



### Retention of Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E Child Protective Service Practitioners

<b>Journal:</b>	Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education
<b>Article Title:</b>	<i>Retention of Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E Child Protective Service Practitioners</i>
<b>Author(s):</b>	<i>Patrick Leung, Karen Brown, Nancy Chavkin, Rowena Fong and Charlene Urwin</i>
<b>Volume and Issue Number:</b>	<i>Vol. 13 No. 1</i>
<b>Manuscript ID:</b>	<i>131016</i>
<b>Page Number:</b>	<i>16</i>
<b>Year:</b>	<i>2010</i>

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is a refereed journal concerned with publishing scholarly and relevant articles on continuing education, professional development, and training in the field of social welfare. The aims of the journal are to advance the science of professional development and continuing social work education, to foster understanding among educators, practitioners, and researchers, and to promote discussion that represents a broad spectrum of interests in the field. The opinions expressed in this journal are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the policy positions of The University of Texas at Austin's School of Social Work or its Center for Social Work Research.

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Winter) by the Center for Social Work Research at 1 University Station, D3500 Austin, TX 78712. Journal subscriptions are \$110. Our website at [www.profdevjournal.org](http://www.profdevjournal.org) contains additional information regarding submission of publications and subscriptions.

Copyright © by The University of Texas at Austin's School of Social Work's Center for Social Work Research. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

ISSN: 1097-4911

URL: [www.profdevjournal.org](http://www.profdevjournal.org)

Email: [www.profdevjournal.org/contact](http://www.profdevjournal.org/contact)

## Retention of Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E Child Protective Service Practitioners

---

*Patrick Leung, Karen Brown, Nancy Chavkin, Rowena Fong and Charlene Urwin*

A Child Welfare Workforce Development and Workplace Enhancement Institute was held in July 2006 for child protective service practitioners with purposes of highlighting strategies, sharing best practices, and developing innovative solutions for developing and retaining a stable workforce. Participants offered key recommendations from the ten synthesis groups covering leadership, organizational development, structure and culture, performance management, employee relations, rewards, staffing, cultural competence, community, and communication. The task of the combined group on rewards and staffing syntheses was “to explore critical workforce issues and develop creative strategies to the many opportunities and challenges in the field” (U. S. Children’s Bureau, 2006, p. 2). The group recommended that an assessment of what motivates staff be conducted and a local rewards program be created. This article focuses on the motivations of child welfare practitioners who have received Title IV-E professional development.

Retention literature has barely focused on the motivations of why social workers choose to work for the public child welfare system. Generally, research studies have focused on the personal factors that impact retention (IASWR, 2005) and the organizational factors that help practitioners stay in child welfare (IASWR, 2005). Personal factors include professional commitment (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2003), previous work experience (Rosenthal & Waters, 2004), education and Title IV-E training (Rosenthal & Waters, 2004), job satisfaction (Cahalane & Sites, 2004; Dickinson & Perry,

2002), age and gender (Rosenthal & Waters, 2004), and bilingual ability (Jones, 2002). Concerning the education variable, a comparison between MSW and BSW degree holders has been examined in reference to their reasons for both choosing to work for child protective services and leaving public agency positions (Lewandowski, 1998; Rosenthal & Waters, 2004; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2003). New knowledge is needed for three purposes: (1) to identify factors that motivate Title IV-E stipend graduates to seek employment in and to continue to work for child protective services (CPS); (2) to generate new strategies in recruitment and retention that target sustaining and promoting their motivation to work for CPS; and (3) to document possible benefits of using federal funds for a university-agency partnership program for continuing education.

