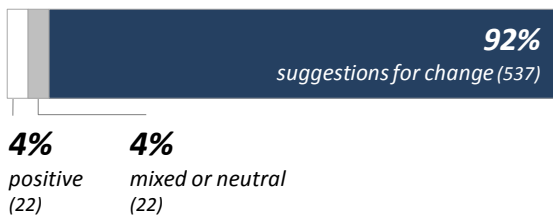"I would like for out-stationing to be more universally accepted and supported."

THEME. Workload

581 of the 8,343 respondents who commented addressed the issue of workload, and its effect on their job satisfaction.

7% commented on this theme *(581)*

Their comments were:

92%
suggestions for change (537)

4%
positive
(22)

4%
mixed or neutral
(22)

More than nine out of ten (92%) of the 581 respondents who commented want a reduction in their workload. They see a clear connection between workload issues and increasing caseloads, staff shortages, and additional workplace duties.

Staff believe heavy workloads:

- Cause workers stress and anxiety
- Negatively impact workers' health and morale
- Make workers less efficient and effective
- Lessen the quality of client service

A small number of staff described a large workload as:

- Manageable
- Relatively stress-free
- Demanding, in a positive way

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff commenting on workload described the "downside" of excessive workloads

"We are too short-staffed to complete essential work and care for ourselves by taking breaks and lunch. I am concerned about the physical health of many of my peers."

"The extreme pressure of the enormous caseload and lack of positive reinforcement make the job unpleasant."

"I am working what really should be two positions. I regularly put in more hours than I am paid to perform. Even so, there are projects that are delayed or curtailed because higher priority projects take precedence."

"Too much to do, too little time to accomplish the myriad of requirements, creates an environment of stress and defeat."

"It is impossible to do the amount of work expected and to keep up with the daily demands and priorities – even though we can now hire. Our staff are leaving faster than they can be replaced."

"Work to eliminate the atmosphere of fear and panic caused by overwhelming deadlines and management expectations that cannot be met in the time allowed without working unreasonable hours."

"We are buried in work and a lot of it is high priority. I am looking forward to things slowing down at some point, and having the workload be more manageable for all of us."

Some equated larger workloads with poorer client service

"In our particular office/region, our numbers are too high to help people as well as we could be."

"Realistic (lower) caseloads and less paperwork so we can actually practice social work with clients."

"The more cases a worker has, the worse each case will be handled, and the more vulnerable the department is to lawsuits, child injury or death, and worker turnover."

"With 105 clients, there is no way to spend adequate time working on behalf of each client."

"As a counselor, my workload is too much. I am hardly able to keep up with all the responsibilities. Residents get shortchanged because we are running around like chickens with our heads cut off."

A few staff see their heavy workloads as manageable, or enjoy a fast-paced work environment

"I am busy, but not overwhelmed. It's a fine line!"

"I have a well-paced workload that I can get done with speed and accuracy, without feeling overloaded and stressed."

"I like that I have a variety of work to perform, high volume, never a dull moment!

"We have a lot of work to do. However, I don't feel any major stress or pressure to perform. I can work at my own pace and still meet the standards."
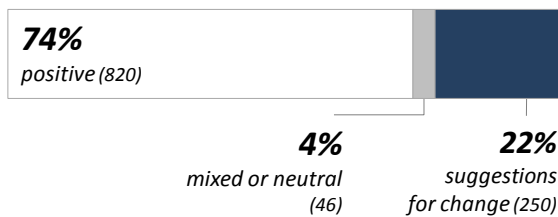
THEME. Autonomy and growth opportunities

1,116 of the 8,343 employees who made comments addressed the issues of autonomy and growth opportunities in their workplace.

13% commented on this theme *(1,116)*

Their comments were:

74%
positive (820)

4%
mixed or neutral (46)

22%
suggestions for change (250)

Nearly three quarters (74%) of the 1,116 employees who commented on autonomy and growth are grateful their workplace offers them independence and a chance to grow personally and professionally. However, nearly one quarter (22%) mentioned a need for improvement in this area.

Employees like:

- Organizing their own work plans and schedules
- Putting their skills and experience to work
- Sharing ideas, and being creative*
- Growing professionally

They dislike:

- Overly-structured work settings
- Being micro-managed
- Lacking the chance to learn and grow

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees want autonomy at work, with access to support when needed

"I greatly enjoy the autonomy of my job as a foster home licensor, helping people through the cumbersome licensing process…My current supervisor helps me do my job better, instead of being overly critical."

"I would like more control over the work."

"I like the autonomy, ability to use my own judgment in determining how to investigate complaints, ready access to my supervisor when needed."

"I would like to be encouraged to come up with different ways to do things. I feel if I take the tiniest step of independence, I am chastised and pulled back."

"I like the ability to work independently, yet having access to support whenever needed."

They value chances to learn new skills and take on new responsibilities

"I appreciate opportunities to be involved in new projects, and career development opportunities that have come my way."

"I'd like to see more opportunities for people to grow and move up, to give them a chance to use their talents and skills."

"I like the intellectual challenge I have, and the changing nature of my job that continually provides new learning and growth opportunities."

"I would like to see the state implement greater opportunities for employees to grow in their occupation. At this time, I'm not aware of leadership training that is available to me or others in my field."

"I like that I am given a high level of responsibility, and a good opportunity to advance."

Employees dislike micro-management in the workplace

"I like that I am given the space to do my job, without having someone micro-manage my day."

"Less micro-managing and more flexibility."

"I like the autonomy to do my job without a lot of micro-management."

"I like what I do, but not how I am managed. My team's supervisor is a micro-manager [whose] way of communication is rude, condescending, and cold."

"I very much appreciate that I can organize my workload without constant supervision."

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

QUESTION. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow

More than half of respondents (56%) reported they have opportunities to learn and grow. However, nearly one quarter (22%) said they would like more support in this area.
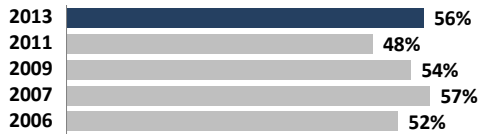
Staff want to:

- Increase their professional knowledge
- Gain new job skills
- Put their creativity into practice

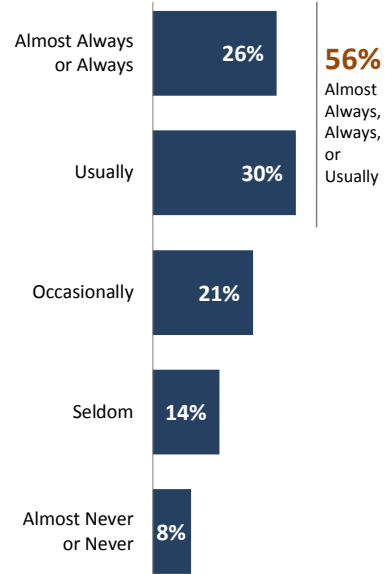Some staff would like the chance to:

- Make better use of their talents
- Assume more work responsibilities
- "Grow" their career

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said there are opportunities to learn and grow.

Year	Percent
2013	56%
2011	48%
2009	54%
2007	57%
2006	52%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	26%
Usually	30%
Occasionally	21%
Seldom	14%
Almost Never or Never	8%

56% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff appreciate challenging work that increases their professional expertise

"I like having a lot of opportunity to learn about many aspects of social work through contact with various professionals."

"My job challenges me to think outside the box, and suggest changes for improving the system."

"I enjoy refining my writing skills, court presentation skills, and learning new assignments that challenge me to grow."

"I am allowed to grow and learn in areas that really contribute to our mission and goals."

"I like being challenged to find better ways to do the work of our administration, and to find new services for people and families."

"My job is meaningful and dynamic; there is always something new to learn."

"I like learning, growing into the duties of the position so that I can better serve each client."

"I have plenty of challenges, and plenty of opportunities to learn."

"I love the diversity of my job. I have the opportunity and challenge to learn new projects almost weekly."

"I have an opportunity to grow and learn each day."

Some staff would like more opportunities to learn and grow in the workplace

"Career growth opportunities, rather than career stagnation."

"I would like to see more opportunities to grow within my department, and more opportunities to cross-train in positions I am interested in."

"Would love to see an opportunity for growth. At times feel I am in a 'dead end' job. I do not feel that I am utilizing my talents/knowledge in the workplace."

"I literally hate this position. I have no opportunity for training or growth, and I am seriously depressed about being here."

"A more cohesive work unit that utilizes my talents and encourages me to grow."

"I would like the ability for professional growth. Since education and training have been removed from the table, there are very few opportunities for staff to grow."

"After many years of doing the same job, I need some new challenges and new responsibilities. Opportunities for growth would be fantastic."

THEME. Other important aspects of the job

3,636 of the 8,343 respondents who commented addressed other important aspects of the job, such as variety, flexibility, and working with others in the community.

44% commented on this theme *(3,636)*

Their comments were:

93%
positive (3,379)

3%
mixed or neutral (121)

4%
suggestions for change (136)

More than nine out of ten (93%) of the 3,636 employees who mentioned other aspects of their jobs made positive comments. 4% suggested changes.

Most employees are pleased with:

- Flexibility in scheduling and structuring their workdays
- Variety in their work assignments
- Opportunities to collaborate with other organizations and individuals in the community

Some employees would be happy to have:

- More responsibility, and ability to use their skills
- Less stress, a lighter workload, and fewer workplace changes
- More time to spend with clients and colleagues
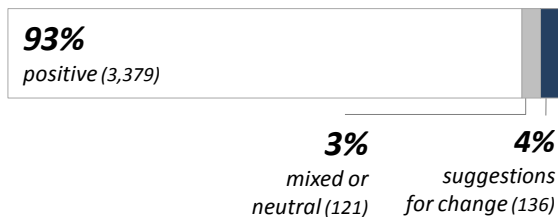
▶ *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees like having variety, flexibility, and the chance for creativity in their work

"I'm allowed flexibility, and given opportunities to come up with creative solutions."

"I like the variety, creativity, mental challenge/stimulation, and the ability to work in and out of the office."

"I like that I have the flexibility and independence to take care of my work responsibilities."

"I like the variety. I enjoy the different people and challenges I encounter, and the flexibility to manage my caseload the way that works best for me and the client."

"I like the flexibility that I have, and I like that this job allows me to think outside the box."

"There is so much variety. I'm always learning something new."

