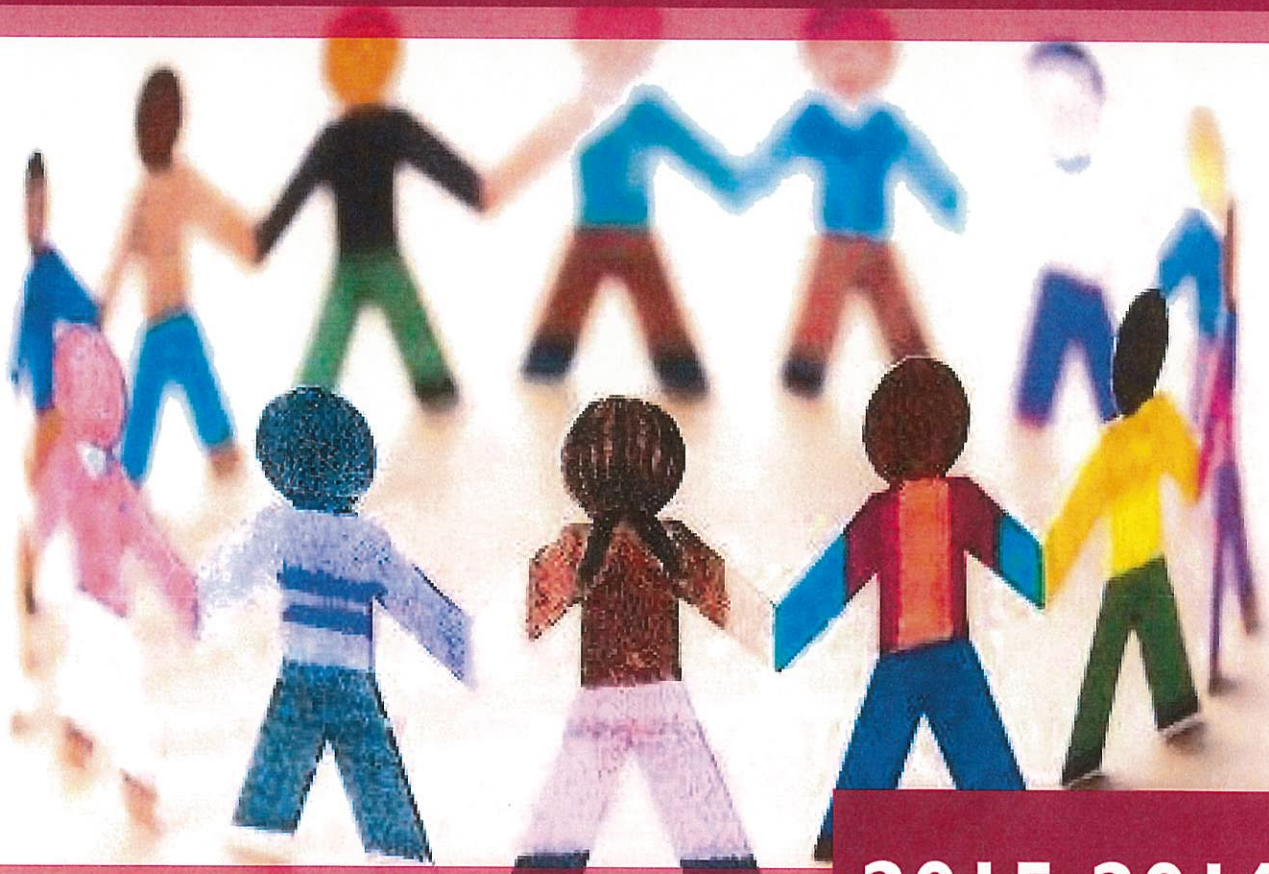


NJ DCF WORKFORCE REPORT:

*A Commitment to Child Welfare Excellence through
Comprehensive Workforce & Leadership Development*



2015-2016



RUTGERS

School of Social Work

Full study can be provided. Contact Rep. Gava's office.