### **Literature Review**

In 2003, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report, entitled “HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff,” that identified the challenges for child welfare agencies in recruiting and retaining child welfare workers and supervisors. Low salaries, high caseloads, administrative burdens, lack of supervisory support, staff shortage, risk of violence, and insufficient time for training were the most frequent responses given as causes for caseworker turnover (GAO, 2003). The report recommended that, in order to successfully recruit and retain CPS caseworkers, strategies be implemented to include accreditation of agencies, leadership and

---

*Patrick Leung, PhD is a Professor at The University of Houston.*

*Karen Brown, PhD is a Professor at Texas State University.*

*Nancy Chavkin, PhD is a Professor at Texas State University.*

*Rowena Fong, PhD is a Professor at The University of Texas at Austin.*

*Charlene Urwin, PhD is a Professor at The University of Texas at Austin.*

mentoring programs within CPS, recruitment bonuses, and university training partnerships (GAO, 2003). However, it was noted that “few of these initiatives have been rigorously evaluated” (GAO, 2003, p.1).

University and agency partnerships were first implemented with the discretionary grant created by the 1962 Amendments to the Social Security Act. Researchers have formally and informally evaluated university training partnerships since the inception of the Title IV-B, Section 426, and Title IV-E training programs administered by the U.S. Children’s Bureau in the Department of Health and Human Services. Chavkin and Lee (2007) conducted a national survey of the types of evaluations that Title IV-E programs were using. They found that although some of the evaluations were promising, many programs were focusing on training and not evaluation. Recently, workforce issues, such as the lack of professionally educated practitioners, have brought evaluation to the forefront again but the resulting evaluation has not focused on the differences between Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E practitioners.

The child welfare crises of the late 1980s highlighted the need for professionally educated social workers due to a shortage of professional staff in the workforce (Zlotnik, 2003). This led organizations such as the Child Welfare League of America, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, the American Humane Association, American Public Welfare Association, National Association of Social Work, and the Council on Social Work Education to individually and collectively identify and develop strategies to address these problems (Briar-Lawson, Schmid, & Harris, 1997). In 2005, the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) under the Child Welfare Workforce Series issued three research briefs on “Retaining Competent Child Welfare Workers: Lessons from Research,” “Professional Education for Child Welfare Practice: Improving Retention in Public Child Welfare Agencies.” and

“Understanding Retention in Child Welfare: Suggestions for Further Research and Evaluation.”

The IASWR Research Brief 2 states that 25 retention studies were identified in research conducted by Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining, and Lane (2005). Of these 25 studies, seven addressed retention of child welfare practitioners educated through a program called *Title IV-E Education for Education Practice Partnerships* (IASWR, 2005). Three studies involved a comparison between BSW and MSW educated workers (Lewandowski, 1998; Rosenthal & Waters, 2004; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2003). However, a comparison study between BSW and MSW Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E is lacking in the literature.

Most retention studies have focused on the reasons CPS practitioners have left the public child welfare system. Reasons tend to be classified as either personal factors or organizational barriers. Little attention has been paid to what motivates practitioners to stay and to discern if there are variant motivations for differently educated practitioners. Identifying variant motivations between Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E educated students can guide public child welfare agencies to better strategize and plan for reward systems and supports to sustain these motivations. The professional development that employees gain through Title IV-E could be enhanced to improve retention if we understood more about what motivates Title IV-E employees to stay.

This study conducted in a southwestern state with BSW and MSW Title IV-E and with non-Title IV-E graduates affirms and extends the literature about what motivates practitioners to stay or leave the public child welfare system. It also adds to the research from states such as California, New York, Kansas, Louisiana, and Texas who have examined their university-agency-community partnerships (Brown, Chavkin, & Peterson, 2002; Fox & Burnham, 1997; Gansle & Ellet, 2002; Lawson & Claiborne, 2005; Weaver, Chang, & Gibaja, 2006). More importantly, the

findings add new knowledge about what motivates child welfare practitioners who have received professional development through Title IV-E. Specific interrelated research questions of this study are: (1) what are the primary reasons for staying at CPS? (2) What are the potential reasons for leaving CPS? (3) What are the motivating factors to work at CPS?