They also like working together with community partners

"I like working with all of the different providers, including attorneys, school staff, and others."

"I enjoy working collaboratively with other professionals outside of the agency."

"I like working with tribes to ensure they are accessing what is needed to help keep families together or children safe."

"I am in an out-station situation, and enjoy the ability to work with others in the community."

"I enjoy working with outside agencies, such as law enforcement."

"I like working with other agencies to coordinate efforts, and best serve our clients."

Some employees dislike specific aspects of their job

"Changes are happening faster than I can keep up; I just start to feel somewhat comfortable in my ability and then it all changes again. I do not enjoy feeling incompetent."

"I spend way too much time putting out 'fires,' and not enough time being a manager to our most important assets – staff."

"I'd like to have more time to spend with parents in the field, instead of spending most of my time on paperwork."

"I'd like to see the LPNs given more responsibility. There are many skills within our scope of practice that are not being used within the mental health environment…It is important for an LPN to continue to use their skills ('use it or lose it')."

"I'm not being used to my full potential, and I'm bored."

"I feel a frequent need to use my training and experience, but have few opportunities to use my skills."

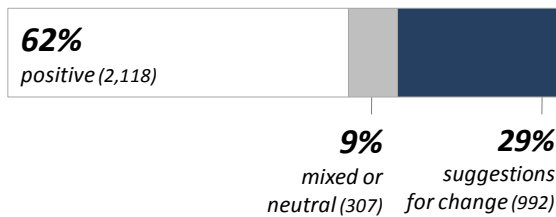"I'd like more time to do my job effectively, and more time to teach and train others."

THEME. Co-workers – an overview

3,417 of the 8,343 respondents who commented mentioned their co-workers.

41% commented on this theme *(3,417)*

Their comments were:

62% positive (2,118)		

9%
mixed or
neutral (307)

29%
suggestions
for change (992)

More than six out of ten (62%) of the 3,417 respondents who made comments about co-workers had something positive to say. However, nearly three out of ten (29%) would like to see changes in the attitude or actions of their co-workers.

Staff applaud co-workers for being:

- Supportive
- Willing to collaborate
- Competent and professional
- Friendly and caring

They resent co-workers who are:

- Unsupportive, or not "team players"
- Lacking in skills or motivation
- Prone to "bullying" behavior
- A negative force in the workplace

Co-workers are discussed in more detail on pages 53-56.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff commenting on co-workers had positive things to say

"My team members are supportive of each other, always finding ways to share information and lend a hand."

"I work with bright, caring, dedicated people."

"The thing I like best about my current job is my co-workers. They are great people who always have a great attitude and work hard as a team. They make being at work enjoyable."

"I have very welcoming, nice, and intelligent co-workers."

"I love the team that I work with in the unit. They are skilled, knowledgeable, and have the youth's best interest in mind."

"Everybody is nice, friendly, and helpful."

"The people that work in this office are hard-working and dedicated. Their level of commitment is hard to find in many work environments."

"I like working with a team of high-performing, self-directed individuals who have a lot of enthusiasm."

"The people in my small group are like family, and are willing to help each other out."

Some are unhappy with co-workers' behavior, or the work they produce

"I would like to see changes in the attitude of some of my co-workers. A few members of my team act to tear others down and create a hostile work environment."

"There are too many people running below the radar and just getting by, and not supporting other team members."

"The negativity and disrespect of some employees for their co-workers and supervisors is challenging. I love my job, but I sure enjoy my day more when the difficult people have the day off."

"More accountability with social workers who don't pull their weight. Everyone in the office knows exactly who they are."

"I would like to see co-workers get along, and stop being petty, nosy, and tattle-taling!"

"Other staff at my level are allowed to get away with not working or producing low quality work. It's frustrating to be the person who cares the most and be surrounded by people who couldn't care less about our work."

"You say hello to certain people and there's no response, or they're looking at the ground and can't be bothered with you! It's like being back in high school with shallow and petty personalities! Maybe it's asking too much for them to be friendly and respectful to others!"

THEME. Teamwork and support

1,543 of the 8,343 employees who made comments mentioned teamwork and co-worker support.

19% commented on this theme *(1,543)*

Their comments were:

57% *positive (880)*		

6% *mixed or neutral (86)*   **37%** *suggestions for change (577)*

Nearly six out of ten (57%) of the 1,543 employees who commented on teamwork spoke positively about their co-workers' ability to function as a team and provide each other support. Nearly four out of ten (37%) indicated that teamwork could be strengthened in their workplace.
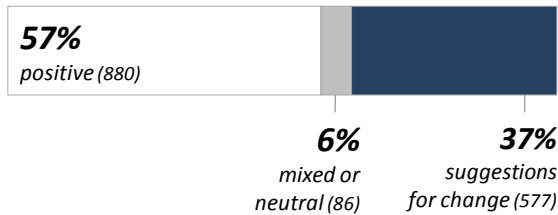
Employees like:

- Being part of a high-functioning team
- Feeling strongly connected to co-workers
- Knowing they have their co-workers' support

They dislike:

- Co-workers who aren't trustworthy
- Co-workers who exclude or mistreat others
- Lack of "team spirit" in the workplace

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

For most employees who commented on teamwork and support, being part of a strong team matters

"I love the people I work with – the team environment of everyone working together to benefit the population we serve."

"The group of people I work with daily are fantastic. We work as a team – support, train and coach each other while providing the best care we can for the client."

"My office is extremely close, helpful, we work as a cohesive group, and we care about each other."

"I am extremely fond of the rapport I have with my co-workers. I feel as though I exist as part of a community, as much as I feel I am part of a workforce."

"I work with nice people, and we all work to help each other. We make a good team."

"The thing I like best about my current job is the team I work with. We are all driven individuals with a common goal, and that makes my job great!"

They commend their co-workers for consistent support

"I love the ambience in this office, and how helpful my co-workers are."

"I have a good unit right now – we are all really supportive of one another."

"My immediate team provides strong support."

"I like our office because we get along well, we have fun, we support and help each other!!"

"I love the support I get from my co-workers. They are always there to help if I need it."

Some employees would like to see *more* teamwork and support in their workplace

"Get rid of the high school cliques and office bullies."

"I am most frustrated with the decline in the 'team process.' Some professions seem to be more involved with client decisions and care than others."

"More teamwork between co-workers, no gossip behind people's backs."

"I'd like to be able to trust my co-workers. We don't feel like a team."

"There is a constant sense of discord and gossip. It seems a lot of the employees spend more time talking about others and looking for the faults in everyone else than doing their job."

"We still need to improve our team culture."

"I would like to see a better sense of teamwork and camaraderie in the course of the very difficult work that we do."

"There isn't friendship or teamwork here. We need to be a team somehow to bring a good spirit to work."

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

Nearly seven out of ten respondents (67%) said their workgroup excels at cooperation and teamwork. However, 16% feel staff on their jobsite could work together more effectively.
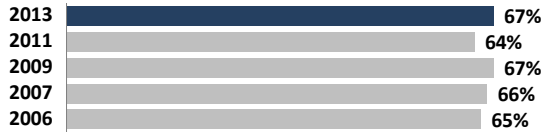
Staff applaud:

- Co-workers who are truly "team players"
- Co-workers they can depend on, in good times and bad
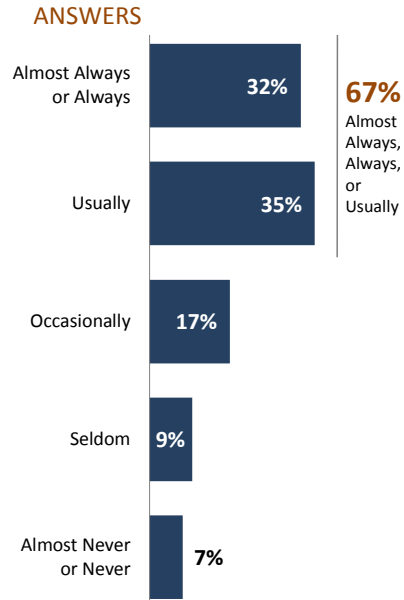- A strong sense of community in the workplace

They don't appreciate:

- Co-workers who create conflict
- Co-workers who don't contribute to team efforts
- Feeling isolated from their co-workers

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 reported teamwork and cooperation in their workgroup.

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	32%
Usually	35%
Occasionally	17%
Seldom	9%
Almost Never or Never	7%

67% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

Year	%
2013	67%
2011	64%
2009	67%
2007	66%
2006	65%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff value their strong connection with coworkers

"Everyone works together, and if we have questions we help one another. Great team!"

"We have a close unit that supports each other."

"Our unit gets along well and supports each other a lot. I never feel I'm without support from others for any task or challenge."

"My team, we have great rapport."

"I like the camaraderie in my work group."

"All of the staff in R1S are very supportive of each other. This caring and supportive attitude has created a very strong community experience."

They feel co-workers' support helps them cope in stressful times

"[My work family] supports each other, we share our problems, and are able to work together to get through any obstacle."

"I like my supportive supervisor and co-workers. They have been wonderful in supporting me through a particularly stressful time in my life."

"I enjoy the team support I receive when the workload is too impossible to handle."

"[Co-workers] do a great job of covering each other when needed. We ALL understand that the job is overwhelming. We do what we can to make sure we – individually, and as a unit – are successful. That takes an amazing amount of stress off."

"I like my co-workers very much, and we help and support each other through the difficult times."

Some staff want a more collaborative and connected workplace

"More opportunities for teamwork, rather than all individuals working in cubicles."

"More activities that help foster group connectedness."

"Better collaboration between workgroups."

"More inclusion for clerical. Clerical workers generally feel left out and ignored."

"The entire department is a team. A little less competition between the units regarding which unit is better than the other."

"Let's get rid of those focused on pointing fingers and making excuses, and get some people in here who actually want to work as a team and collaborate on creating an environment where learning, acceptance and change are embedded!"

THEME. Co-worker competence

908 of the 8,343 employees who made comments mentioned the competence or incompetence of their co-workers. They addressed skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

11% commented on this theme *(908)*

Their comments were:

69%
suggestions for change (629)

25%
positive
*(223)*

6%
mixed or neutral
(56)

Nearly seven out of ten (69%) of the employees who commented on co-worker competence feel their co-workers' performance could improve. One quarter (25%) made positive comments about their co-workers' competence.

