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Caseworker Turnover: Why Do Child Welfare Caseworkers Want to Leave Their Jobs and What Makes Them Stay

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CASEWORKER TURNOVER:
WHY DO CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS WANT TO
LEAVE THEIR JOBS AND WHAT MAKES THEM STAY?

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WHY DO CASEWORKERS WANT TO LEAVE THEIR JOBS

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ABSTRACT

When the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania revised its child protective services law (CPSL) in 2014 in response to highly publicized child abuse incidents, the impact on public child welfare agencies was often negative. The child welfare system faced increased referrals without enough staff to handle the workload and numerous caseworkers began to leave their jobs. Caseworker turnover has a negative impact on children and families because excessive workloads dilutes the quality of services clients receive. Turnover may have lifelong implications for children in the child welfare system, such as delaying family reunifications, adoptions, or other permanency options. Changes in the CPSL increased the number of mandated reporters required to make referrals of suspected abuse, and expanded definitions for injuries defined as child abuse and perpetrators, which increased the number child abuse investigations. With a goal of identifying factors contributing to caseworker turnover, this study examined survey responses from a secondary data sample from 511 child welfare caseworkers in Pennsylvania. Findings indicated that caseworkers want to stay in their jobs because of feelings of personal accomplishment, positive co-worker support, positive client relationships, and positive supervisory support. Reasons to want to leave the job included low salaries, high workloads, and emotional demands. Implications from an ecological systems analysis of the child welfare system suggest that regulations requiring matching county funds may be contributing to wide differences in salaries, a primary reason for turnover. The study recommended that legislative changes are needed to address systemic barriers that influence low salaries and are leading to excessive workloads that increase caseworker turnover.

Key words: caseworker turnover, job retention, child welfare, supervision, management, ecological systems theory, Sandusky

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Outline and Brief Summary of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces a phenomenon that occurred in Pennsylvania (PA) after legislative changes led to a critical caseworker shortage. The scope of the problem that has contributed to caseworker turnover in the PA child welfare system is discussed, including how PA's county-based structure has contributed to caseworker turnover. Chapter 2 includes an examination of relevant empirical literature related to caseworker turnover. The literature review provides information about previous scholarly research that identified factors related to caseworker turnover. An overview of the ecological systems theoretical perspective that provided the conceptual framework for this study is discussed. Research findings related to caseworker turnover within the ecological system levels of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem are identified as factors that impact turnover within the child welfare system. The purpose of this theoretical framework is to analyze the variables studied and examine proposed relationships among those variables based on theory and past research. Chapter 3 describes the methodology utilized in this research study. The research design, questions, data collection, and analysis are explained in detail. In Chapter 4, findings are presented about the reasons caseworkers want to leave their jobs and what makes them want to stay. Chapter 5 provides implications for social work policy and practice, as well as recommendations for further research. A discussion of themes that emerged from the data analysis is also presented, including implications for social work, education, and policy changes that are needed.

CHAPTER 1

Changes to the Child Protective Services Law

This chapter introduces the problem and significance of addressing caseworker turnover in the Pennsylvania (PA) public child welfare system. In response to public pressure following a highly publicized child sex abuse scandal at Pennsylvania State University, PA revised its Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) in 2014. The impact on public child welfare agencies was often negative, as the system faced increased referrals without enough staff to handle the workload. As numerous caseworkers began to leave their jobs, turnover became a problem state-wide. Caseworker turnover takes a strong human toll through the negative impact it has on the lives of children and families. The problems related to turnover will be explored, including the financial costs that deplete scarce human services resources. The ways PA funds child welfare services will also be discussed, as well as the current county-based funding requirements that may be one of the factors that contribute to caseworker turnover. Changes in the law resulted in unintended consequences that impacted the child welfare system. The implications of these changes on social work practice will be discussed.

