

Employee Survey

May 2016 | Report 11.229

2015

From the former DSHS Secretary:

This is my choice, but not because of its title “food.” Rather, because I have such a clear recollection of a day of visits I made to the Colfax and Clarkston offices – where rolling fields of wheat truly shimmered with a golden glow on a chilly, but beautiful, sunny fall day. As with many trips to eastern Washington offices, the trip provided for plenty of road time and a reminder of how large and diverse our state is as we seek to serve people in every corner of it. This picture also reminds me of the warm reception I received at each of those offices and how my simple thank you to those teammates, who are so far from Olympia, was so graciously and gratefully received. In short, this picture reminds me of our statewide team and our statewide mission. Sounds maudlin I’ll bet, but it is all 100% true.

– Kevin W. Quigley, former Secretary

“Food” • Secretary’s Choice
DSHS Photo Contest
By Kim Karu, with permission

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

Transforming lives

DSHS

WASHINGTON STATE

Department of Social and Health Services

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Online Library:

www1.dshs.wa.gov/rda

Information About This Publication

Title: 2015 DSHS Employee Survey

Abstract: The 2015 survey revealed widespread increases in employee engagement at DSHS since our last major survey in 2013. Positive responses increased for the majority of survey questions, and DSHS exceeded the statewide target for Governor Jay Inslee's "Employer of Choice" goal. There were improvements in all of the areas of focus specified by former Secretary Kevin Quigley for 2013 – 2015. The response rate in 2015 was 81%, the highest level of participation since the survey began in 2002. The survey results also show opportunities for positive change, and in some cases, important challenges. Many of these opportunities and challenges are specific to Administrations and major units, and are the subject of action planning at every level of the organization.

The Employee Survey is 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.

Keywords: Surveys, DSHS, Employees

Category: Surveys, DSHS, Employees

Geography: Washington State

Research Time Period: October 13 to November 25, 2015

Publication Date: May 2016

Publication Number: 11.229

Project Name: DSHS Employee Surveys

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"Tulip Farm" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Kim Karu, 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

“Chinese Lantern Festival, Spokane”

• **Honorable Mention (tie)**

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic

By Shari Riley, with permission

From the photographer:

“Spokane is blessed to be the first to experience this 5 week celebration of Chinese culture. A mix of illuminating lights, beautiful music, dancing and delicious cuisine made it truly a cultural experience for any Spokanite or visitor!”



“Lopez Island Sunset” • Photographers Choice

DSHS Photo Contest

By Miranda Koutecky, with permission

From the photographer:

“This picture was taken during a family trip to the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington. This was our view from the apartment we were staying in. As the sun went down the sky started to get more and more vibrant. Because of all the fires in the area at the time the sky turned into a rainbow of colors and the water reflected the beautiful colors of the sky.”



2015

DSHS Employee Survey



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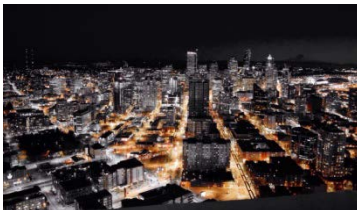
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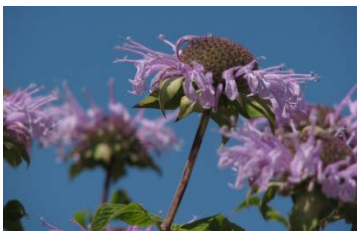
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Appendices are available in conjunction with this report on the RDA Website:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/rda/research-reports>

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



"Purple Flowers" • Honorable Mention (tie)

DSHS Photo Contest • Categories: Technical

By Alli Smith, with permission



“Alpine Lakes Vista in Central Washington” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By John Plotz, with permission

Executive Summary

THE BIG NEWS ABOUT THE 2015 EMPLOYEE SURVEY IS POSITIVE. The 2015 Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Employee Survey revealed upward trends in almost all areas. Many of the improvements in employee satisfaction reflect efforts throughout the Department to increase employee involvement and to address issues of employee concern. However, concerns and opportunities for improvement remain.

The Employee Survey is the principal method for DSHS to gather comprehensive performance feedback from all staff. The goal of the survey is to reach out to each of the more than 17,000 employees at DSHS, obtain candid feedback about their workplace experiences, and provide actionable results at every level of the organization. The Employee Survey is used extensively for strategic planning and performance improvement across all Washington State employees, the entire Department, each DSHS Administration, and hundreds of individual workgroups.

Encouraging Trends and “Bright Spots”

The 2015 survey found widespread increases in employee engagement at DSHS since our last major survey in 2013. Positive responses increased for the majority of survey questions, and DSHS exceeded the statewide target for the Executive Branch’s “Employer of Choice” measure. There were improvements in all of the areas of focus specified by former Secretary Kevin Quigley for 2013 – 2015. The response rate in 2015 was 81%, the highest level of participation since the survey began in 2002.

Employee Engagement is UP at DSHS. We saw:

- Statistically significant increases from 2013 for 12 of the 20 survey questions.
- No negative trends from 2013 to 2015.
- An increase of 4 percentage points from 2013 on 11 “Employer of Choice” questions.^{1,2}
 - This exceeded the statewide target of 3 percentage points.
 - DSHS was the primary driver of a statewide increase. The average increase for employees of other state agencies was less than 1 percentage point.

Secretary Quigley’s emphasis on specific Focus Areas paid off in higher scores:

- More employees say they know how their agency measures its success (58%, up from 54% in 2013).
- More employees say they have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting their work (55%, up from 51% in 2013).
- More say they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things (50%, up from 46% in 2013).
- More employees say their supervisor gives them ongoing feedback that helps to improve their performance (69%, up from 65% in 2013).

Among the 12 questions trending in a positive direction, three stand out because of their relatively large gains and relevance to employees:

- More employees say they receive recognition for a job well done (55%, up from 51%).
- More say the agency supports them in living a healthy life (55%, up from 50%).
- More say they have opportunities at work to learn and grow (60%, up from 56%).

Employees’ written comments also revealed encouraging trends:

- 40% increase in positive comments about the competence of co-workers.
- 24% fewer complaints about diversity issues.
- 33% increase in positive comments about overall satisfaction or morale.

¹ See Washington State Human Resources, 2015 Employee Engagement Survey Report:

<http://hr.wa.gov/WorkforceDataAndPlanning/WorkforceDataTrends/StateEmployeeSurvey>

² This measure is defined in Results Washington Goal 5.1.3. <http://www.results.wa.gov/what-we-do/measure-results/efficient-effective-accountable-government/goal-map>

Continuing Opportunities for Positive Change

The survey results show opportunities for further improvement, and in some cases, important challenges. Many of these opportunities and challenges are specific to Administrations and major units, and are the subject of action planning at every level of the organization.

Despite improvements, positive responses are still low for some questions

- Only 41% believe we always or usually use customer feedback to improve work process.
- Only 45% say they always or usually receive clear information about changes within the agency.

Written comments identify new opportunities for change

- 59% more comments calling for better pay and benefits (some of these are linked to turnover).
- 45% more comments calling for better resources for clients.
- 39% more requests for more flexible schedules or telecommuting opportunities.
- 26% more comments about the need for better staffing (includes concerns about staff turnover).
- 19% more comments about staff safety (of these, 40% were from Western State Hospital).

Individual administrations, divisions, and workgroups have unique issues and concerns. Workshops and comprehensive custom reports help units to identify the needs of their workgroups.

Survey Facts

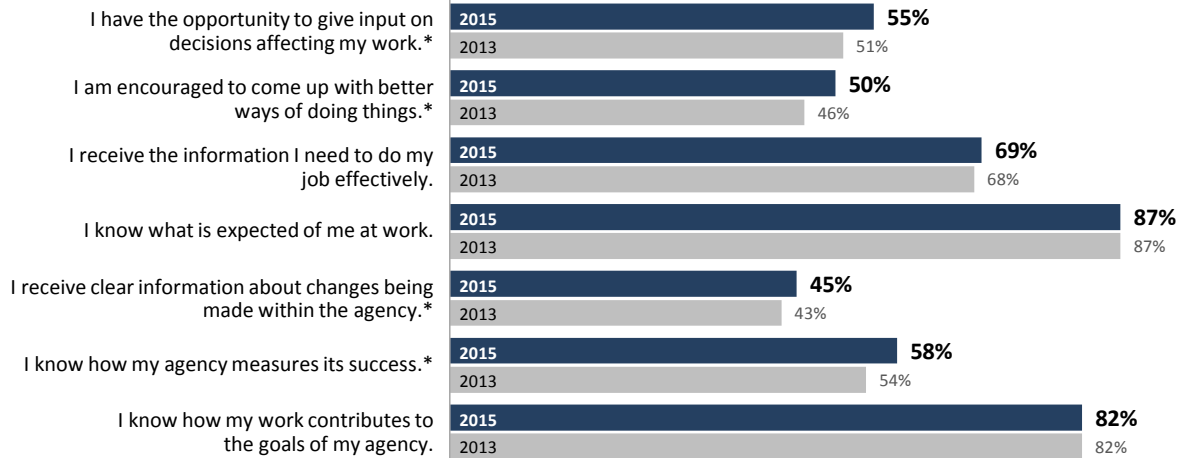
The 2015 Employee Survey is the ninth DSHS-wide employee survey. The biennial survey is administered by the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA), under the Services and Enterprise Support Administration (SESA).

The survey was:

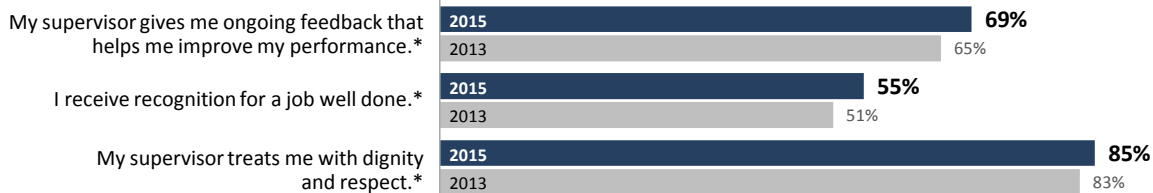
- Available to all employees from October 13 to November 25, 2015.
- Administered in conjunction with a survey of all state employees, sponsored by Governor Inslee.
- Standardized across the Department, with the option to add questions to meet specific needs of individual programs.
- Completed by 13,664 Department employees—an 81% response rate (based on FTE totals).
- Analyzed thoroughly. 529 detailed custom reports were prepared for workgroups throughout the Department.
- Distributed widely. In addition to this comprehensive report and the many workgroup reports, the survey findings have been made available through more than 15 presentations, workshops, and individual consultations.
- A push for future improvements. As of this report’s publication date, workgroups at state-wide, department, and division levels are reviewing results, gathering further information around key issues, and formulating plans to address employee concerns and capitalize on opportunities.
- An important component of Governor Inslee’s Results Washington data-driven performance management and continuous improvement system. 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 and accountable government. Action plans developed by the Department’s Assistant Secretaries guide the next two-year cycle of performance improvement.

Changes from 2013 to 2015: Percent of Employees Answering “Usually” or “Always”

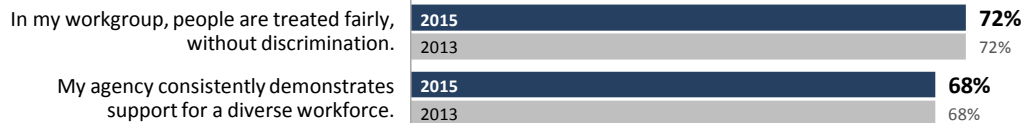
COMMUNICATION



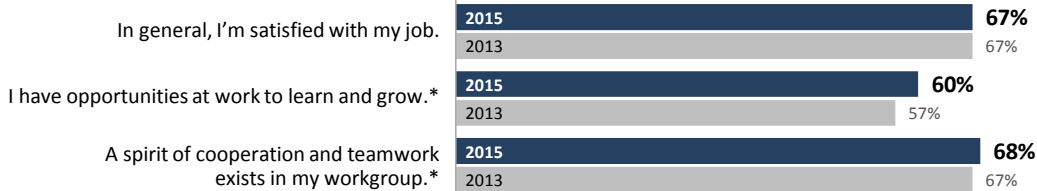
SUPERVISOR/MANAGER SUPPORT



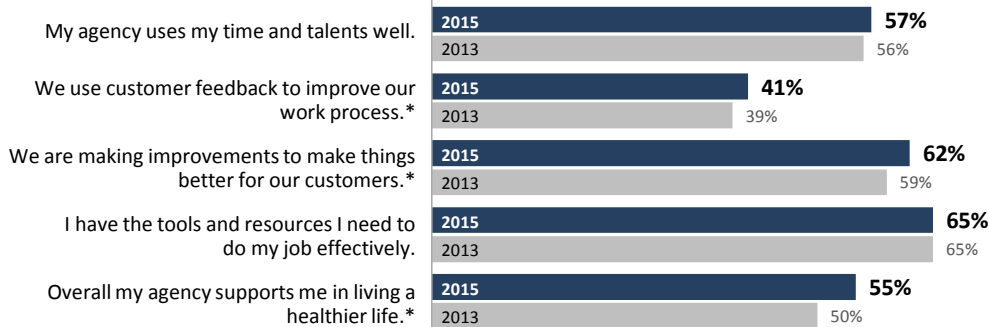
FAIRNESS/DIVERSITY



THE DAILY JOB



BUSINESS PRACTICES

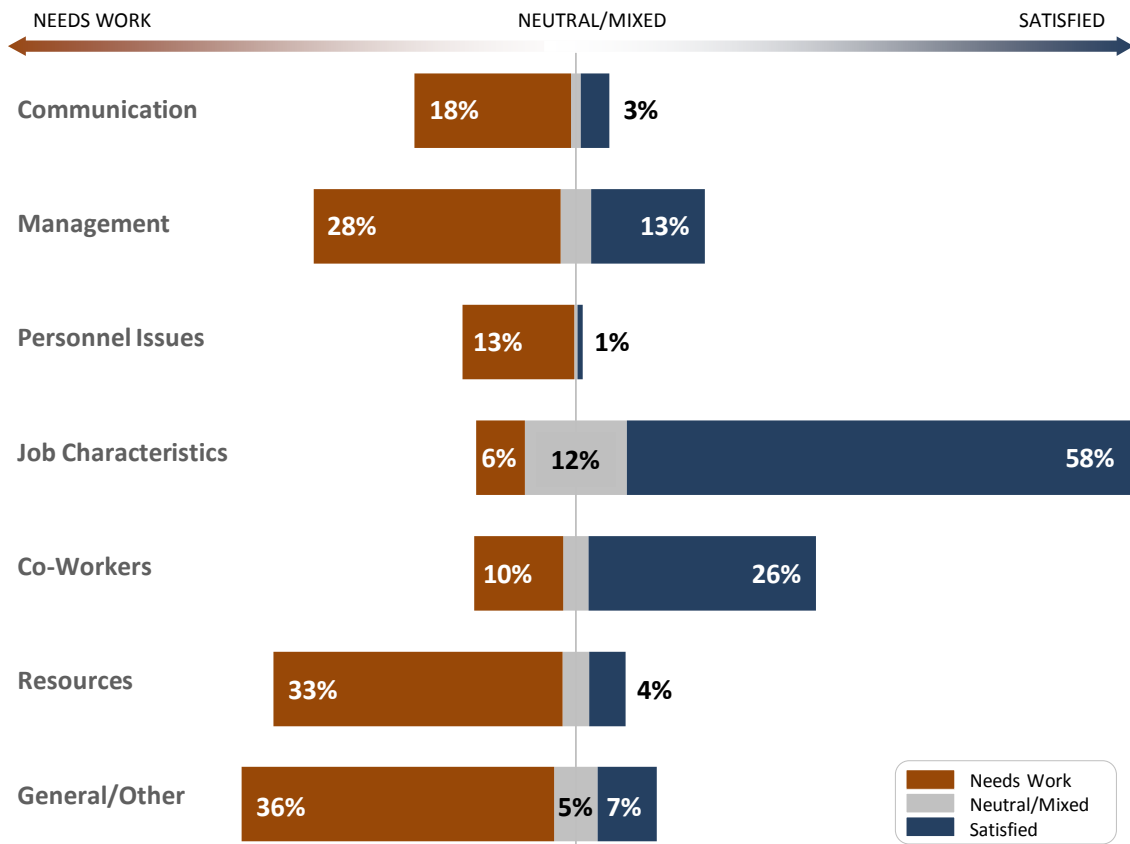


*Change is significant at the .01 level. See Appendix B, Chart F for long term trends.

Major Comment Themes: Percent of respondents who made comments in 2015

Comments were made in response to these two questions:

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



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

High Points in the 2015 DSHS Employee Survey

			Higher than State		
			Highest Ever for this Measure		
			Statistically Significant (p<.01)		
	Change from 2013 to 2015				
	2015 Percent Positive				
How we measure success/communication					
12. I know how my agency measures its success.	58%	4%	✓	✓	✓
14. I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency.	45%	2%	✓		
3. I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency.	82%	1%			✓
Expectations					
4. I know what is expected of me at work.	87%	0%			✓
8. My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance.	69%	4%	✓	✓	✓
Ideas Considered/Improvements					
1. I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.	55%	4%	✓	✓	
15. I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.	50%	5%	✓		
5. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.	60%	4%	✓	✓	✓
10. We are making improvements to make things better for our customers.	62%	3%	✓	✓	
Support					
9. I receive recognition for a job well done.	55%	4%	✓	✓	✓
11. A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup.	68%	2%	✓	✓	✓
7. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.	85%	2%	✓	✓	✓
20. Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life.	55%	5%	✓	✓	



“First Dance” • First Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

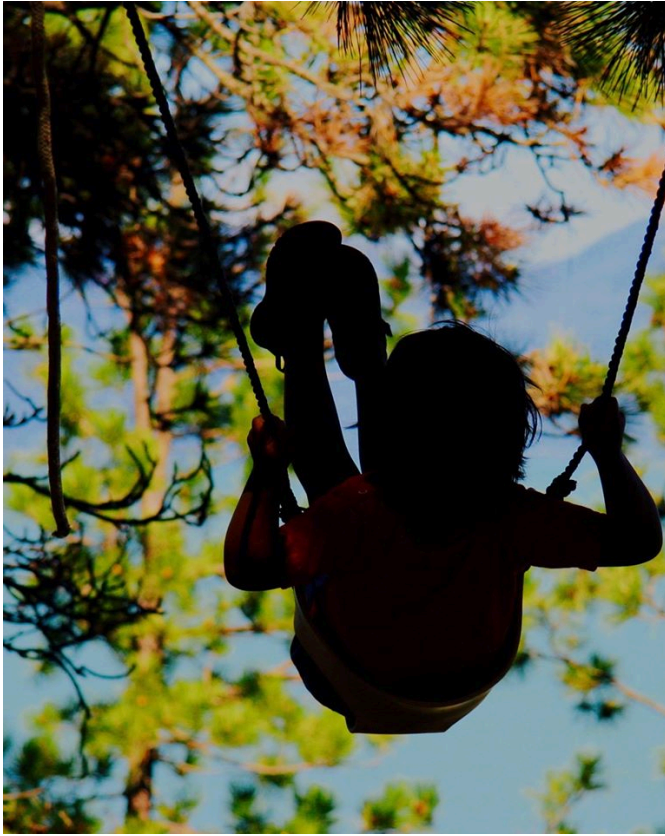
From the photographer:
“Fellow co-workers tied the knot in August 2014. This is a loving and intimate photo of their first dance together as husband and wife.”



LEFT
“4th of July” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Jolene Griffith, with permission



RIGHT
“Daddy and Daughter” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Angelica Eldridge, with permission



“Swing on Flathead Lake” • Third Place (tie)

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Alison Miller, with permission

From the photographer:

“I shot this photo of my daughter while visiting friends on Flathead Lake in Montana. Everyone should experience childhood as this picture illustrates; a gentle push into the wonder and beauty of the world while secure in the shadow and safety of a nearby loved one.”



“I-5 Bridge” • Honorable Mention (tie)

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



“Patients Grown Spuds” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

From the photographer:

“Patient-grown potatoes at the Western State Hospital green house. This was an experiment to see if they could grow potatoes and to see what would come out of a mixed bag of seed potatoes.”

CHAPTER 1

Communication

EMPLOYEES REPORTED INCREASED SATISFACTION ON SEVERAL COMMUNICATION MEASURES. Compared to the 2013 survey, significantly more employees reported they have opportunities to provide input, receive clear information about workplace changes, and know how their agency measures success. As in 2013, 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.

Much room for improvement remains: Only about half of employees said that they “always” or “usually” have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting their work, and less than half said that they receive clear information about changes being made within the agency. As in previous surveys, communication issues figure prominently in employees’ comments. Nearly one quarter (22%) of the comments concern communication, and 80% of those comments identified areas that need work.

Staff input. Staff consistently report that they want a stronger voice in their workplace. Managers that value input and encourage staff to participate in workplace decisions are highly regarded. Employees want to see their ideas put into action, and to feel they have insight to improve daily operations. While satisfaction with communication continues to rise, the open-ended comments demonstrate a need for continued effort.

- **More opportunities for input.** 55% of employees (up from 51% in 2013) said they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting their work.
- **More encouragement to innovate.** 50% of employees (up from 46% in 2013) said they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.
- **Challenges remain.** Base rates of positive responses to these questions are still relatively low. Only 985 employees (10% of those who made comments) addressed managers listening to staff input, but the majority of these (74%) indicated that more work is needed.

Information from management. As in years past, staff indicated a need for clearer and more comprehensive information from management. However, positive responses increased from 2013 in one category.

- **Improved information about changes.** 45% of employees (up from 43% in 2013) said they receive clear information about changes within the agency.
- **High awareness of job expectations.** 87% of employees (the same percentage as in 2013) said they know what is expected of them at work.
- **Moderately high satisfaction with job-specific information.** 69% of employees said they receive enough information to do their job effectively.
- **Continuing challenges with information sharing by management and supervisors.** Of the 921 employees who commented about this issue (8% of those who made comments), 90% indicated dissatisfaction.

Goals, guidelines and performance measures. An increasing majority of employees understand how their agency measures success. Even more say that they know how their work contributes to the goals of their agency. Some employees still lack clear understanding of their agency's direction.

- **Overall increase in understanding of agency success.** 58% of employees (up from 54% in 2013) said they know how their agency measures success.
- **Steady knowledge about how work contributes to agency goals.** 82% of employees (the same percentage as in 2013) are clear about how their work contributes to the goals of their agency.
- **More positive comments about the overall direction of the agency.** Of the 205 employees who commented on the presence or absence of a clear direction for the agency, 35% indicated satisfaction with their agency's plans and goals. In 2013, only 21% of comments about this theme were positive.

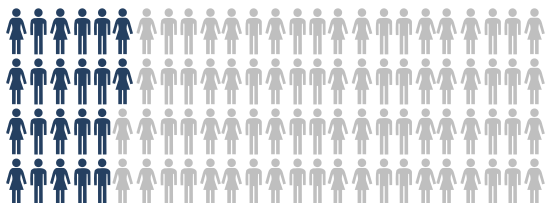


**“Seattle Ferris Wheel” •
Second Place**
DSHS Photo Contest • Category:
Technical
By Kim Karu, with permission

THEME. General communication

2,226 of the 9,926 employees who made comments mentioned communication.

22% commented on this theme (2,226)



Their comments were:



15%

positive
(329)

5%

mixed or neutral
(110)

In this survey, as in previous surveys, employees expressed a strong desire for clear and effective communication at all levels of the department. Eight out of ten (80%) of those commenting on communication were critical or suggested improvements. Of the 2,226* who mentioned communication:

- 985 (44%) addressed whether staff has input into workplace changes (pages 12-14)
- 921 (41%) discussed the information staff receives from management (pages 15-18)
- 205 (9%) described communication about agency guidelines and performance measures (pages 19-21)
- 573 (26%) mentioned other communication issues, which are referenced throughout this chapter

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees praise the quality of communication in their workplace

"I like that I have a great line of communication with my supervisor and team. We collaborate well."

"My team, supervisor and program manager do their best to work together and keep us informed in all that matters."

"I always have all the updates and information I need on time."

"I like the communications I have with the managers in different programs. I am able to learn about them and how they make life better for the citizens of Washington."

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

"Better, more professional communication is needed. Personal agendas and many instances of not following chain of command in communication causes incorrect information to be blown out of proportion, and individuals unfairly accused/targeted."

"More communication and understanding on what's going on and why from the main office workers."

"Communication from all levels. Don't just communicate when things go wrong."

"Better DSHS communication. 'The News You Can Use' is not that useful."

"Clear information about changes being made within the agency."