### Methodology

#### A. Participants

There were two groups of participants: CPS practitioners who participated in Title IV-E professional development programs, (Title IV-E participants), and CPS practitioners who did not participate in Title IV-E training, (non-Title IV-E participants). In February 2002, the State's CPS Office identified the practitioners who participated in Title IV-E training<sup>1</sup> (n=350) while they were still employed by CPS. These Title IV-E participants then served as the experimental group. A comparison group of non-Title IV-E participants (n=350) was randomly selected using a stratified sampling method by region and units.<sup>2</sup> One purpose of comparing Title IV-E participants with non-Title IV-E participants is to show the possible benefits of using federal dollars in the study of university-agency partnerships for curriculum development in specialized continuing education. Another reason is to provide documentation and accountability about the results of spending federal Title IV-E dollars on continuing education.

#### B. Procedures

Seven hundred "Impact of Training" instruments were sent out via email to the identified 350 Title IV-E (experimental group) and 350 non-Title IV-E (comparison group) CPS practitioners. The participants were asked to complete

and send back the instrument via email to the CPS headquarters. One hundred and thirty nine (139) members of the experimental group (Title IV-E) and 87 non-Title IV-E participants returned the instrument. The data were transformed to an SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Services) file by the State's CPS office and the SPSS file was sent to the Title IV-E evaluator for analyses. In order to protect the identity of the subjects, all names in the data base were removed by the State.

This article discusses the data gathered from the four open-ended questions in the "Impact of Training" instrument. Themes were identified and data were coded based on the grounded theory process of open, axial, and selective coding. Specific data analysis procedures included open coding (identification of themes) and axial coding (coding of data into categories and sub-categories). To improve the rigor of the study, additional reviewers from the Title IV-E Evaluation Committee were utilized to categorize answers. The reviewers' analyses were compared to the researcher's analysis insuring accurate identification of data themes.

#### C. Instrument

An "Impact of Training" instrument was developed by the State's Title IV-E Evaluation Committee in order to assess the impact of Title IV-E training for CPS employees. The "Impact of Training" instrument contains four qualitative components along with the demographic items. The instrument was pilot tested with a group CPS practitioners (n=40) and was found to be reliable and valid.

### Results/Findings

The instrument contained four interrelated open-ended questions to which both Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E participants responded. These questions are:

**A. What are the primary reasons that you stay at CPS?**

**B. What are some of the reasons you would**

---

<sup>1</sup>The non-Title IV-E participants were stratified by CPS *unit*.

<sup>2</sup> Title IV-E participants had attended Title IV-E programs offered at exactly 12 universities in the State.

leave CPS?

**C. What motivates you to work at CPS?**

**D. Please feel free to make any additional comments.**

**A. Primary Reasons for Staying at CPS: Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E**

***Title IV-E Participants***

The one hundred and thirty-nine Title IV-E participants identified a variety of reasons for staying at CPS. These included employment benefits, intrapersonal benefits, interpersonal benefits, and commitment to both the community and their contractual agreement.

**Employment benefits.** A total of 73 responses related to employment benefits. The elements of employment benefits mentioned most often were job flexibility (n=26), health benefits (n=19), challenge of the job (n=15), pay/salary (n=13).

**Intrapersonal benefits.** Sixty-eight responses related to intrapersonal benefits. These included personal satisfaction with the work (n=32), belief that one is making a difference (n=25), and belief in the CPS mission (n=11). Participants described personal satisfaction in more detail with comments such as “I enjoy the job,” and “I enjoy the work I perform.” Others shared the importance of believing one is making a difference: “I believe I’m making a positive difference” and “Making a difference in the lives of children and families keeps me here.” The importance of belief in the agency mission is reflected in the following: “CPS’ mission is important” and “I value what CPS represents.”

**Interpersonal benefits.** There were 57 responses on interpersonal benefits including enjoyment of working with co-workers/supervisors (n=32) and enjoyment of working with children and families (n=25). Detailed feedback includes comments on working with co-workers/supervisors, such as “I have great supervisors,” “I have a wonderful unit and feel we are a team,” and “The working relationships I have with my

peers.” Comments on working with children and families included: “I enjoy working with children,” and “I enjoy interacting with parents and children.”