Background

Caseworker turnover, defined as caseworkers' voluntary resignation from their jobs negatively impacts the public child welfare system in many ways. Besides concerns about having a lack of experienced caseworkers working in child protection services, "an additional burden is placed on those remaining (overloaded) caseworkers, whom less experienced caseworkers seek out for mentorship" (Rochelle & Buonanno, 2018, p. 167). The quality of work suffers for the remaining workers (Strolin et al., 2009), as staffing shortages tax the resources of caseworkers and supervisors who are left struggling to hold the system together by managing the crisis. A

chronic struggle to hire, train, and support caseworkers leads to an unstable child welfare system that is never fully staffed with experienced caseworkers. A continuous cycle of training new caseworkers depletes resources from supervisors and agency management, who lack time to support their existing staff to improve the quality of services. In addition, caseworker turnover may require children to tell their story repeatedly, and can delay the timeliness of reunifying families, placing children for adoption, or other permanency options (Caseworker Retention Workgroup (CRW), 2017).

As a state with over 2,600 caseworkers (Caseworker Retention Workgroup (CRW), 2016), PA could save millions of dollars by reducing turnover, which could then be used to improve services for thousands of children. Estimated costs to train one caseworker vary between $27,487 (Westbrook et al., 2012) and $54,000 (National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, 2015), each time a worker must be replaced. Sending a caseworker through 120 hours of Charting the Course Training that all new caseworkers are mandated to attend costs about $4,500 (DePasquale, 2017), but this amount does not include salaries, travel costs for mileage, hotels, or meals for staff while they attend training. Completing initial pre-service training also takes months to finish, which results in other caseworkers having increased caseloads while they wait for new caseworkers to be trained.

When agencies experience high caseworker turnover, the quality of work suffers from having less experienced caseworkers investigate child abuse referrals and provide ongoing services to abused and neglected children. Experienced caseworkers have stronger attitudes toward preserving families than caseworkers with less experience (Fluke et al., 2016), which may impact whether or not children receive permanency in their lives. Reducing caseworker turnover can improve the services that families receive, ensure that children are safe from abuse

and neglect, and increase permanency and stability for children in the child welfare system

(National Child Welfare Workforce, 2018). Williams and Glisson's (2013) analysis of National

Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II) data, a nationwide survey with a

sample of 20,346 children and 1,544 caseworkers from 73 child welfare agencies, reported that

better child outcomes occurred in organizations with cultures that ensured caseworkers were

competent, focused on the needs of youth, and where there was lower caseworker turnover.

Several studies found investing in caseworker retention strategies can improve outcomes

that enhance youth well-being, while also providing services in a more cost-effective manner

(GAO, 2003; Williams & Glisson, 2013). Edwards and Wildeman's (2018) exploratory

qualitative analysis of secondary data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

(NCANDS) child files from 2003 through 2015 compared worker tenure, worker turnover,

worker caseloads, and workforce capacity for 46 states between the years 2003 and 2015. The

results of this longitudinal study indicated that caseworker turnover led to poor outcomes for

child safety and permanency (Edwards & Wildeman, 2018).

Flower et al. (2005) conducted a systemic review of turnover of private agencies that

provided foster care and safety services for the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare. The study

consisted of interviews with private agency chief executive officers and management staff, state

leaders, judges and staff from juvenile court, University of Milwaukee training partners, and

meetings with workforce recruitment workgroups. Focus groups were held with 57 (26%)

ongoing case managers and 28 (62%) supervisors from eight private agency providers. The study

concluded that high caseworker turnover led to poor youth outcomes. Children entering care

between 2003 and 2004 who had only one caseworker achieved permanency in 74.5% of the

cases. Successful permanency outcomes decreased as the number of caseworkers assigned to a

case increased, ranging from 17.5% for cases with two case managers to 0.1% for children who had six or seven caseworkers. Children with a goal of adoption who had more than one caseworker were 60% less likely to be placed for adoption, compared to children who had one caseworker (Flower et al., 2005).

A Child Abuse Scandal

A push to implement changes in the PA child welfare system was influenced by a 2011 scandal that rocked Pennsylvania State University (PSU). Former PSU football coach Gerald "Jerry" Sandusky was accused of sexually abusing ten young boys between 1994 and 2009, when he served as an assistant football coach and founder of The Second Mile, whose mission was to serve underprivileged children (Kelly, 2013). Sandusky was ultimately indicted on 52 counts of child molestation. The Sandusky case brought national attention to child abuse in Pennsylvania when PSU officials were accused of covering up the abuse. The Sandusky case resulted in a demand to improve the state's child welfare system after it was revealed that PSU officials failed to report suspected child abuse. This impacted not only the university, but also the public child welfare system.