"I would like to see better communication across the board. There needs to be less unilateral decisions and more discussions."

"Crucial Conversations training for ALL staff with the expectation positive communication around conflict will occur."

"Communication is POOP!"

Communication with co-workers and between units was often mentioned

"I enjoy the teamwork between ACs. We work together to do what is best for the clients and use each other's inputs to make sure we have a rounded view of the needs of our clients."

"Improved communication between shift charges and relief staff, especially when it concerns clients that are one on one."

"I would like to see more communication between work groups. For example: To be able to connect with financial workers and workers in different departments to better understand the processes that are needed in order for work to be done."

"The teamwork with the other shifts, for the most part, is positive and we are able to communicate well with each other, all working towards the common goal."

"Improved communication between the divisions. The work being done in the various divisions are connected and inter-related, however the cross communication is oftentimes lacking."

"Better information sharing between units."

*Issues listed below total more than 2,226 and more than 100%, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to communication.

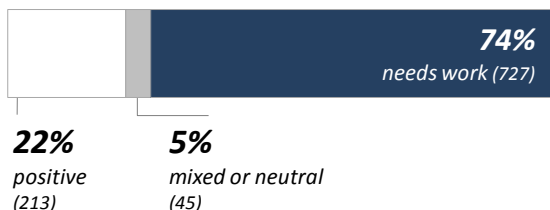
THEME. Listening to input from staff

985 of the 9,926 respondents who commented addressed the issue of managers listening to staff.

10% commented on this theme (985)



Their comments were:



985 respondents offered comments about staff input. Of these, more than two out of ten (22%) said that managers or supervisors listen to them and encourage feedback.

More than seven out of ten respondents (74%) who made comments about staff input feel improvements are needed. Many suggested specific changes. Respondents want management to:

- Engage in two-way communication, actively listening and giving feedback
- Ask for input
- Encourage input from all staff, no matter what position or opinions they hold*

► What DSHS employees said . . .

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

“My opinion counts!”

“My supervisor listens and is interested in what I say.”

“I feel I have input and that my chain of command listens. Not that we always agree, but just being heard and respected means a lot.”

They want to feel like their input is meaningful

“Don't ask for staff input then do what management wants to do anyway. Appears to be just to put on show.”

“At our agency, Lean is driven from the top down and not from the bottom up. Management does what they want and creates work groups to affirm what they want. They intervene in workgroups to make sure the result is what they were looking for. Non-management ideas are not accepted. Being a booster or cheerleader for management is what is rewarded.”

“Although I am often asked my opinion, it is immediately discounted. Expressing my opinions and observances have only hurt my career. I no longer speak.”

“I would like to see my suggestions go somewhere, I want to be heard. It seems when I suggest something, it falls on deaf ears.”

“Field workers’ input and suggestions to management taken seriously about what is needed. Upper management forgets what it's like to be out in the field.”

Staff value supervisors and managers who engage them in dialogue

“Office supervisors and management encourage open two-way communication. Decisions are made by getting staff input and listening to that input.”

“I like our new Superintendent. He is an incredible leader and has made great changes in the relatively short time he has been here and always seems to listen to all concerns and supports input and growth in his staff.”

“I would like to feel that my input is valued. I feel that management in this office believes that if we share ideas about how to improve things we are just complaining.”

“Less input from people who go to committee meetings and talk about patient care and more input from people who actually provide it when it comes to what are best practices.”

“Consult with those doing the work before changing a practice.”

“If upper management actually listened to the employees and made changes we suggested as we are the ones that are hands on, things would run much more smoothly.”

*See also the Autonomy and Growth Opportunities section of the Job Characteristics chapter (page 49).

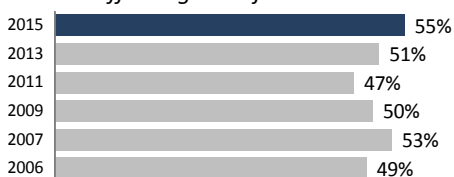
QUESTION. I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

More than half of employees (55%) said they always or usually have a chance to give input on decisions in their workplace – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS.

More than two in ten employees (21%) said they seldom or never have opportunities to give input. Employees appreciate supervisors and managers who:

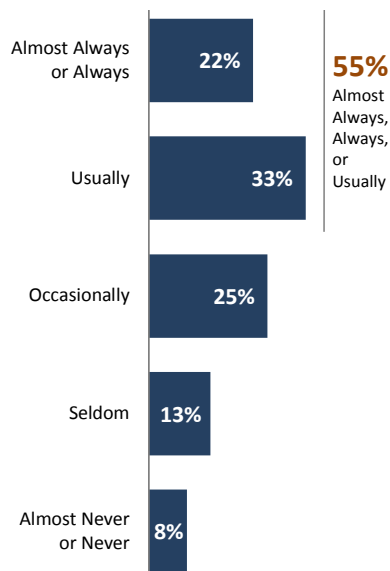
- Create a supportive environment where they feel safe making suggestions
- Value staff input
- Use staff ideas when possible

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they have input into decisions affecting their jobs.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees feel heard in their workplace

"We have a great supportive group of management team who have ears to listen, respect, and hear us what we need to better our job. For example: Our health issues and almost everyone has a sit stand workstation and also our communicator is upgraded to Skype for business. I would say to my management team you are the best and thank you for ears to hear us. Blessings to you."

"I like the fact that my opinion counts for something."

"I love that over the past couple years we have had a lot of rein to participate on workgroups, and develop our skills, and really have a say in our job, and how it is done. I appreciate that the staff know our leaders, the director, and RA and more. Our leaders are now tangible and accessible people. I like that! This means a lot to staff! And they listen. Super cool!"

"The ability to bring new ideas to my boss and have a voice. They will discuss all ideas brought to them to determine their viability. No idea is a bad idea."

Others report their input doesn't have an impact

"I would like to see more follow up from administration. Suggestions are given frequently and then are lost in the shuffle. Most of the time they are never mentioned again."

"Communication between my discipline and administration is very, very poor. We provide feedback and receive little, if any response; our opinions do not seem to matter."

"No feedback — up or down. Supervisors always take a negative approach and really don't care to listen."

Employees want to feel safe in voicing their opinions

"I gave up hoping for other changes after being told 'no' several times. Now I just do my job and have no interest in suggesting change or improvements of any kind. These things are really not welcome here and serve to only irritate my supervisors and make them hostile towards me and possibly jeopardize my job."

"Better two way communication with the manager. I have seen the manager snap at people when they disagree with her, publicly humiliating and alienating employees in the process. This has caused many/most staff being uncomfortable voicing their opinions and it stifles growth and office productivity."

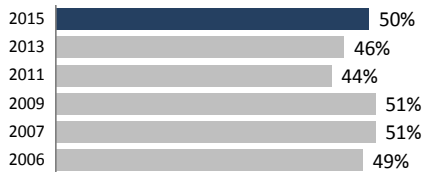
"I love the fact that I'm able to speak up when I have something to say and I feel heard. I am able to disagree, and I feel comfortable doing so, without fearing retaliation."

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

50% of respondents reported they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things – a statistically significant increase. More than one quarter (27%) indicated they seldom or never receive such encouragement. Respondents are pleased when they are:

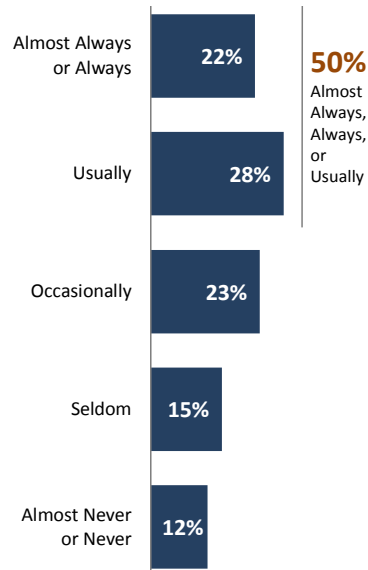
- Able to contribute their ideas
- Valued for their skills and experience
- Given the chance to offer creative solutions

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they are encouraged to find new ways of doing things.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$. Wording changed in 2011.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some staff say they are able to share their thoughts and suggestions

“Ability to recommend changes to my unit. They are always looked at with an open mind and it is explained in detail if there is a reason the change can't be made.”

“I appreciate the ‘think outside the box’ philosophy and the attitude of ‘tell me what I need to do to support what you are doing’ that is communicated by Administration. Everyone's job is important and hearing this is a refreshing change and makes changes easier to implement in a more positive way.”

“My leads, supervisors, and administrators are very supportive of my growth and development. They are open to conversation and helping make the workplace a great environment to be in.”

“I like that our suggestions are heard by management, which makes me feel valued.”

Others feel they are not given the opportunity to contribute ideas

“Floor staff should have more impact in the patient's treatment plan and input to steer their treatment in a more positive direction.”

“To be able to make a decision as a part of the team and to be encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things in a collaborative way, not ‘my way or highway.’”

“Encourage a spirit of cooperation, teamwork, transparency and open communication, and inclusion.”

“I would prefer a more open attitude toward infrastructure change suggestions.”

“I'd like to see decisions made that involve the staff doing the work. Right now there is little communication, if any. If something new is happening it's being done to the lower level staff rather than including them in the decision.”

“Leadership does not do a very good job of rewarding hard work. Staff fear retaliation from [redacted], so many do not speak out.”

Many staff appreciate opportunities to use their skills and experience to improve the workplace

“My supervisor values my experience and opinions and asks big picture questions along with processing questions. It is nice to feel valued.”

“I have years of experience that helps me give quality recommendations for change. I feel that my opinion is respected.”

“I am able to express my opinions on subject matters that affect staff. I can truly say that my talents are being acknowledged and used for the betterment of our program.”

“Upper management involves those who are subject matter experts before decisions are made to change things especially since many of them don't really know what ‘we’ do.”

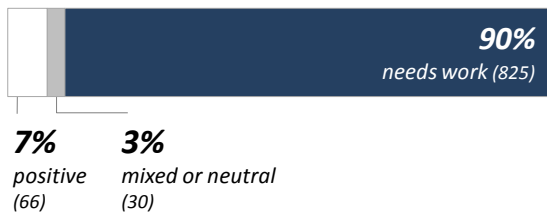
THEME. Information communicated from management to staff

921 of the 9,926 employees who offered comments criticized the provision of information by supervisors and managers.

9% commented on this theme (921)



Their comments were:



Nine out of ten of the 921 comments about information sharing by management (90%) called for improvements. A small number of employees (7%) reported satisfaction with the way supervisors and managers provide information.

Employees described needs for improvements in communication at all levels, including supervisors, managers, and executive leadership. They would like communication that:

- Keeps them “in the loop,” knowing what is going on in the workplace
- Occurs consistently
- Honestly shares what is known
- Addresses specific details of issues or changes

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees appreciate the way their supervisors and managers communicate

“What I like best about my current job: my managers, they keep the line of communication open and recognize individuals for their contribution to the workplace.”

“Support of my administration. Administration walks the talk. They tell the facts — both the difficult news and give recognition for those workers going above and beyond every day.”

“I really appreciate my supervisor and all his support and advocacy. He provides a work environment that makes you truly feel appreciated and heard. Very supportive and always providing information about changes that affect the work we do.”

Most who commented want to see communication improve in quality and quantity

“I have been told that my supervisor does not need to tell me anything and I am not in the position I was hired for.”

“To be properly communicated with as a team through more than just a one time e-mail about a new directive and expected to have it memorized right away. To actually get our wants and needs addressed and taken seriously, looked into, and followed through with a response; sooner than later.”

“That the decisions affecting us could be talked through with us prior to being ‘done to us’ and then making us adapt.”

“When changes happen, we are told about them in a whole bunch of webinars. While it is good and needed to get information, it seems that it would be best to wait to give us the information after it's known for sure. It's frustrating for us case managers to hear ifs, maybes, don't know yet, etc. Give us the information all at once after it's known for sure.”

“Management needs to do a better job in informing staff when changes are being made that will affect how they do their job. Staff are more likely to accept change if they're informed why the changes are being made and how it will affect their jobs.”

Staff want supervisors and managers to give thorough explanations

“A shift in communication style and focus by upper management from the ‘how and what’ of things we're told to do, to a mission focused ‘why’ we're doing it. I believe that many of the actions taken are in the best interest of clients and employees. However, the way directions are communicated is about what we're doing and how we're going to get it done, rather than starting with the why it's important and how it's going to help clients, and finishing with what we're actually going to do.”

“Communication from upper management is very difficult to get. There are major changes that are taking place right now, and line staff does not know or understand the exact reason for these changes because they're not communicated. Due to these changes, residents are verbalizing that they can do whatever they want to do because there are no punishments or repercussions for their actions. This is jeopardizing the safety of line staff who work in constant, direct contact with these residents.”

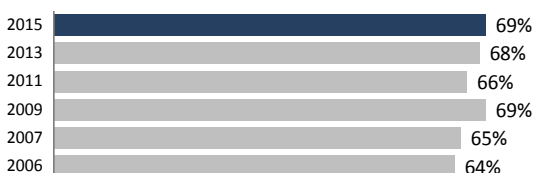
QUESTION. I receive the information I need to do my job effectively

Nearly seven out of ten respondents (69%) said they get the information needed to do their job effectively. Only one out of ten (10%) reported they don't have the information needed to do their job well.

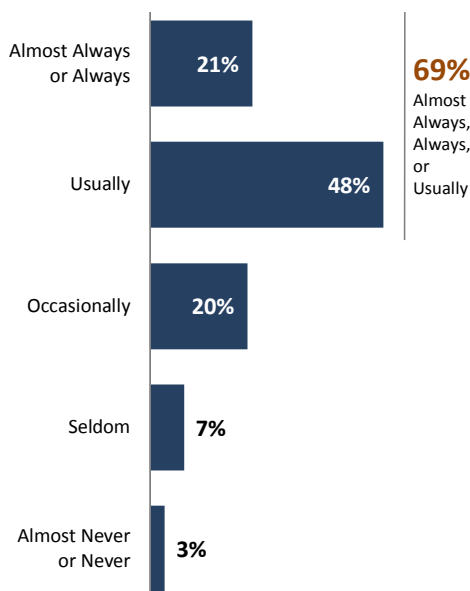
Most respondents appreciate the amount of information they receive from their supervisors and managers.

Some respondents want their supervisors and managers to put more effort into providing quality information in a timely manner.

There was no significant change between 2013 and 2015 in staff who said they have the information they need to do their jobs.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff are pleased with the information they are provided

"My new supervisor is awesome! She supports us when needed and has an open door policy. She keeps us informed about changes and is always willing to help."

"Communication is powerful when we all are provided information about program changes, directions and updates. I appreciate the DDA Newsletter; it is professional as well as informative."

"My manager takes the time to explain policies to our group, anything that we need further explanation; he will reach out to people in charge of a policy to have it explained to us."

"I love being included and informed about current and future changes and expectations."

Some want more complete information

"It is not enough to just 'communicate' a message by e-mail or articles, etc. Sometimes a little extra effort by upper management to deliver the message in a more direct manner is needed. We are bombarded with e-mails – when we want something to happen, we have to ensure it happens, not just say 'we sent e-mails telling them to do this.' It is time-consuming, but worth it when it is important. How does upper management ensure their message has filtered down through several levels to the staff and reaches them in a timely manner?"

"Better communication and processes with management, so that we have the information that we need to meet deadlines (an inclusive teamwork environment). Having recognition of potential to benefit better processes. I do not feel that we should be confined to only knowing what we do. If I have an understanding of the whole picture, I can often find cleaner ways of completing tasks."

"My supervisor provides necessary info, management does not. If management would present issues in an open and honest matter at the beginning they would see a very different response from staff."

Timely communication is important

"Better communication. It seems that line staff are the last people who have information. Better timing. Providing information about changes in requirements should not come one week before implementation."

"My office chief in Seattle is excellent. He communicates well and provides strong leadership. He has clear expectations for me and provides me with the tools and training I need to be successful."

"I appreciate my supervisor who provides quick and accurate information for problem solving and support."

"I always have all the updates and information I need on time."

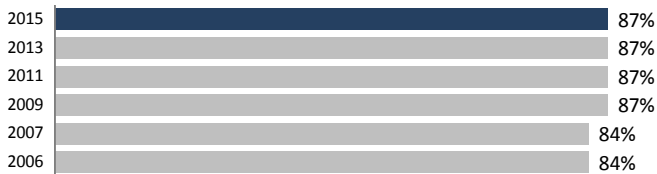
"We are getting better information and training due to past survey complaints."

QUESTION. I know what is expected of me at work

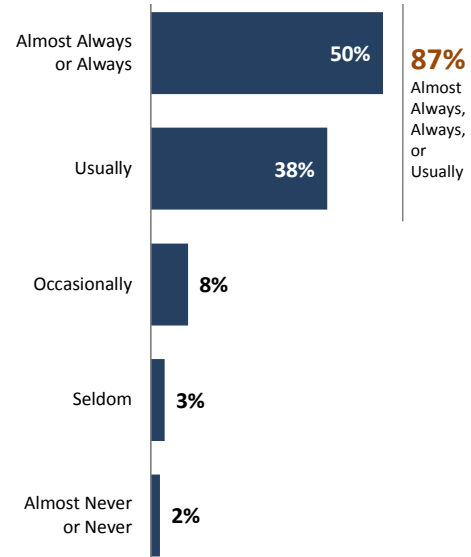
Almost nine out of ten employees (87%) indicated they understand their job expectations at work. A small number of employees (5%) said they seldom or never know what is expected of them.

In their comments, most employees expressed appreciation for clear job expectations. But some are frustrated by unclear or inconsistent communication from supervisors and managers.

There was no significant change between 2013 and 2015 in employee knowledge of job expectations.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees are clear about their job requirements

"I have a terrific supervisor who keeps our workgroup informed of achievements, team goals and upcoming challenges."

"I feel my leadership provides me with the tools to do the job as well as the direction on what is expected from me."

"Expectations are made very clear. Clear deadlines are established."

"I trust my boss. There are clear expectations, transparency and trust between us."

"I have a wonderful supervisor who is patient and understanding, yet still able to set clear expectations for behavior by employees."

"I know what is expected of me and can work toward that goal each day."

"I get clear direction to do my job as efficiently as I can."

"I like being able to work at a pace comfortable for me while still being given a structure so I know what is expected of me while I am working."

"We have clear instructions."

"The director sets clear expectations, schedules regular division and individual meetings, and provides opportunities for growth and development."

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

"We need COMMUNICATION. We need policies. We need procedural guidelines. We need standardization and consistency in the quality and processes of the work we do."

"Better communication with management team. It appears that management does not communicate well with each other, so it makes it difficult for employees to understand what goals or expectations are for the workplace."

Others are unhappy about changing job expectations

"It seems we've gone a little overboard on pursuing so many changes and new things. It is difficult to keep up and to focus well on them all. Quality of the product and goals we are attempting to achieve suffer and diminish when we are stretched thin and attempt to do too many good things."

"There have been many changes and no coordination or training for these, no training in agile processes, and no training for new tools, which are now being used differently by different workers. Communication is poor."

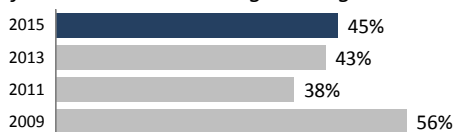
"Communication. There is a lack of communication from the top of the chain to the bottom. One day you come to work it is one way then the next day it changes. There is never clear direction or guidelines on what needs to be done and the team is fighting with management about the inconsistency in the daily running of the building."

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

Nearly half of respondents (45%) said they always or usually receive clear information about agency changes – a statistically significant increase. Nearly three out of ten (28%) said they seldom or never receive information about changes.

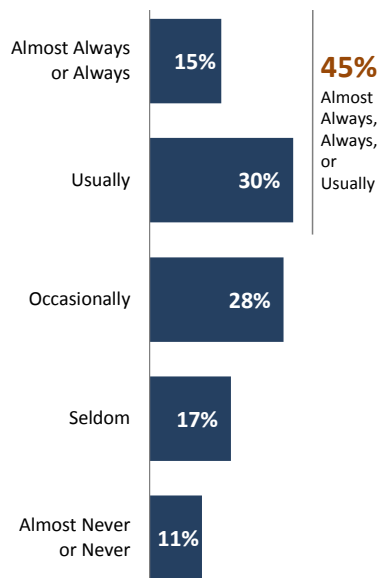
Some respondents are satisfied with the information they receive from their supervisors and managers. Others feel they are left out of the loop, with negative consequences for their work.

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they have clear information about changes being made in the agency.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$. Wording changed in 2011.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff are grateful for supervisors and managers who communicate information about changes

“Being part of a team and having a leader who provides relevant information about what is going on in DSHS, including the potential impact to SESA-specific operations.”

“We have a great team that is supported by management. Cristie and her management team keep us informed about things that have a direct impact on us.”

“CSTC sends out weekly communications about management meetings so we all know the status and upcoming projects and visits.”

“My supervisor gives me clear, succinct advice and job description daily, as my temporary work changes daily.”

Others feel that communication about changes is inadequate

“More organization. Many leaders say one thing or another — we don't know what change is the correct one to make.”

“I would like to see more open communications regarding the changes that are taking place not just an e-mail and a comment in a meeting asking if you understood the change. More mock situations to practice these changes so we can all offer feedback and we all have the opportunity to understand and grow. I would like to see a more hands-on approach to coaching by the supervisors such as more side by side one-on-ones so you are more familiar with the work that your staff do daily, not just an assumption of what is done from when you did it way back when.”

“Many changes are constantly occurring and the communication about how to implement those changes is either minimal or nonexistent.”

“Communication! It's my understanding that lots of changes are occurring in HR but it seems like a lot more rumors exist than anything. If changes do occur, it's not a consistent message.”

Some want to receive the information in a more timely manner

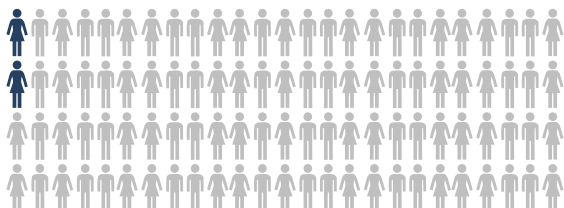
“I'd like to receive information about changes that are in process. We do get an overview periodically when there is an all staff meeting, but otherwise the information flow is rather limited.”

“I'd like to see faster, more efficient communications from headquarters regarding changes that are coming. When a family comes to me with a question about a new program, a lawsuit, a new law that might impact services – and I haven't heard anything about DDA's response or plan to address the issue, or worse, I have never even heard about the issue they're asking about. I feel like I've been let down by the administration, and I feel embarrassed that I know less than our stakeholders about new issues impacting services.”

THEME. Clear direction for the agency

205 of the 9,926 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.

2% commented on this theme (205)

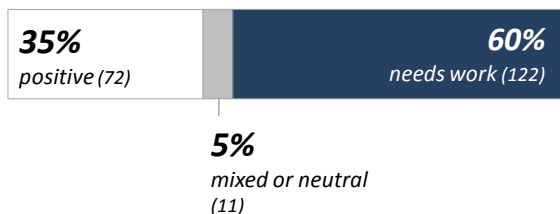


205 employees made comments concerning clear direction for DSHS, administrations, and programs. 35% of those who commented did so in positive terms, up from 21% in 2013.

60% of the commenters, however, criticized current communication about agency direction. They would like to see agency mission, vision, and goals:

- More clearly articulated
- Changed less frequently
- Forming the basis of decisions and actions

Their comments were:



In the years directly preceding this survey, DSHS worked to better involve employees in the agency goals and mission. There is still room for improvement, but this initiative appears to be gaining traction. In addition to increased positive comments, 97 respondents directly quoted the agency mission, “Transforming Lives” (across all themes).

► What DSHS employees said . . .

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

“Our division is a great place to work, our management team is unified, and we have a clear purpose for our division.”

“I work in an agency with a clear set of Values and Goals, the philosophy and mission guides the policy and the direction of service provision to clients and their families.”

“I love that the people I work with are supportive of each other, are extremely intelligent problem solvers and especially that they base their decisions on options that create the best outcomes for the people that we serve. This approach is modeled by our Division Director and Assistant Secretary who weigh all decisions from that perspective and set this expectation for all.”

“I have a position where I’m able to see the vision of where we’re going and the impact it has at the field office level.”

“I have the knowledge of how my role at DCS has a direct, positive impact on transforming lives in Washington state.”

Most commenting on agency direction want clearer information and fewer changes

“A leadership team that has a strategic vision that is clearly articulated and effectively implemented. To be able to articulate their plan, the rationale for implementing this plan instead of another plan, and how the plan will be implemented.”