**Commitment.** Finally, 49 responses indicated commitment as a reason for staying with CPS. Helping and protecting children and helping families (n=37), and fulfilling payback requirement (n=12) were central themes. Participants elaborated, “I have a passion to help children,” “Helping kids is my mission in life,” and “I feel that protecting children is essential.”

***Non-Title IV-E Participants***

The eighty-seven (87) non-Title IV-E participants described a variety of reasons for staying at CPS related to employment benefits, intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, and commitment as well as satisfaction in helping.

**Employment Benefits.** In terms of employment benefits, sixty-nine (69) responses included flexibility (n=27), enjoyment of the job (n=19), health benefits (n=13), job challenge/excitement (n=10). Examples of elaborative comments on enjoyment of the job included, “I remain at CPS because I love the work.” Job challenge/excitement elaboration: “Working with CPS has been challenging,” “My job is exciting,” and “I love the challenging work.”

**Intrapersonal Benefits.** Thirty-seven responses related to intrapersonal benefits. They included satisfaction in helping (n=22) as a reason to stay. Explanatory comments include “Enjoyment of helping children,” and “I love helping children and their families.” Respondents described purpose/meaning in life (n=13) as why they stay, noting “I am devoted to the philosophy of helping,” I see this as a “Spiritual obligation,” and my work “Makes me feel worthwhile.” They also described a sense of role mastery (n=5), “I do a good job” and “I’m good at what I do.”

**Interpersonal Benefits.** These 32 responses included interacting with families and children (n=21) and co-workers/supervisors (n=11). Feed-

## Retention

**Table 1. Reasons to Stay**

	Title IV-E (n= 139)	Non-Title IV-E (n= 87)
Employment Benefits	73 (53%)	69 (79%)
Intrapersonal	68 (49%)	37 (43%)
Interpersonal	57 (41%)	32 (37%)
Commitment	49 (35%)	10 (11%)

back included, “I enjoy working with children and families” and “My co-workers are amazing.”

**Commitment.** A small proportion of the non-Title IV-E respondents (n=10) reported a commitment to the role of CPS protecting children as a reason for staying at CPS. For example, “I stay to do my best to protect the children.”

### *Similarities and Differences about Staying: Discussion*

**Similarities.** Both groups of respondents demonstrated several similarities in responses about staying at CPS. Both groups appear to appreciate many of the same employment benefits including health benefits, challenge, and the enjoyment of working at CPS. Both groups choose to stay with CPS because of intrapersonal satisfaction in knowing that they are making a difference and helping children. They valued the same interpersonal benefits, including satisfaction with co-workers/supervisors.

**Differences.** As Table 1 indicates, the qualitative data suggest that a larger proportion of Title IV-E participants stay to fulfill a commitment to the agency and to clients than do non-Title IV-E participants. Forty-nine out of 139 or 35% of Title IV-E respondents identified commitment as a reason for staying while fewer than 10 or 11% of the 87 respondents in the non-Title IV-E group did.

### **B. Potential Reasons for Leaving CPS: Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E**

#### *Title IV-E Participants*

Title IV-E participants (n=139) responded with a wide variety of reasons for leaving CPS, including agency-related and personal ones. Only 28 responses could be classified as personal reasons for leaving. As the data clearly indicate, these participants would leave CPS primarily because of agency-related factors, including insufficient salary (n=61), workload/caseload (n=54), lack of advancement opportunities (n=21), poor work environment (n=19), and low quality supervisor/management (n=13). Clearly, salary and workload were the two most important factors.

**Salary and Workload.** Participant elaboration on salary that was particularly noteworthy includes the following: “Salary does not match level of education,” “I have not been compensated for earning my MSW,” and “The fact that furthering my education does not mean more money.”