NJ DCF WORKFORCE CAPACITY & ACHIEVEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

According to the *Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance on Workforce* (2010), workforce development should be a child welfare agency priority because:

- A well-trained, highly skilled, well-resourced, and appropriately deployed workforce is foundational to a child welfare agency's ability to achieve best outcomes for the vulnerable children, youth, and families.
- The workforce is the agency's public face to the children, youth, and families it serves. Additionally, the actions of the workforce are what stakeholders use most to judge an agency's competence and effectiveness.
- The workforce is both the most important and most expensive resource in which child welfare agencies must invest to achieve their goals and objectives.
- Studies have established a causal relationship between a capable child welfare agency workforce and positive case outcomes. This includes the influence of workforce capacity on placement stability, maltreatment recurrence, reunification, and foster care and permanency outcomes.
- When a workforce possesses adequate attributes, skills, knowledge, abilities, and resources, the agency will be better positioned to engage clients and improve client outcomes through the services they provide.
- When a clear understanding of what goes into building a strong and vibrant workforce is present, management will be able to use resources more effectively and efficiently.
- When a workforce has credibility in the community, it will be able to engage the resources of other agencies to provide service that the agency is unable to provide.

For these reasons, NJ DCF has made workforce development an agency priority and has realized a number of significant outcomes as a result (Munson, 2015). The performance indicators and achievements in ten (10) different categories are provided in the sub-sections that follow.

A STABLE & CONSISTENT WORKFORCE

One of the most important indicators of an effective child welfare agency is the stability and consistency of frontline staff, which is captured by vacancy and turnover rates. *Vacancies* refer to the number of appropriated full-time equivalent (FTE) positions that are unfilled, while *turnover* reflects how often staff leave an organization.

Vacancy rates are a good reflection of agency effectiveness with marketing and recruitment efforts. Higher vacancy rates may reflect an organization's problems connecting with appropriate applicant pools or indicate that prospective applicants do not find available positions all that attractive.³

Low vacancy rates are required for effective child welfare practice—unfilled positions mean that cases are left uncovered or covered by multiple staff unfamiliar with the family, negatively impacting engagement and relationship-building with children and families (Faller, Masternak, Grinnell-Davis, Grabarek, Sieffert, & Bernatovicz, 2009; Graef & Potter, 2002; Wagner, Johnson, & Healy, 2009). One national study found an average vacancy rate of nearly 10%, with agencies taking between 7 to 13 weeks to fill vacant positions (APHSA, 2005). In some areas, documented vacancy rates have been as high as 31% (NC Office of State Personnel, 2004).

By contrast, as Table 3 highlights, NJ DCF has very few open, unfilled positions: *vacancy rates are less than 3%* in all categories of its child welfare staff and supervisors. While the vacancy rate increased slightly this year—from 1.27% in 2015 to 2.34% in 2016—this modest increase was due to the fact that an additional 82 new positions were added during the year (the total number of positions grew from 4098 to 4180). Once these newly added positions have been filled, it is anticipated that the rate will return to below 2%.

TABLE 3: VACANCY RATE (as of June 2016)				
Position Title	Total Positions	Current Employees	Approved to Fill Vacancies	Vacancy Rate
Family Service Specialist Trainee	305	302	3	0.98%
Family Service Specialist 2	2159	2108	51	2.36%
Family Service Specialist I	766	740	26	3.39%
Supervising Family Service Specialist 2	659	648	11	1.67%
County Services Specialist	85	82	3	3.53%
Supervising Family Service Specialist I	206	202	4	1.94%
TOTAL/AVERAGE	4180	4082	98	2.34%

Turnover has been found to have a negative impact on organizational health and functioning: when caseworkers leave, the workloads of remaining staff increase and morale declines, which in turn leads to another cycle of turnover and more cases being left uncovered or covered by

³ NJ DCF does not have this issue, as the agency receives more than 10,000 resumes per year.

multiple staff or staff unfamiliar to the family (Faller, Masternak, Grinnell-Davis, Grabarek, Sieffert, & Bernatovicz, 2009; Graef & Potter, 2002; McKenzie, McKenzie, & Jackson, 2007; Wagner, Johnson, & Healy, 2009). Staff turnover also has a negative impact on services and has been found to be related to increased placement disruptions, length of time in out-of-home care, maltreatment recurrence, and re-entry into foster care (Flower, McDonald, & Sumski, 2005; National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2006; Strolin, McCarthy, & Caringi, 2007; Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar, & Trinkle, 2009; U.S. GAO, 2003). For example, one study found that agencies with a 9% turnover rate had a 6.1% rate of children who experienced re-abuse, while agencies with a 23.4% rate of turnover had a 14.9% rate of re-abuse (NCCD, 2006). In another study, youth with only one caseworker in a given year had a 74.5% chance of achieving permanency, while youth with two caseworkers had a 17.5% chance of permanency, and youth with more than three caseworkers had only a 1% chance of permanency (Flower et al., 2005).