“I would like more trust between executive management and the workforce. More communication from DSHS executive leadership regarding strategic goals and plans. Clarity as to how DSHS intends to operate within the existing political climate.”

“Consistency and clarity in procedures handed down from upper management (i.e. strategic planning and core metrics).”

“I would like to see the division more clearly identify its objectives and direction and better define what success looks like.”

“The amount of changes that occur on a routine basis creates confusion in the sense of which policy was changed last, and which directives to go by, as different management continue to do things differently.”

They would like to see actions and decisions that match the agency’s mission, vision, and goals

“It does not appear leadership is making decisions to support the mission of this agency.”

“Management which places the clients above its own interests and which makes a concerted and continuous effort to measure the effectiveness of its efforts against the mission and vision statements it purports to uphold.”

“Our mission is to assist and provide resources for families that keep children safe. Management lost sight of this mission a long time ago.”

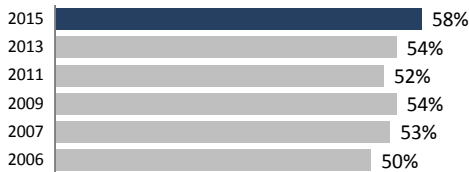
QUESTION. I know how my agency measures its success

Nearly six out of ten respondents (58%) reported they understand how the agency measures success – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. However, more than two in ten employees (21%) said they seldom or never know what methods are used to measure success.

Respondents want:

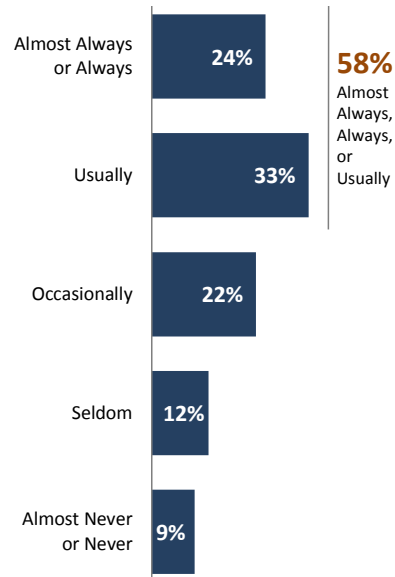
- Performance measures that are applied consistently
- Clear and realistic measures
- A balanced approach to measuring success that allows time for more client interaction

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they know how the agency measures success.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff are satisfied with the measures of success used in their workplace

“I do feel like the current Secretary has passed along a solid and fresh vision for DSHS that seems more directed towards staff/supervisor development that in turn equates to better customer services and generally positive outcomes.”

“[I like] the ability to see results that show I am making a difference, and working on agency goals.”

“The positive direction that our Department is moving using progress instead of compliance as a model and working with the family and community system.”

“I love the ability my position has to bridge youth, families and the agency together in a collective as treatment plans are formulated, discussed and measured throughout the continuum of care.”

Some feel that performance measures can create unneeded burdens

“While performance measures are necessary, it would be nice to have them open to explanation. It is unfair to measure one person against another or to hold workers responsible for the decisions and success of our clients. The expectation of an adult being held responsible for how quickly or efficiently another adult does something is not right!”

“There has been a big move to make our work more accountable and trackable (in home studies), which is necessary and good. But the manner in which it is being done is creating resentment and a feeling that management thinks we are not doing our work – when the fact is we are working extremely hard on some very challenging cases.”

“What the agency says about how it measures success does not match the day to day operations. We are way too top heavy to really meet the needs of our youth.”

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

“It feels like the Department is only interested in statistics and numbers. The management stresses closing cases over and above the families we are working with.”

“I want to feel that leadership trusts employees to do their best everyday – to communicate the expectations through values and a focus on quality as well as numerical targets. For example, quality of nursing home discharges, not just number of people discharged.”

“We are dealing with an at times difficult to serve population, yet we are constantly reminded of numbers. Numbers don't mean much to a social worker, the people is what we are all about and their stories.”

“There's a focus on numbers (and improving them) which makes sense, but loses sight of the actual goals that the numbers are trying to accomplish. There's also a lot of bragging about all the good things that we're doing that distracts from the fact that there are numerous areas where we could use much improvement.”

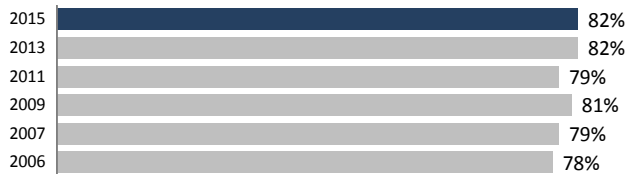
QUESTION. I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency

More than eight out of ten employees (82%) said they understand how their work contributes to agency goals. Fewer than one in ten employees (7%) indicated that they don't understand how their work supports the goals of the agency.

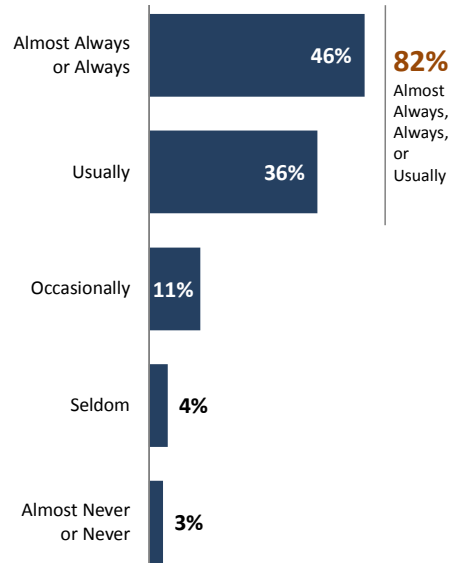
Employees like having:

- Knowledge of how their job relates to agency goals
- Adequate time and resources to do excellent work
- A sense that their work is valuable

There was no significant change between 2013 and 2015 in employee knowledge about how their work contributes to agency goals.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees understand how their work impacts agency goals

"My position offers the ability to assist DSHS staff across the state to accomplish our agency's mission."

"What I like about my job the most is that I get to be a contributor to the effort of making the lives of youth better. I am helping to transform lives. I am a working part of the strategic plan. I am so lucky to be here and to be a part of this work."

"I believe in the mission of DVR and that I make a difference in assisting customers change their lives in a positive manner."

"Serving youth and families. Support youth to make positive choices in their life. Supporting DSHS mission statement to reduce recidivism."

"The opportunity to work collaboratively on matters that involve our clients. There is a strong atmosphere of teamwork and knowing that I am not alone in the complex situations that arise on a daily basis. This is part of the environment that cannot be mandated or required, it comes from the inside and is a part of the mission here at DDA."

"I have continued in my role to make a difference for children. I want to see children have the tools they need to become happy, healthy, functioning members of society. They are the leaders of tomorrow and many are impacted by their family's deep involvement in environmentally life damaging decisions. Our agency's goal is to provide these children with better options and that should be each and every employee's daily mission."

Others feel there are significant obstacles to achieving the agency's stated goals

"Everyone is responsible for everything' is, most of the time, producing nothing more than lukewarm impact; that's a reality."

"Maybe if we stopped focusing on INDIVIDUAL goals and focused on AGENCY goals we would learn to act more like a team."

"The best interest of families and children may be the mission and goal of CA, but the system fights itself in these efforts and the workers bear the brunt of the dichotomy of this cognitive dissonance."

"If pursuit of excellence and open communication are two of the core values that allow us to advance the DSHS mission of transforming lives, then a significant amount of work needs to be done."

Some aren't clear about agency goals or how their efforts support those goals

"With the exception of an increase in community facility returns to institutions over the past 1-2 years, I'm unclear about the long-term impact our services have or how we should be measuring that (i.e. recidivism, employment status, education status, sustained treatments, abstinence from substance use, participation in pro-social activities, etc.) For me, it doesn't feel as though there's much feedback to know if what we're doing is working, and how do we know where to target our attention, time, and resources to get better?"

"I would love to know how my work fits into the 'big picture' here at DDA but in order for that to happen we would need to have an all staff meeting and we would require an FSA and supervisor(s) here that understand what we do and how it fits in."



“Reading with my Auntie” • Honorable Mention

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Jamie Walker, with permission

From the photographer:

“My sister, Eastern State Hospital employee, impromptu-sit down to read with my one year old granddaughter on a sunny early-autumn day.”



“Bikes Rock” • Third Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Jessica Hatch, with permission

From the photographer:

“This summer, I was fortunate to find an adventurous group of mountain biking ladies who have collectively encouraged me to get out and find new trails, complete in enduro races, and make new friends in the mountain biking community. This was taken at Steven's Pass during an all-women's riding clinic with an organization called She Jumps. I set my camera on video mode and snapped a still frame to get this image. Riding down granite faces is a new challenge I have taken on this year, and this one was my first.”



“Grandchildren on the Palouse” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Deb Goodwin, with permission

From the photographer:

“This photo was taken on a visit with our grandkids. They were showing us their farm, I was falling behind a bit, and it just happened to be a wonderful photo op. The little bump on the left is my youngest granddaughter, holding her big sister's hand.”

CHAPTER 2

Supervisor/Manager Support

EMPLOYEES’ OPINIONS OF SUPERVISOR AND MANAGER SUPPORT rose between 2013 and 2015, continuing the positive trend from 2011 that was noted in the previous report. They are generally more satisfied with treatment by supervisors and managers than they were in the last survey. There were statistically significant increases in positive responses for all three survey questions concerning support from supervisors and managers, consistent with the Department’s emphasis on supervisor and manager training over the past two years. Although these trends are welcome news, the written comments show that there are still many opportunities for improvement.

Feedback from supervisors. *Employees value feedback, and most report that that they get feedback from their supervisors.*

- **More supervisor feedback.** 69% of employees (up from 65% in 2013) said their supervisor always or usually gives them feedback that helps them to improve their performance.
- **Feedback is valued.** Employees commented on the value of feedback for their work performance, their relationships with supervisors, and their sense of connection to the agency and mission.

Recognition for a job well done. *An increasing majority of employees say that they receive frequent recognition, but there is substantial room for improvement in this area.*

- **Increased recognition.** 55% of employees (up from 51% in 2013) said they always or usually receive recognition for a job well done.
- **Recognition is lacking in some areas.** Despite the continuing improvement in this area, nearly one quarter (24%) of employees said that they seldom or never receive recognition for a job well done. Many comments indicate that recognition is greatly appreciated when offered, and sorely missed when absent.

Respectful treatment. *A large majority of employees say their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect. But those who do not feel respected are often deeply dissatisfied.*

- **High rates of respect.** 85% of employees (up from 82% in 2013) said their supervisor always or usually treats them with dignity and respect.
- **Still room for improvement.** Although most employees say they are treated respectfully, 532 of 701 written comments were negative or suggestions for change. Some described troubling situations such as bullying and harassment.



“Sunset on LaCenter” • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Kim Karu, with permission

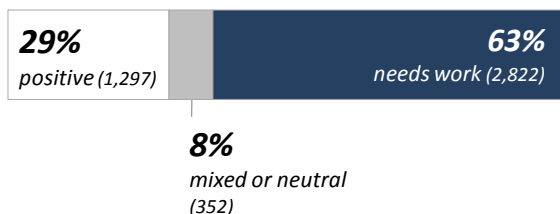
THEME. General treatment by supervisors and managers

Many employees commented on how they are treated by supervisors and managers. 4,471 of the 9,926 employees who made comments addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support or other aspects of supervisor/manager behavior.

45% commented on this theme (4,471)



Their comments were:



Almost three out of ten employees who mentioned supervisors and managers (29%) made positive comments. However, more than six out of ten (63%) suggested the ways that supervisors and managers treat their employees could be improved.

Of the 4,471* who mentioned supervisor and manager treatment of employees:

- 1,913 (43%) addressed help, mentoring, and feedback (pages 26-27)
- 812 (18%) discussed staff recognition (pages 28-29)
- 701 (16%) focused on courtesy and respect (pages 30-31)
- 877 (20%) wrote about manager fairness (Chapter 3, pages 35-36)
- 2,639 (59%) described other issues concerning relations with supervisors and managers (these issues are addressed throughout this report)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Supervisors and managers can have an important impact on job satisfaction

“I have seen a positive shift of management to solicit and listen to new ideas, and have seen a positive impact on staff morale.”

“My boss is the best I've ever had and with his vision and support, our entire team is growing and evolving. I'm excited to come in to work each day. I've never been happier at work.”

“Yes, I am looking for another job. I am exceptionally good at my job, I really know the programs, but why would anyone tolerate the stress and this type of treatment?”

“Upper management has no grasp on the workforce's pains. They spend more time causing stress and turmoil for the workforce than they do actually listening and finding ways to make the environment more pleasant and less stressful.”

“The lack of management makes it an awful place to have to come every day.”

“I have seen time and again where management has made line staff seem worthless, punished and emotionally damaged. This contributes to high turnover rates of employees, low morale and high call-out rate of our office.”

Employees expect supervisors and managers to set a positive tone in the workplace

“A lot of positive attitudes and encouraging words. I am very happy here, and thankful for this opportunity.”

“Management should celebrate the focused people, the unsung heroes, the ones doing a great job day in and day out. Forget the negative, if it doesn't have a platform to voice from it will die away.”

Employees value accountability, but want supervisors and managers to help them get the job done

“My supervisor is a partner in getting the job done, a team player and has my back.”

“My supervisor has clear expectations and provides regular feedback regarding my performance, provides feedback regarding resources, and useful examples on how to more efficiently manage my caseload.”

“Many administrative and supervisory staff know little to nothing about what duties line staff are responsible for. This makes it very difficult for line staff to perform their job duties.”

“Management does not hold anyone accountable. My boss does not hold me accountable for my actions and his boss does not hold him accountable for his, and hers does not hold her accountable for hers.”

*Issues listed total to more than 4,471 and more than 100%, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to management.

THEME. Support and mentoring by Managers and Supervisors

1,913 of the 9,926 respondents commenting addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support and mentoring – including availability, helpfulness, and feedback.

19% commented on this theme (1,913)

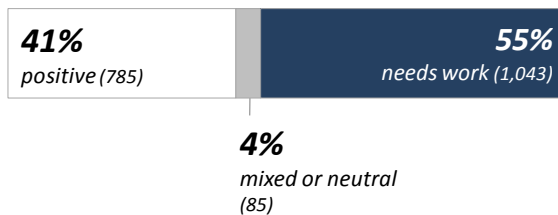


Of the 1,913 respondents who wrote about supervisor and manager support and mentoring, four out of ten (41%) expressed satisfaction. 55% saw a need for improvement.

Staff are grateful for supervisors and managers who:

- Offer strong and consistent support
- Provide guidance *when needed*
- Avoid micromanagement
- Freely share their knowledge and skills
- Encourage and enable staff in positive efforts
- Care about their individual needs

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

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

- “I have a very supportive supervisor who helps me when I am overwhelmed, helps me keep to a timeline, and encourages me when I have done well.”
- “I would like more support from my boss and have him back me up when it counts.”
- “I like the support that my supervisor and the management team have given me when I have new ideas or questions.”
- “When an opportunity comes up to leave for a better position there's no reason to stay in an office where management is not supportive.”
- “I love my managers and feel supported. I know that I can go to any one of them and know that they will support me 110% as well as mentor me to get the best outcome for myself as well as our Residents. I finally feel at ‘home.’”
- “I love my supervisor! She makes me feel so welcome and part of a team. She helps me whenever I need it.”
- “The work is stressful and not being supported by your supervisor or management makes it so much worse.”

Staff want supervisors and managers to look out for their individual needs

- “It feels like I have to fight my own agency to get my families the care and support they need. I have to fight my own agency to get needs, breaks, and the time off I need to be healthy.”
- “Our managers are really here for our team, they have great ideas, they are supportive and they truly back us up and I can trust them and have faith in what they say to us.”
- “[I would like] For my supervisor to care, to care about me, the job, THE REASON he is paid.”
- “My supervisor allows each of her team members to be themselves and contribute in a manner that allows us to feel safe even when we make mistakes.”
- “They don't care about our input, they don't care about our safety. We are just numbers to them.”

They appreciate supervisors and managers with strong mentoring skills

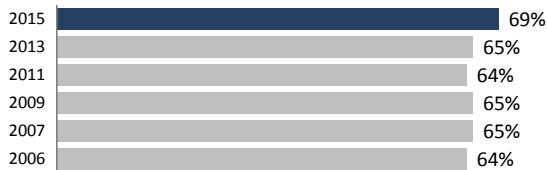
- “I have a terrific supervisor who is supportive of me. She gives me information readily, training as needed, and encouragement. I delight in my job every day.”
- “Managers have no commitment to mentoring and developing seasoned workers, preferring to focus on constant staff turnover and getting new workers performing uniformly.”
- “I would like to see more coaching and mentoring with less micromanagement.”
- “I am serving the public and have great mentors!”

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

More than two thirds of employees (69%) said their supervisor provides regular feedback – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. However, 14% of employees reported they seldom or never receive feedback from their supervisors. Employees like supervisors who:

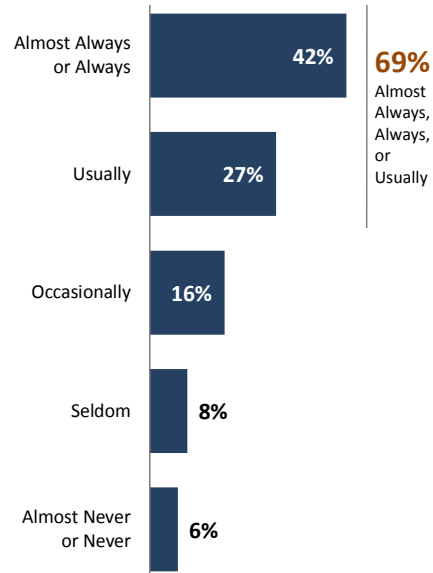
- Provide useful feedback based on knowledge and experience
- Are consistent in offering such feedback
- Balance constructive criticism with understanding, assistance, and well-deserved praise
- Are energetic and effective mentors
- Are committed to employees’ development and well-being

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they receive ongoing feedback.



Increase from 2013 to 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees praise supervisors who provide clear and consistent feedback

“My supervisor gives constructive feedback with good examples. During feedback she always gives me ideas to improve.”

“I’m thankful for local leadership and a management team that values relationships with staff and provides an open, transparent, safe opportunity for candid, constructive conversation, and feedback.”

“My supervisor always listens to my ideas, and offers feedback and suggestions for refinement.”

“My supervisor is very supportive, gives great positive feedback and is always willing to help!”

“Positive feedback and support from my supervisor and co-workers most of the time.”

“What I like best about my current job is the support and feedback from supervisor and upper management.”

They believe constructive feedback improves work performance

“My supervisor gives constructive feedback and learned how to work with me as an adult.”

“I realize follow up for every mistake made is unreasonable, but some sort of follow up on critical or habitual mistakes can only make us better.”

“The positive feedback and open communication to and from supervisors and managers.”

“I appreciate verbal feedback and the opportunity to process my learning in supervision.”

“We rarely receive positive and constructive feedback from the many supervisors we come into contact with during our shift. It would be nice to receive more feedback to improve the quality of my work.”

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

“Managers should give ongoing feedback and not wait until evaluations.”

“My opinions are seldom second guessed, but then again, I receive very little formal feedback from anyone.”

“I would like to receive ongoing feedback, especially when a new process is implemented.”

“More feedback. We need to know more when we make mistakes so we don’t keep making the same mistakes. We also need to know when we are doing well so we know we are and don’t just assume.”

THEME. Recognition and awards

812 of the 9,926 employees who made comments addressed the importance of supervisors and managers recognizing and praising the good work of employees.

8% commented on this theme (812)

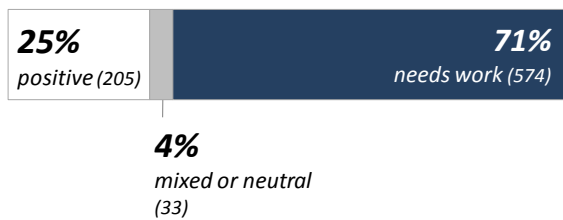


Of the 812 employees who commented about employee recognition, one quarter (25%) are satisfied with the recognition they receive. However, more than two thirds (71%) feel the current methods of recognizing employees need improvement.

Employees value:

- Frequent acknowledgment of their good work, and their strong work ethic
- Special recognition for exceptional efforts and achievements
- Acknowledgment through actions as well as words
- Praise for excellent work accomplished under trying circumstances

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees want supervisors and managers to appreciate their skills and hard work

“Praise and/or acknowledgement when things are done well, instead of always acknowledging the negative.”

“We have great staff who need to feel appreciated, needed and respected, not just by their local regional management, but by headquarters management.”

“More respect for my abilities, my integrity and my ethics as a social worker.”

“I can truly say that my talents are being acknowledged and used for the betterment of our program.”

“I feel my work and ideas are valued. Thank you.”

“I am respected and valued for my contributions.”

“I like my job when I feel that my skills are respected.”

They also want their efforts to be rewarded

“Most of the staff I know who were recognized in the past have kept their little trophies on their desks. If we can't give bonuses, at least we can give some recognition for high performance.”

“If one works hard they're rewarded with flexibility and trust.”

“More demands are made upon employees to give more – give time, give information, give support, give donations, give money, give blood, give organs, give a latte. What are YOU as an employer giving to your employees?”

“We do a great job with division-wide employee recognition, but I would love to see employees who go above and beyond be rewarded with something else other than more work.”

“It would be nice to be compensated in monetary terms as ‘atta boys’ and ‘thanks’ don't pay the bills.”

Some who commented on employee recognition feel unappreciated and unacknowledged

“The entire management needs to learn to truly care, show compassion and take interest in the person the individual – not just send the e-mails saying ‘we appreciate your work,’ because the actions and treatment show you don't!”

“There is no or seldom appreciation for the work we do. Instead, just the mistakes that are made, which in our line of work, are nearly impossible not to make.”

“We are adults who work very hard for little pay, the least headquarters could do is treat us as competent workers.”

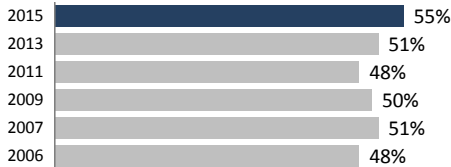
“When the job is well done it is good practice for the employees to be given feedback and recognition. It is not happening at all and it is very discouraging to work with passion when you feel that ‘no one cares.’”

QUESTION. I receive recognition for a job well done

More than half of respondents (55%) reported they receive recognition for excellent work – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. Nearly one quarter (24%) said they seldom or never receive recognition for good work they accomplish. Staff feel strongly that:

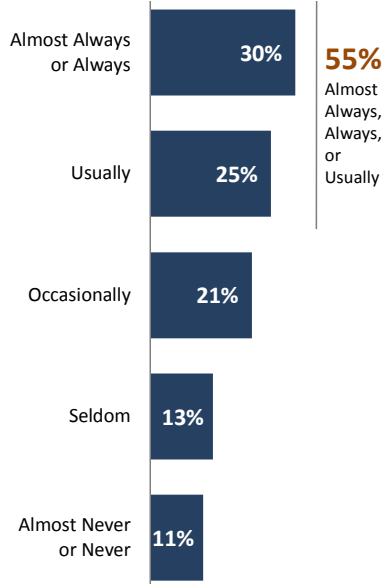
- Ongoing positive recognition from supervisors and managers matters
- Staff morale suffers if good work is not acknowledged and appreciated
- Individual accomplishments should be noted and celebrated

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said they received recognition for a job well done.



Increase from 2013 to 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff feel their good work is recognized

“Having a supervisor that appreciates your work makes you want to work better for them.”

“I feel appreciated. I love what I do and the team I work with.”

“I love the positive atmosphere, being supported and recognized. I can't believe how lucky I am to have this job.”

“The almost instant feedback to questions and concerns by my supervisor and leads makes me feel confident in my work. I can depend on them to not only give me praise when I get things right, but to gently correct me when I am headed down the wrong path.”

“As opposed to my old job, I feel my efforts are appreciated.”

“I have the highest respect for my direct supervisor and my Director. I feel respected, honored, valued and recognized.”

Others would like to see more acknowledgment of staff accomplishments

“I have had clients telling me that they wanted to tell my supervisor some positive feedback and I'll transfer the call to his extension. And I'll never hear back from that call from my supervisor. I do get e-mails from his superior telling me that I'm doing a good job and that makes me feel good.”

“I would like to see qualified staff rewarded for their efforts, regardless of whether they're liked or not on a personal basis by a supervisor.”

“Respect for the work we do and the contributions we make, we have often been treated as impediments rather than partners.”