Employees are displeased when co-workers:

- Produce little work, or poor quality work
- Miss work, or waste time at work
- Fail to act in a professional manner
- Face no "fallout" for negative behaviors
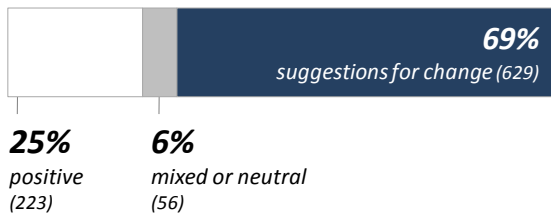
They like working with individuals who:

- Are professional, skilled, and hard-working
- Don't give up in the face of adversity
- Are committed to their work and their clients

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Many employees commenting on co-worker competence criticized unproductive or unprofessional co-workers

"People don't pull their weight. Should I work slower so I don't have to do work for others?"

"Less tolerance for social workers who are punitive and disrespectful to clients, or are engaging in bad practice."

"The level of profanity in the office is very unprofessional."

"I hate that I come to work every day and work my butt off, while others stand around shooting the breeze for hours on end – often with supervisors present. I hate that some workers come in late, take long breaks/lunches, and disappear early."

"More patience from staff – more patience for each other, and for their customers."

"We have way too many state employees that have degrees that cannot follow simple – let alone complex – procedures…We can't address the big issues because we can't get past our lack of basic skills."

They feel problematic co-workers should face consequences

"Deal with those people who are negative, refuse to do the job correctly, or do the minimal amount of work to get by, leaving others to pick up the pieces."

"I would like people that don't do their work and can't keep up with their own work let go."

"Discipline for employees who cause constant drama or an uncomfortable work environment."

"The Department has lost a lot of good workers due to lack of support and back-stabbing that goes on with employees, and will continue to unless poor behavior is addressed in a proper manner."

"Fire the people who abuse sick leave or attendance in general."

"Troublemakers should be disciplined, moved, or let go."

Employees appreciate competent and dedicated co-workers

"My team is phenomenal! They are hard-working, supportive, professional, and represent this department with integrity."

"I enjoy my co-workers. I am impressed on a daily basis with their determination, skills, and devotion to persevere in an incredibly confusing and stressful environment."

"My co-workers are hard-working, and passionate about their work with families."

"My team are all professionals who work tirelessly for the greater good of our clients and for DSHS."

"I'm privileged to work with some very professional and competent members of a treatment team who are dedicated to helping clients achieve recovery."
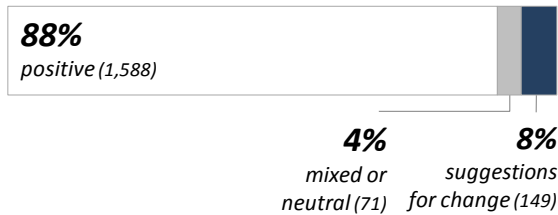
THEME. Other comments about co-workers

1,808 of the 8,343 respondents who commented addressed some other issue related to co-workers.

22% commented on this theme *(1,808)*

Their comments were:

88%
positive (1,588)

4%
mixed or neutral (71)

8%
suggestions for change (149)

Nearly nine out of ten (88%) of the respondents who commented on co-worker issues other than teamwork or competence spoke positively about their co-workers. Only 8% described problems caused by their fellow workers.

Respondents praised co-workers who:

- Are friendly and fun-loving
- Are caring, supportive and trustworthy
- Are smart, skilled, and willing to share expertise
- Are hardworking, and dedicated to their work

They criticized co-workers who:

- Show disrespect to clients or colleagues
- Bring negativity to the workplace
- Lack interest in, or commitment to, their work

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff comments about co-workers falling into the "other comments" category were positive in nature

"I like my co-workers. They show me trust and respect, as I do them."

"My unit members are willing to help when needed, I can seek advice from them, and they are friendly and fun."

"I like the people in my unit. We have a good team that has each other's back."

"My favorite part of the job is the people I work with. I have the greatest respect for the dedication and hard work that they do, and their commitment to excellence. I know that I can rely on their collaboration and input to problem-solve, and appreciate their vast knowledge and creativity."

"My direct co-workers are supportive, fair, and so smart. There is no drama or bull in our office."

"The group of people I work with are very caring with the patients and their co-workers."

Pleasant and supportive co-workers make work a better place

"I like the 'family feel' in our unit. I feel included. We all work really hard keeping staff happy, we communicate together a lot, and talk things out. Everyone has a voice in our unit. We laugh and support each other through the stressful times."

"I like that I was welcomed into the team so easily – I am still fairly new in my position, but have had lots of support."

"My co-workers make coming to work fun. Being able to accomplish work while being happy makes a huge difference."

"The people I am privileged to work with – we care for and watch out for each other in a dangerous environment."

"I like working as a team, and the spirit of love and cooperation that exists."

"Without my team, this job would not be as fulfilling."

Some staff are upset by co-workers' behavior in the workplace

"I'd like to see those whiny ingrates that work here move on and spread their discontent elsewhere."

"Because of two very loud, foul-mouthed women in my office, I don't currently like anything about my job. I hate the thought of having to listen to them all day – it really affects my morale."

"I'm sick of the negativity, bad attitudes, lack of intelligence and common sense, and employees who have a sense of entitlement. The employees here don't realize they are being paid to work."

"Less gossip/meanness. More professional behavior, sprinkled with a little kindness."

"Negative people and complainers should retire or go somewhere else to poison the workplace."

"Less infighting/disrespect/defamation/rude comments and office clique politics. Less of a 'proud to be mean-spirited' attitude – we are DSHS employees after all."

"Orchids" • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
Cared for by the patients at the Western State Hospital green house.
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

Business Practices

EMPLOYEES' OVERALL VIEW OF BUSINESS PRACTICES SHOWS SOME POSITIVE TRENDS since the last survey. In answer to standard questions, more employees said that the agency uses their time and talents well, gives them the tools and resources needed to do their job, and supports them in living a healthier life. Employee comments once again included a wide variety of suggestions for changes in process and policy. The focus of other comments about business practices shifted somewhat.

Policies and procedures. The percentage of employees who feel their time and talents are well-used in the workplace increased in 2013. There were a large number of suggestions for improving business practices in 2013, although fewer than in 2011. The majority of employees said their workgroups are making improvements for clients, although only a minority said customer feedback is used when making such improvements. There was increased concern about personnel issues, particularly the recent implementation of a new employee evaluation program.

- **Fewer suggestions for policy and procedure improvements.** 2,462 employees (30% of employees who made comments, a 12% decrease from 2011) suggested ways to improve program policies and procedures.

- **Most said improvements are being made for clients, but not as many said customer feedback is used to guide such improvements.** In response to a new survey question**,** 59% of employees said their workgroup is making improvements that will benefit their customers. However, only 39% (the same percentage as in 2011) said customer feedback is used to improve work processes.
- **More feel their time, skills and experience are well-utilized.** 56% of employees (up from 52% in 2011) said the agency uses their time and talents well. This increase is consistent with responses to other questions about employee engagement, including questions about opportunities to give input in Chapter 1 and opportunities for learning and growth in Chapter 4.
- **More mentioned personnel issues.** 901 employees (11% of those who made comments, a 10% increase from 2011) made suggestions for improvement around personnel issues. Many expressed their frustration with the recently-launched PERFORM employee evaluation program.

Resources. More employees in 2013 feel they have the tools and resources needed to do their job well. Fewer expressed concerns about staffing and client resources. More stressed the need for improvements in training and facilities. Fewer said they were happy just to have a job.

- **More satisfaction with tools and resources.** 65% of employees (up from 62% in 2011) said they have the tools and resources to do their job effectively.
- **Less concern about staffing and client resource issues.** As the program and staffing cuts of the economic recession recede, 31% fewer employees (792) expressed concern about understaffing. 42% fewer (143) complained about lack of resources for clients.
- **More focus on the need for training and facilities improvements.** 815 employees (10% of those who made comments, a 32% increase from 2011) suggested the need for more or better training. 335 (a 38% increase) asked for improvements in their physical environment.
- **Less gratitude for pay and benefits.** As the economy slowly recovers, 41% fewer employees said they were grateful simply to have a stable job with benefits.

Health and safety. More employees said their agency supports them in living a healthier life. The percentages of employees expressing concern about staff safety and wellness resources were much the same as in 2011.

- **Wellness support.** 50% of employees (up from 46% in 2011) said their agency supports them in living a healthy lifestyle. 167 employees made comments indicating a need for more wellness resources.
- **Staff safety**. 260 employees (3% of employees who made comments, the same percentage as in 2011) expressed concern about their safety and that of their co-workers.

"Unlocked" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

From the photographer:
"I entered this photo as part of a challenge for a photo project I am currently involved in. For this challenge, a mundane object is chosen and then left up to the photographer to decide how to photograph it. The object of this particular challenge was 'key' and this photo is a result of my interpretation."

THEME. **Work processes and policies**

2,733 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed work processes and policies.

33% commented on this theme *(2,733)*

Their comments were:

90%
suggestions for change (2,462)

5%
positive
(127)

5%
mixed or neutral
(144)

Of the 2,733 respondents who wrote comments about work processes and policies, 5% (127) indicated they are satisfied with the approach taken by DSHS.

The vast majority of those making comments (90%) feel changes are in order. The 2,462 employees who suggested improvement addressed a wide range of topics. They frequently noted a desire for:

- Processes and policies that meet clients' needs
- Greater use of Lean process improvement tools
- Initiatives that reduce workloads
- Fewer changes in the workplace
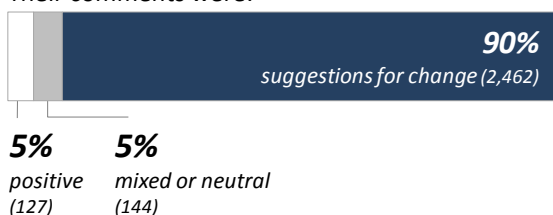
Comments concerning personnel issues, safety, and wellness are reported separately. See pages 64, 65, 74, and 75.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees want policies and procedures that focus on clients' best interests

"I like the system in place for Child Protective Services that is evidence-focused and family friendly."

"I wish that clients did not have to wait in the lobby for hours to see a worker for an eligibility review that sometimes takes us ten minutes to complete once they are at our desk."