Staff turnover impacts an agency's budget, costing 45% to 115% of an employee's annual salary (CPS Human Resources, 2006). A 2014 Texas study by the Sunset Advisory Commission estimated that the cost to the State of each caseworker leaving the child welfare agency was approximately \$54,000, given the expenses of recruiting, screening, selecting, training, and onboarding new staff. Studies indicate that average turnover rates for public child welfare/protection agencies range from 20% to 40% (NCWWI, 2011). Across all industries, turnover rates that fall below 10-15% are typically considered "healthy" or "optimal" (Gallant, 2013). By comparison, even as DCF has expanded the size of its caseload-carrying workforce (CLC), *it has reduced its turnover rate by more than half over the last ten years, and between CY2014 and CY2015, the rate dropped an additional .23%:*

TABLE 4: CASELOAD-CARRYING STAFF TURNOVER (CY2015) ¹											
Indicator	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Total CLC Staff⁵	2559	2545	2511	2590	2495	2494	2449	2513	2498	2401	2155
Average CLC Staff	2552	2528	2550.5	2542.5	2494.5	2471.5	2481	2505.5	2449.5	2278	2038
CLC Growth	.55%	1.35%	-3.05%	3.81%	0.04%	1.84%	-2.55%	0.60%	4.04%	11.42%	12.18%
Total CLC Separations⁶	178	183	195	192	175	158	130	194	254	235	299
Turnover Rate	6.97%	7.2%	7.7%	7.6%	7.0%	6.4%	5.2%	7.7%	10.4%	10.3%	14.7%

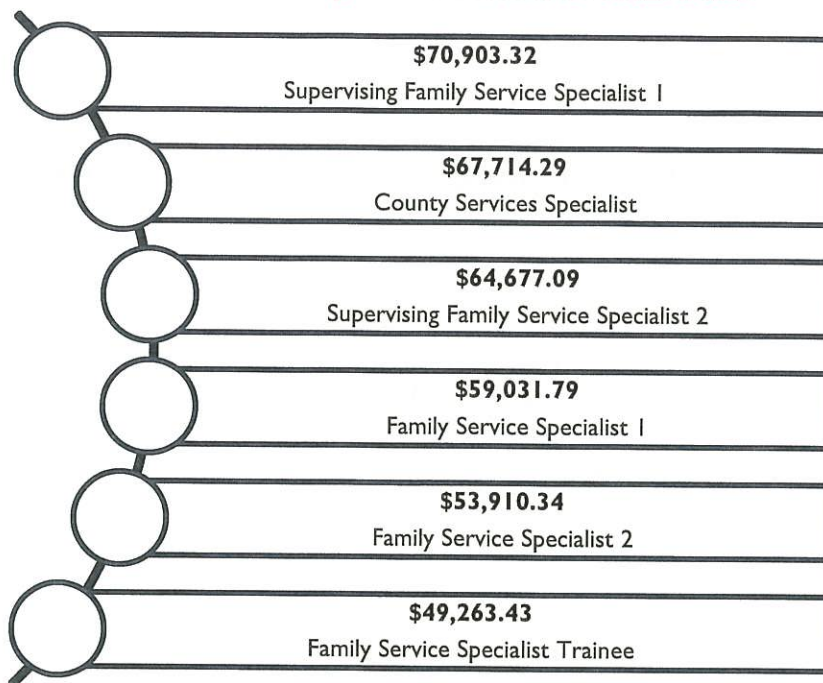
Figure 1 highlights that DCF's turnover rate continues to remain well below the national average and reflects national benchmarks of a stable, consistent workforce:

⁴ Turnover is defined as separation from DCF and does not include internal promotions or position changes.