“Praise good work even with those who barely meet the minimum. This encouragement just may boost their productivity.”

“More emphasis on individualized recognition rather than an obligatory group ‘good job.’”

Some suggested specific ways to recognize staff

“I believe the employee appreciation celebrations have helped and we should do more of them.”

“Support from management toward morale building committees/activities without having to give up our personal breaks or lunch time to prepare for such committees and activities.”

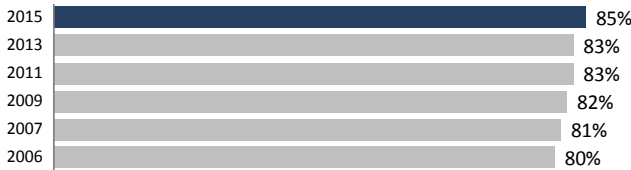
“I think it would be nice if recognition was provided other than just a good job or good evaluation. I think there should be something tangible such as a certificate or more recognition.”

“Different measures of incentives: With more acknowledgements, opportunity to earn time-off, opportunity for increased wages considered as options.”

QUESTION. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect

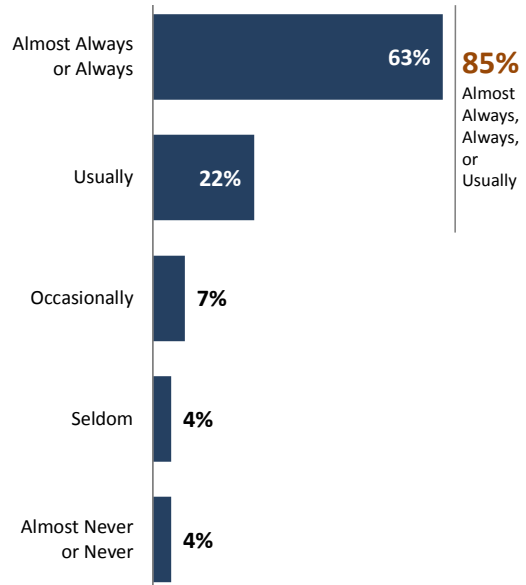
More than eight out of ten employees (85%) reported their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. Although less than one out of ten employees (8%) reported their supervisor seldom or never treats them respectfully, some described supervisors who are rude, patronizing, or accusatory. A selection of these comments can be found below.

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect.



Increase from 2013 to 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff feel well respected by their supervisor

"The way my supervisor treats me and others she supervises. I have never been treated with such kindness, dignity, respect and with a spirit of accommodation."

"My supervisor is a great person to work for, he treats everyone with respect."

"I feel respected by my supervisor and co-workers. My supervisor is never negative or condescending to the employees."

"I feel that my efforts, abilities and knowledge are not only needed, but also respected. This is a welcome and much appreciated change for me."

"Since being able to change teams, the experience is far more enjoyable and it makes me want to work harder. I am now shown respect and treated fairly."

Some consider their supervisor's behavior to be disrespectful

"Managers need better training in how to effectively manage, not just be authoritative and supervisory, but manage and lead with respect and interpersonal communication skills."

"I am witnessing other supervisors who demean their staff on an ongoing basis. This makes me uncomfortable because I don't know what to do about it."

"It would also be great if our office manager would stop acting like she is better than us. She refuses to speak to us lowly workers, doesn't acknowledge our presence, and won't even so much as say 'hello' or 'good morning.'"

Staff want to be recognized and treated as professionals

"My supervisor is very supportive and treats me like a professional: With respect and trust."

"I trust my supervisor and his decisions. He speaks to me as an equal and an adult. He is not a micromanager and treats all of the unit members with respect."

"As a professional I resent that my work is has been regulated to production quotas which are what factory workers do. We are not being treated with the trust and dignity that should be the right of any professional."

"Not to be micromanaged but treated like an adult who can be trusted to do a good and consistent job. Sometimes I feel like a preschooler in how supervision and management respond. Just let us get on with our work."

"The ability to make sound, responsible choices each day in our job is something we have to be able to demonstrate to be successful at our jobs, but we are treated as if we are children who need to be monitored and herded to ensure we are doing what is best for the department and the clients."

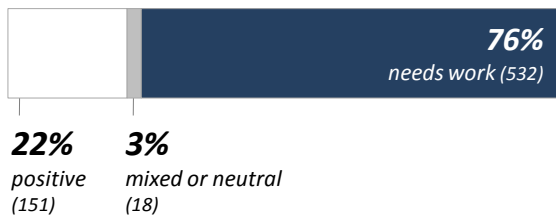
THEME. Courtesy and respect from supervisors/managers

701 of the 9,926 respondents who commented addressed this aspect of supervisor and manager behavior.

7% commented on this theme (701)



Their comments were:



Of the 701 respondents who wrote comments about courtesy and respect, less than one quarter (22%) said supervisors and managers treat them respectfully. More than three quarters (76%) see a need for improvement in this area.

Staff want:

- Respect and kindness from their superiors
- To be treated as adults and professionals
- Prompt action to address bullying after it has been reported

Staff dislike:

- Being treated with disrespect
- Being demeaned or distrusted by their superiors
- Being bullied

► What DSHS employees said . . .

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

“Management is very supportive and most staff excel at their jobs and people are respected.”

“I appreciate the current respectful and inclusive tone throughout the agency's chain of command.”

“I enjoy teamwork, respect and support from supervisor and administrator.”

“I feel that my team is very respectful to one another. I believe this is due to the administrator and supervisors demonstrating this through their leadership.”

“What I like most about my current job is my great supervisor who treats me with respect and fairness.”

They dislike working for those who they feel do not respect them

“I feel like we are starting to move away from a fear based management model to a more strength based model and this will help staff retention.”

“Leaders demand respect from staff but don't show the same respect.”

“When we don't understand something and ask for clarification, our supervisor tells us that we aren't listening and tells us that ‘the instructions are VERY clear.’ Um, no they aren't if we are all confused.”

“There is a reason four employees in this area have left – that would be because of the supervisor. She rules her little fiefdom like she knows everything and it's her way or the highway. I would be the fifth person to leave this area if I could transfer to another position with the same pay.”

Some employees see their supervisors or managers as bullies

“The bully supervisor should be fired or sent to a different location. There is no reason for an office bully, and staff have complained for years. Nothing ever seems to change.”

“Bullying still exists from management, this is an issue that continues to be ignored.”

“The supervisor is a bully. Staff are concerned and some say it's hard to come to work.”

“Arrogance needs to stop, the bully effect from the top down needs to stop. The ‘us against them’ attitude needs to stop, and everyone there needs to remember who is important – THE CLIENTS!”

“I would like the workplace to be a ‘bully free zone.’”

“Would like to see all bullying stop and those that participate (even management) in bullying be held accountable by disciplinary action.”



“Railroad in the Fall” • Second Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients

By Johnmark Jenny, with permission

From the photographer:

“One day I decided to buy a camera and I found out I was good at it. I have learned how to enhance my photos using editing software. This photo was taken at the Lake Whatcom Railway in Wickersham, WA.”



“Correspondence” • Second Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action

By Jason Pitsch, with permission

From the photographer:

“Although they are not exciting, envelopes play an integral part in the day-to-day work of DSHS. In a way, they are invaluable to the work of DSHS. The seal of Washington on our envelopes reminds us that we are representing something bigger than ourselves every time we send out a letter.”



“Smokey Sunset at Kalaloch Beach” • 1st Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Dennis Brockschmidt, with permission

From the photographer:

“Taken August 22, 2015. Dramatic sky is the result of the multiple wildfires burning throughout the state of Washington.”

CHAPTER 3

Fairness and Diversity

FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY MEASURES REMAINED GENERALLY POSITIVE. Responses for the two standard questions about fairness, discrimination, and agency support for a diverse workforce matched 2013 levels – the most positive in the history of this survey. The majority of comments about manager fairness were critical, much the same as in previous years. The percentage of negative comments about favoritism or discrimination connected to diversity issues decreased slightly from 2013. 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 2015 are identical to those in 2013 – the highest since the survey began.

- **Fair treatment.** 72% of employees said, “In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.” This is the same as the 2013 percentage – up from 68% in 2011 and slightly higher than the previous high of 71% in 2009.
- **Support for diverse workforce.** 68% of respondents agreed, “My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce.” This is the same as the 2013 percentage – an increase from the previous high of 64%, recorded in both 2011 and 2009.

Comments about fairness and diversity. Complaints about manager fairness, discrimination against protected groups, and negative comments about other diversity issues all decreased slightly from 2013.

- **Negative comments about manager fairness dipped slightly.** 833 (8% of employees making comments) criticized manager fairness – slightly lower than the 9% seen in the surveys in 2009-2013.
- **Comments about diversity were relatively infrequent.** 190 of the 9,927 employees who commented (2%) made negative comments about treatment of protected groups. The main issues focused on management and staff representation, and opportunities for advancement. An additional 107 made other negative comments related to diversity, including reverse discrimination, nepotism, “good old boy/girl” practices, and sexual harassment. These comments were slightly less frequent than in 2013.



“Port Townsend Drydock” • Third Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical

By Anneliese Bulleri, with permission

From the photographer:

“My husband and I were in Port Townsend and we were driving by the drydocks. The sky was very stormy but in between the clouds were spots of blue to promise a nice day. I saw these two boats among many and realized they would never be that close together in the water.”

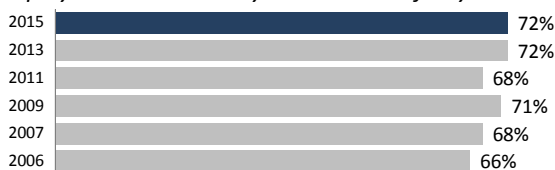
QUESTION. In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

72% of employees said they are treated fairly. 15% reported on unfairness in their workplace. As in 2013, fewer staff in residential facilities feel they are treated fairly (64%) compared to other staff (77%).

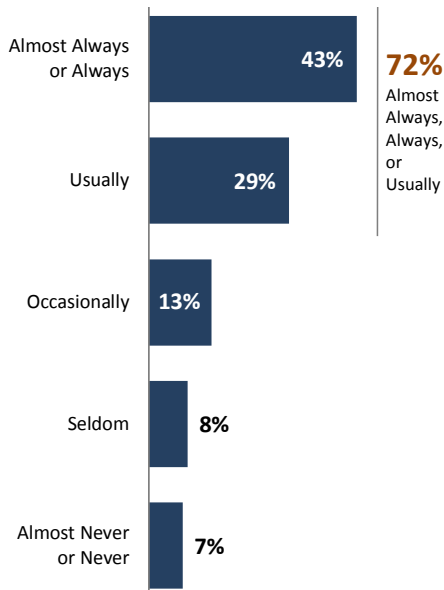
Many of those who commented about unfair treatment expressed concerns with preferential treatment for friends or relatives. These comments often described supervisors who favor certain workers, who receive better treatment and are held to less rigid work standards.

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.

There was no change between 2013 and 2015 in the percent of employees who said they were treated fairly.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

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

"I love the people I work with and how everyone is treated the same."

"I have a very fair supervisor who works right along with the staff to ensure patients are well taken care of."

"The walls are down. The bullying is gone. There are no longer the little groups of haves and have nots."

"I have the choice to move up, we as a team are being treated fairly."

"My supervisor is great to work with and is extremely fair. She has a lot of knowledge and is willing to step in if needed."

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

"Some come and go as they please and don't even claim leave for all the time they are gone while others are held to a firm standard."

"We had our employee recognition event today and the CSOA told some of the committee members they could leave without turning in leave slips, but not all committee members and we recently had other events and none of the committee members were given such privileges. He picks and chooses who he gives perks to."

"The promotion of individuals who are ill equipped for the task over those more skilled is disheartening and reinforces the perception that advancement is based upon political ties, as opposed to skill, integrity and competence."

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

"Not having our staff pulled to help other regions resulting in an excessive amount of work for those remaining here to maintain required timelines."

"More equality in workload distribution – some workers like to 'hold on' to cases even when they should be transferred or closed, so that they are not assigned any new cases."

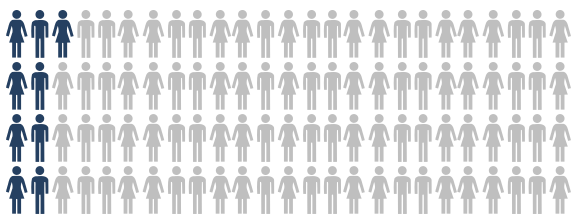
"It is not fair to the staff who show up every day on time ready to work, who take their breaks and lunches responsibly and leave on time to work alongside someone/someones who come in late, take long breaks, long lunches and check out early, daily without using their leave or making up the time."

"Hold employees accountable when performance or other issues arise instead of ignoring them or not addressing them to begin with. It's unfair and disrespectful to those that do their job and have a good work ethic."

THEME. Manager fairness

877 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of management fairness.

9% commented on this theme (877)



Of the 877 employees* who wrote about manager fairness, 95% said there was room for improvement. 5% made positive or mixed/neutral comments.

Employees dislike managers who:

- Favor some staff over others
- Hire or promote friends and family members in preference to qualified staff (also discussed on page 65)
- Apply rules unevenly
- Retaliate against staff who speak their mind

Their comments were:



4%	1%
positive (35)	mixed or neutral (9)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees resent unfairness in hiring, promotion and growth opportunities

- “I would like to see less promotion of staff because they are friends with the hiring supervisor; more promotion because of experience and knowledge of the job.”
- “Positions are not received by qualifications, but by who you know. Completely unqualified people are given positions when there are highly qualified people for the position that are overlooked.”
- “I would like to see more personal growth for all individuals be nurtured, not just a ‘targeted’ few.”

Some feel supervisors apply rules unfairly

- “I would like to see management recognize line staff that come to work and quietly do their work. It seems that the only ones that management really recognizes are line staff that are always socializing with them during work.”
- “Accountability is overboard for some employees (they can’t sneeze without their supervisor knowing), and non-existent for others (that take hour long lunches, and long strolls in the park).”
- “I wish people were treated equal instead of the GOLDEN CHILDREN always getting extra special treatment.”
- “At this time it seems like the better job you do, you get ‘rewarded’ with more work and picking up the slack for people who are either not capable, or too lazy to meet performance expectations.”

Others fear retaliation for voicing their concerns

- “Making constructive comments or criticism brands you as a trouble maker. Most of the staff that have been here more than 5 years realizes this and have given up trying to change things for the better.”
- “In my local office I see a lot of actions and reactions by supervisors and leads that are not appropriate, but fear of retaliation makes bringing this to someone’s attention not worth it.”
- “As soon as you bring a complaint to a supervisor’s attention, there will be retaliation; therefore it’s better to stay silent.”

Some employees are pleased with the fairness of their supervisors

- “I’m always treated fairly and respectfully by my supervisor and co-workers.”
- “I like the fact that everyone is equally treated.”
- “What I like best about my job is my supervisor. She is very smart, fair and always has a moment if I need to talk with her.”
- “My opinion, based on my experience within the agency, is valued and based on my presentation and my work ethics. Not based on my race or gender.”

*This count does not include complaints specific to unfairness related to diversity issues. These are addressed later in this chapter.

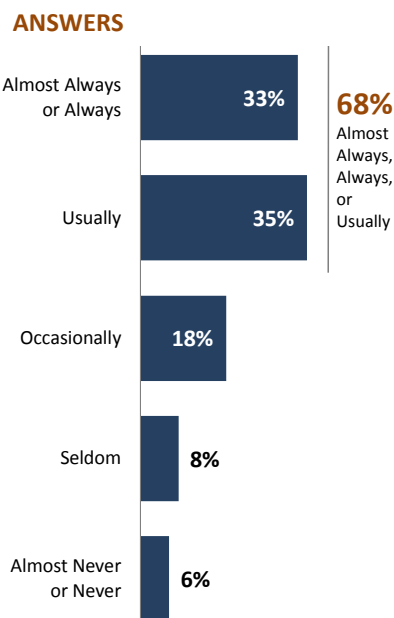
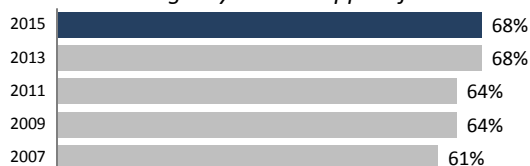
QUESTION. My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce

68% of employees said their agency always or usually shows support for a diverse workforce.* 14% reported that such support occurs only seldom or never.

Employee comments show that many feel the DSHS workforce is quite diverse. Others, however, would like to see greater representation of diverse groups in staff and management.

*Interpretation of this question can be difficult. Some respondents answering “seldom” or “never” to this question may have focused on the phrase “diverse workforce.” They may feel their agency does not work hard enough to recruit a diverse workforce, does not provide special support for staff from protected groups, 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 minority or protected employees in the existing workforce.

There was no change between 2013 and 2015 in employees who said their agency shows support for a diverse workforce.



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees appreciate the diversity of the DSHS workforce

“I sit around co-workers that are different ages, background, race and experiences. They are wonderful people who truly care about their clients and take pride in their work.”

“The way most everyone works together regardless of job title, race, gender, etc. This is truly a very diverse office and it is the people here that make it work.”

“I like the opportunity to work with a diverse group of people, co-workers as well as customers.”

“The diverse staff we have on our cottage. This makes learning about different cultures very interesting.”

Some would like to see greater management and staff diversity

“More diversity in management (not just ethnicity, also disabilities, and other factors).”

“DSHS values a diverse workforce, so why are all of local management the same?”

“I would like to see more gender, ethnic, and racial diversity, especially in our executive management team. We end up with people who think exactly alike, limiting our perspective and ability to think innovatively and creatively.”

“I would like to see a promotion ladder program for DSHS staff. I know of talented and skilled staff who are minorities who have applied again and again for upper management promotions only to be passed over.”

“Africans and African Americans seldom hold lead worker, supervisor or upper management positions. Many are discouraged and give up on applying due to maltreatment, misconceptions and prevalent stereotyping.”

“JR executives only think of diversity of Caucasian and African American. Native American/Latino/Asian are rarely or sparsely included. A very low percentage sit at the decision table.”

Others feel that the DSHS workforce should better reflect the diversity of agency clients and communities

“We NEED DIVERSITY amongst staff as we do not accurately represent the diverse clientele we serve.”

“Continue to make efforts that result in hiring employees who represent the populations that we serve. Professionals that represent diversity bring different perspectives to the workforce.”

“With Latino clients reaching 18 to 19 percent, we should have Latino management sitting at the table to help make decisions. Diversity and inclusion should be other than African American and Caucasian staff.”

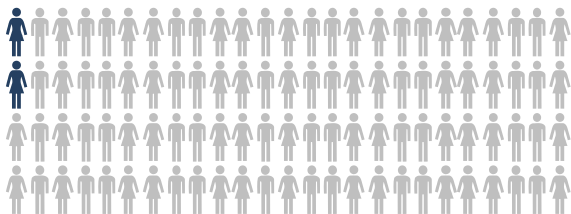
“Hire more Native Americans. They understand the ramifications of historical trauma and its impact.”

“Social justice and opportunities for all. Representation for all groups, not only for Mexican Americans.”

THEME. Favoritism or discrimination involving diversity issues

220 of the 9,926 who made comments addressed discrimination against protected groups.

2% commented on this theme (220)



Their comments were:



12% positive (26)
2% mixed or neutral (4)

26 of the 220 respondents are satisfied with agency diversity. Four made mixed or neutral comments. The majority (190*) addressed discrimination related to protected groups:

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

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Concerns about race/ethnicity focus primarily on advancement and hiring, but some address general treatment

"I would like to see a more diverse workplace that reflects our country and more opportunity for advancement for minorities."

"My unit Chief and Director put strong value in a diverse workplace and this has allowed me to flourish in my job. But my experience with DSHS as a whole has been that there is a tremendous amount of discrimination against persons of color."

"Assistant secretary and tier one management do not support the advancement of Latino staff."

"It's clear that some supervisors will only hire Caucasian females and there is a lack of African American males in the office."

"The only inclusion that continues to progress in the workplace is African American and Caucasian staff."

"Treat people equally regardless of race or status. We should not treat people better or worse based on skin color."

Others feel that there is discrimination or fewer opportunities based on gender or sexual orientation

"I want to see an end to promotions based on 'gender balance' and age discrimination."

"More diversity in upper management; it's all white men."

"I would like to see more males in authority in the role of Administration, as it is almost all white females."

"I believe we are condescended to, because we are women."

"Discrimination not allowed within the work space against employees of color or identifying as gay, lesbian or LGBTQ. It needs to be heard by those who feel uncomfortable or threatened by colleagues just because of their sexual preference or race."

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

"More listening and support for being OPEN to an aging work force and opportunities to job share, telecommute along with a more creative work schedule!"

"There is extreme discrimination for anyone over 50. There are no resources available to help older workers with the criteria being used for skills assessments, and younger workers, newly trained, have the advantage."

"I do not feel valued. Older workers (ones who have been here 15 years plus) are being pushed out of the way for newer workers. Our experience and tenure are not respected."

"If an employee has a disability it is a hostile work environment if that employee asks for an accommodation."

"DVR should be at the forefront when hiring staff with disabilities as well as supporting staff with disabilities."

"DCS does not support older employees with seen and unseen disabilities and when that interferes with attendance (even when employee has a FMLA) they start you down the road of disability/termination."

*Individual areas of concern will add to more than 190, 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 expressed concerns about diversity and equal opportunity within the agency, but did not focus on discrimination against protected groups.

► **What DSHS employees said . . .**

34 employees believe family members of other employees may cause a problem in the workplace, getting preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, or supervision

"The hiring practice has become more of a friends and family process than based on qualifications."

"The fact there is no encouragement to advance, unless you are related to management members."

"If you are related to someone in management, it is apparent, no matter what the relative's degree is in, they get the job they told their mom, dad, aunt or uncle they want."

"We have a 'good old boy network' where friends and relatives get promotions, even if they are not the best candidate."

"Changes need to start with hiring better fits, rather than friends and family members."

"How about eliminating the nepotism? No matter how many times it comes up, nothing changes. Parents hiring children, relatives hiring relatives or friends with no experience or knowledge, jobs being secretly filled without even being posted!"

"Unless you are a relative or good friend of the right people, you will stay in your spot forever."

"Less 'coincidental' hiring of peoples' relatives."

24 employees said that diversity is given too much attention, and may prompt favoritism toward protected groups

"We have a diverse workforce and don't have issues with inclusion, etc. We're continually hit over the head on this and I really don't think it's a problem, time and energy can be better spent doing other things."

"Diversity is more than gender, race, ethnicity, religion. There have been suggestions that employees (at all levels of the agency) are not being held to the same standard, that the 'race card' is being 'pulled.'"

"Stop the reverse discrimination because of fear for what non-minorities will say."

"There are more concerns for a diverse workforce than the RIGHT workforce."

"I also think there is too much focus on diversity and you may not be hiring the most qualified person for the position."

"Here at the Special Commitment Center, Caucasians are in the minority and have been known to be treated differently."

"There are several staff who are not held accountable because the race issue comes up every time. That is not fair to the rest of us, regardless of our ethnicity. It's very demoralizing to have different standards based on race."

"There are incompetent supervisors promoted for diversity reasons and they do not have enough experience."

21 employees mentioned "nepotism," and 12 criticized "good old 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 old boy/girl" to mean cronyism.)

"Nepotism and the 'good old boy' system make mine a dead end job with no possible means of training or advancement."

"Then there is the issue of rampant nepotism, especially in hiring practices."

"I would like to see people get an equitable chance on promotions and upgrades rather than by popularity and nepotism."

"They need to follow the proper hiring procedures instead of hiring by the 'good old boy' method."

"The current hiring process doesn't seem fair. There is too much nepotism. Do away with the 'good old boy' hiring practices."

13 employees spoke to a need for better sensitivity to client diversity issues and increased training on cultural competency. Three employees expressed concern about sexual harassment. One commented on religious sensitivity.

"A commitment to cultural competency relating to our clients, not just general cultural competence, and hiring diverse staff."

"More diversity. More cultural competency. LGBTQ resources for both staff and clients."

"I would like to see more cultural competency training."

"More cultural sensitivity when making decisions about the life of the families that we work with."

"Increased education for foster parents/professionals regarding Native American culture and how to put that into practice."

"Remove supervisors that have been identified as perpetrators of sexual impropriety during administrative investigations in the workplace, instead of reassigning them to new offices, where the behavior continues."

"Conferences, meetings etc. are set up for major religious holidays making it difficult to attend some events."



“Clothing Donation” • Honorable Mention

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Debbie Macy, with permission

From the photographer:

“This was a donation site in the lobby of the Olympia CSO. I spent the day there and saw people donating to the collection of stuff and I saw people making use of what was there. It thought it was a thoughtful thing to include at the CSO.”