"I really appreciate what we do to ensure that our geriatric population receives the care they need."

"Improve attendance at work, specifically nursing. It impacts patients' care!"

"My current job is a great way to work with families from the beginning. It's a great way to introduce the Department to families in a strength-based way. Hopefully the Solution-Based Casework model continues to be followed if the family continues to work with the Department."

"More support from department supervisors to work as a team to implement programs and therapies that are in the best interests of the patients."

"I like being able to have continuity over time with my clients, and to provide complex healthcare, with a professional team."

They would like to see new policies and procedures reduce workload

"Serious reduction of workload for Child and Family Welfare Services staff. We have added so much to this program – all good – but it is very challenging for even strong capable staff."

"Too many duties to perform, with too few staff."

"My supervisor and lead worker are great. I get assistance when I need it, but sometimes not as soon as I need it, due to the demands on their time."

"Lean processes would greatly improve service delivery, reduce errors, and allow staff more time to do their job efficiently."

"I'd like to be able to do the work at hand efficiently, correctly and well. Workload and work flow is overwhelming most days."

They are frustrated by ongoing changes in their workplace

"Stop changing everything all the time, and then re-changing them again! This is frustrating! It's happening on a region-wide basis and a state-wide basis – very not good."

"Too much reorganization. Difficult for people to feel like they belong with so much change."

"I'd like to see fewer changes. It's difficult to keep up with the changes already in place."

"Less changes. I know this is not going to be an option for a bit, but it's hard to feel like you know what you're doing at your job when it changes all the time."

THEME. Specific work processes and policies

Many comments related to practices in individual workplaces or certain DSHS services.

▶ *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff appreciate improvements in business practices

"Our team has embraced the LEAN principles throughout the past year, and the results have been very positive."

"I am excited about Family Assessment Response [FAR]. It's a slow process, but I believe the agency is moving towards a more family friendly practice."

"Some changes have been made already to FamLink that are speeding my work up."

"Casual dress sounds like a minor detail, but it's a relief not to have to pay for or maintain a 'professional' wardrobe."

"In the call center, I previously felt pressure for the quantity and not quality of the calls. However, we're no longer under pressure to quickly take one call to the next. We're now give the time to handle our calls thoroughly, and I appreciate that."

"I'm happy to see the direction of DCS change, and the improvements in the collection tools to do our jobs – both legally and technologically."

Some feel particular processes only add to workplace problems

"I would like to see the NeoGov performance evaluation system junked; it is a poorly designed program that supervisors spend more time trying to figure out how to navigate through than they spend talking with their staff. The value of the evaluation process has been damaged by the use of this tool."

"Provider One has made our life much harder. We spend more time trying to validate data than when we did it manually."

"Return the regional structure to 6 regions. The current structure is not working well, causing confusion and inconsistencies."

"I would like to see the 'clocks' gone. I believe we are working under pressure to hurry, hurry, hurry. This does not always mean good quality work."

"Closure of the call center, and more workers in the office. Clients complain consistently about the call center, and end up coming into the office anyway. Most clients don't bother to call the call center."

Others have a "mixed" view of current practices

"I'm in favor of changes that provide help and encouragement to our clients, and aid my ability to provide services to our clients. I'm not in favor of changes that appear geared to the needs of management and the regions."

"I am critical of some of the business practices I observe, but I also know that DVR is the one division in DSHS that truly is about 'helping' people, and supporting people with going to work and becoming contributing members of society. What can be more positive than that?"

"Everything in our office is being streamlined to be more consistent, but this does not always improve the work process."

"We are doing great work, but there is a lack of balance. Most of the work we are doing (at the CSO level, and others) is intervention and short-term work. It's helping people to a degree in the moment, but not really addressing larger cultural and societal factors on a large scale."

Many staff shared their ideas for process and policy improvements

"I would like to see a one-stop report line for DSHS employees to report suspected fraud."

"Use multi- or inter-disciplinary teams to facilitate planning, development and decision-making when conducting our work."

"Increased use of technology in the field. For instance, access to all of our systems to increase efficiency while working remotely. It doesn't make sense to be unable to access client files or other systems while in the field."

"I would like to see DDA go paperless, at least with the eligibility files."

"I'd like to see less meetings, and protected time for people to actually be at their desks without interruption. Perhaps an inviolate rule that no meetings can be scheduled between 8 and 9, and a definite end to meetings during lunch time."

"I'd like to see the public entering information into our programs instead of us receiving information on paper – and then typing it into a computer program. Let the public do the typing – we are duplicating their work."

"More access to the Internet to help locate non-custodial parents."

"Centralization of responsibility for cases involving clients with limited English proficiency. It's appallingly inefficient to spread these cases out among all employees statewide."

"We need an electronic medical record system – yesterday."

"Why can't LEAN practices start at a local level? There is no discussion or local group that can make proposals and send them up the food chain, it's all top-down – which does not seem like it will ever change."
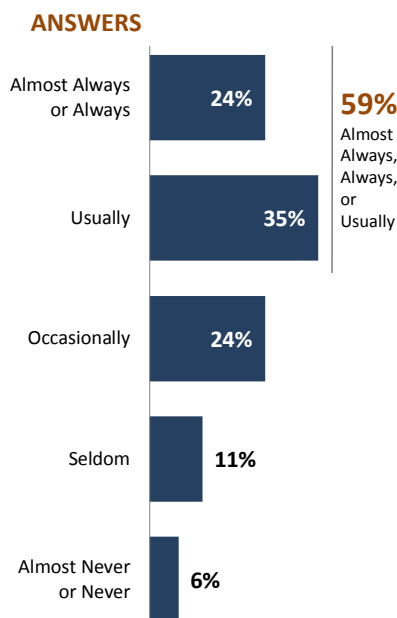
QUESTION. We are making improvements to make things better for our customers

Nearly six out of ten employees (59%) said their workgroup is making improvements that benefit their customers. Nearly two out of ten (17%) indicated that efforts are seldom or never made to improve the circumstances of their customers. Employees feel DSHS should:

- Make client service its first priority
- Increase direct client/staff interactions
- Decrease staff's paperwork and data input requirements
- Upgrade technology to serve clients more efficiently

2013 is the first year this question has been included in the Employee Survey.

ANSWERS

Answer	Value
Almost Always or Always	24%
Usually	35%
Occasionally	24%
Seldom	11%
Almost Never or Never	6%

59% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

2013 Baseline — 59%

Question first asked in 2013

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees are pleased with changes that clearly benefit their clients

"I was happy to see a program expanded to get clients off of a waiting list; clients have been waiting years and years to receive some help."

"I like being able to use improving technology to make accurate eligibility determination, and expedite issuance of benefits."

"I am really excited about the goals of the Alternative Solutions Program, and how it can help our clients be better parents with the assistance this group will be able to lend. Connecting client to the services they need from organizations that already exist in our community is a win-win for all."

"I like the best that we're heading in a direction to become more productive to serve more clients/families in an efficient manner."

"I am excited to see what will happen with the new Exchange. This type of change is long overdue for the people who have not been covered with insurance."

"I like being able to directly update the status of a person's case to complete the processing of an application, review, or make changes in a person's case that will help that person or family to become eligible for their food, cash, or medical assistance."

"I like that our office listened to our input, and is piloting a different way to work with our customers for incoming calls."

"I love that we're moving toward allowing clients to meet with us in-person for childcare. This is a move in the right direction."

Some feel clients' needs should be given more time and attention

"I would like it if the supervisors would put the customers first, instead of the agency."

"More time for case managers to focus on managing cases, rather than financial eligibility issues."

"Staff work individually, and do not go out of their way to assist a customer who is not on 'their' caseload. They tell the customer the counselor is out, and they will send the counselor an e-mail…I'm sorry, but this is not a team approach or good customer service."

"I would like to see more focus on taking time with our clients to help improve their lives, versus keeping a time clock and number system of how long it takes to process a case and help a client."

"Make it more about patients' needs, instead of staff's convenience."

"Kids should come first, family interactions should come first, but there is no way that can happen when we are sitting on the computer or at the copy machine for discovery, or completing bean-counter paperwork."

QUESTION. 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 (35%) indicated customer feedback is seldom or never utilized to make improvements. While only a small number of employees made specific comments about the use of customer feedback, many spoke of their desire to provide clients the services they need. Employees feel DSHS could improve client service by:

- Increasing face-to-face interactions with clients
- Listening well to clients' opinions and concerns
- Making specific processes more "client-friendly"
- Increasing connections with other agencies

*In 2011, this DSHS-created question was worded, "In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes." In 2013, the state Office of Financial Management adopted the question for use statewide, and changed it to its present wording. This tended to shift focus from local workgroups to the more distant agency, which may account in part for the lack of positive change which was seen in responses to other questions between 2011 and 2013.

ANSWERS

Answer	Percent
Almost Always or Always	14%
Usually	24%
Occasionally	27%
Seldom	20%
Almost Never or Never	15%

39%
Almost Always, Always, or Usually

The percentage of staff saying customer feedback is used to improve work processes was the same in 2013 and 2011.

Year	Percent
2013	39%
2011	39%
2009	44%
2007	44%
2006	43%
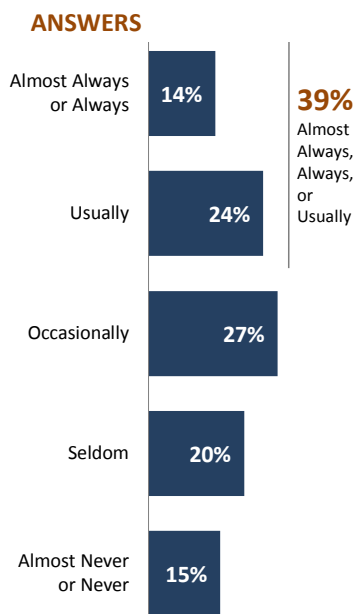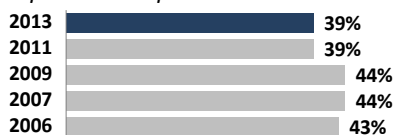
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Staff want clients to have ready access to good service

"I have a great team who feel clients should always come first. We go above and beyond in our small community, and assist in any way we can."

"DSHS has moved away from customer service in an attempt to become automated; basically, to reduce the number of staff needed and to provide services instantly. The problem is that our customers are humans who have varying needs and who progress at different levels. They come to us at the worst times of their lives, and aren't ready to be put on an assembly line."