⁵ Data from December 2015 "Workload by Worker Type" report (NJ SPIRIT) by NJ DCF Office of Human Resources

⁶ Data from NJ Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) by NJ DCF Office of Human Resources

FIGURE 3: NJ DCF STARTING SALARIES



A WELL-SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

Large caseloads and excessive workloads pose challenges for child welfare staff to effectively serve children and families. The average caseload for frontline/caseload-carrying staff in many agencies often exceeds recommended levels, sometimes by double or more (NCWWI, 2011). Heavy caseloads can negatively impact essential child welfare/protection processes, such as visitation, relationship building, family engagement, and permanency planning (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016). Because these core case management and clinical processes are time intensive, it is critical that caseloads are kept low so that staff can devote adequate energy and attention to them. NJ DCF performance in this area is high, as *all permanency caseworkers (100%) and more than nine out of ten intake and adoption caseworkers (93-94%) have caseloads that meet standards as well:*

TABLE 7: CASELOADS					
CLC Staff	Aligned with CWLA & Other National Standards	NJ DCF Exit & Sustainability Plan Benchmark	Caseloads meeting standard (as of June 2014)	Caseloads meeting standard (as of June 2015)	Caseloads meeting standard (as of June 2016)
Intake	No more than 12 open cases and no more than 8 new case assignments per month	90% target	85%	89%	93%
Permanency	No more than 15 families and no more than 10 children in out-of-home care	95% target	96%	99%	100%
Adoption	No more than 15 children	95% target	83%	90%	94%

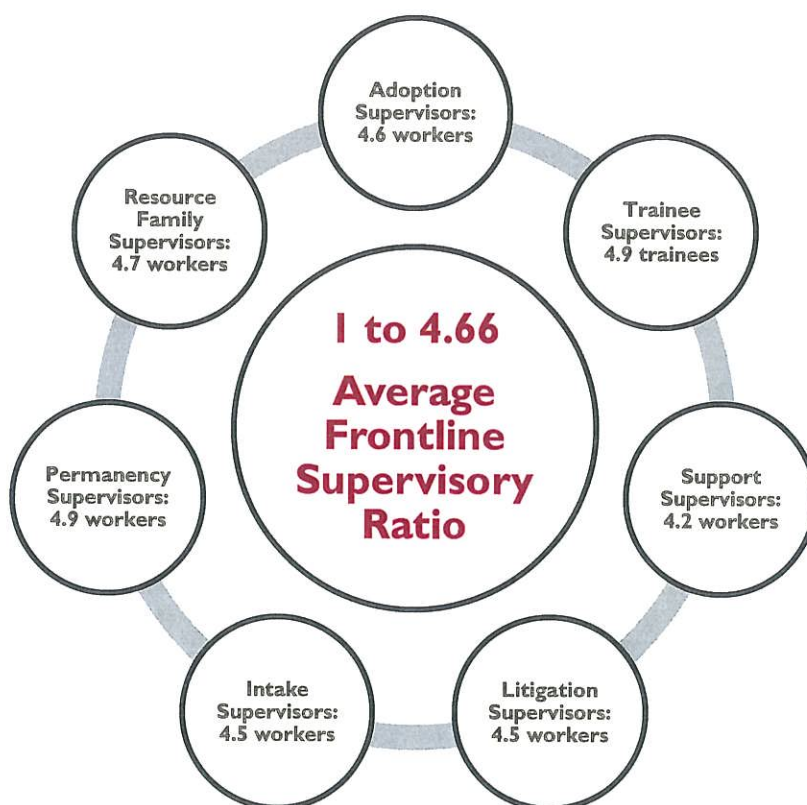
A WELL-SUPERVISED WORKFORCE

Frontline supervisors play a critical role in child welfare organizations as facilitators of effective service delivery, employee functioning, and staff retention (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Hess, Kanak, & Atkins, 2009). According to a meta-analysis of more than 10,000 supervisory studies across a variety of disciplines, when supervisors provide tangible, work-related advice and instruction and have high-quality interpersonal interactions with staff, staff experience improved levels of well-being, a sense of competence, agency commitment, and job satisfaction (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun, & Xie, 2009).

Supervisory ratios—the number of staff assigned to a single supervisor—reflect an organization’s commitment to high-quality practice and providing the resources needed to support the supervisor-staff relationship and workforce well-being. The Child Welfare League of America’s standards articulate a benchmark ratio of one supervisor for every five frontline staff, although the results of a national survey reflect average ratios of 1:6 (NCWWI, 2011).

As Figure 4 highlights, *NJ DCF supervisors are responsible for an average of 4.66 frontline caseworkers* across all areas, reflecting DCF’s commitment to effective support and oversight of all of its staff on the frontlines.