The three other agency-related categories shed light on discontent at working at CPS. **Advancement Opportunities.** Comment related to advancement opportunities included: “Lack of CPS advancement opportunity” and “Get another job to advance in the field.” **Work Environment.** Elaboration on poor work environment included: “Morale of office,” “Untrained staff,” “Negativity

**Table 2. Reasons to Leave**

	Title IV-E (n= 139)	Non-Title IV-E (n= 87)
Insufficient Salary	61 (44%)	59 (68%)
Workload	54 (39%)	16 (18%)
Lack of Advancement	21 (15%)	11 (13%)
Poor Work Environment	19 (14%)	7 (8%)
Lack of Supervision	13 (9%)	8 (9%)
Burnout/Stress	0 (0%)	20 (23%)

in office,” and “Physical danger, actually being attacked by a client.” **Supervision/Management.** Respondents elaborated on issues involving supervision and management: “Being treated unfairly by supervisor,” “Lack of supervisory support,” “I feel like no one is listening to our problems when they are addressed,” “I feel like I am not treated as a valued employee,” and “I feel I get no recognition for the work that I do.”

**Non-Title IV-E Participants**

The 87 non-Title IV-E respondents described a variety of reasons for leaving CPS related both to the agency and to personal considerations. Only two areas elicited numerous responses --salary and work environment.

**Salary.** Fifty-nine responses related to insufficient salary. Insufficient salary (n=47) was coupled with unfair compensation for length of employment (n=12). Participants elaborated on their discontent with salary. For example, they cited “Lack of regular pay increase,” “Unfair compensation for length of employment,” and “No promotion.”

**Work Environment.** Sixty-four responses were identified as related to the work environ-

ment: burnout/stress (n=20); high caseload/workload (n=16); lack of advancement opportunities (n=11); feeling devalued (n=10); lack of supervisor/manager support (n=8); poor work environment (n=7). Elaborative comments on the work environment included the following: “Negative work attitude in office,” “Adding and shifting responsibilities,” “Policies and practice at CPS are constantly changing,” “Unappreciated by ‘higher-ups,’” “Disrespected by clientele,” “Management does not have time to give positive reinforcements,” and “Lack of promotion for tenured folk... more emphasis on hiring new ones.”

**Similarities and Differences about Leaving: Discussion**

**Similarities.** As Table 2 shows, both groups had many similar reasons for leaving. Both groups noted the primary reason for leaving CPS was inadequate salary followed by workload. The lack of advancement opportunities was also a very important reason to consider leaving CPS. Individuals in both groups would leave CPS in order to further professional development, and both groups had issues with the work environment and lack of supervision.

**Differences.** Although salary is overwhelmingly the primary reason to leave CPS, for both groups, there is a strong difference between groups related to salary. The Title IV-E group valued compensation in terms of education level, and the non-Title IV-E group valued compensation in terms of length of employment at CPS. These two groups differed in their views of which staff quality is to be rewarded at CPS: education or experience. Fifty-four, about 40% of the Title IV-E participants, listed workload/caseload as the second most important reason to leave, and only 18% (16) of non-Title IV-E participants mentioned this as a reason. On the other hand, approximately 23% (20) non-Title IV-E participants gave burnout as a reason to consider leaving while few if any Title IV-E participants did.

**C. Motivating Factors to Work at CPS: Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E**

***Title IV-E Participants***

Title IV-E participants described a variety of factors that motivate them to stay at CPS including intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, commitment, practice/employment benefits, and professional growth opportunities. Intrapersonal and interpersonal rewards and commitment emerged as the primary motivating factors.

**Intrapersonal.** Title IV-E participants (a total of 130) gave 73 responses classified as intrapersonal: the belief that one is making a difference (n=25), enjoying work (n=22), role mastery/

competency (n=10), belief in CPS mission (n=8), and compatibility with personal values (n=8). Elaborative comments include the following: role mastery, “I am confident about my performance,” compatibility with personal values, “This work is my mission.”