They feel clients desire – and deserve - a strong voice in their services

"We need to take the customers' needs and concerns into consideration. Our clients are very unhappy with our new shared workload model, and the staff don't like it, either."

"When there is a question about what we should do, we usually look at it from the perspective of the client."

"Allow patients much more input on activities, meals, and daily schedule."

"Give a chance for clients to provide feedback on the customer service through their phone call (a choice for a small survey after their call)."

"I have been taking a poll of the clients that I talk to on the phone. Most of them say they do not like the new phone system."

Some offered suggestions for improving client services

"Less automation. This is a people agency, but personal contact with customers is emphasized less and less."

"Regular opportunity for clients to give positive and negative feedback, and be heard. Make feedback forms available."

"Cut out legal jargon mailed to clients, so they can understand in 'plain talk' what their benefits are and how to access them."

"Reduced paperwork load. It takes away from being able to do the real work with kids and families."

"Greater opportunity to network with other agencies' employees who serve the same customers, to learn how to help our folks (participants/family members/caregivers) to navigate through multiple systems."
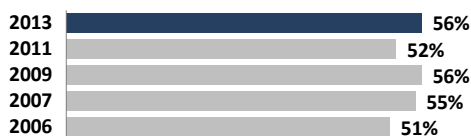
QUESTION. My agency uses my time and talents well

56% of employees said that DSHS uses their time and talents well most of the time. However, nearly one quarter (24%) reported that time and talents are seldom or never used well. Employees feel the Department should:

- Recognize workers' strengths and skills
- Help workers to develop their talents
- Encourage workers to use their creativity and expertise in the workplace
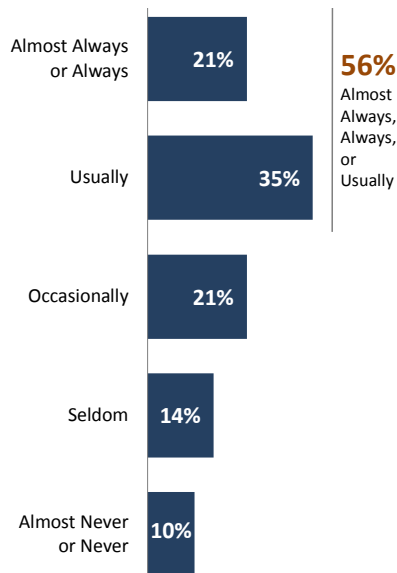- Solicit and use workers' input on job-related changes

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

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 said the agency uses their time and talents well.

2013	56%
2011	52%
2009	56%
2007	55%
2006	51%

Increase from 2011 to 2011 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Answer	%
Almost Always or Always	21%
Usually	35%
Occasionally	21%
Seldom	14%
Almost Never or Never	10%

56% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees are encouraged when supervisors see their strengths and support their growth

"My skill sets are recognized and valued. I am trusted to devise my own work methods, and I am supported when I need direction. I am treated as an integral part of the team, whose input is important and sought after."

"The support from my boss and my unit is outstanding. I have many opportunities for growth and professional development."

"My supervisor is always supportive and willing to help if needed, giving me the freedom and respect to manage my workday."

"I work independently, and am encouraged to do so. My supervisor and above trust me to make the right decisions and do my job correctly and efficiently."

They want to use their skills and experience to best advantage

"It is time for the state to do away with the old style of leadership and adopt Agile, Scrum or LEAN. The members of my unit are highly capable, but their skills are untapped and we are not able to make a move without the supervisor's approval."

"It's important to be challenged and to stretch yourself to become a better worker, more educated, and the job does this."

"Utilize employees who have training, rather than putting them on the sideline and not allowing them to use their skills."

"Our leadership staff needs to let the workers show what they are made of – to stop keeping them under their thumbs and give them a chance to shine."

"More opportunities to grow as a nurse. Less meaningless paperwork."

They also want a voice in workplace changes

"I like being able to suggest changes to make business processes better, and have those suggestions merit consideration from supervisors and section managers."

"More input from the social workers who are actually doing the work when making changes with home studies."

"I like having the freedom to articulate – and, often, demonstrate innovation – in areas where we are lacking."

"I would like to see more line staff input into decisions that are made that affect our everyday work before changes in processes are made. Too often a process is dropped down on us that has too many bugs to work effectively."

"I love the flexibility I have with my job to openly express my ideas and use them here at work to make things better."

"More respect for the specific skills and level of knowledge, within their specialties, of health care professionals. All too often, decisions are made, and policies developed in a 'knowledge vacuum' because upper administration does not seek the advice, or respect the expertise of, the professionals who work for them."

THEME. Personnel issues

947 of the 8,343 respondents who made comments addressed personnel issues.

11% commented on these themes *(947)*

Their comments were:

95%
suggestions for change (901)

3%
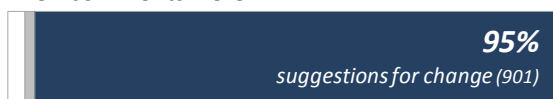positive
(29)

2%
mixed or neutral
(17)

The vast majority of the 947 employees who made comments about personnel policies (95%) suggested improvement is needed in this area. 3% made positive comments about personnel policies, and 2% made mixed or neutral comments.

Those who commented would like to see:

- Better service from Human Resources staff
- Fair hiring and promotion processes
- Accountability for problematic employees
- A new employee evaluation program

See the next page for additional discussion and comments related to hiring and promotions, investigations and disciplinary actions, and the PERFORM evaluation program.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Many employees who commented on personnel issues are dissatisfied with the personnel system

"There needs to be quality assurance in the hiring practice. The selection of who and how someone gets promoted is still based on politics, and has nothing to do with competency."

"Our office no longer has an on-site Human Resources representative. We need one. Taking away our on-site Human Resources representative was a mistake."

"It seems that employees with bad work habits are not dealt with."

"I'm exhausted with the lack of expediency in terminating employees for theft, insubordination, incompetence, etc."

"The PERFORM system currently being used for performance evaluations, in a word, sucks! It is difficult to use, confusing, and doesn't really do a good job in capturing or rating work performance or productivity."

"More and better support from HRD. Things like evaluations, hiring, and personnel issues consume far too much time."

"Human Resources can't decide on anything. They put out programs before they are up and running, and they make our jobs so much harder because they won't give us a straight answer or a written answer. It is really a sad state of affairs."

They offered a wide array of suggestions for addressing personnel issues

"I would love to see greater retention efforts within my organization. I have moved to a specialized unit on my own in order to chart my career path. However, I was not given an exit meeting in order to see if I wanted to stay."

"Less changes in Personnel. It's difficult to know who my HR people are, and who does what, because it's always changing."

"Get some input on promotions from an outside source, to help eliminate favoritism in promoting."

"Improve the process for transferring. At this time, it is difficult to do a transfer within Children's Administration."

"Do away with Alternate Assignment throughout DSHS. It's seen as a punishment, and is abused by those who apply it."

"Create opportunity for people within the region to be mentored and promoted from within, when appropriate."

"Remove a worker ASAP when threats and bullying occurs, at least until things can be investigated or sorted out."

A few employees commended personnel processes

"I greatly appreciate the opportunity to advance within the agency."

"Any negative/disciplinary actions are taken with great care and respect."

"I like the Family Medical Leave Act because it allowed me to be off work for two weeks at the instruction of my physician in order to help recover from work-related stress, anxiety and depression."

"I appreciate the ability to transfer within the office to another type of job."

THEME. Personnel issues (continued)

Employees feel strongly about the need for fairness in hiring and promotions. They think investigations and disciplinary actions should happen more quickly, more consistently, and more efficiently.

The specific personnel process that generated the most, and most negative, comments was the new PERFORM employee evaluation program. Employees described this program as being complicated, confusing, hard to use, a poor investment, and an ineffective evaluation tool.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees believe hiring and promotion practices need improvement

"It shouldn't be so easy for a supervisor to just hire who they want without serious justification to the superintendent. A larger interview panel of administrative staff outside our department should be mandatory, and approval of the final candidate shouldn't be up to just one person."

"I would like to see people promoted on merit, rather than who is least threatening to the managers."

"Hiring practices are done as though people are being invited to a backyard barbeque, and are not based on qualifications, education, and/or experience. It's more important to be liked by management that it is to be proficient at one's job."

"A more stringent hiring methodology and more diligent probationary period before becoming a permanent employee."

"The favoritism and personality contests have got to go! I am so sick and tired of seeing people promote not based on skill level but based on who likes who the most and who will do whatever is asked with no question."

"I would like to see a change in the hiring process. Of the last six people hired in my office, only one of them was hired fairly after an equitable application and interview process. The other five were all decided before the interview process began."

"I would like to see more opportunities for promotions for those staff on night shift. It seems as though because night shift is always so short staffed, we rarely get the opportunity to promote because that will leave a vacant position."

"The hiring process is never the same, and too many external candidates have been hired when qualified internal candidates are available."

They think investigations and disciplinary actions should be handled more effectively

"Administrative investigations should be done efficiently…It is a punishment to be investigated for months without specifics as to what was done wrong. That should change. It shows no respect."

"Consistency in application of investigations and disciplinary actions. There's one standard for managers, another for staff."

"Stop moving incompetent workers around like errant priests."

"When a staff bullies a fellow staff the victim should not be made to suffer along with the offender (i.e., the two suspended from work until the investigation is completed). This might encourage a staff who is frustrated or not serious with the job to cause trouble with another so that both would lose the job."

"Personnel issues need to be addressed and solved quickly. Bad behavior is time-consuming, and draws energy away from those who want to perform at a high level."

"Investigations of misconduct of employees on average last nine months. I feel like there is a better process – that should be looked into."

"Disciplinary actions are a joke, because everyone knows there really isn't anything that management can do."

Others are deeply frustrated with the PERFORM program

"Scrap that damned stupid PERFORM evaluation program, and use something more user-friendly. I AM NOT A PROGRAMMER OR A DATA ENTRY OPERATOR. That site is a frustrating waste of time that is difficult to teach, use and learn. The people who thought that piece of garbage would work should be disciplined for wasting state resources."

"Get rid of PERFORM. Yes, it's a flashy on-line tool – but it is useless for managing staff."