“Prozac” • Third Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Robyn Chafin, with permission

From the photographer:

“Once upon a time at Western State Hospital there was a wonderful old building known as North Hall. This unit housed patients who were designated as “MIO”, Mentally Ill Offenders. On ward N-3, the med room had a little mascot. A cute toy dog named Prozac had somehow taken residence on the floor at the end of the med counter. When patients came for med call, Prozac was there to greet them. I don’t know who actually let Prozac into the med room; most of the staff from that time are no longer working at WSH. After the Nisqually earthquake, after the evacuation, after many “retrieval” missions in to the condemned North Hall; Prozac was never rescued to my knowledge. Today, in the new “MIO” (Center for Forensic Services) where I work sometimes, I ran across this little guy hiding in the med room. I have no idea why he is in there, where he came from, or who he belongs to. I do not know if a nurse let him in, or if he snuck in behind a pharmacy tech; but seeing a little toy pup in the med room brought back an old memory that made me smile!”





“NightScaping” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Cheryl De Roca, with permission

CHAPTER 4

The Daily Job

JOB SATISFACTION STAYED THE SAME OVERALL from 2013 to 2015. As in previous surveys, employees are pleased with opportunities 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. *Employees reported the same general satisfaction with their jobs between 2013 and 2015, and more employees made positive comments about their workplace environment in 2015.*

- **Overall satisfaction was unchanged.** 67% of employees (the same as 2013) said they are satisfied with their job.
- **Positive comments about satisfaction increased.** 1,152 employees commented about morale or overall satisfaction. 332 of these comments were positive (a 33% increase from 2013).

Job Characteristics. *As in previous surveys, employees expressed gratitude for the chance to help clients, the support they receive from most of their co-workers, and chances to learn and grow in the workplace. More said they want flexible schedules and telecommuting options. Fewer complained about co-worker competence, skill, and need for accountability.*

- **Helping clients remains an important source of job satisfaction.** 3,485 employees commented about helping and working with clients. The overwhelming majority of these (over 99%) indicated that these employees find meaning and satisfaction in helping clients improve their lives.
- **Co-workers – at least *most* co-workers – make the workplace better.** 3,908 employees mentioned their co-workers. Most of these employees (66%) made positive comments. 370 praised the competence and professionalism of co-workers (an increase of 40% from 2013). The percentage of employees *concerned* about co-worker competence and professionalism fell by 11% in 2015. Most employees (68%, up from 67% in 2013) said that a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in their workgroup.
- **Opportunities to learn and grow are increasing.** The majority of employees (60%, up from 56% in 2013) said they have opportunities to learn and grow. Of 1,331 comments about autonomy and growth opportunities, 75% were positive (comparable to 2013, when 74% were positive).
- **Flexible schedules and telecommuting options are desired by many.** 1,209 employees (a 28% increase in these comments from 2013) addressed schedules or work location. Of those, 42% were pleased with their schedule or the ability to telecommute (an increase of 13% from 2013). Just over half (51%) said they want to have the option to flex their schedule or work location (a 39% increase from 2013).
- **Heavy workloads continue to be a concern.** 634 employees made comments about their workload. Of these, 87% shared feelings that they, and their co-workers, are burdened by excessive workloads. This figure is little changed from 2013. In both 2013 and 2015, 6% of DSHS staff who made comments complained about workload. Three times as many Children’s Administration staff (19%) made such complaints.



“My Other Office” • Second Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees

By Katy Herko, with permission

From the photographer:

“My job makes me appreciate life. Working with people with disabilities reminds me how lucky I am to be able to get outside, run, hike, climb. Since moving to Washington, the mountains have become my refuge. I spend as much time in the wilderness as possible, to celebrate life.”

THEME. General satisfaction

The majority of comments from the employee survey outlined specific things employees were pleased about, or that they thought should be changed. However, 1,616 employees (16%) made general comments about workplace atmosphere, worker morale, and overall job satisfaction.

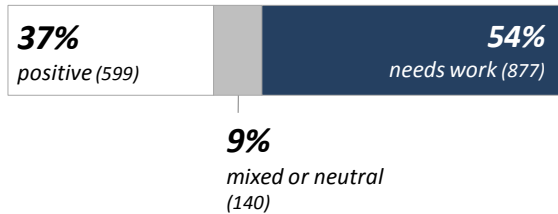
16% commented on this theme (1,616)



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 can be:

- Inspiring
- Comfortable
- Stressful
- Demoralizing

Their comments were:



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 . . .

Most who commented feel their work environment needs improvement

“Improve work atmosphere and morale, both of which I feel are sorely lacking in the current workplace.”

“This isn’t an easy environment to work in, either physically, emotionally or mentally.”

“I have talked personally to supervisors and managers about the working conditions that we are under, and I am told that things are being worked on and changes are going to be made, but after years of hearing that and not seeing any results, I am losing hope that any changes for the better will ever come to pass.”

“What can I say? Nothing ever changes for the good.”

“I find working here very depressing; I am only here because I have too many years to quit now.”

“The culture has changed to a ‘Cold War’ feel. It seems like everyone is out to undermine you to make themselves looks good.”

They often attribute burnout and poor morale to ongoing workplace issues

“This sort of work environment ultimately leads to higher absenteeism and worker dissatisfaction.”

“It is apparent that DSHS is not a healthy place to work. Let’s find ways to relieve the stress.”

“People in this field cannot provide care needed when morale is beaten so low.”

“Morale is poor and the workplace is more stressful than I have seen it in a very long time. The focus on numbers, not necessarily on quality of work, is problematic for workers who came in to the people helping profession.”

“Great social workers are getting burned out due to not having adequate support, in a high stress and important job.”

Some employees said they are satisfied with their workplace

“I enjoy my work environment and those I work with.”

“I am so happy to say that working here has been such a wonderful experience.”

“The overall atmosphere in my office is conducive to a productive work environment.”

“I have never worked in an environment quite like this before, it is awesome!”

“My workplace seems to function just fine.”

“Things here are great!”

“This is the best work environment I have ever worked in.”

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

67% of respondents said they are generally satisfied with their job. However, 15% expressed some level of disappointment.

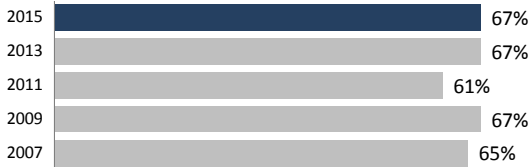
Staff like:

- Being of help to others
- Tasks that match their skills and education
- A workload and schedule that suits them
- The ability to learn and grow professionally

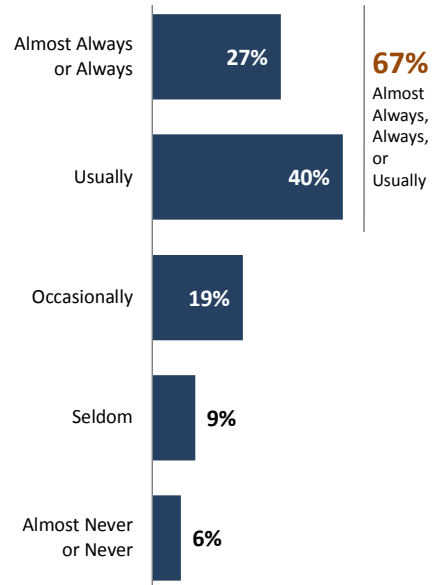
They are frustrated by:

- Lack of time and resources to provide good services
- Frequent work-related changes
- A negative or stressful work environment

There was no change between 2013 and 2015 in the percent of staff who were satisfied with their jobs.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff said they are pleased with their job

"I LOVE my job! We provide a wonderful service to this state and it is very satisfying to help people transform their lives every day."

"I am completely satisfied with my job."

"I am very satisfied with this job and would recommend it to anyone."

"I love my job and I would not trade it for the world."

Some mentioned specific aspects of their work that make them happy

"It's seldom boring. Working in the field provides opportunities to go into different communities and connect with a variety of folks. Doing the job well helps to weed out those who pose harm, or are risks to kids."

"Using creative thinking and multi-tasking on a regular basis keeps my mind alert. Each day presents new challenges and the result of our work is rewarding."

"I make someone's day nearly every day by letting them know that they have a way to feed their family. THAT is AMAZING work and work that I am so grateful to have."

"I love the balance between doing administrative type work and also getting to work with real people in real life."

"I believe in transforming lives, which is the biggest reason that I am here."

"Working with law enforcement toward the safety of children."

Others said their job is not very fulfilling

"I like fewer and fewer things about my job under the current leadership."

"What I like and what is assigned to me are different and I do not have a say, so what's the point?"

"I have nightmares about work and stress about it all weekend. The nature of our work is stressful in itself, but then to feel like you are constantly not living up to what's expected feels hopeless sometimes."

"[This job is] like having a rock in your shoe; when I finally get to take it out it feels good!"

"The ability to be on the floor to work with the clients, without the bother of excess, and repeat paper work. We are here to aid our clients, all we are is data takers."

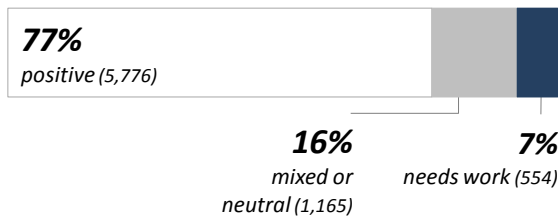
THEME. Job characteristics – an overview

7,495 of the 9,926 employees who made comments addressed job characteristics, such as helping clients, work schedules, workload, and autonomy and growth opportunities.

76% commented on this theme (7,495)



Their comments were:



Nearly eight out of ten (77%) of the 7,495 employees who made comments about job characteristics described their job in positive terms. Less than one in ten (7%) expressed a desire for change.

Employees appreciate:

- Being a part of improving a client’s life
- Flexible work hours and reasonable workloads
- Control over *how* they do their job
- Opportunities to learn and grow

They don’t like:

- Lack of options with their work schedules
- Unmanageable workloads
- Being micromanaged and controlled
- Having no support for job development

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

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees like to feel that they are helping people

- “I like being able to connect to clients and help them through periods of crisis in their lives.”
- “I really enjoy seeing progress in the lives of my clients.”
- “What I do makes an impact, makes lives better, helps.”
- “It is awesome when you see the fruits of hard work really helping the families we are working with.”
- “I enjoy working and helping the greater community, which is why I took my job.”

They care about having schedules and workloads that support a healthy work-life balance

- “I am very grateful for the opportunity our Administrator has provided for me to work with an adjusted schedule in order to provide the support my family needs. I feel this helps demonstrate the importance of putting family first and allowing a work/home life balance, which provides healthier and more efficient employees.”
- “I am grateful for the ability to work flex hours and from home.”
- “The workload is not that much to handle and I go home feeling relaxed as I know my job was well done.”
- “I feel flexibility and work-life balance is honored throughout this agency.”
- “I appreciate the flexible schedules DSHS offers to enable employees to have a good work/life balance.”
- “The hours are nice because it affords me time to go home and spend time with family and friends and having weekends off is AWESOME!”

Some wish their jobs were a better fit for them

- “I find myself bored sometimes, and I would like to do more. I would like to be utilizing my talents more effectively, and I feel that I am not being encouraged or pushed to do more with the skills that I have.”
- “I like and want to be busy and I don’t feel busy enough.”
- “My main tasks are overwhelmingly clerical. 90% or better of my time is filling out your forms or processing documents on statewide lists. You have hired a social worker to pay bills and file.”
- “I do not feel the job is a good fit for my personality and skills, as a result there is little I enjoy about it.”

THEME. Helping and interacting with clients

3,485 of the 9,926 respondents who commented mentioned working with and helping clients.

35% commented on this theme (3,485)



Their comments were:

99.5%
positive (3,467)

0.5%
mixed or neutral (11), or
needs work (7)

Nearly all of the 3,485 employees (over 99%) who commented on working with clients consider their ability to connect with clients, and to help those clients, to be a most important and gratifying part of their job. As in previous surveys when employees were asked, “What do you like best about your current job?” they most often spoke fondly of their interactions with clients and their families.

Staff value:

- Getting clients the services they need
- Helping clients make positive life changes
- Seeing the happiness they bring the client
- Being a part of their clients’ successes

They are frustrated when:

- Policies limit the services they can give to clients
- Clients are abusive and rude to them
- Time doesn’t allow them to give clients the attention they need

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff overwhelmingly say it is gratifying to be a part of helping clients improve their lives

“I like being able to make a difference in someone’s life and giving them the tools to obtain a better life.”

“I enjoy being able to work with different families and getting to learn about each one. It is really a privilege. I enjoy educating families about the dependency system.”

“I enjoy working with the clients we serve. I love trying to figure out the pieces of the puzzle to get the families the help they need to be healthy for themselves and their children.”

“I contribute a service that improves the health of the residents I serve. I accomplish something very important every day.”

“I love working with the residents I serve. The most rewarding part of my job is seeing that ‘aha’ moment a resident has when they’re successful in a task they have struggled to master.”

“The joy of impacting change for a youth that has not been blessed with normal opportunities that we take for granted, is my personal reward.”

“I enjoy my job because there are people who really need the help and have no money.”

They love being part of bringing joy to clients and families

“My favorite part of my job is interacting with my residents and seeing them smile.”

“I like the rewarding feeling I get from assisting the clients and walking into work to see that they are happy to see me as well.”

“The patients! I love the patients.”

“I like my job, because I make my clients happy in their daily life.”

A few expressed concern about how they are treated by the clients

“Reduce the stress of working with patients who are rude, mean, or actually dangerous.”

“The only people you’re having interaction with outside of breaks, due to the pace of the calls, are clients who are frequently angry and abusive with you.”

“I hate hearing from the client, how long they have been on ‘HOLD,’ like I had any control over this. I would love to see the person who made the change be responsible for the abuse that was inflicted upon the workers and have to apologize for their actions to each person this had affected.”

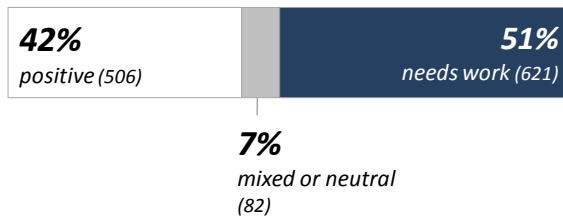
THEME. Flexible schedules and telecommuting

1,209 of the 9,926 employees who made comments addressed the issues of flexible work schedules and the ability to work from home.

12% commented on this theme (1,209)



Their comments were:



Just over half (51%) of the 1,209 employees who commented on work schedules or telecommuting requested improvements be made. More than four out of ten (42%) indicated they were pleased with their schedule and telecommute flexibility.

Employees want:

- Availability of alternative work schedules
- More part-time and job-sharing options
- The ability to take leave, or work overtime, when they choose
- Options to telecommute or work out-stationed

Those with the ability to flex their schedules and work locations appreciate:

- Reducing their commute
- Some control over their work schedules
- Support of a healthy work and home life balance

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff that made positive comments typically said they are happy to have a flexible work schedule

"My managers are flexible when it comes to work schedules. Their primary concern is that the job gets done and that hours are accounted for accurately. This flexibility allows for a healthy life-work balance."

"I appreciate my flex schedule, and the ability I have to schedule my day as needed in order to get my work done."

"My supervisor trusts me to get my work done and in turn allows me to work an alternate schedule (4 day 10-hour shifts) to ease the amount of commute time I have."

"Personally, the flexibility with my work schedule. It provides me with the ability to balance home with work. It communicates to me I am valued and I appreciate that."

"There is enough flexibility in my work hours, which allows me to get my job done during hours that my clients are available."

Those that telecommute are very grateful for that opportunity

"I just started tele-working and I already see the positive benefits to working at home and feel I am far more productive not having the distractions that come with being in an office environment."

"I tele-work and I like it, because of less noise around me which makes me more relaxed and I enjoy it better."

"I love the ability to work from home and have the needed support to be successful in this endeavor."

Others said they want more scheduling options available to them

"More opportunities for alternate work schedules, hours earlier and later than usual, the ability to occasionally work from home or other offices. This is 2015, we have cell phones, laptops, etc.; we don't need to be at our desks 40 hours a week."

"I would like to see that it is easier to request time off instead of calling in sick to make sure you can get a day off."

"Stop forcing staff to work overtime. Stop harassment when overtime is mandated, but the employee can't do it. Stop expecting the current staff to work more shifts. The workplace should be free from harassment to do overtime, and the staff should not be threatened that they're going to lose their job if they can't stay and work the extra hours."

"Have varying work schedules available to better assist customers."

"It appears to me that 99% of the work I do and of the work done by many of my peers could be done from home via web-based programs, e-mail, phone, WebEx, etc."

"Mandatory overtime needs to stop. I'm tired of feeling guilty for 'ONLY' working 40 hours a week."

THEME. Workload

730 of the 9,926 respondents who commented addressed the issue of workload, and its effect on their job satisfaction.

7% commented on this theme (730)



Their comments were:



Nearly nine out of ten (87%) of the 730 respondents who commented want a reduction in their workload.* Fewer staff (10%) said they found their current workload manageable.

Staff believe heavy workloads:

- Cause high staff turnover and shortages
- Are harmful to workers' health and morale
- Increase processing errors
- Reduce the quality of customer service

They appreciate a workload that:

- Is reasonable and manageable
- Comes with realistic expectations
- Allows them to spend more time helping clients

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff commenting said they are negatively impacted by an excessive workload

- "I would like to see social workers have a manageable workload that allows them to be efficient and make results."
- "The list goes on and on. It is really daunting, and I don't think it's possible to accomplish this with the caseloads AND within an 8 hour workday."
- "I love the variety and the different projects, but there are too many, and not enough people. Everything always feels half done."
- "The workload is incredible and in no way realistic. I can't keep my own head above water due to the workload let alone try to help new workers. I see AT LEAST one person crying in their cubicle every single workday because they are so overwhelmed."
- "I think that management (above Supervisors) needs to have a better understanding of what they are asking of Field Staff. We are constantly doing work above the full time employee required and are pushed to continue to do so without support."

They feel larger workloads cause customer service to suffer

- "To go home every night and feel like you are drowning and no one cares, stinks. Trying to make a difference in the life of a child or a parent? No. Trying to stay caught up on paperwork so you don't get yelled at? Yes."
- "The job is demanding and has a high caseload with not enough time. Our ability to help improve lives and meet goals and numbers and caseload size is impacted by this."
- "I was told that the legal number of cases to have on a social workers caseload is 18, yet everyone in my unit is well over this number; most in the high 30s, a few higher. How can we effectively support our clients and offer them the best social work with double the 'legal' amount?"
- "I have a caseload of 34. I CANNOT do my job and what is expected of me. I CANNOT keep the children safe with a caseload of 34. It is absolutely IMPOSSIBLE. I love my job, I would like to keep working for Children's, however I will not continue if I am expected to keep a caseload this high. It is truly terrifying knowing that I am responsible for the safety and well-being of twice as many kids as I am supposed to have."

A few staff mentioned they like their current workload

- "We support and care for one another and take the extra time and effort to make sure the workload is even for all."
- "The amount of work is manageable, and I have discretion on how to handle my workload."
- "Lots of work to do – I love it."
- "Because I have a reasonable caseload I am able to utilize our assessment tools in the manner they were designed and dedicate time and energy to the thought process that is so pertinent to a well thought out case plan."

*See the section on Staffing Resources on page 68 for related discussion and comments.

THEME. Autonomy and growth opportunities

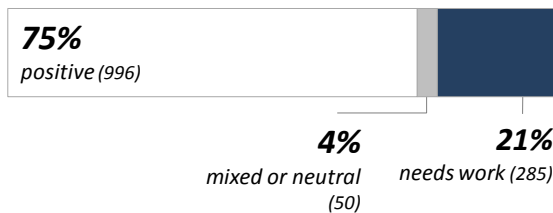
1,331 of the 9,926 employees who made comments addressed the issues of autonomy and growth opportunities in their workplace.

13% commented on this theme (1,331)



Three quarters (75%) of the 1,331 employees who commented on autonomy and growth feel that their workplace offers them independence and a chance to grow personally and professionally. However, 21% said improvement is needed. Many of these (134) expressed concern about restrictions imposed by a new “Workforce Optimization” (WFO) scheduling system at the Economic Services Administration.

Their comments were:



Staff like it when they can:

- Organize their own work day
- Be creative and improve their work processes
- Expand their knowledge and experience

They are displeased when:

- Their work day is overly structured
- They feel micromanaged
- Opportunities to grow are lacking

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees value autonomy at work, with opportunities to be creative

- “I am allowed to use creative approaches and to act independently in achieving our goals.”
- “I most enjoy the ability to meet the responsibilities of my work autonomously.”
- “I enjoy having some creative say in how I do my job.”
- “Autonomy: I am given great latitude in defining how to do my job and when.”
- “I have some creative freedom to do my job in the way that I feel works best and best serves our clients.”

They appreciate chances to learn new skills and take on new tasks

- “I love when I am given opportunities to deepen my understanding of my practice. I enjoy being given opportunities to lead, learn and grow.”
- “I have a good rapport with my supervisor and I appreciate the freedom he gives me to do my job and the opportunities he gives me to achieve improvement and enhance my skills. A day never goes by that I don't learn something of value.”
- “I like that I am able to use all my current skills along with being able to learn and grow and am encouraged to grow and move in to other positions if I'd like.”
- “I am growing and learning a new position which is interesting and challenging.”

Staff dislike being micromanaged

- “Stop micromanagement, allow us to actually help clients and allow us to manage ourselves. IT WORKS!”
- “There is a feeling of micromanagement within our team which gives me a sense of fear or paranoia even though I know I have done nothing wrong. A person should feel at ease at their job. You might be surprised what you can get out of happy employees.”
- “I enjoy my work when I am given autonomy to develop and oversee a project. Unfortunately, I do not get this opportunity much since my supervisor feels the need to control most aspects of my work.”
- “Find a way to give staff more ownership over their work so that they feel a sense of personal responsibility and accountability which would help in accuracy, attendance, employee retention, and overall sense of engagement.”
- “Any flexibility that employees have had to ‘go the extra mile’ or try to have some flexibility for family issues for employees have been eliminated by the minute by minute scheduling that we are under with WFO.”

QUESTION. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow

Six out of ten respondents (60%) said they have opportunities to learn and grow – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. 19% said such opportunities were rare.

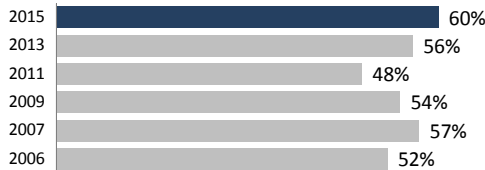
Staff appreciate it when they can:

- Pursue new learning opportunities
- Acquire skills that further their careers
- Make improvements to their work routine

Others would like the chance to have:

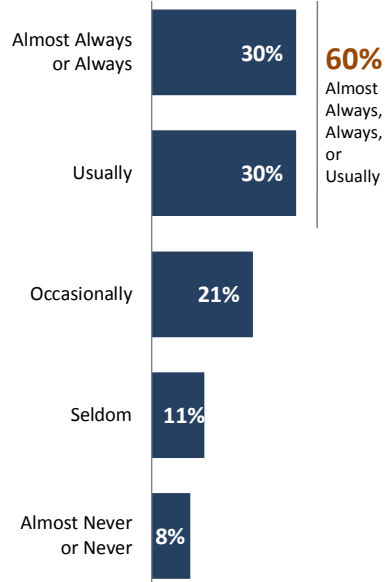
- Their talents and skills utilized
- Opportunities for skill development
- Trainings that help them advance

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said there are opportunities to learn and grow.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff said they like that their job allows them to learn and grow

"The opportunity for training, learning, growth, is always there."

"I have plenty of opportunities to learn and grow."

"Opportunities to grow, learn new things and push me beyond my comfort zone."

"I have been very fortunate to have opportunities to develop and grow as both a person and an employee."

"My supervisor allows us to do our jobs, even with minor mistakes he asks 'what have you learned,' which gives us the opportunity to grow and learn from our mistakes."

"I like that I am encouraged to grow and learn more every day."

"There are opportunities to learn and grow through the trainings and in-services."

"I enjoy working with great people and the continuous growth and learning opportunities."

"My chain of command is supportive and encouraging on a consistent basis. They often ask if I am interested/thinking about growing professionally and how they can assist me in achieving my goals."

Others felt that growth and learning opportunities are lacking in their workplace

"[We need] opportunities to learn and grow. Sometimes we feel stuck."

