Preventing Early Departures Among the Child Welfare Workforce

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?	Early caseworker departures can have far-reaching consequences for agencies, leaving families feeling uncertain and wasting hiring and training resources. This study looked at workers who departed within six months of hire and those who continued with their employment. Significant factors for early departures included worker characteristics and organizational factors.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The following organizational factors had a greater impact on early departure than worker characteristics:

• Consistency between training content and agency practice
• Transition from preservice training into independent child welfare casework
• Initial caseload size
• Role ambiguity

Each additional family case assignment a worker received in the first week of practice **increased their odds of departure by 10%** (for example, a worker who received 5 more family cases was 50% more likely to depart early).

Workers who experienced inconsistencies between agency practice and training were **nearly five times more likely to leave early.**

Significant worker characteristics of early leavers included:

• More years of work experience
• Having a degree in social work or another human services field
• Less satisfaction with pay and benefits
• Less support from supervisors and coworkers
• Less mentoring

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Better orientation, training, and socialization during the onboarding phase are vital to reducing an organization's turnover. Specifically, the results of this study suggest organizations should:

• Ensure training matches practice in the field
• Provide mentoring
• Offer strong supervisor and coworker support
• Advocate for good pay and benefits
• Keep caseloads to a minimum during first weeks of independent practice