Figure 4: Number of Caseworkers per Frontline Supervisor
(as of June 2016)



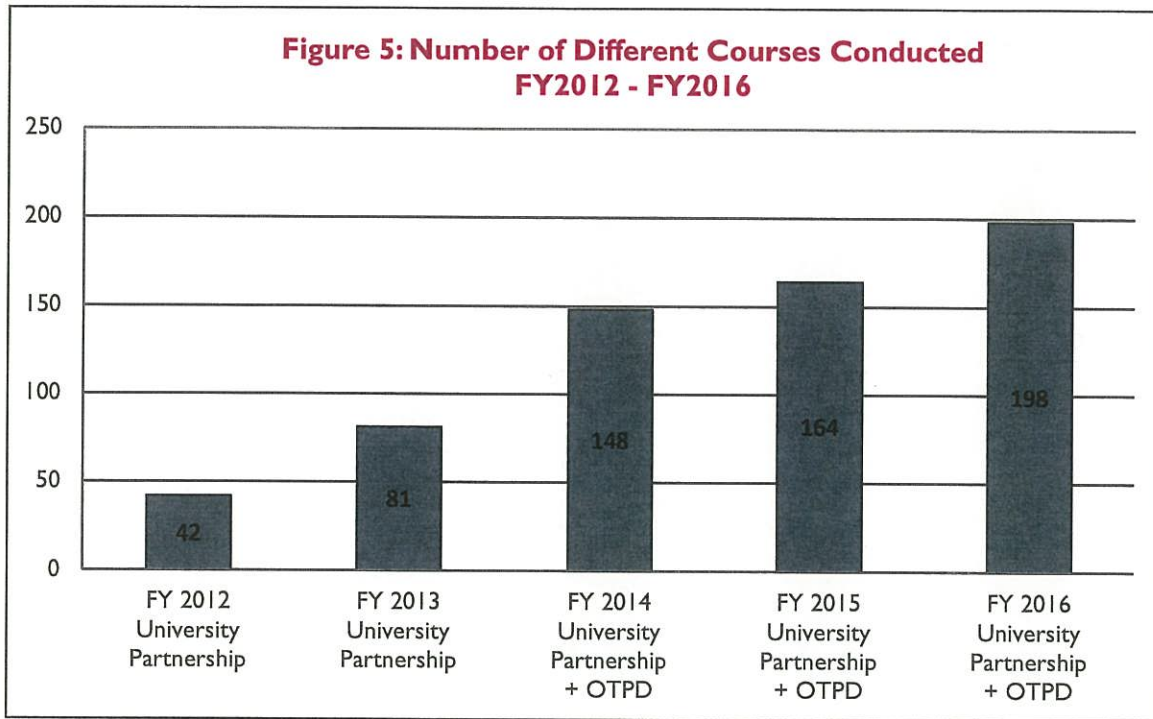
A WELL-TRAINED WORKFORCE

Educational preparation and training are also essential components to building and maintaining an effective child welfare/protection workforce. A robust menu of professional development opportunities ensures that prospective and current staff are provided with a well-organized, systematic training program that communicates a consistent practice model and standards, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs and effectively serve vulnerable children and families (NCWWI, 2015b).

Through the NJ DCF Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD) and its University-agency Child Welfare Training Partnership (NJCWTP, or “The Partnership”), created in 2007 to provide professional development to the NJ DCF workforce, a comprehensive catalog of course offerings and training days is provided annually. As noted in Figure 5 and expanded on in Appendix C, in FY2016, OTPD and the Partnership together provided an extensive menu of professional development to the entire NJ DCF workforce: new worker pre-service, hybrid new worker, mandatory in-service, elective, and Family Preservation classes.

Nearly two hundred (198) unique course titles were delivered in FY2016, representing an increase of a total of 34 courses from the previous fiscal year.¹⁰

Figure 5 below highlights the continued increase of course offerings for NJ DCF:



For CY2015 (January-December 2015), caseload-carrying (CLC) staff and their supervisors (3192) received *nearly a quarter of a million hours of annual training (237,341 hours)*. All (100%, or 3192) of DCF's CLC staff and their supervisors received at least 40 hours of annual training. Overall, they completed an *average of 74.4 hours of training last year*. More than three-fourths (2421, or 76%) completed more than 40 hours, and more than one-fifth (643, or 21%) completed at least double or more hours of training required (80+ hours of training).