"Supervisor needs to provide more opportunities for the employees to grow and learn by allowing or encouraging employees to attend training that would be beneficial to their jobs."

"Aside from these Star 12 seminars, and an in-house mentoring program (which does not guarantee acceptance if there is no good 'mentor' match) and honestly does not seem to be run well, there are no organized or endorsed opportunities for growth or learning."

"There is not an environment of 'growth and learning.'"

"We also need to provide people with opportunities to grow and learn and become leaders, no matter what position they hold in the agency."

"More opportunities for growth and professional development."

THEME. Other important aspects of the job

4,650 of the 9,926 respondents who commented addressed other important aspects of the job, such as variety, flexibility, and working with others in the community.

47% commented on this theme (4,650)



More than nine out of ten (92%) of the 4,650 employees who mentioned other aspects of their jobs made positive comments. 4% want to see a change.

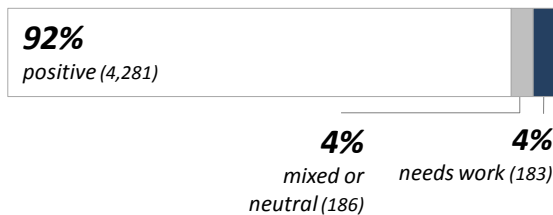
Employees say they are happy to:

- Have a job that they enjoy
- Work with other organizations and individuals in the community
- Have variety and flexibility in their work tasks

Some would like to have:

- Job tasks that challenge them and use their skills
- Less stress and fewer changes
- More time to spend with clients and co-workers

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees say they find their job fulfilling

"It brings satisfaction and pride knowing I have impacted someone's life for the better."

"I like how I am able to transform lives every day. It is very fulfilling knowing we have satisfied our clients."

"My goal in life is to leave this world a little better than I found it, and working here is helping me make that a reality."

"I like performing the work I am trained to do. This job is a good fit for the kind of expertise that I have and enables me to feel like I can help people."

"I have the ideal job for my strengths and skills."

"I know my work is important and meaningful."

"It gives me a sense of purpose."

They enjoy collaborating with community partners

"I like serving the customers and building relationships with them and the vendor agencies that we work with."

"This position keeps me energized and connected with the field staff and community partners that we support."

"Enjoy working in the field with trying to improve the environment for residents and working collaboratively with providers."

"I love engaging with community partners, building relationships with other agencies, and educating organizations about disability issues."

"There's so much I love about my job! I love being on the 'front lines' of protecting children. I love working with the community: Law enforcement and schools especially."

"I like working with the community and helping people take steps to get to where they want to be in life."

"I enjoy the opportunity to assist community members access the services they need."

Some employees mentioned specific things they dislike about their job

"I would like to be doing less work outside of what I am tasked to do. Instead I am doing 80% of things that are not my responsibility, but I have to do them because management, in their short sightedness, fired the person that should be doing what I am doing."

"There is a total lack of cohesive process and defined responsibilities on projects. This causes me a lot of grief and anxiety. I would like to be able to understand what is expected of me on a week-to-week if not day-to-day basis."

"More connection to a team around my work. I am very isolated by the nature of my work."

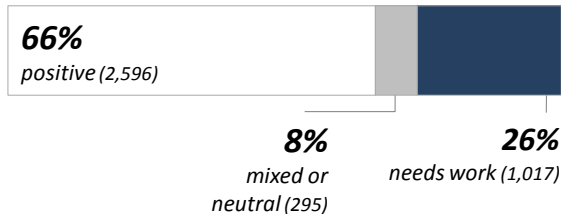
THEME. Co-workers – an overview

3,908 of the 9,926 respondents who commented mentioned their co-workers.

39% commented on this theme (3,908)



Their comments were:



More than six out of ten (66%) of the 3,908 respondents who made comments about co-workers had something positive to say. However, just over a quarter (26%) would like to see changes in the attitude or actions of their co-workers.

Staff appreciate co-workers for being:

- Positive and supportive
- Flexible team-players
- Knowledgeable and professional
- Passionate about helping clients

They object to co-workers who are:

- Lazy and unproductive
- Unwilling to take responsibility for their actions
- Only concerned with themselves
- Contributing to a toxic work environment

Co-workers are discussed in more detail on pages 53-56.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff who commented praised their co-workers

“I love the work environment and the feeling of unity. The office I work in is playful and down-to-earth, but also professional. We support one another and have an awareness that we function as a department and not just within our individual cases.”

“A strong sense of cooperation, collegiality, professionalism and integrity guides my workgroup. We work together to work smarter, accomplishing more than we ever could before. Everyone’s opinion is sought and valued. I like working in an organization with so many intelligent and dedicated people, and I like doing work that matters.”

“I really love the team that I get to work with and the passion that these individuals bring to the table. I appreciate the support and acknowledgments that our team gives one another outside of our leadership.”

“I am impressed with the professionalism, talents and cooperative spirit of my co-workers.”

“My immediate supervisor and the group of people I work with here in this office are smart, resourceful and highly motivated people. We genuinely care about each other and the clients we serve.”

“I like what I do and my co-workers are nice, proficient at their jobs and willing to help.”

“Working on a specialized team, with highly motivated, intelligent, dependable individuals that battle the daily grind together in achieving the best result they can possibly muster with the shoddy tools they have been given.”

“My unit is so very supportive. We all always watch out for one another professionally and personally. We often spend time together at lunch and after work.”

Some are unhappy with co-workers’ poor attitudes and their lack of effort

“There has been much too much negativity, gossip and cliques in the office. There should not be an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality within an office that strives for the same goal.”

“The majority of the people I work with know their work has a positive effect on the families we serve. They work hard and want to be successful. There are always a few bad apples that see negativity in everything and do not take personal responsibility for their own actions and behavior. I appreciate that we are working hard to minimize their impact on the majority of our staff – those that are here to work hard in a positive and productive environment.”

“Long-term staff and staff who happen to be good at their jobs are allowed to speak in a disrespectful manner to others in meetings. This is an accepted practice and it should not be.”

“I want a work environment without blame and malice, and an effective means to hold employees accountable for poor attitudes and lack of adherence to quality work ethics.”

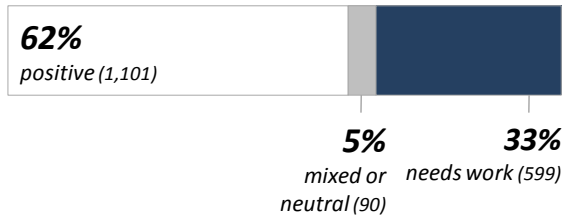
THEME. Teamwork and support

1,790 of the 9,926 employees who made comments mentioned teamwork and co-worker support.

18% commented on this theme (1,790)



Their comments were:



More than six out of ten (62%) of the 1,790 employees who commented on teamwork spoke positively about their co-workers' ability to function as a team and provide each other support. One third (33%) indicated that teamwork could be strengthened in their workplace.

Employees like:

- Co-workers who are well trained and willing to help
- Receiving encouragement from co-workers
- Comfortably sharing their ideas and work processes

They dislike:

- Co-workers whose actions result in increased workloads for others
- Co-workers who disrespect others
- Poor communication among teammates

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees who commented on teamwork feel encouraged and empowered by their co-workers

"My team does a great job working together and supporting me and those to whom I am accountable. They are dedicated professionals who, when given the guidance and support to do their jobs, simply shine. I am lucky to have them."

"I like the people I work with. They're positive, they know what they're doing and they're willing to help. I learn from them every day I am at work."

"I really enjoy the team I work with. I enjoy my office. I love that I am able to come to work and be me, share my ideas, my thoughts, vent, have a say, work as a team, see results, set goals and celebrate them."

"I like the unit I work with and the collaborative teamwork. We all have our own talents and backgrounds and it is encouraged that we all utilize each other to do our jobs the best we can."

"I'm proud of how my workgroup has grown over the past couple of years. We have fun doing really great work for Washington State. One of the most important aspects of our growth is learning to play to worker strengths and realizing the value of our co-workers."

"We always work as team and as a co-worker family. When one of us is sick, the other team members help when needed without question. All of us respect each other and personal matters affect us all in positive ways."

An employee's workload contributions can greatly affect their teammates' morale and work output

"I would like to see staff slow down and take the time to take CORRECT CASE ACTION instead of being sloppy and making it someone else's problem when it should never have been an error in the first place if the agent had taken the time to thoroughly review the matter. This 'find-it-fix-it' approach leaves workers not being held accountable for doing the job they are getting paid to do."

"It is discouraging to work in an environment where some co-workers and units are expected to provide half the work and not held to as high of standards. While I believe in quality work it is often stressful to be held to a higher level of expectation than many of my co-workers who have far too much free time to do absolutely nothing a majority of the day which results in more work for a few other individuals within our local office."

Some employees would like to see increased communication and unity among co-workers

"Employees need to be trained to treat others in a professional manner instead of 'my job is more important than yours.'"

"I'd like the team to gel. Support each other automatically and then if there's a problem deal with it later, one-on-one. Instead of highlighting problems with other staff and complaining, come up with a solution to an issue and solve it team-wide. We're as strong as our weakest staff – and right now we are not very strong. Good management right now is what is keeping us afloat. Sometimes the hardest part of the job is dealing with other staff, not the residents."

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

Nearly seven out of ten respondents (68%) said their workgroup excels at cooperation and teamwork – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. 15% feel their teams could collaborate more effectively.

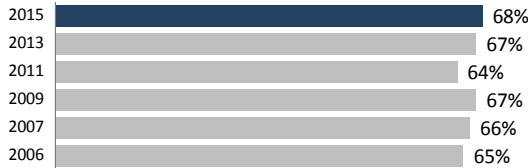
Staff desire co-workers who:

- Create a comfortable work environment
- Can be depended on for quality work
- Foster a strong sense of camaraderie in the workplace

They disapprove of co-workers who:

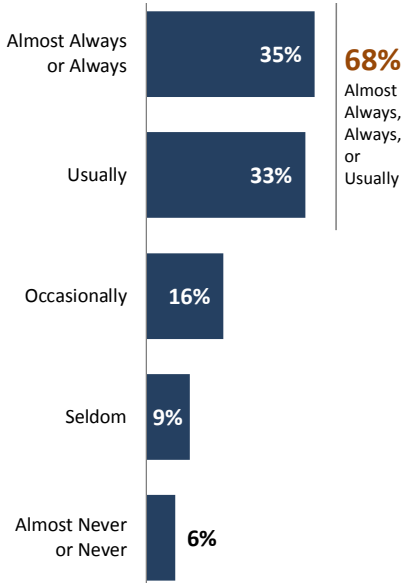
- Avoid doing their job
- Act in ways that reflect poorly on their team
- Undermine their team’s progress

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 reported teamwork and cooperation in their workgroup.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff value their co-workers and their focus on the team’s success

“What I like best is the support and guidance of my peers who have been in this position longer and have years of experience and knowledge that they are willing to share.”

“I am fortunate to work in a unit that is very collaborative and works very well together. Our unit works hard, but knows how to get along well and have fun while working. There is a strict rule within our group that we will not gossip or speak badly about others. This has contributed to our success and helps us focus on the importance of collecting child support.”

“Our team is cohesive. We work well together. Overall the team is very positive and enthusiastic about making changes at our level that will better serve our customers as well as our employees.”

“What a wonderful place to work! While the actual job tasks are demanding and can be somewhat stressful, the people I work with make all the difference. Uplifting, efficient, and respectful cross-team collaboration happens every day.”

“I believe as a group we feel we are trying to make a difference every day.”

They also feel positive attitudes are important to the spirit of teamwork

“I love the ‘can do’ attitude of my workgroup. We accomplish nearly impossible tasks every day.”

“I would like to see co-workers supporting one another, praising one another for their positive efforts and jobs well done ON A DAILY BASIS. There should not be a day that goes by that you can't find SOMEONE who is doing a great job at SOMETHING. They should be patted on the back.”

Staff disapprove of co-workers who avoid work and hinder the progress of their team

“I would like to see the office spend less time catering to people who spend the majority of their time filing grievances and conjuring up reasons to complain that cause everyone else to make changes to their work experience.”

“It is disheartening to work on collaborating with families in order to get them the services their family needs, and producing a comprehensive assessment, when other workers in the office talk about doing the minimum because they will get things approved either way.”

“There are times within the team where there are different expectations for team members who do the same job. I don't mind helping the team or this particular team member; however, whenever this team member chooses not to do a task or incorrectly does the task, that task is often given to me to fix.”

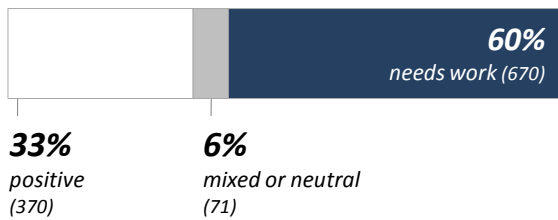
THEME. Co-worker competence

1,111 of the 9,926 employees who made comments mentioned the competence or incompetence of their co-workers. They addressed skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

11% commented on this theme (1,111)



Their comments were:



Six out of ten (60%) of the employees who commented on co-worker competence feel their co-workers' performance could improve. One third (33%) made positive comments about their co-workers' competence.

Employees criticize co-workers who:

- Act unprofessionally
- Misuse or waste their time at work
- Are not held accountable for their actions
- Have no interest in improving themselves

They value individuals who:

- Keep a professional and helpful manner
- Consistently try to do their best work
- Strive to fulfill their agency's goals

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff feel co-workers who are repeatedly unproductive or disruptive should be held accountable

"There should be consequences for excessive, unauthorized leave and repercussions for sleeping on the job. The staff that reports other staff sleeping ends up being bullied by the other staff that also sleeps on the job. Nepotism is too rampant; too many family members covering poor work performance. Mediocrity is considered acceptable here, and there is no incentive or support for improved work performances."

"I would like office gossipers and trouble starters to be dealt with as soon as they try to stir the pot. It really brings down the morale when a few people in the office can make trouble without consequences."

"There are employees who take ten minute breaks every hour. Where is the accountability? There are employees who take 45 minute lunches. Where is the accountability?"

"The ongoing excuses made for employees who can't do their job, yet get paid what we all get paid is ridiculous. The other workers within our office have to absorb those cases that could be worked by those employees."

"There should be consequences for staff that treat other staff with negative behavior. The favoritism, double standards and bullying are not professional and should be stopped."

Some staff feel their co-workers do not have the necessary skills for their position

"Some newer employees are not as prepared or trained effectively enough. Mistakes are made and safety is compromised due to the lack of experience."

"I want management to hire competent people. I wonder how some of the on-call staff even take care of themselves. They need more training!"

Employees praised professional and committed co-workers

"I am working with a team of like-minded individuals who are trying to help people every day. There are no slackers in my unit."

"We have a great, supportive work unit. I enjoy the variety of tasks that require creative problem solving, but mostly it's my co-workers who are committed to what we do, and they do it well."

"My team on my shift is comprised of highly skilled individuals who work well together. I enjoy the people I work with and I enjoy the strong and consistent team we have built."

"I know that I'm working towards a worthy mission and working with excellent co-workers with great work ethics and esprit de corps!"

"I enjoy all the people I work with. They are the most dedicated group of people I have ever had the privilege to work with."

THEME. Other comments about co-workers

2,078 of the 9,926 respondents who commented addressed some other issue related to co-workers.

21% commented on this theme (2,078)



More than nine out of ten (91%) of the respondents who commented on co-worker issues other than teamwork or competence spoke positively about their co-workers. Only 6% described problems caused by their fellow workers.

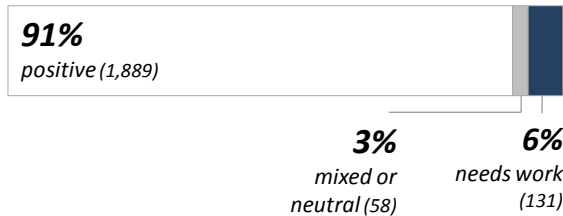
Respondents admire co-workers who are:

- Adaptable to change
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Dedicated to helping DSHS clients
- Positive when times are tough

They are displeased with co-workers who:

- Resist change in the workplace
- Are inconsiderate of others

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many staff made comments about their co-workers' commitment to DSHS clients and services

- "I enjoy working for an agency with staff that are compassionate and genuinely care about the clients that they serve."
- "I enjoy the people I work with and how they are able to be an effective team to accomplish the common goals."
- "I am at an institution and I believe the staff here demonstrates a caring, considerate manner toward the youth. It appears that most of the staff are here because they want to be a part of making a difference in a youth's life."
- "I love that the people I work with are supportive of each other, are extremely intelligent problem solvers and especially that they base their decisions on options that create the best outcomes for the people that we serve."
- "I work with an amazing group of people, both up and down my organization. There is a real sense of common goals and desire to better serve our clients."
- "I have the privilege of working with some of the most committed, professional individuals I have ever known."
- "I like working with a team of people who respect each other and want the best outcomes for our patients."
- "My team is very supportive, hard-working and dedicated to our residents."

Staff whose actions and attitudes encourage a productive and positive work environment are highly valued

- "I appreciate the commitment of my co-workers in the after-hours program to take care of whatever is needed to ensure the best outcome possible, often in horrible conditions."
- "The people I work with on the unit make me feel comfortable, safe, and happy while I'm at work."
- "I have a fantastic team of supportive co-workers who make this job manageable and enjoyable. If not for them, it would be difficult to maintain this work."
- "The atmosphere is professional. The workplace is stable and well organized and individuals seem to be respectful of one another. There are weekly popcorn socials that are a nice break for employees and give them a bit of a lift."

Some staff wish their co-workers were more accepting of change in the workplace, and more considerate of others

- "Some people do have a problem with change. Just because some people have been around for years, when change is presented they have a hard time making that change. I would like to see more people try before complaining."
- "The problem at DDS is the disgruntled employees – the ones who do not like anything that is, has, or will be changed here. They tend to have negative opinions and are essentially a poison to a work environment."
- "I hate the fact that the people I work with think the state owes them a job."
- "I would like to instill in everyone the golden rule of, 'Treat others the way you would want them to treat you.'"



“Patients Choice” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Daniel Broumley, with permission

From the photographer:

“Both staff and patients tend the Western State Hospital green house. They take care of a wide assortment of plants inside the green house. The patients also care for gardens they plant in raised boxes. A variety of vegetables and flowers are grown. This year’s sun flowers are again a hit with everyone.”

CHAPTER 5

Business Practices

EMPLOYEE VIEWS OF BUSINESS PRACTICES SHOW MIXED TRENDS since the last survey. More employees said their workgroups were using customer feedback and making improvements for customers. There was also an increase in the number of employees who said their agency supports them in living a healthier life. However, in the comments portion of the survey, employees expressed greater concern this year over interrelated resource issues including staffing, pay and benefits, safety, and resources for clients.

Policies and procedures. *An increased number of employees that said their workgroups are making improvements for the benefit of clients. More staff also said that their workgroups use customer feedback for process improvement. As in the past, there were many suggestions for improving business practices.*

- **More improvements for customers.** 62% of employees (up from 59% in 2013) said their workgroup is making improvements to make things better for their customers.

- **Greater use of customer feedback.** 41% of employees (up from 39% in 2013) said customer feedback is being used to improve their work processes.
- **Many suggestions for improvement.** 2,887 employees (29% of those making comments) made suggestions for improvement in work processes or policies. This rate is unchanged from 2013.

Resources. There was no change from 2013 to 2015 in the percent of employees who feel they have the tools and resources needed to do their job well. However staffing and related issues drew more attention. In 2015, there were more comments about needs for better staffing levels, higher pay and benefits, and more client resources.

- **Unchanged overall satisfaction with tools and resources.** The percentage of employees (65%) who said they have the tools and resources to do their job effectively did not change from 2013 to 2015.
- **Greater dissatisfaction with staffing.** 1186 employees (12% of those who made comments) expressed concern about understaffing and turnover in their workplace, a 26% increase from 2013.
- **A call for increased pay and benefits.** Concerns over staffing and turnover may have contributed to 59% more employees saying they want an improvement to their pay and benefits than in 2013. 828 staff members made such comments, just over 8% of those commenting in 2015.
- **More concerns about client resources.** 45% more employees (247) said that more resources for clients are needed. While mentioned by only 2.5% of those who commented, this increase brings such client resource concerns nearly back to the higher post-recession levels of 2011.

Health and safety. More employees in 2015 said their agency supports them in living a healthier life. Comments about staff safety increased by 19% from 2013, and some employees linked this issue to low staffing levels.

- **Improved wellness support.** 55% of employees (up from 50% in 2013) said their agency supports them in living a healthy lifestyle. 201 employees made comments requesting improvements in wellness resources (2% of those who commented, unchanged from 2013).
- **Slight increase in staff safety concerns.** 367 employees (4% of those who made comments) noted safety concerns. This is a small (19%) increase over 2013, when safety concerns were noted by just over three percent of those who commented. There was greater concern at Western State Hospital where 16% of the employees who commented mentioned safety issues.



“CSO Lobby” • Honorable Mention

DSHS Photo Contest •
Category: DSHS Clients
By Debbie Macy, with permission

From the photographer:

“I’ve worked for DSHS for 13 years, but have never visited a CSO before. I was impressed with what I saw there and wanted to document it.”

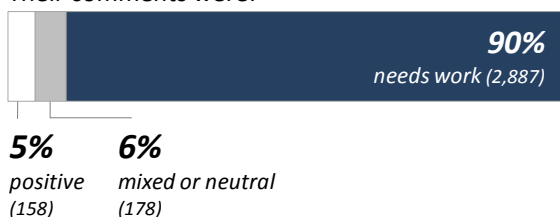
THEME. Work processes and policies

3,223 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed work processes and policies.

32% commented on this theme (3,223)



Their comments were:



Of the 3,233 respondents who wrote comments about work processes and policies, 5% (158) indicated they are satisfied with the approach taken by DSHS.

The vast majority of those making comments (90%) feel changes are in order. The 2,887 employees who requested improvements addressed a wide range of topics. They frequently noted a desire for:

- Processes and policies that help their clients
- Implementation of Lean principles in the workplace
- Removal of old tasks when adding new
- Less frequent changes

Comments concerning personnel issues, safety, and wellness are reported separately (pages 64-65, and 74-75).

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees appreciate when policies and procedures make helping clients easier

"More action should be taken to help our clients. We constantly hear management talk about our clients needs being goal #1 but then the actions of our agency don't reflect those claims."

"I like the support of innovative thinking and focus on client services."

"There are many changes happening daily that help create a better environment for staff and clients."

"I wish everyone would look out more for the clients rather than how it looks from administration's perspective. It'd be nice to have more of a 'quality, not quantity' outlook. There is so much room for growth here, but everyone looks more on appearance rather than the actual outcome of our work."

"For the first time in my career, I am seeing a results oriented process that works well for me and the organization as a whole."

They don't like it when changes happens so fast they can't keep up with them

"There are so many policy, system updates and software upgrades. We learn one way of doing things (so do the clients) and then it changes. It is frustrating and hard to keep up with, not only for us as employees, but also for the clients."

"Any positive changes that happen in the work flow process always come with a negative repercussion such as increased work demand, faster processing time, higher production goals for the year that don't seem equal or beneficial after the fact."

"In the last several years the state has made several changes. None of them benefit the line staff or make it any easier or faster to do the job. It benefits the management or headquarters only."

"I would like to see changes slow down. I don't expect that they would ever stop but we can't even catch our breath between changes and updates."

"All the projects or yearly mandated policy procedures that come down that are always asked in addition of keeping up with all the regular day-to-day work. There are times I think this system is trying to destroy the hard work the line staff do, on a daily basis."

They are frustrated when outdated technology slows them down

"Better technology. For instance, my job still has me filling out forms by hand while visiting professionals use laptops. DSHS employees look less professional as a result."

"Way too many meetings and too much travel. There is a lot of technology out there and I think folks wouldn't have to travel as much if they made better use of it."

"Having up-to-date enterprise level applications that share information seamlessly would greatly improve productivity. The level of technology being utilized in so many areas is truly pitiful compared to what is available today."

THEME. Specific work processes and policies

Many comments refer to practices at individual workplaces or with particular DSHS services.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Some employees mentioned certain business practices that are improving

"I like the improvements and the emphasis on Respect. I've noticed that the atmosphere in this office is more positive."

"New PM has improved best practices which, in turn, improves all aspects of my job."

"I am VERY GLAD we have changed our assessment process to be more client-focused."

"I am very excited by some of the positive changes in services that DDA is offering and that we are attempting to make our services more 'person centered.'"

"I like the commitment to using evidence based programming and methods."

"We're undergoing significant changes in our work unit due to federal court order. Changes that directly impact my work duties have incorporated feedback from those doing the work. We are decreasing customer wait times in jails and this gives a sense of positive excitement within our work group."