**Interpersonal.** Sixty-five (65) responses related to interpersonal factors included relationships with co-workers/supervisors (n=35), and working with the clients (n=32). Respondents provided detailed feedback only on working with clients, saying, “The children motivate me,” and “I like working with children and families.”

**Commitment.** Forty-six of Title IV-E participants are motivated by commitment to professional and by stipend obligations as well as commitment to clients. Respondents described that they were committed to helping others (n=26), protecting children (n=16), and paying back the IV-E stipend (n=4). Elaboration includes comments such as “Desire to help children and families,” “Enabling children and families to improve their lives,” “Protecting the unprotected,” and “My dedication to protecting children from abuse.”

***Non-Title IV-E Participants***

Non-Title IV-E respondents described a variety of factors that motivate them to stay at CPS related to intrapersonal and interpersonal factors, commitment, employment rewards, practice opportunities and professional growth. Non-Title IV

**Table 3. Motivating Factors**

	Title IV-E (n= 139)	Non-Title IV-E (n= 87)
Intrapersonal	73 (53%)	31 (36%)
Interpersonal	65 (47%)	29 (33%)
Commitment	46 (33%)	35 (40%)



-E participants are primarily motivated by both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors.

**Intrapersonal.** Thirty-one (31) participants out of eight-seven (87) described the belief that one is making a difference (n=14), enjoying work (n=10), role mastery or competency (n=5), belief in CPS mission (n=1), and religion (n=1) are motivating factors. Respondents give detailed information: “Knowing that I am making a difference,” “I like what I do,” “Truly enjoy the work,” “It’s still fun,” “Ability to deal with subject I know about,” “I am comfortable in knowing what I’m doing,” and “God motivates me.”

**Interpersonal.** Twenty-nine responses are classified as intrapersonal motivators. They include relationships with clients (n=17) and with co-workers/supervisors (n=12). Respondents provided detailed comments only on working with clients. “I enjoy working with the kids on my caseload” and “I enjoy working with different clients in their homes.”

**Commitment.** Thirty-five non-Title IV-E participants are also motivated by commitment. Their responses include: commitment to helping clients (n=18) and to protecting children (n=17). They had comments on helping others: “Helping out families in need,” “I like being able to help children and their families,” “Protecting the unprotected,” and “Saving and protecting innocent children.”

#### ***Similarities and Differences about Motivating Factors: Discussion***

**Similarities.** The qualitative data suggest the vast majority of participants from both groups are motivated to work at CPS primarily because of intrapersonal and interpersonal reasons and commitment to clients. It is noteworthy that most of the intrapersonal and interpersonal reasons in both groups are highly associated with providing competent service to clients and appreciating working relationships with clients and co-workers. Making a difference is the most important intrapersonal reason for both groups.

**Differences.** As Table 3 illustrates, the Title IV-E participants’ intrapersonal responses (53%) and interpersonal (47%) motivators outnumber commitment (33%) while the three motivators for the non-Title IV-E participants are almost evenly divided with intrapersonal at 36%, interpersonal at 33%, and commitment at 40%.

#### **D. Additional Comments: Title IV-E and Non-Title IV-E**

##### ***Title IV-E Participants***

Title IV-E respondents were given the opportunity to comment on other topics that would contribute to the knowledge gained by this evaluation. Title IV-E respondents commented on Title IV-E stipends (n=11), job satisfaction (n=7), job level/compensation (n=6), administration (n=4), workload (n=3), and work environment (n=3). Generally, the comments supported data gathered by the other three questions. It is noteworthy that a number (11) of Title IV-E participants explicitly addressed the receipt of the stipends for the first time in this section. Participants’ comments on them include, “I appreciate the stipend,” “Stipend should be available to rural staff,” and “I’ll leave CPS after repayment of stipend.”