"Overhaul PERFORM or get rid of it – ridiculously difficult to use, the steps are unclear, and it makes NO sense. The page is cluttered with information, so one has no idea where to click."

"PERFORM is not helpful and takes away from a meaningful performance review because it is overly complicated; instructions are confusing and don't match the system, doesn't allow for viewing of one another's comments."

"I don't like the PERFORM application currently being used for evaluations. I find it cumbersome to navigate, even after going through the training. It takes longer for me to complete than the paper copies took. Two thumbs down."

"The current PERFORM evaluation system is horrendous. It is not user-friendly or personal."

"Draw and quarter whoever selected PERFORM and signed the purchase contract. It is without question the worst-designed, worst-implemented, worst-supported tool you have ever inflicted on staff."
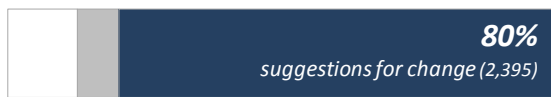
THEME. General resources

3,004 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resource issues.

36% commented on this theme *(3,004)*

Their comments were:

80%
suggestions for change (2,395)

13%
positive
(381)

8%
mixed or neutral
(228)

The majority of resource-related comments (80%) suggested improvements. Of the 3,004* respondents who addressed resources:

- 817 spoke about staffing (page 68)
- 755 mentioned pay and benefits (page 69)
- 909 addressed training (page 70)
- 472 talked about facilities and work environment (page 71)
- 171 mentioned resources for DSHS clients, and 504 mentioned other resources (page 72)
- 280 commented on safety issues (page 74)
- 178 spoke about resources for wellness (page 75)

The survey also asked two standard questions about resources: *I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively* (page 67) and *Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life* (page 73).

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most employees who commented on resources noted a lack of resources in their workplace

"Staffing! Staffing! Staffing! Inadequate staff makes the work environment very unsafe and drains the few staff available!"

"A better work facility – the heating/air conditioning is a nightmare! We are so cramped for space it's unbelievable."

"Currently there is nothing to prevent an armed person from coming into the office. There should be an armed guard near the customer service area."

"More training – just started and was thrown into a full caseload without any idea what I am doing."

"I would like to be paid more. It has been far too long since I have had a pay increase. The state is losing good people due to this issue."

"Exercise room! Massage offered on breaks occasionally."

"We need to have reliable copiers – ours break down, and they are also our printers and our fax machines now."

They are concerned that clients suffer when resources aren't available

"Our visit rooms seem so cold, un-family like. How can we 'reunite' our families in rooms like these?"

"Staffing ratios make it very difficult to provide the best quality of care for our clients."

"Staff is regularly put in dangerous situations with dangerous clients. These situations also endanger other clients."

"Overtime is extremely hard to get, even when my job requires it. I believe it is a disservice to my clients [for me] to be overworked, and have families wait for me to get caught up with referrals, meetings and home visits."

"There are just not enough homes for the amount of children needing homes."

"I like working with the patients, but so many of our wards are not staffed well enough to work with the patients towards their recovery."

"We need more trainings to educate staff about the unique circumstances and needs of youth in detention."

"I would like to see more incentives for self-care/health in the workplace. If we are healthy and strong, we can give just a little more on the job, and to our clients."

"There are staffing issues that need to be addressed. It is unsafe for employees and patients, and that makes it difficult to meet the needs of the patients."
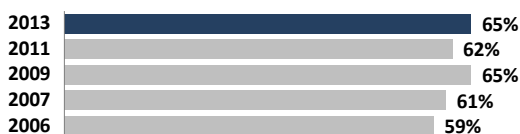
*Issues listed below total more than 3,004, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to resources.

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

65% of employees said they have access to the tools and resources needed for their job. 13% said they aren't provided needed tools and resources, which prevents them from doing the best possible job. They would like to have:
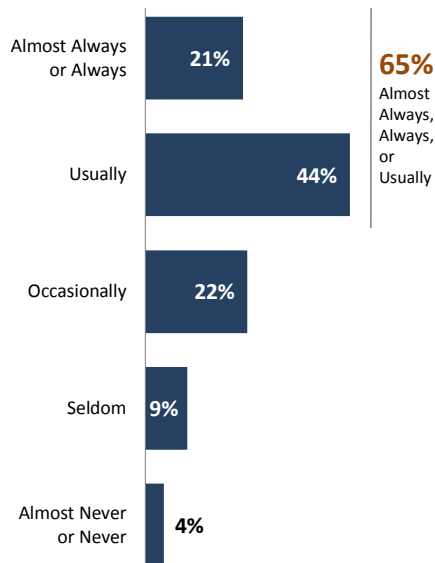
- Laptops, notebooks, smartphones and software
- Cell phones, scanners, and cameras
- More state vehicles, and HOV passes
- New office machines
- Medical equipment
- Basic office supplies

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 reported having adequate tools and resources.

Year	%
2013	65%
2011	62%
2009	65%
2007	61%
2006	59%

Increase between 2011 and 2013 is statistically significant at p<.01

ANSWERS

Almost Always or Always — 21%
Usually — 44%
Occasionally — 22%
Seldom — 9%
Almost Never or Never — 4%

65% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most staff are grateful for access to needed tools and resources

"My supervisor is very accessible, and provides me with the tools and resources to do the best job I can."

"I like the new computers that WORK, and don't freeze! Yay!"

"I like always having the supplies/chemicals to clean and sanitize the hospital."

"I love that we are given good technology to do our jobs. We have current computers, two computer screens, and many different systems to verify information."

"I have the time and supplies I need to do my job, and deliver quality care."

"The ability and resources to get the job done. I can get the correct parts or contractor to get the problem fixed the first time."

"I love the work I do, the tools I have to do it, and the positive effect I have on families' lives."

Some want updated computer systems

"At the minimum, an electronic notebook so we don't have to handwrite notes at our home visits and then return to the office and spend hours typing them into FamLink."

"I'd like to see more work-efficient devices such as laptops, tablets and/or smart phones."

"Better software; more user-friendly and designed specifically for the health field."

"If the department went to smart phones, we would have a GPS, access to e-mail, voice recording, and a better quality camera all in one. This also assists workers' personal safety and makes sense financially!"

Some requested tools or resources other than computers

"Have more state vehicles available to our department, so we are not having to put so many miles on our personal vehicles to go to the different facilities to do investigations."

"I'd like tools to increase efficiency: HOV passes, hand-held scanners, access to state client assessments, a digital camera."

"Medical supplies and exam equipment."

"We desperately need to have more printers and a color copier."
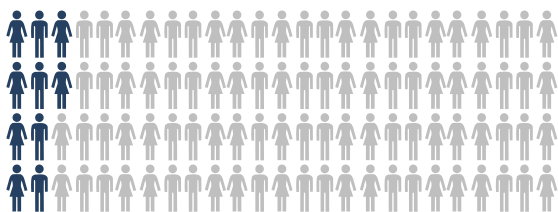
"I would like a cell phone, with caller ID."

"Better supplies. We run out of toner, paper, envelopes, chairs break – nothing gets taken care of in a timely manner."

"We need more equipment in our large office: copier, scanner, fax machine."

THEME. Staffing

817 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of adequate staffing.

10% commented on this theme *(817)*

Their comments were:

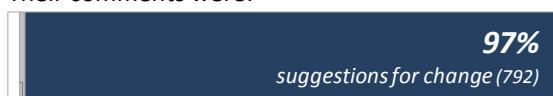|	
	97% *suggestions for change (792)*

2%
positive
(17)

1%
mixed or neutral
(8)

Of the 817 employees who wrote about staffing resources, 97% see a real need for more staff.

Those who commented believe low staffing levels create a number of negative effects in the workplace. They are particularly concerned about their inability to:

- Provide clients the best possible service
- Give clients individual attention
- Manage their workload well
- Collaborate effectively with co-workers
- Take time to "process" work experiences

They would like to see:

- Fewer managers, and more line staff
- Less staff turnover
- Vacant positions filled quickly

▶ *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Employees believe inadequate staffing hurts them, their co-workers, and their clients

"Increase in staff so high caseloads can be distributed, to allow workers the time to better serve clients, and the time to take advantage of training/education to increase skills/knowledge to ultimately provide better service to our clients."

"We need more staff in all shifts to be effective in carrying out patients' treatment plans/goals and be safe at all times!"

"Smaller caseloads for each worker (hire more people) and more miles on each vehicle. Face-to-face contact is so much more powerful than a phone call, and really shows the youth and families that we care."

"Smaller caseloads, PLEASE!! We need more people in the office. I often feel overwhelmed with the workload. Many of my co-workers are overworked as well – we aren't able to team together and help each other as often as we should."

"We simply need more people. We can't continue to always be in crisis mode, reacting when we could be responding if only we had time to breathe, think, and reflect on what works and what does not."

Some see "top heavy" management as part of the problem

"We need workers, not management. We don't have enough staff for what is expected of us. It takes away from quality activities with the clients."

"Hire more floor staff, train them well, and decrease our upper management. Too many chiefs and not enough Indians!"

"It feels like we are management top-heavy. It would be great to get more line workers so we don't have such high caseloads."

Employees are concerned about staff turnover, and want staff retention to be a priority

"Too many years of no COLAs, so we're losing staff for better-paying jobs. Need to somehow figure out a way to recruit, compensate, and retain key employees."

"Social workers are leaving at an amazing rate. The rest of us are overwhelmed, with little relief. The environment is toxic."

"There needs to be a focus on welcoming, engaging, and keeping staff. Morale in the office is pretty low collectively. There are pockets of people who are satisfied – I'd like to see that grow."

"Stable staffing. Our unit has undergone several years of fairly intense staff turnover. It is debilitating and exhausting."

They also want staff vacancies filled in a timely manner

"We need to fill the vacant spots we have, instead of leaving them vacant for months at a time."

"I'd like to see positions filled with permanent candidates. There are a lot of key positions that have interim people in them."

"We had many open positions this year that took a long time to fill – staff felt pressured to do work beyond regular duties."

THEME. Pay and benefits

755 of the 8,343 respondents who made comments addressed the issues of pay and/or benefits.

9% commented on this theme *(755)*

Their comments were:

58%
suggestions for change (437)

37%
positive
(276)

6%
mixed or
neutral (42)

Nearly four out of ten (37%) of the 755 respondents who mentioned pay and benefits made positive comments, with many expressing gratitude for their job and the benefits they receive.