"I enjoy the opportunity to inform families of the new FAR process and (hopefully) try to help them understand that CPS is there to help during stressful situations."

They appreciate Lean principles but expect them to be applied effectively in the workplace

"I like that we are given the opportunity for processes improvement, ideas implementation, use of Lean methodologies to simplify our daily work."

"There is an incredible amount of waste and Lean practices are talked about, but not implemented or encouraged. Yes, there appears to be a push from headquarters, but in the office overall, there is a level of 'we have always done it that way' mentality."

"We go to a lot of Lean conferences to learn how to work smarter, but here at my office, the only Lean thing ever accomplished was cleaning out the refrigerator."

"I feel like we are trained to Lean lingo without any significant examples as to how we are making things substantially 'leaner.' If anything they feel 'fatter.'"

Many mentioned specific processes or systems they feel are hindering their work

"GET RID OF **TIVA**! We're all going to leave because of **TIVA**. No common sense anymore."

"**TIVA** to work for the line worker, clearly geared to mine data, and is cumbersome and repetitive for workers."

"That we do not move forward with systems, such as **Provider1** until they're ready for rollout. The amount of extra work this has caused our employees is horrendous. We have lost providers because they could not get paid or it has held up payment so providers no longer want to contract with us."

"Please, never, ever implement a program like **Provider1** without a longer trial. This was a disaster! No one had answers. Trial and error is not a good learning tool. There's nothing worse than coming to work, opening CARE and being greeted with 'ERROR.'"

"The CRIPPLING effect **Provider1** is having on getting our clients basic DME [Durable Medical Equipment] and SME [Specialized Medical Equipment] in a timely fashion is going to send us spiraling backwards"

"**PERT** should be used to go from ward to ward in their center, getting to know the patients and building a rapport with staff and patients. The best antidote for assault is building relationships with the clients. **PERT** could ASSIST the staff instead of rolling over the regular staff and telling them what to do."

"**PERT** is a disaster and needs to be removed."

"I would like to see **FamLink** nuked. It's a miserable failure as far as software. Not only does it detract from the work that we social workers do, it adds to the overall workload."

"**FamLink** is an unmitigated disaster. The amount of unpaid overtime new AND seasoned workers have to put in to stay caught up is criminal."

"Being forced to use programs that are useless to our clients, like **PACE**, is not helpful."

"The **SMART** program, and other treatment programs, is a constant source of frustration to the patients. The programs are unrealistic and unfair. Codes and assaults will continue to increase if treatment wards do not utilize firm, fair and consistent concepts and simplify the ward programs and rules."

"**WFO** has not turned out to be the helpful program that it was touted to be."

"People are so worried about their time in the **WFO** that customer service gets forgotten."

QUESTION. We are making improvements to make things better for our customers

More than six out of ten employees (62%) said their workgroup is making improvements that benefit their customers – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. Nearly two out of ten (16%) indicated that efforts are seldom or never made to improve the circumstances of their customers. Employees feel DSHS should:

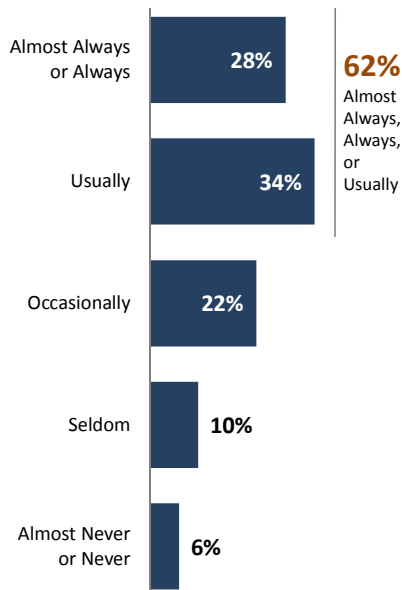
- Prioritize client needs
- Increase face-to-face contact with clients
- Eliminate busy work that wastes staff time
- Upgrade technology to serve clients more efficiently

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 reported improvements to make things better for customers.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees like it when changes benefit their clients

"I feel that most of the changes being made are improvements that impact both the employees as well as our customers."

"Right now I'm part of the mobile pilot program, and this has significantly improved the level of service that I can provide to my clients and has been very helpful in getting my work done."

"I appreciate that as an agency, we continue to look for ways to improve our quality of work and services to our customers."

"Really appreciate management and their efforts to improve DSHS processes for clients."

"I like the level of computerization of all the work we do, and how customer services improved in the last 5 years."

"Our agency is doing its best in promoting and upholding every client's rights and dignity as well as encouraging client independence by making and implementing programs for their benefit."

"I enjoy the challenge of assisting in a growth process and the steps of improving patient care."

"The Columbia River CSO serves clients well with structured office procedures and implementing better ideas to ensure delivery in great customer service."

"I like engagement of new technologies and services to improve delivery of services and to reduce waste (fiscal and productivity)."

"Recent success in improving the services we provide our residents."

Some feel clients' needs should be given more time and attention

"The management stresses closing cases over and above the families we are working with."

"Patients have some viable complaints that are not being addressed. Patients are largely ignored and staff as well as management has poor customer service skills. Even when patients fill out complaint forms they are largely ignored and minimized."

"I would like to have a new, redesigned and better database that would help streamline our process and improve our ability to understand more about our customers."

"A strong relationship is needed to help our customers improve and address deficits."

"I believe the business model is taking the human element out of staff's ability to help people in need. The 'handle time' requirement is absurd when you are dealing with families who have suffered DV, are learning disabled or not as educated."

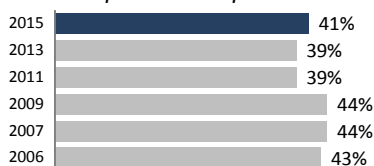
QUESTION. We use customer feedback to improve our work processes*

More than four in ten respondents (41%) said their workgroup uses customer feedback to improve services – a statistically significant increase. Nearly one third (32%) 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 said they want processes to work well for the clients. Employees feel DSHS could improve use of client feedback by:

- Increasing interactions with clients
- Placing value on clients’ opinions and concerns
- Listening and making processes more client-friendly

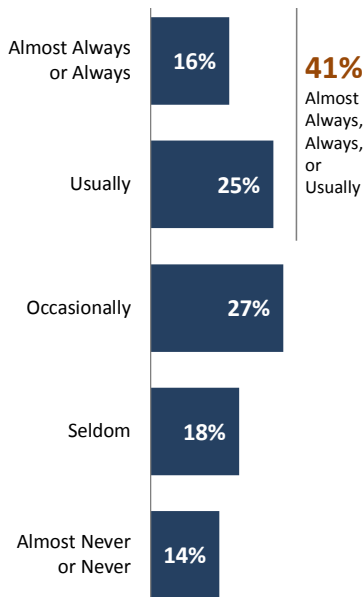
*In 2011, this DSHS-created question was worded, “In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes.” In 2013, the state Office of Financial Management adopted the question for use statewide, and changed it to its present wording. This may have shifted focus from local workgroups to the more distant agency.

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said customer feedback is used to improve work processes.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff want processes to be helpful and client-friendly

“We need to speak less with internal jargon and more in our customers’ language. We need to seriously apply the Governor’s Plain Talk initiative to the reams of documents we write. Less and simple is most often better.”

“In order for us to truly be client-oriented, we need to be given necessary tools to serve them better. A better workplace and a computer system that clients can sign in through, would be two helpful tools that would allow us to serve the community in a way that they deserve.”

“Know the pulse of the community...Their needs are just as important as what headquarters is trying to accomplish and could and should be listened to. This is supposed to be about the clients, families, children.”

They feel clients’ opinions on services should be used to make improvements

“An example – if it turns out that the designation of ‘relief care’ is confusing to families, would we be able to change it back to ‘personal care’ or will we be stuck with it regardless of whether it was helpful. And will we ever know if it is helpful or not?”

“We usually give customer feedback an appropriate level of consideration.”

“Patient feedback is not valued.”

“I’d like to see more ways to receive customer feedback on various issues/processes and an ongoing plan to improve processes based on the feedback.”

“Folks need to be heard.”

Some say there are not enough opportunities for clients to provide feedback

“Not many clients can give feedback to improve our work processes.”

“For the agency, ask the line staff what customers are telling them is important (we are the ones they complain to). Don’t rely on statistics only as your measurement for success.”

“I feel that we struggle to gather and incorporate feedback into how we implement programs and services. I think that it could significantly improve the quality of our services and the quality of our clients’ lives if we were more able and flexible in this.”

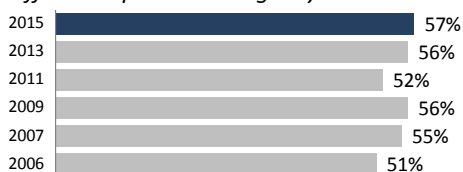
QUESTION. My agency uses my time and talents well

57% of employees said that DSHS always or usually uses their time and talents well. Nearly one quarter (23%) reported that time and talents are seldom or never used well. Employees feel their supervisors should:

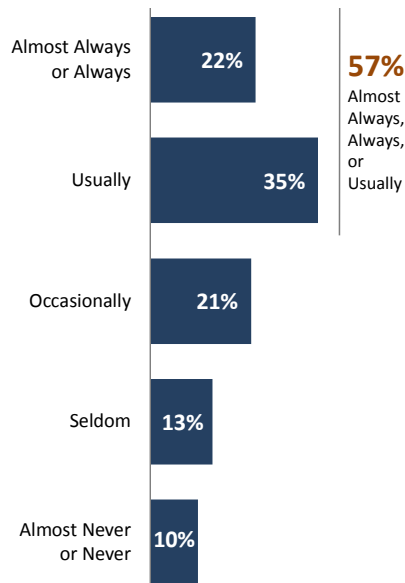
- Show staff they recognize their strengths and skills
- Give staff opportunities to learn and grow
- Encourage staff to use their knowledge and talents
- Listen to workers' suggestions for improvements

These issues are also addressed in other sections of this report, including communication, job characteristics, and management.

There was no significant change between 2013 and 2015 in staff who reported the agency uses their time and talents well.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Employees appreciate it when supervisors recognize their talents

"I feel valued as a person as well as for my job related talents."

"I have seen lots of GOOD talented people leave due to their talents being wasted so they go elsewhere."

"My new supervisor recognizes my work and my potential for growth. I am encouraged more now than I have been before, that I will be able to take on new challenges and opportunities."

"Most staff are not recognized for their talents or skills."

"I like being appreciated for the talent and skills I bring to the team."

They want to be allowed to use their skills and experience

"My supervisor encourages me to use my skills and knowledge to do an effective job."

"I would like more opportunities to share my strengths and allow me to use more of my talents and abilities."

"My talents and education are underutilized."

"I don't feel like my skills are utilized very well by my supervisor."

"My talents are currently underutilized in the position I currently hold."

"I am allowed to use my skills and experience to help solve difficult situations."

"How about letting your employees solve the issues that no one BUT them know best."

They also want their supervisors to encourage and support their growth

"I appreciate and enjoy working for my supervisor who does a good job of using my talents and insisting that I grow by stepping out of my comfort zone."

"My current supervisor is very supportive, and encourages training for personal and career growth. I am able to exercise my skills, talents and abilities in a way that I was not able to previously. I feel valued for what I bring to the team."

"All staff should be encouraged to learn and grow as individuals."

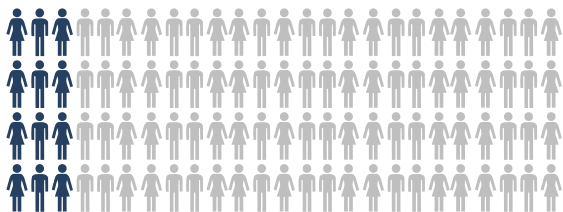
"I have felt that the environment that I work in has allowed me to learn new skills and programs. I have had opportunities to grow."

"My manager, my supervisor and my co-workers are all very supportive of my growth and encourage me to continue to grow in my field and will provide the tools needed to make me a more valuable member to the agency."

THEME. Personnel issues

1,155 of the 9,926 respondents who made comments addressed personnel issues.

12% commented on these themes (1,155)

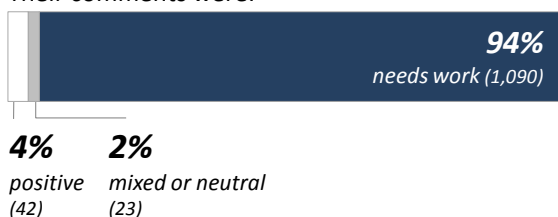


The vast majority of the 1,155 employees who made comments about personnel issues (94%) suggested that **improvement is needed**. A few made positive comments (4%) or mixed or neutral comments (2%).

Those who commented would like to see:

- Quicker turnaround time on HR processes
- Fair hiring and promotion processes (see page 36)
- Job classification reviews
- Consequences for staff that don't do their jobs
- More opportunities to advance

Their comments were:



See the next page for additional comments related to hiring and promotions, as well as investigations and disciplinary actions.

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Almost all of the staff who commented think personnel processes need improvement

"Quit hiring inexperienced management and using us as training subjects."

"More promotional opportunities given to people that do not have 4 year degrees, but have years and years of experience."

"I would like to see human resources processes implemented to eliminate dead weight and ensure the right staff have the right job."

"New staff should not be hired in at a higher rate of pay and higher level than existing employees. Particularly when, though they may have more education, they have no experience and existing staff have to train those employees that are at a higher ranking level making more money."

"Something has to change, we are losing great staff and unable to fill many positions."

Many had specific ideas on what these improvements should be

"The biggest change I would like to see is a closer examination of new hires. I'm not talking about closer look at their education or their degrees. I'd like a closer examination of their character, work ethics, how they interact with other people."

"I would like to see exit interviews with staff who are leaving."

"We are very 'Olympia-centric.' In today's world, the excuse that employees need to be located here at headquarters is more tradition-based than fact-based. It would be helpful to be able to promote and utilize talent across the entire state, without limiting it to a restrictive geographic area and those willing to relocate to it."

"Can't there be some kind of program to identify, develop and assist staff internally to help those who want a promotion achieve their goals?"

"The Employee Checklist (received the first day) is NOT a sufficient way to inform new hires that there are three different benefits sign-up dates and if an employee misses the Disability sign-up date they are NEVER able to sign up for this benefit again. Such a draconian deadline should merit an automated reminder or follow-up from Human Resources at the very least."

"I'd like to see part-time positions/shared positions available."

"They need to take a look at the way they communicate with people. We have a man that was told that he would get his layoff papers on the first of the month. It is now three weeks later and he has not heard anything."

A few of them had positive things to say about Human Resource processes

"There is room to move around and promote. It's a great career oriented environment."

"I love the job security and fairness in advancement here. This leads to a more supportive environment."

"This job constantly has promotional opportunities and we are encouraged to promote when the opportunities are present."

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.

► *What DSHS employees said . . .*

Many employees expressed concerns about the fairness of hiring and promotions

"They hire and promote friends and family to the detriment of the agency and employee morale."

"It is not always the best person for the job who advances; it is who you know and who is friends with whom. Morale and the entire work environment suffers, but this will never improve or be corrected because this practice is as old as time, and rampant from the top on down."

"Hiring decisions are never fair. If you are over 40 or don't like to meet for drinks after work, you won't be hired permanently."

"Less hiring of friends and family just because they are friends and family and more hiring of people who can do the job, regardless of who you know or are related to. Promotions based on job abilities, not on who is your friend, who you feel sorry for, or because they are best at 'brown nosing.'"

"Often times amazing talent is passed up, and only friends of management will ever promote whether or not they can actually perform the job. This is unfair and gives advantages to people who do not deserve advancement."

"I would really like to see the favoritism and cronyism stop. In our office it has become very clear that hiring, promoting and opportunities for desired assignments are clearly based on who you are 'friends' with rather than the talent/skills you may bring to the table."

"The friends and family hiring method has created a knowledge poor hierarchy that lacks the tools to positively contribute to a productive and respectful environment in which to work."

Some ask that promotions happen from within the organization

"Promote within. If you want to see people happy, give them something to work for. Stop turning down good employees for promotional opportunities."

"I feel that there are ZERO or even NEGATIVE support for my desire to promote within."

"Nepotism and the 'good old boy' system make mine a dead end job with no possible means of training or advancement in the future."

"Hiring from within and seeing current employees receive transfer and promotion opportunities before hiring from outside."

"More promotional opportunities within the division."

"Oh, and I like that how they hire and pay more to people who know nothing of the business while others who have been here for years DO NOT GET PROMOTED to those jobs."

Others suggested that we could improve methods of dealing with disruptive or underperforming workers

"I would like to see more accountability for the behaviors of my peers. It seems they can do all sorts of wrongdoings, but they are still here, working like nothing had happened. I even hear comments like 'I am a state employee. What are they going to do with me? Fire me? Ha, ha.'"

"I now have to give a document that tells the person that I am interviewing that they do not have to talk to me. It's a counterproductive way to run an investigation."

"Quit putting people on alternate assignments, dragging it out as if they were criminals. Do the reprimands and get them back to work."

"I would like to see changes in how staff make it to our floor...It appears that many people have been transferred to the floor as part of a disciplinary process, which creates an atmosphere similar to the Island of Misfit Toys. I work with several people who are burned out and just not 'into' working, and so they are ineffective while holding positions of some power. There are people with obvious drug or alcohol impairments who do not seem to face any adverse consequences. There are others who for some reason are targeted or picked on by their supervisors for behavior or actions that seems no different than that of others, who are left alone."

"I would like to stop seeing workers that are under investigation sit around at workstations sleeping, playing on their cell phones, etc., all while being paid."

"The idea that once someone is permanent they can't be fired REALLY needs to be addressed. We all see and come in contact with those employees that we know should not be in customer service or supervisory/lead positions and yet no one addresses the issues."

"I would like to understand how a person that naps at work and plays on his phone when awake gets promoted, but then denies the promotion because it was too much work, but then is given ANOTHER, even better promotion! Talk about a morale killer."

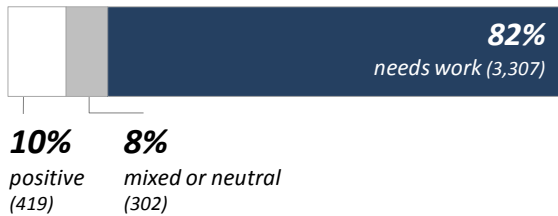
THEME. General resources

4,028 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resource issues.

41% commented on this theme (4,028)



Their comments were:



The majority of resource-related comments (82%) requested improvements. Of the 4,028* respondents who addressed resources:

- 1,209 spoke about staffing (page 68)
- 1,191 mentioned pay and benefits (page 69)
- 1,062 addressed training (page 70)
- 635 talked about facilities and work environment (page 71)
- 268 mentioned resources for DSHS clients, and 711 mentioned other resources (page 72)
- 386 commented on safety issues (page 74)
- 224 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 . . .

Employees described a variety of general resource needs

“We are understaffed and undertrained. Our vehicles are in disrepair as is our facility.”

“I do not like my job. It is extremely stressful due to a lack of appropriate tools and resources.”

“Our supplies are very limited (e.g. we run out of paper and cannot complete our job printing Observation Reports, Room Inspections, etc.) You practically get your head bit off when you ask for a pen to write with or a Post-it to write a note on. We currently are out of Scotch Tape and have broken staplers and hole punchers. We are constantly putting in maintenance orders for our heating being broken on the unit. It is so cold down at the end of the resident hallways that their rooms and mattresses are getting mold. Speaking of mold, there is a resident bathroom that has black mold in it and they continue to not fix the problem. Many telephones (both staff and residents) are not working properly but the IT orders are not being looked at. Our buses are even unsafe. Sometimes they barely start and staff have ended up walking because the wheel bearings sounded loose. We do not have adequate staffing to get things done. Both our medical and clinical staff are at an all-time low. There are many staff that are working so much overtime that they are walking around like zombies making it a very unsafe environment. This place seems to be falling apart before our eyes.”

“There should be more training available to staff. Have vehicles that actually work and are safe to drive. Have the proper amount of staff and equipment to do our jobs successfully.”

“Modern technology to take the place of antiquated and laborious systems so that we can be more efficient, accurate, and effective.”

“We really need to update our tools to be able to support our customers in a way that is mainstream and really expected. It is frustrating to have minimal staffing levels and then overtax them because we don't invest in the tools and training we need.”

“I would give the staff what they need to support the goals of the agency. Have a budget that supports a safe and secure environment. We have to beg to get equipment to do our job and to support the staff we support. We do an equipment budget every year and never receive the money that was so-called approved for our area – it is very frustrating!”

Some employees cited efforts being made to improve their resources

“The agency is using (or attempting to use) the latest technologies.”

“The tools and resources have greatly improved to make it easier to do my job.”

“Thank you for beginning the transition to mobile workstations for front line social workers. This will vastly improve efficiency and accuracy as we will not be having to input handwritten case notes into a computer often days after events occur.”

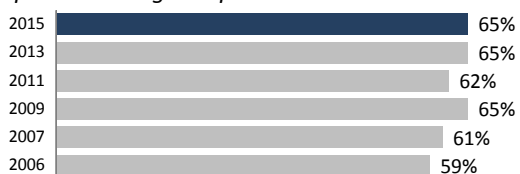
*Issues listed below total more than 4,028, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to resources.

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

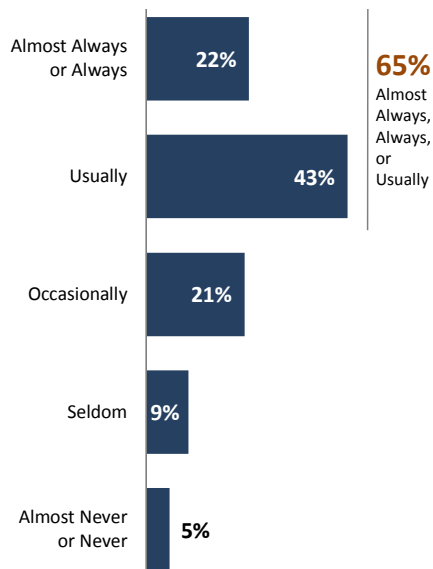
65% of employees said they have access to the tools and resources needed for their job. 14% said the tools and resources needed are seldom or never available. They would like to have:

- Technology to work while out of the office
- Helpful devices like smart phones and tablets
- More timely repairs when tools need maintenance
- Replacement of outdated technology

There was no change between 2013 and 2015 in staff who reported having adequate tools and resources.



ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff appreciate having up-to-date tools and access to those tools when they need them

"I love my new tablet and iPhone. I can work more efficiently and my computer doesn't crash. All workers should have this. AWESOME!"

"What I like best about my current job is that leadership has a vision and the aspiration to improve the business with cutting-edge technology, making state employment attractive to a new generation. It also empowers current employees."

"I like the use of technology to make things easier."

"I am very much looking forward to seeing how the mobile technology project makes a positive workload impact. I cannot express how much extra time things like case noting started to take me when I no longer had a laptop and could not work in the field anymore. The mobile technology project should, hopefully, go a long way toward making sure all of our work time can be productive."

"The tablet and iPhone has been a huge time saver in completing the work and has helped in lowering the workload. Even in the short amount of time we have had them, we are better able to manage our time and get our reports and notes entered in a timely manner."

"I am equipped with resources that help me work effectively and efficiently with clients to enable them to achieve their individual goals."

"I am in the pilot program for an iPhone and a tablet. Working with this new equipment has been fun. I also believe it will save me time as I learn new methods for completing my case notes. Also, I look forward to completing CFEs and service referrals while at the court on court days."

Some staff want access to modern technology that could increase their productivity

"We need phones with caller ID so that when elderly people call us and do not remember to leave their phone number we will be able to call them back."

"Line workers need cell phones that we can effectively use for texting. In other words: smart phones. Teenagers especially like to text. Give all of us that ability. The old flip phones that some of us still carry are mostly worthless when working with teenagers."

"Better technology support: smart phones, tablets, redaction programs that everyone is trained on and has access to, and the ability to input documentation in real time while in the field."

Other staff desire repairs and better upkeep for their current resources

"Fix the things that are broken before spending more money on new, unproven things."

"I want efficient response times for maintenance on broken things that pose a threat to the safety of staff or customers."

THEME. Staffing

1,209 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of adequate staffing.