##### ***Non-Title IV-E Participants***

Non-Title IV-E respondents were also given the opportunity to comment. They remarked on a number of areas, including power politics of CPS (n=8), compensation (n=6), workload (n=4), and practice (n=4). These remarks generally supported data revealed by answers to the other questions. They were concerned about power politics in two areas: feeling devalued and decision-making at CPS. In terms of feeling devalued, respondents stated, “Caseworkers receive no support” and “I do not feel that caseworkers are valued at all.” Similarly, respondents described the decision-making process in this way: “This agency is way too top heavy” and “We have to second-guess what is and isn’t policy... we are told to do what our supervisor requests, even if it

overrides agency policy.”

### ***Additional Comments: Discussion***

Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E groups had similarities and differences in their additional comments. Most noteworthy is that both groups identified the heavy workload as a problem. In addition to reflecting on the heavy workload, comments indicated that salaries are insufficient, and recognized other professions that could offer better salaries. The Title IV-E group thinks their professional education is devalued in the hiring process and in the workplace, and the non-Title IV-E feel devalued in decision making in the workplace.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although the impact of Title IV-E professional development requires further examination, data in this study support earlier research findings on retention. For instance, the qualitative data suggest that low salaries, high caseloads, insufficient support from supervisors, and the lack of advancement opportunities are important reasons practitioners leave CPS employment.

Also, the study adds new knowledge about why practitioners stay and what motivates them to work for CPS. Both groups highly appreciate many of the same employment perks, including health benefits, challenging work, and job flexibility. Both groups identify various intrapersonal benefits of CPS as important reasons to work for and to stay at the agency, especially being able to make a difference and dedication to the mission. Interpersonal factors, especially the satisfaction of working with a team of colleagues and with clients, aid in retention. Commitment to clients, to helping families, to protecting children, and generally to the mission of CPS keeps practitioners in their demanding and challenging jobs.

Several limitations of this study should be carefully considered when interpreting the results and planning future research on the impact of Title IV-E programs on retention. Low response

rate, especially of non-Title IV-E group, lack of uniformity across programs, and time since graduation may impede the external validity of the results outside of the specific groups. Out of 700 surveys disseminated, 226 were returned, for an overall response rate of 32.3%. The Title IV-E group returned 139 while the non-Title IV-E group returned 87, response rates of 39.3% and 24.9% respectively. Sampling errors may exist, as only 700 subjects were randomly selected from the CPS employee pool. In addition, differences exist across schools regarding how the University Title IV-E programs are administered and implemented. Similarly, the length of stipend provision varies between the Title IV-E schools. Also, many participants in the study were new graduates of the Title IV-E programs, so that the impacts of professional development might not be recognized until they have been in the field for several years.

The Title IV-E group and the non-Title IV-E group in this study are very similar in their responses, yet there are some differences that suggest guidelines for retention strategies and for further research related to retention of Title IV-E practitioners.

**Reasons for Staying.** A larger proportion of Title IV-E participants stay to fulfill a commitment to the agency and to clients than do non-Title IV-E participants. This finding has important implications for recruiting new employees through the Title IV-E program and encouraging current practitioners to participate in the Title IV-E program.

**Reasons for Leaving.** There is a strong difference between groups in regard to salary. The Title IV-E group valued compensation in terms of education level, and the non-Title IV-E group valued compensation in terms of length of employment at CPS. If agencies want to keep BSW/MSW educated social workers, they will need to build salary compensation related to education level.

Fifty-four (39%) of the Title IV-E participants

listed unreasonable workload/case load as the second most important reason to leave and only 16 (18%) of non-Title IV-E participants mentioned this as a reason. Approximately 23% (20) non-Title IV-E participants gave burnout as a reason to consider leaving while few if any Title IV-E participants did. Even though these responses are different both suggest heavy workload and burnout are appropriate targets for retention efforts for all child welfare practitioners.

The authors recommend that the same cohort be studied again so that the long-term impact of Title IV-E training can be confirmed or modified. Furthermore, future research studies should also include Title IV-E supervisors regarding their experiences with Title IV-E programs.