Nearly six out of ten (58%) respondents suggested a need for changes in the pay and benefits they receive. The changes they recommend include:

- Pay raises
- Cost-of-living increases
- Improved benefits
- Increased compensation for groups of workers with particular advantages or disadvantages
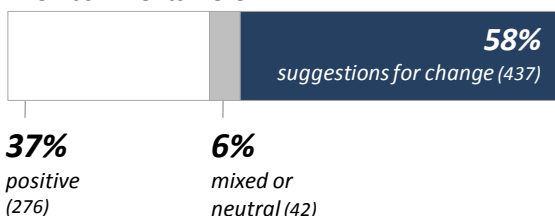
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff are pleased to have their job, and the benefits that come with it

"I'm thankful I have a job, when so many people are struggling and don't have a job."

"I like the pension, health benefits, annual and other leave, shift, and employment stability."

"Employee benefits that are offered are very good, and hard to beat anywhere in Washington."

"I like the fact that I have a job, and it also provides benefits."

"I enjoy the sense of security/stability. As a former private sector employee, I'm still shocked at how much better state employees are treated. This includes everything - income, breaks, vacation time, days off, sick leave – too much to list."

"I'm proud to be able to provide healthcare for my children, and I feel lucky to have a retirement plan."

Others feel strongly that a general increase in pay or benefits – or both – is in order

"Better pay across the board for everyone. We work very hard, and are the agency's greatest resource."

"There should be more raises/benefits for those who have been here for many years, as well as cost of living increases."

"Commute trip reduction should be supported (financial incentives for busing, carpooling, etc.)."

"Pay raises should occur to make up for the 'lost' years we have been through. Cost of living adjustments, too."

"Better health benefits, and a salary increase."

"How about a raise! The cost of living has increased greatly over the years, and wages for state employees haven't."

"Something needs to be done about the pay for most state employees. In the Puget Sound area, we're dramatically trailing other government agencies in wages. If the legislature wants a talented work staff that will stay in the state workforce, they need to increase the wages."

Some comments were requests for more compensation for specific categories of workers

"Pay increases based on performance."

"Higher wages for those of us with more experience specific to our work responsibilities."

"I would like to see geographic pay for high-cost areas of the state."

"Master-level employees should be paid more."

"Specialization results in better customer service and more satisfied customers. Encourage specialization, as they have in the past, with higher pay levels."

"Hazard pay – or island pay – for all SCC employees."

"Recognize the experience, knowledge and education of new workers – have remuneration packages matching each worker."

THEME. Training

909 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed training issues.

11% commented on this theme *(909)*

Their comments were:

90%
suggestions for change (815)

6%
positive
(54)

4%
mixed or neutral
(40)

Of the 909 respondents who commented about training, nine out of ten (90%) made suggestions for change. 6% made positive comments about training issues, and 4% made mixed or neutral comments.

Employees would like to see:

- More training in specific areas
- An increase in certain types of training, including on-line training, Lean training, and college courses
- Specialized training for specific employee groups
- Early and extensive training for new hires
- More hands-on training and mentoring programs
- Comprehensive training on new work processes
- More competent trainers
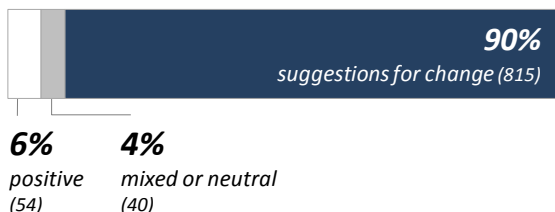
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees appreciate the training available to them

"I like the ability to cross-train, and be utilized in different areas."

"I'm a new employee, and I feel the training I am receiving is beneficial and well-planned."

"I've appreciated the opportunity to take classes for personal and professional growth through the STAR pass program."

"I'm very excited that our department has put resources toward training staff and implementing the LEAN process."

Many employees who commented on training requested additional training

"Would love to see more professional trainings on autism, ADHD, fetal alcohol exposure, and more."

"More on-line training."

"More training for dealing with dually diagnosed clients."

"More access to college courses, even if that meant having reduced paid hours. Expand tuition reimbursement."

"More cross-training."

"More team-building and sensitivity training."

Some recommended training for specific categories of employees

"Develop a training program for administrative/clerical staff. There is little or no training provided to them."

"More training for on-call staff."

"Supervisors should be mandated to attend ongoing training on how to manage/supervise people in order to get the best out of them. The training should address 'How not to bully' the people you supervise."
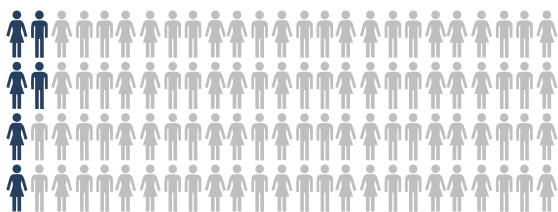
Others suggested a variety of ways to improve training

"We need hands-on training, not computer-generated training. Training on the computer does not allow questions."

"I'd like to see DSHS establish a mentoring program where employees could be supported to create a vision of their desired career path, and be given the attention and resources needed to grow and develop professionally."

"More competent trainers, with concise training materials."

"More job shadowing, to better understand different functions and job processes."

"Figuring out new systems seems to be trial by fire. More careful training, and time to prepare, is VERY necessary."

"Allow for training to happen first – before sending new workers out in the workforce with a 'deer in the headlights' look – so they're more prepared for what may come their way."

THEME. Facilities/environment

472 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed their work environment. These comments touched on offices, institutions, parking, commutes, and surroundings.

6% commented on this theme *(472)*

Their comments were:

71%
suggestions for change (335)

27%
positive
(125)

3%
mixed or neutral
(12)

Of the 472 respondents who commented on the facility they work in, 27% were satisfied with their physical work environment. Their positive comments included praise for the location of their worksite, the buildings they work in, and the ease of their commute between work and home.

More than seven out of ten respondents (71%) suggested that improvements are needed. The changes they would like to see at work include:

- Cleaner, better-maintained buildings
- Improved heating and cooling systems
- More light, especially *natural* light
- A quieter environment
- More – and more private – work space
- More conference rooms and break rooms
- Easier commutes, and better parking
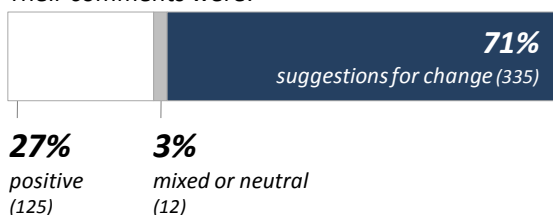
► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff expressed satisfaction with their workplace

"I like the geographical location, and the condition of the building and the grounds."

"The commute (6-10 minutes) is a blessing."

"I like this location (OB-2) – right off the freeway and a beautiful campus."

"Our office is a perfect place for customers and employees alike. The room fits every employee, and parking is not a problem."

"I like the location – good bus routes."

"Clean and bright environment to work in."

"I like the proximity to my home, and the peaceful atmosphere here."

Many who commented on facilities and environment feel their workplace needs improvement

"We need more space. It's already too crowded and we're expecting a net gain of 90 people soon. This will create huge parking problems, and make hard-to-book conference rooms even scarcer."

"Cleaner work environment. Ability to adjust lighting in the work area. Bathrooms that don't smell like a sewage backup."

"The location could be closer to a bus line."

"We have a very small office and are very cramped. There are no break areas or places to have lunch together."

"The building is too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer."

"More windows, so most of us don't feel like moles."

"Improvements to the visit room, painting the walls in the building (gloomy and dirty), improve the main lobby appearance."

"I don't like the facility I work in. It is noisy, ugly, and turning to get into the parking lot can be dangerous."

They would appreciate more privacy at work

"More privacy for confidential phone calls. The work stations are too close together, and everything can be heard."

"An area away from clients, for break time."

"A place to meet with clients who come in to the office. Currently, there's no place private enough to meet with them."

"More privacy would be nice. It would be nice to have offices with walls and doors. It's a big dream, I know."

THEME. Resources for clients and other resources

659 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed other resource issues, including resources for clients.

8% commented on this theme *(659)*

Their comments were:

86%
suggestions for change (564)

12%
positive
(79)

2%
mixed or neutral
(16)
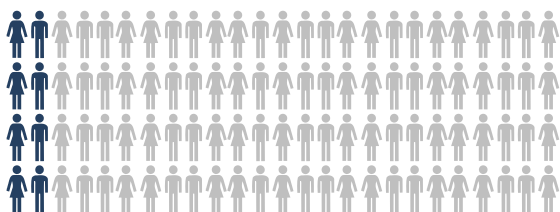
Of the 659 respondents who wrote comments about other resource issues, 86% were requests for increased resources. These requests can be grouped into two main categories:

- 171 commented on **resources for clients**. 143 expressed concern about the lack of adequate resources, 21 were satisfied with the resources they have to help clients, and 7 made mixed or neutral comments. Some of these comments appear below.
- 504 commented on **other resources**. 436 asked for more tools or resources to do their job. 60 were appreciative of the available resources, while 8 made mixed or neutral comments. Examples of these comments can be found on pages 66 and 67.
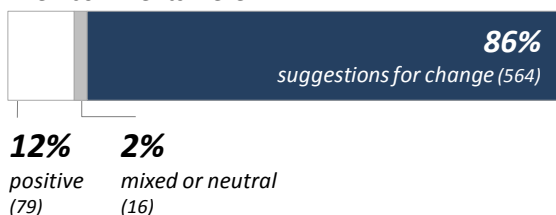
► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees who commented on resources for clients are frustrated by the lack of such resources

"There are very few real resources available to actually help the people I am supposed to help. Much of my job seems to consist of finding out what people need, then telling them we can't help them."

"We lack appropriate placements for all the mental health clients we now see."

"It is unfortunate that most clients in the institutions share bedrooms, and their living environments are too congested for optimal active treatment."

"The agency does not appear to recognize the need for recruitment and retention of foster parents is our greatest need. We can't keep children safe until we have homes to keep them safe in."

"Not enough foster homes, community supports; hard to work with youth and families when you don't have the supports needed."

"This region lacks culturally relevant services for our clients."

"We need service providers who are knowledgeable about the dynamics of domestic violence, and willing to work with families in a 'harm reduction' and solution-focused model."