¹⁰ See the full Course Catalog at <https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/file/1626/download>

Figure 6: Annual Training for Caseload-Carrying (CLC) Staff & Supervisors



NJ DCF staff continue to report *high levels of satisfaction with the training provided*, with an average overall training satisfaction rating for all trainings of 3.65 out of 4.0, as noted in Table 8:

TABLE 8: TRAINING SATISFACTION¹¹			
Satisfaction Survey Statements	FY2014 Average Satisfaction Score	FY2015 Average Satisfaction Score	FY2016 Average Satisfaction Score
The trainer was able to engage participants.	3.7	3.64	3.7
The trainer demonstrated expertise related to the training topic through her/his knowledge, skills, and practice experience.	3.7	3.62	3.7
The trainer's presentation was clear, concise, and organized, resulting in an effective training.	3.7	3.59	3.6
The trainer was able to answer participants' questions.	3.7	3.59	3.6
The content of the curriculum/training materials provided me with knowledge and skills I will need to meet my responsibilities in this area of work.	3.6	3.53	3.6
The instructional materials (PowerPoint slides, handouts, and participant manual) were helpful in building participants' knowledge and skills in this topic.	3.6	3.52	3.6
The activities (role plays, small group exercises, lectures, and discussions) were helpful to building participants' knowledge and skills in this topic.	3.6	3.48	3.5
The training curriculum provided different instructional activities in a way that will enable participants to use the information with children and families.	3.6	3.48	3.5

¹¹ The scale ranges from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree). A high score signifies higher satisfaction with the training.

TABLE 8: TRAINING SATISFACTION ¹¹			
Satisfaction Survey Statements	FY2014 Average Satisfaction Score	FY2015 Average Satisfaction Score	FY2016 Average Satisfaction Score
Children and families will benefit from knowledge and skills participants gained during this training.	3.7	3.53	3.6
Overall, the training was a useful experience.	3.7	3.53	3.6
AVERAGE OVERALL SCORE	3.7	3.55	3.6

In addition, available data from the most recent pre- and post-test analyses over the last two years demonstrate a *continued increase in knowledge gained, with an average increase in knowledge gain from before and after trainings of 24 percentage points this past year*, noted in Table 9 below:

TABLE 9: KNOWLEDGE GAIN			
Average Scores	FY2013-2014	FY2014-2015	FY2015-2016
Pre-Test	60%	60%	60%
Post-Test	81.75%	82%	84%

A WORKFORCE LED WITH VISION & HEART

Strong, thoughtful leadership enables an organization to identify and operationalize the critical components of workforce development (NCWWI, 2015a). Dynamic, effective leaders create an environment where comprehensive workforce development is taken seriously, using a menu of interconnected strategies that foster an organizational climate and culture that values its staff and their work.

The NJ DCF Commissioner and leadership are committed to being visible and accessible—communicating frequently and with respect to staff, stakeholders, and community partners, and engaging in collaborative decision making at all levels throughout the agency. NJ DCF leadership team members recognize change begins at the top; if they model the core values—respect, empathy, genuineness, and competence—and celebrate successes, through a parallel process, staff will model these values with youth and families and be more likely to invite the family and youth voice.¹²

Ultimately, NJ DCF leadership reflects the foundational elements of effective leadership practice in child welfare: adaptive, collaborative, distributive, inclusive, and outcome-focused (NCWWI, 2010). As a result, NJ DCF leadership has been able to successfully facilitate the implementation

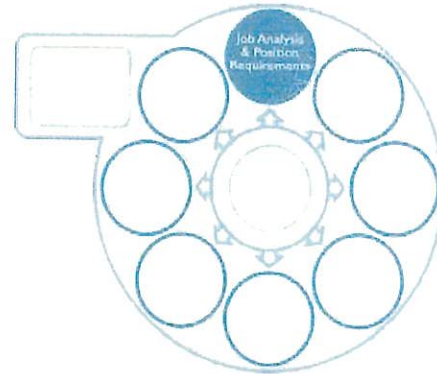
¹² <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/telefiles/061912tele/NJ%20NRCOI%20Webinar%206-19-2012%20Rev.ppt>

JOB ANALYSIS & POSITION REQUIREMENTS

NJ DCF has instituted a variety of key strategies to clearly articulate and recruit for staff with specific competencies.