Perry (2006) and Barth and colleagues (2008) strongly suggest we need more studies on Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E child welfare practitioners. Using federal Title IV-E dollars appears to be making a difference in the attitudes and behaviors of the child welfare workforce. Of particular importance, according to Chavkin and Lee (2007), is the need for more measures that capture data on changes in behaviors and skills. Multiple methods and sources can help identify some of these changes in behaviors and skills in both CPS practitioners and their clients. This study is only a first step in describing some of the benefits of using federal money for specialized professional development training that uses university-agency partnerships. More studies are needed.

#### References

- Barth, R. P., Lloyd, E. C., Christ, S. L., Chapman, M. V., & Dickinson, N. S. (2008). Child welfare worker characteristics and job satisfaction: A national study. *Social Work, 28* (3), 199-220.
- Briar-Lawson, K., Schmid, D., & Harris, N. (1997). The partnership journey: First decade. *Public Welfare, 55*(2), 4-8.
- Brown, K., Chavkin, N., & Peterson, V. (2002). Tracking process and outcome results of the BSW students' preparation for public child welfare practice: Lessons learned. *Journal of Health and Social Policy, 15* (3/4), 105-116.
- Cahalane, H., & Sites, E. (2004). Is it hot or cold? The climate of child welfare employee retention. Unpublished manuscript. The University of Pittsburgh.
- Chavkin, N. F., & Lee, A. (2007). A national survey of Title IV-E evaluations: Lessons learned and recommendations for the future. *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education, 10*(2), 36-46.
- Dickinson, N., & Perry, R. (2002). Factors influencing the retention of the specially educated public child welfare workers. *Journal of Health and Social Policy, 15*(3/4), 89-103.
- Fox, S., & Burnham, D. (1997). Reengineering the child welfare training and professional development system in Kentucky. *Public Welfare, 55*(2), 9-14.
- Gansle, K., & Ellet, A. (2002). Child welfare knowledge transmission, practitioner, retention, and university-community impact: A study of the Title IV-E child welfare training. *Journal of Health and Social Policy, 15*(3/4), 69-88.
- Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research. (2005). Retention in child welfare: A review of research-executive summary. Washington, DC: Author.
- Jones, L. (2002). A follow-up of a Title IVE Program's graduates retention rates in a public child welfare agency. *Journal of Health and Social Policy, 15*(3/4), 39-52.
- Lawson, H., & Claiborne, N. (2005). *Retention planning to reduce workforce turnover in New York State's public child welfare systems*. New York: New York State Office of Child and Family Services.
- Lewandowski, C. (1998). Retention outcomes of a public child welfare long-term training program. *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education, 1*(2), 38-46.

## Retention

---

- Perry, R. E. (2006). Do social workers make better child welfare workers than non-social workers? *Research on Social Work Practice, 16*(4), 392-405.
- Rosenthal, J., & Waters, E. (2004). Predictors of child welfare worker retention and performance: Focus on Title IVE-funded social work education. *Journal of Social Services Research, 32*(3), 67-84.
- Scannapieco, M., & Connell-Carrick, K. (2003). Do collaborations with schools of social work make a difference for the field of child welfare? Practice, retention, and curriculum. *Journal of Behavior in the Social Environment, 7*(1/2), 35-51.
- United States Children's Bureau. (2006). *Child welfare workforce development and workforce enhancement institute: Knowledge development and application*. Meeting report. Washington, DC: Author.
- United States General Accounting Office. (2003). *HHS could play a greater role in helping child welfare agencies recruit and retain staff*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Weaver, D., Chang, J., & Gibaja, M. (2006). *The retention of public child welfare workers*. Berkeley, CA: California Social Work Education Center.
- Zlotnik, J. (2003). The use of Title IV-E training funds for social work education: An historical perspective. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 7*(1/2), 5-20.
- Zlotnik, J., DePanfilis, D., Daining, C., & Lane, M. (2005). *Factors influencing retention of child welfare staff: A systematic review of research*. Washington, DC: Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research.