12% commented on this theme (1,209)



Of the 1,209 employees who wrote about staffing resources, 98% see a need for more staff. Those who commented described a variety of negative consequences for co-workers and DSHS clients. Poor staffing levels create concerns about:

- Giving clients individual attention
- Providing the best possible service
- Keeping up with work expectations
- Maintaining positive morale

Their comments were:



1% positive (10)
1% mixed or neutral (13)

Employees would like to see:

- More focus on attracting quality hires
- Methods put in place to retain competent staff
- Vacant positions filled quickly and permanently

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Many employees believe understaffing hurts their ability to help clients

“We need more staff so the work can be done effectively and to the caliber that our policies and procedures expect.”

“Poor employee retention means I am constantly dealing with the mistakes of new and/or undertrained staff.”

“I want consistent and adequate staffing to meet the needs of a high caseload of clients.”

“The change that I would like to see in the workplace would be to have more staff so we can focus more time on each individual client, because in the unit that I am on, the time spent on clients is divided among all the clients. I would love to spend more time on them all individually.”

Many cite high turnover rates among new staff as a reason for low staffing in their workplace

“90% of people from an orientation will leave my place of employment in three months due to workplace dissatisfaction.”

“I would like to see help for all the staffing shortages and retention and recruitment issues. Management needs to stress the importance of aggressively supporting new employees so they stay in their new jobs and don't leave shortly after they finish their new employee orientation class. They feel demoralized, defeated, discouraged and end up quitting.”

“Something needs to be done to retain workers. The possibility of a worker staying longer than a year is very low. No support. Too much work. Too little time to do the work.”

“The turnover rate wouldn't be so high if we were paid more. That is the truth. The people are great, the work has a positive impact on our community, and people like being here. The one thing that makes people leave is money. This job is used as a foot in the door for people to get in at the state, which opens up other, outside opportunities for them where they can be paid what they deserve.”

Some staff also feel the hiring process should move faster to address staffing needs

“I want a faster hiring process. It can take several months to fill vacancies, even temporary vacancies. This causes staff shortages and a lessening of the treatment services provided to our residents. It also leads to staff burnout, which means staff call in sick more, exacerbating the problem.”

“More transparency and SPEED in the hiring process.”

“We have a lot of vacant spots that desperately need to be filled, but they're never posted. We have a lot of good on-calls that never seem to get a chance to interview for a permanent position. Even when they apply for them, they don't get called in to interview. Seems like a waste of talent.”

“Something should be done to more promptly fill vacant positions.”

“Fill the empty positions quickly.”

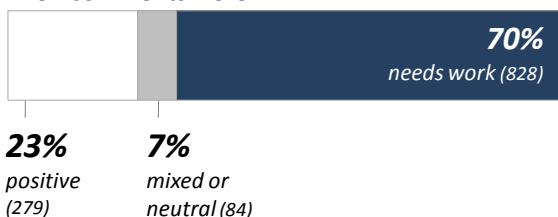
THEME. Pay and benefits

1,191 of the 9,926 respondents who made comments addressed the issues of pay and/or benefits.

12% commented on this theme (1,191)



Their comments were:



More than two out of ten (23%) of the 1,191 respondents who mentioned pay and benefits made positive comments, with many expressing gratitude specifically for the benefits they receive.

Seven out of ten respondents (70%) see a need for changes in the pay and benefits they receive. The changes they asked for include:

- More and better cost of living adjustments
- Improved benefits
- Wages that attract and retain talented employees
- Wages that better reflect the difficulty of the work being done

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most staff who responded positively on this subject referenced their benefits and job security

"The benefit package is very generous. Our leave (annual and sick) is very generous compared to the private sector."

"I have tremendous job security."

"I like the good benefits and stable employment."

"I like that there is stability and the benefits package is amazing."

Many feel their wages are low compared to similar positions in the private sector

"I recently discovered that the job I left when I came to work for the state now pays significantly more than what I am currently paid. When I left that job the state offered better pay and benefits, but in the past 20 years I now find that I am earning significantly less. While I enjoy what I do, I am a bit regretful that I didn't continue with my former employer."

"Our salaries are well below market, particularly for professionals in psychiatry, psychology and social work. The 3% raise was a joke, given that 12% is what was needed to bring us up-to-date based on CPI. If the state is serious about attracting and keeping a qualified workforce, the top priority needs to be on paying people a competitive wage. Period."

"I want wages to be more in-line with the private or outside sector to attract more of an applicant pool for full-time employee positions."

"A COLA and raises are needed. We are not recruiting and retaining quality staff due to this. AAA and non-profits compensate significantly higher."

Staff also feel DSHS wages are unattractive to potential employees, and contribute to staff turnover

"I want a better salary for staff. We cannot fill vacancies because other social work jobs have better benefits and salaries. Current, committed staff leave because their own workload is too high and stressful. In my historically stable offices I now always have a vacancy that I can't fill. It is becoming common to offer a job to a preferred candidate and have it turned down."

"Better pay and more job flexibility would help keep the good employees on staff and keep mistakes to a minimum."

"Serious consideration should be given to increasing the salary of workers, particularly those who live and work in King County where the cost of living is significantly higher than most other counties. We can't attract enough high quality or seasoned professionals because of the low pay and high cost of living. And it's notable that we have workers who have to utilize food stamps just to feed their own families. It is a disgrace that they're paid so low, and it should not be the reality for the people we entrust to go into harm's way to protect children. They deserve better."

"My pay and benefits are ridiculous and getting worse. Case in point: the horrible recruitment and retention rates we now have."

THEME. Training

1,062 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed training issues.

11% commented on this theme (1,062)

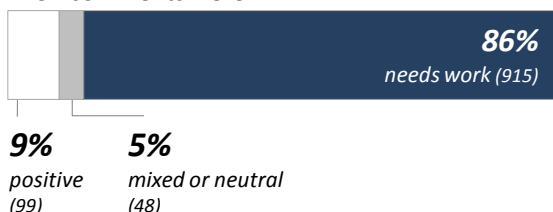


Of the 1,062 respondents who commented about training, nearly nine out of ten (86%) described needs for improvement. About one in ten (9%) made positive comments about training issues, and a few made mixed or neutral comments (5%).

Employees would like to see:

- More focus on ensuring new hires are well trained
- More time prioritized for developmental training
- Increased opportunity to take refresher courses for trainings already completed
- A wider variety of training opportunities
- Increased mentoring opportunities
- Training that is relevant and realistic

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Some employees expressed appreciation for the training they received

"I like how the state is becoming more involved with Lean. I like the different trainings that are offered."

"Participating in Excellence training is one of the things I like best about my job right now."

Staff feel heavy workloads and understaffing limit their opportunities for training

"I appreciate the potential for career and personal development, yet I don't feel I have the luxury of taking advantage of those opportunities because we are so short staffed. I feel I would be leaving my co-workers in the lurch. I would like to be able to take more on-line trainings but hesitate for the same reason."

"I want appropriate staffing levels so that workers are able to participate in career building extra assignments and projects without jeopardizing customer service and their own performance."

"There are many opportunities for growth. However, there is so much work that I usually don't have the time to attend."

Some employees requested additional training opportunities

"I want training on how to work with millennials."

"I strongly believe in education and ongoing training. I was fortunate to get great formal training when I was hired; something some older workers state they never got. But I think our initial training should not be a one-time thing. We should receive refresher courses. I was able to attend the Immigrant Eligibility Training and feel very confident in this subject now. Even my leads would have cringed at some of my questions. With our difficult and complicated programs that keep changing, we need to be refreshed every so often."

"I would like to see more cultural competency training."

Other staff commented on challenges or opportunities for improvement

"There should be more training for new workers so they are prepared for what they are going to do. Pair new workers with a mentor to guide them on all the additional paperwork they need to do, timelines they need to follow and the meetings they need to attend. All of these cannot possibly be taught and reinforced in academy classes due to the short amount of time and the goal of the training. People cannot become social workers in three weeks or a month's worth of training."

"We need a budget to train staff. The increased training for managers and supervisors (Excellence, Transforming Performance, etc.) has been very helpful. We also need a budget to help line staff and program management staff so they can promote and develop new skills that are necessary for us to continue to evolve our programs."

"Train the employees in a sensible manner so that they're able to promote when they have been here for a while."

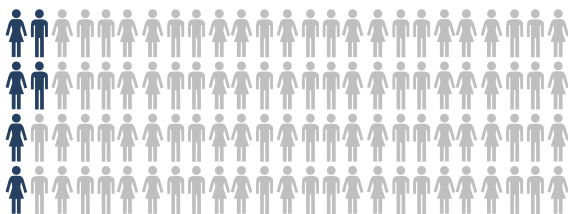
"Allow more opportunities for training and learning outside of the institution."

"More hands-on training with new or changing policies and procedures."

THEME. Facilities/environment

635 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed their work environment. These comments touched on offices, institutions, parking, commutes and surroundings.

6% commented on this theme (635)

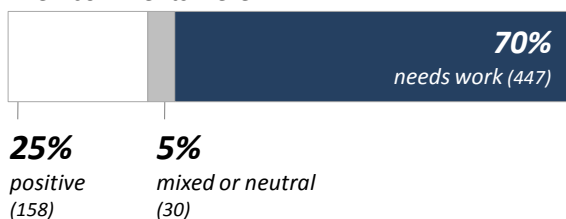


Of the 635 respondents who commented on the facility they work in, 25% were satisfied with their physical work environment. Their positive comments included praise for worksite locations, the ease or speed of their commute, and appreciation for new facilities.

Seven out of ten respondents (70%) suggested that improvements are needed. The changes they would like to see at work include:

- Faster maintenance when requested
- Heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems that work
- A cleaner workplace
- A quieter environment
- Improved privacy
- Better arrangement of their workspace

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Positive comments generally describe appreciation for their office's location or an easy commute

"I like that I work close to home."

"I am fortunate to work in an area where I have good parking."

"I like that I was allowed to transfer to a more convenient office for my commute each day."

Many who commented feel their facilities are outdated or in need of repairs

"My office has no heat in the winter. Until this year we could not reliably get cars for work-related travel. The elevators break down. We clean our own offices. Our windows haven't been washed in over nine years. None of us have ergonomically correct desks and chairs for working on our computers. The kitchen went without a mechanical dishwasher for months. Everything has been cut to the bone."

"I would like to see things that need to be repaired – such as the elevator and the heating system in the administration building – fixed a little faster. These are not small items but they are very important for the clients and staff. The elevator has not worked since April and the heat in the lobby is not working very well. Clients and staff are using the freight elevator for medical appointments. The receptionist sits in the lobby with gloves, a coat and a hat on to keep warm since there has been very little heat in the last three weeks. A client will come and sit in the lobby most days even when it has been cold."

"Everything in this place needs to be fixed."

Some staff feel their work environment causes difficulties in the workplace

"My co-workers who sit by the mini-blinds can't see their monitor so they will adjust the blinds just enough to see their monitor. The people around them will then complain, call them names, reopen the blinds, file complaints, etc. They don't care that someone can't see their monitor. Maybe it is jealousy, but someone needs to make an official announcement about the blinds because I know I'm tired of juvenile behavior."

"The 'child area' cube is right in the middle of workers who can't hear on a phone call. It is demeaning and unproductive to be able to hear each worker's conversations and no privacy all day long. For functionality and morale, it would be worth the effort to soundproof and build taller cubes vs. the short cubes. Also, there is a disparate and perhaps seniority mentality around which worker gets the best equipment for their cubes and the size of each cube can vary. Some have great file cabinets, a chair set-up with back support, and spacious cubes to work in depending on the department. It seems poorly planned and left to first come, first serve. Most importantly, the noise level can be so high and distracting it becomes brutal to try to produce work. I see it wearing down my co-workers and creating a hopeless and draining environment."

"Higher cubicle walls are needed so that it's not so hard to tune out the staff on their work phones."

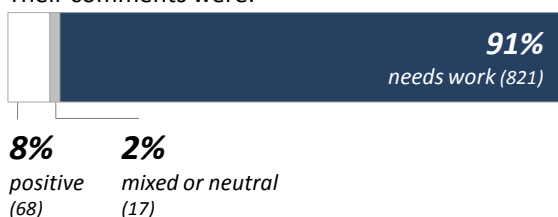
THEME. Resources for clients, and other resources

906 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed other resource issues, including resources for clients.

9% commented on this theme (906)



Their comments were:



Of the 906 respondents who wrote comments about other resource issues, 91% said that more resources are needed:

- 268 commented on **resources for clients**. Of these, more than nine in ten (92%) expressed concerns about the lack of adequate resources, one in twenty (5%) were satisfied with the resources they have to help clients, and a smaller number (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.
- 711 commented on **other resources**. Of these, nine in ten (90%) described tools or resources they need to do their jobs. Less than one in ten (8%) were satisfied with the available resources, and a few (2%) 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 client resources feel that more resources are needed

“Systemic changes are needed to better serve the patients and the community. Working in forensic work, it has been brought to my attention that we need many more beds for pretrial competency restoration as well as our growing NGRI population.”

“Figure out how to get safety belts for patients and for patients with head gear. They should have a face mask. It is not ‘their right to fall.’ That’s just crazy!”

“The Aged, Blind and Disabled program that I work with has a very limited income at \$197 a month and this causes a lot of problems with clients demanding the HEN program. Sometimes clients can be angry and frustrated over the fact that this amount of money isn’t enough to survive on for rent, utilities and basic needs.”

“I want less to be taken away from clients. They have lost almost everything they have and enjoyed.”

“I would like to see my DVR workplace come into this century: Can we please have Wi-Fi for our customers? I understand secured flash drives are an option, but they are not how people communicate. All of my clients have phones, tablets or computers with them for their job search.”

“We don’t seem to be making improvements to make things better for our customers, only making changes in the physical structure of the hospital. We are supposed to be treating the patients (Recovery), but this is happening less and less. There are very few meaningful activities for the patients for treatment or leisure activities.”

Some employees offered suggestions about increasing resources for clients

“We have a hard time doing our job in CFWS when we do not have adequate foster placements, it is also really hard on the children we are trying to help to be sitting in our office every night for weeks on end waiting for a one night placement every night. This is the worst I have seen it in eight years. There also seems to be a significant shortage of DDA placements available for our youth with disabilities when they are ready to leave DCFS. Some individual administrators are personally trying to help with this problem but it is too big a task for a few individuals. We need more recruitment efforts and infusion of money to encourage growth in the kind of licensed providers that are going to do their best for our kids in care. Also, we need to brainstorm about more efforts toward non-monetary encouragement, rewards and praise for people who agree to be foster parents. I would really enjoy helping to recruit adults to work specifically with our teens and finding adults who want to help by being launch pad foster parents for our youth in extended foster care. These are not the same people who want to help little kids, and right now we really aren’t reaching them.”

“I would like to see more community involvement/partnerships. Our WorkFirst families are in the community struggling for resources. If more agencies were at the table (housing) we could improve communication and help our clients become stable through community collaboration.”

“I would like to see more activities offered on weekends and PM shifts.”

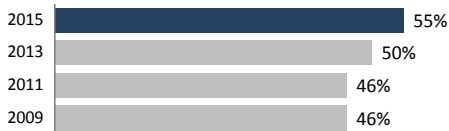
QUESTION. Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life

More than half of employees (55%) said DSHS supports them in living a healthier life – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. Nearly one quarter (24%) said the agency seldom or never supports their efforts to be healthier.

Employees who commented on this issue believe:

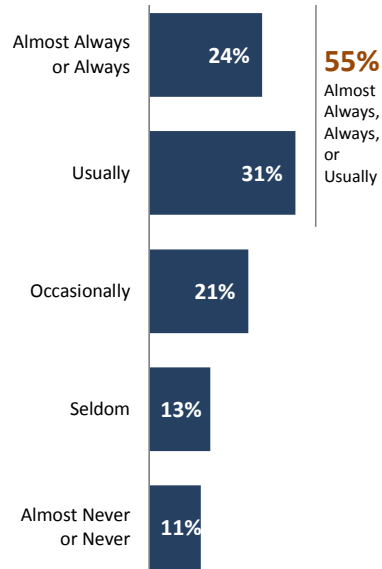
- Agencies should do more to support the health of employees
- Management should listen to, and be responsive to, employees’ safety concerns
- Decreasing employees’ stress in the workplace should be a higher priority

More staff in 2015 than in 2013 said their agency supports them in living a healthier life.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said . . .

Staff are grateful when wellness is supported in the workplace

“As a group more focus is being directed to wellness and RESPECT. I like it.”

“With the new workstation changes, employees can be more proficient in their jobs with whatever ailments they might have.”

“I like that the work environment encourages employees to take all of their breaks, as it helps with self-care.”

“We have a wellness program and often people do little things for one another that go a long way.”

“I like the SmartHealth program which helped further motivate me this year to be healthy.”

“Everyone in my office is working to be healthier because of the encouragement we receive.”

“Almost everyone has a sit/stand work station.”

“I like the flexibility and encouragement to be healthy, take care of myself and to grow.”

“[I like] the recent attention to wellness.”

Staff suggested ways the agency could provide more encouragement for healthy living

“I would like for all employees to receive ergonomic evaluations, because you don't know if you are doing something incorrectly unless someone informs you. I believe that all employees should have access to ergonomic keyboards, desk setups and chairs. Because my job is mostly sedentary and typing a lot, I find this even more important!”

“That upper management would enforce the no scents rule, like no flowers. People who do not have allergies to these things and products think they don't cause any harm but they do, for hours, and it doesn't make for a nice environment to work in.”

“I wish the breakroom at my workplace was a non-smoking place, some employees in my agency smoked and then worked in the room with a strong smoky smell, it's horrible. It also causes secondhand smoke cancer for non-smoking employees. I can't breathe and have had to have lunch in the breakroom like that!”

“A gym. I'd like a handful of stationary bikes and treadmills in the building. I know this is pie in the sky but I can feel myself gaining weight as I sit here at my computer.”

“Health and well-being is a focus of our agency but field staff are not being provided equipment that supports their health and wellbeing. Each field worker should be provided lightweight laptops and wireless headsets to prevent injury. Providing these two items would reduce neck and shoulder tension immensely.”

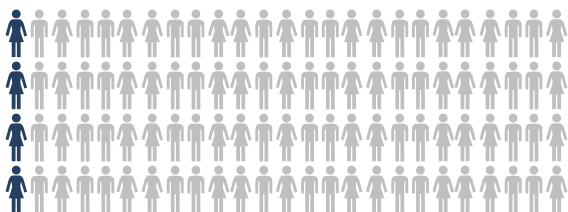
“Accommodate workers with equipment and furniture to give the ability to sit and stand while they work. Workers no longer get up as much and sitting too long causes medical issues which in turn can get more costly for the department in the long run.”

“How about discounts to local gyms? The county employees get discounts and they have lower healthcare premiums.”

THEME. Safety issues

386 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed staff safety issues.

4% commented on this theme (386)



Of the 386 respondents who commented on safety issues, less than one out of twenty (3%) said they feel safe in their workplace.

More than nine out of ten comments about safety issues (95%) identified areas where work is needed. Employees want:

- Improved safety in buildings and parking areas
- Safety considerations for field workers
- Safe staffing levels, especially for institutions
- Increased safety training and improved techniques
- Managers and supervisors to take safety concerns seriously

Their comments were:



3% positive (11)
2% mixed or neutral (8)

► What DSHS employees said . . .

Most employees who commented on safety shared ideas for making their jobs safer

"We do not have a safe place to counsel youth. We have asked for drug dogs to be present occasionally to address the huge amount of drugs coming in. We need to have safety and security FIRST!"

"I would like glass partitions at the front counter. I want better lighting in the parking lot. I do not think our facility is secure, and I believe the nature of our work puts us at an increased risk for workplace violence."

"Clear and consistent expectations that help to provide a safe workplace in more than the mere façade of safety that we keep recreating with a different name."

"I think there should be a security guard on each ward to ensure staff and patient safety."

"My cubicle is within direct view and range of the front counter. I feel somewhat vulnerable and exposed in this location. Maybe a more secure area, out of sight of the front counter."

"Those who work on the floor do not feel supported and safe while we're doing our job. It feels as though the focus is primarily on the budget, not the safety of floor staff."

"Better security, more than just a sign that says weapons are not allowed."

"I'd like to see a lot more changes take place in regards to the high degree of patient assaults on staff."

Staff often blame inadequate training and low staffing for safety problems

"Adequate floor staff should always be maintained to ensure staff safety."

"There is a need for training for what to do if in a risky situation while in an isolated interview room and leaving and entering the building."

"Physical safety is often a concern due to low staffing."

"More staff and training, to maintain a safe environment."

"We are always working short-staffed and staff are getting hurt from assaults by the patients."

"More training opportunities to assist direct care staff with more safety."

A few said their teams help them to feel safe and secure in their workplace

"I like working with a collegial treatment team and ward staff who are highly knowledgeable, experienced and dedicated to providing excellent patient care and a safe environment for all."

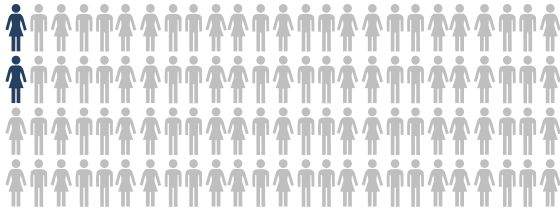
"We get things done according to policy; ensuring the safety and security of our team as well as those around us."

"A strong supportive team and positive culture has helped create a safe environment."

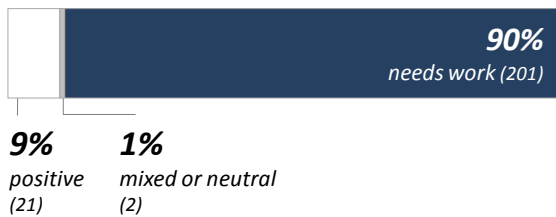
THEME. Wellness resources

224 of the 9,926 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resources for wellness and health.

2% commented on this theme (224)



Their comments were:



Of the 224 respondents who commented on wellness, nine out of ten (90%) see room for improvements. One out of ten made positive comments (9%), and two individuals made mixed or neutral comments (1%).

Employees want (*in order of frequency mentioned*):

- Wellness programs available at the workplace
- Sit/stand stations for all employees
- Ergonomic equipment and furniture
- Improvements in air quality, including scent-free and smoke-free worksites
- Dedicated wellness/break areas that include showers and lockers, and the time to use them
- Access to gym equipment in their building or reduced gym memberships
- Healthy foods and clean drinking water available

► What DSHS employees said . . .

The majority of staff who commented want more availability of, and support for, wellness activities

- “I would love to see more health and wellness strategies available or created for employees to utilize for better overall health.”
- “More support on living healthier, more active lifestyles (add some gym equipment, an elliptical or treadmill or stationary bike) have a real lunch room, sponsored wellness events.”
- “I would like to see the agency promote wellness and encourage employees to get out of the office for lunch and breaks.”
- “A health and wellness facility to include workout equipment and shower facilities.”
- “I would like to see a wellness room where we can exercise or rest if needed (meditation, yoga, stretching).”
- “It would be nice to see the workplace care more about the health of employees by providing time for wellness activities and/or limiting snacks.”

Many said they would like sit/stand stations and other ergonomic equipment

- “It would be nice if more people had the option for a sit/stand workstation. I know it costs money, but the human body is not made to sit for as long as we do. The ability to change position while still working would help.”
- “Workplace needs to be more ergonomically correct, such as easier or more accessible options for stand-sit desks.”
- “I submitted a letter from my doctor asking for an adjustment to my workstation so I would have the option of standing, three months later I am still sitting. I have lower back issues that are aggravated from sitting for long periods.”
- “Focus on staff wellness with ergonomic equipment to assist staff with performing their duties safely and effectively.”
- “I would also like to see more availability of standing desks. We have made health a priority for staff through the smart health challenge, yet those who sit at desks all day are still at a health risk; standing desks would help to mitigate health risks.”

Staff suggested several other ways they would feel healthier at work

- “Every time I have to go into the office I become ill from the air quality in the building.”
- “For employees to not smoke in State vehicles or State buildings.”
- “Offer staff gym memberships or open a free-to-use staff gym.”
- “The state doesn’t support health and wellness when it continues to sponsor celebrations that only feature fatty foods.”
- “I would like to see our workplace have drinkable water. We have not had drinkable water for several years.”
- “Better adherence to the ‘no fragrance’ policy.”



“Buddy” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Categories:
Honorable Mention (tie) in
Technical category and Honorable
Mention in DSHS Family category
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

From the photographer:
*“This is Buddy, a Basset hound
owned by a fellow co-worker. This
photo was taken at one of our
annual DDA All Staff picnics at
Madrona Park.”*



**“Almost a Sunflower” •
Third Place**
DSHS Photo Contest • Category:
DSHS Clients
By Daniel Broumley, with
permission

From the photographer:
*“WSH clients plant the sunflowers
in raised beds because they are
pretty and birds love the seeds.”*

Employee Survey 2015