EMPLOYEE QUALIFICATIONS

NJ DCF provides clear degree requirements and preferences for all positions (see Table 1) and the knowledge and skills sought for each position (see Appendix A). Not only does this streamline the recruitment and screening process, but it also helps employees have a clearer sense of the agency's career ladder and opportunities for promotion.



SPECIALIZATIONS

All positions also can have a bilingual designation or variant added as needed, allowing the agency to do targeted recruitment and incentivize the outreach and selection of potential staff who speak more than one language. NJ DCF also analyzed its workforce and service gaps, which resulted in the addition of a variety of specialized positions designed to support effective casework, such as domestic violence liaisons, case practice liaisons/specialists, youth advocates, LGBTQ-Safe Space liaisons, and others.

CASELOAD STANDARDS & SUPERVISORY RATIOS

NJ DCF set caseload standards to align with national standards, such as the Child Welfare League of America's caseload standards for intake, permanency, and adoption caseworkers. These caseload standards were designed to ensure reasonable workloads (see Table 7) so that staff have the time needed to develop relationships with and provide effective services to children, youth, and families. NJ DCF also used the national standard for effective supervisory ratios to ensure that supervisor to staff ratios across the agency allow supervisors the time to be available and engaged with their staff (see Figure 4).

- Proven mentoring and team-building skills;
- Support and respect of the Local Office Manager and other office staff to ensure the integrity of the Field Training Unit and its functions;
- Understanding of and supportive approach to the mission of NJ DCF DCP&P and the goals of the Child Welfare Reform Plan; and
- Aptitude for and interest in patiently developing and nurturing new caseworkers.

In order to support new caseworkers, Field Training Unit Supervisors:

- Create an atmosphere of a *teaching unit*, support teamwork, and enhance new caseworkers' knowledge of NJ DCF DCP&P policies and procedures;
- Create *learning circles* where new caseworkers are responsible for sharing and participating in the teaching and learning process;
- Convey messages of commitment to the NJ DCF DCP&P mission, policies, and procedures;
- Identify and strengthen the case practice skills of new caseworkers;
- Are available and accessible to all unit members;
- Ensure new caseworkers are afforded opportunities to experience diverse functions, including case assignment types, community contacts, Local Office systems, and personnel interactions;
- Coordinate field days that are relevant to, and complement, OTPD's curriculum;
- *Team new caseworkers with different unit activities* during the training process to ensure clarity regarding office functions and how staff interact;
- Conference each new caseworker's caseload on a weekly basis, or more often if needed; and
- Conduct *joint field visits*.

Gradual Case Assignment

New caseworkers are gradually assigned cases²¹ as ongoing permanency workers and are not placed into child protective investigation positions given the complexity and advanced training needed for those positions.

After completing Module 7—Functional Assessments for Child Well-Being, Safety, and Risk—of the Pre-Service Training program, new caseworkers are assigned one or two cases incrementally (approximately three to four weeks after the Pre-Service Training program begins). The following is the time table for assigning cases to new caseworkers:

²¹ A case is defined as a family.

TABLE 12: SCHEDULE FOR GRADUAL CASE ASSIGNMENT	
Period	Cases
3 1/2 - 4 Weeks to 3 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisor begins to assign one or two cases to new caseworkers only after completion of Module 7 of the Pre-Service Training Supervisor gradually assigns additional cases as appropriate By the end of the third month of employment, new caseworkers may have a total of seven cases
4-6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisor gradually assigns one case per week until new caseworkers receive up to eight additional cases
6 Months & Beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 families per caseworker

Care is taken to ensure that new caseworker caseloads are diverse in population, service needs, and procedural content and reflect different case situations such as a child in out-of-home placement, a multi-issue family (e.g., substance abuse, homelessness, etc.), a child in residential placement, and a case in litigation. New caseworkers may be assigned low- or moderate-risk cases and may not be assigned very high-risk cases at first, such as complex cases of sexual abuse and the most difficult physical abuse cases.

Additional information around the specific structure and supports provided by the *Field Training Unit* can be found in Appendix D, while expectations for the *New Worker Training* process and content can be found in Appendix E.

INCENTIVES & WORK CONDITIONS

NJ DCF offers a number of incentives and resources to support healthy and safe working conditions.

BENEFITS

NJ DCF provides staff with a comprehensive benefits package, along with discounts for movie passes, sporting events, Broadway shows, and other items through the State's Employee Discount Program. The agency is also taking steps to ensure all staff have smart phones and tablets.