"Stop saving money in the food service end at the expense of the clients."

"There are many clients and families who are struggling to care for their child with disabilities, but there aren't many resources for these families."

"We need more staff and resources to accommodate the growing elderly population."

"Homes available for difficult kids, and services available to families who don't have funds to pay for DV or counseling."

"There's a huge need for more programs for clients who not only have an intellectual disability, but also mental health issues."

A few employees are pleased with the resources available to clients

"I get to assist people in the community who are in desperate need of medical benefits, cash assistance, and housing. I can provide my clients with resources that can improve the quality of their lives."

"Having access to Roads to Community Living resources allows us to be creative in helping clients."

"I like having the resources and support to place people back in the workforce."

"What I like best about my job is being able to give services to my people, like vocational services and Individual and Family Services."

"I like see our clients succeed with our resources, and supporting them throughout their time here at JJ&RA."

QUESTION. Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life

Half of employees (50%) said DSHS supports them in living a healthier life. Nearly three out of ten (28%) reported the agency seldom or never supports their efforts to be healthier. Employees who commented on this issue believe:
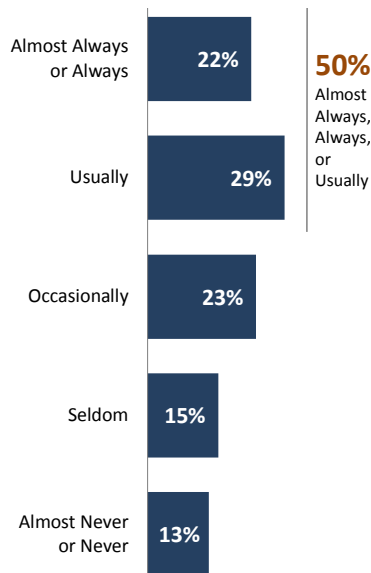
- Management should increase efforts to improve the physical and emotional health of employees
- Management should be aware of, and responsive to, employee's safety concerns
- Decreasing employees' stress in the workplace should be an agency priority

More staff in 2013 than in 2011 or 2009 said their agency supports them in living a healthier life.

2013	50%
2011	46%
2009	46%

ANSWERS

Almost Always or Always	22%
Usually	29%
Occasionally	23%
Seldom	15%
Almost Never or Never	13%

50% Almost Always, Always, or Usually

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff are satisfied their workplace is safe and healthy

"It is a professional and safe place to work."

"Health and wellness are encouraged, and resources are provided to that end."

"The administration has a strong interest in patient and staff safety."

"The agency supports healthy lifestyles with a fitness room, quiet room, bike cage."

"Positive, safe, healthy work environment."

Others feel management should act to improve workers' safety and health

"I'd like to see the motor pool expanded. It poses a significant risk to workers to have clients with a history of violence capable of identifying their personal vehicles and gathering information that can be used to track a worker outside the workplace."

"I'd like my agency to focus more on self-care – taking lunch breaks, encouraging physical fitness and healthy eating habits."

"The worksite lacks any security other than key cards, despite the risky/unpleasant nature of our work. Hire a security guard."

"Make a commitment to allowing for healthier ergonomic practices at workstations – provide necessary equipment."

"The gang activity on campus is running rampant, and I believe our administrative team doesn't have a clue on how to deal with it. Many incidents are overlooked, and staff are getting hurt."

"Allowing time off for employees who stay healthy and don't use their sick leave or draw from the health system. Allow for gym time or workout time."

"We don't have cell phones. The line staff – meeting with clients who have criminal histories, drug use, mental health issues, have committed serious violent crimes – don't have a way to communicate our own safety."

Staff suggested ways the agency could lessen their work-related stress

"More emphasis on staff care (i.e., hosting a free massage clinic on campus), e-mail reminders to do something relaxing to maintain work/life balance, a counselor for the counselors to go to for mental health check-ups."

"An improved wellness room that is larger in size and with actual equipment (e.g., treadmills, ellipticals, bikes). This would be a great tool to help deal with the daily stresses that go along with the job."

"Therapy/counseling and workshops regarding vicarious trauma, and the psychological effects of employees' daily exposure to traumatized and psychopathic individuals."

"Encouragement for healthy choices. Bring back wellness committees, and encourage staff to reduce stress, thus leaving us with healthier employees who are motivated to come to work."

THEME. Safety issues

280 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed safety issues.

3% commented on this theme *(280)*

Their comments were:

93%
suggestions for change (260)

5%
positive
(14)

2%
mixed or neutral
(6)

Of the 280 respondents who wrote comments about safety issues, one out of twenty (5%) said they consider their workplace to be safe.

More than nine out of ten comments about safety issues (93%) were suggestions for improvement. Employees requested:

- Improved safety in buildings and parking areas
- More safeguards during fieldwork
- Better security in institutions
- Additional staff, to increase safety for current staff
- Increased safety in staff training
- Regular maintenance of state cars and equipment
- Honest, timely communication of safety concerns

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Most employees who commented on safety offered ideas to make their worksites and field activities safer

"Staff security in building, around building, and parking lots. Security cameras at all entrances and exits."

"Allow CPS investigators to carry a weapon."

"Change the navigator's station. Enclose financial workers. Have a security guard. Mandatory safety training."

"I feel an actual dispatch we can radio into when making contacts in the field would be best."

"Interview rooms separate from the employee work space. Client should never be behind the counter for any reason."

"More security, like a scanner code to check for weapons as clients come into the lobby."

"Bullet-proof glass at the front counter."

Some addressed safety concerns specific to institutions

"I feel, at the very least, staff should be allowed to carry pepper spray. We have a record number of staff and youth assaults."

"Provide safe staffing! Every night we have to work with minimum staffing or less than minimal staff. Does someone have to be killed before we are listened to?"

"Stop putting staff in harm's way by running the units and security short staffed – especially in the recreation center."

"A security guard on each ward, to promote safety and to actually help with any aggressive behaviors on the ward."

"I think the panic buttons that staff wear at night should connect directly to the police when it is pressed, not an alarm company that will take at least five minutes before they notify police."

"More effective way of working with extremely violent behavior clients, to avoid staff becoming seriously injured. For example, restraints used sooner rather than later!!"

"Safety and security. Pat downs on all movements. More room searches."

"Better employee safety from very dangerous patients who decline their psych medications constantly."
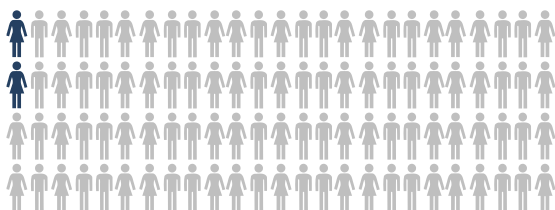
Employees also mentioned a variety of other safety issues

"Equipment being serviced more often, so that it works properly, to avoid injury to staff or clients."

"When a client leaves a threatening message about killing us, all staff should be aware of it, instead of supervisors hiding it."

"I'd like to see about hiring at least another person in our shop. Right now the workload is too much, and causes safety issues!"

"We would feel much safer knowing that the state cars in DDA Region 2 South are properly maintained."

"Seriously modify 'Dealing with Resistive Youth' training to eliminate staff injuries during training."

THEME. Wellness resources

178 of the 8,343 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resources for wellness and health.

2% commented on this theme *(178)*

Their comments were:

| **94%** |
| *suggestions for change (167)* |

5%
positive
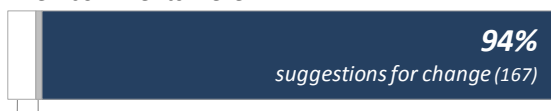(9)

1%
mixed or neutral
(2)

Of the 178 respondents who commented on wellness, the majority (94%) suggested changes. 5% made positive comments, and 1% made mixed or neutral comments.

Employees would like:

- Exercise areas, and the time to use them
- Safe and convenient bicycle parking
- Ergonomic workstations
- Improvements in air quality, including scent-free and smoke-free worksites
- Access to fresh food and pure water
- Lunch rooms, break rooms, and rest areas
- Accommodations for nursing mothers

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some staff want steps taken to encourage exercise

"I would like to have an on-site gym."

"How about some standing/running/walking exercise machines for good health? Thank you!"

"Discounts on a gym membership."

"Allow staff to flex their schedules to accommodate a full hour of exercise during the lunch hour."

"A lunch-time fitness class for staff."

"Better places for people to store bicycles, so they can bike to work without worrying about their bicycles being stolen."

"More concern with physical health, such as exercise equipment, showers, and encouragement for physical wellness."

Others want more ergonomic workstations

"Sitting for the majority of the day is a health hazard. Everyone should have the option of a standing cube."

"Ergo chairs for ALL staff."

"Options of 'walking stations,' so workers can walk slowly while at work."

"A computer desk that can be adjusted to sit or stand (ergonomic)."

"Ergonomic workstations for all, ergo assessments on the first day of hire, with implementation within two weeks."

Staff suggested a variety of ways to promote wellness in the workplace

"A new building and/or new HVAC system that allows employees to work without being subjected to the bad air quality."

"I'd like to see a water cooler, as opposed to the water fountain water that tastes like a swimming pool."

"A designated place to use a breast pump that is private and sanitary."

"Better enforcement of the memo put out referencing perfumes and body washes. The scents are giving me headaches."

"Healthier on-site food and drink options."

"A designated lunch room and break room would be nice, so we don't have to use the hallways next to cubicles to store our food/microwave/refrigerator/sink, etc."

"A smoke-free campus."

"I'd like to see a place provided to lay down for a few minutes if you have a headache, or just can't keep your eyes open."

"Eagle Scout Project Complete" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Holly Hanson, with permission

From the photographer:
"My son was very happy when he finally completed his Eagle Scout Project at Sarvey Wildlife Center in Arlington."

"Autumn Fun" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Michelle Butler, with permission

"Luke Loves Pumpkins" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Francia Reynolds, with permission

From the photographer:
"My grandson wanted to take all the pumpkins home. We were at the Maris Farms Pumpkin Patch in Sumner as part of Headstart Day for teachers and students from the Clover Park School District on October 20, 2013."

"Emerging" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Doug Gentry, with permission

"Better than Bo Peep" • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Cindy Rochelle, with permission

From the photographer:
"This is one of thousands of children who have been rescued by DSHS. Addiction and neglect have been replaced by joy."

Employee Survey 2013