Sandusky was convicted on forty-five charges in 2012 (Jaschick, 2017). The state's legislative response to the Sandusky case resulted in sweeping changes to its child welfare system that were intended to improve the state's ability to protect children, but the changes resulted in a critical shortage of caseworkers. A total of 24 pieces of legislation revised the CPSL, with effective dates from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014 (Joint State Government Commission (JSGC), 2014). An additional bill, Act 15 of 2015, was enacted July 1, 2015, to clarify which criminal history and child abuse clearances were required for employees

and volunteers who work with children (PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW) Child Abuse

Report, 2015).

One of the reasons the Sandusky case led to a push for legislative changes in the CPSL

was because under the previous version of the law, coaches were not considered to be mandated

reporters and universities were not included in the definition of "school" (JSGC, 2014). Under

the previous CPSL, school employees in educational settings were only required to report

suspected abuse to their superiors, not the state's child abuse hotline, ChildLine. Educational

institutions had their own hierarchies that assigned an individual in charge of the school or a

designated agent in the organization the responsibility to contact ChildLine (Kelly, 2013). In the

Sandusky case, the reporting of suspected child abuse fell through the cracks in the hierarchy of

the university system. When an assistant football coach saw a child being sexually molested by

Sandusky in a locker room shower, he reported the incident to his supervisor, but the incident

was never reported to the police or child welfare authorities. Under the previous CPSL mandated

reporter law, PSU's president Graham Spanier was not required to report the alleged abuse to the

police or child welfare authorities (Jaschick, 2017).

CPSL Updates

PA's Expanded Definition for Mandated Reporters

In 2015, as part of a response to a sexual abuse scandal at Pennsylvania State University,

the state of PA implemented legislative changes designed to improve child protection efforts,

that led to a sudden critical shortage of caseworkers. Changes in the CPSL increased the number

of mandated reporters required to make referrals of suspected abuse, changed the definition for

the type of injuries that were defined as child abuse, and increased the number of persons

considered to be a perpetrator of child abuse. The previous Child Protective Services Law,

Chapter 63 was added December 19, 1990 to Public Law 1240 and updated in 1994.

The previous regulations under 55 Pa. Code § 3490.12 required certain professionals to report

suspected child abuse:

> licensed physician, osteopath, medical examiner, coroner, funeral director, dentist,
> optometrist, chiropractor, podiatrist, intern, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse,
> hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of persons,
> Christian Science practitioner, member of the clergy, school administrator, school
> teacher, school nurse, social services worker, day-care center worker or any other child-
> care or foster-care worker, mental health professional, peace officer or law enforcement
> official.

In the previous CPSL, staff members of medical, public, or private institutions, schools,

facilities, or agencies were required to immediately report suspected child abuse to "the person in

charge of the institution, school, facility, or agency, or the designated agent of that person."

Upon notification, the person in charge or their designated agent, assumed the responsibility and

legal obligation to report allegations of child abuse or cause a report to be made. The previous

law only required mandated reporters to report suspected child abuse when acting in a

professional capacity of their employment (Behun et al., 2015).

Under the revised CPSL, an expanded definition of "mandated reporter" (JSGC, 2012)

increased the number of persons required to report suspected abuse to include any professional or

volunteer position where adults have direct contact with children. Mandatory reporters were

expanded to include all school staff, including custodial staff, cafeteria staff, after-school

program staff, volunteer sport coaches, scout leaders and anyone in any employment or volunteer

position where children are present. Under the revised CPSL, all school employees became

legally mandated reporters required to report suspected child abuse by directly contacting

ChildLine, the state's child abuse hotline, themselves. Additionally, all colleges and universities

in PA were included in the expanded definition of "school."

A revision in the language of the new CPSL also lowered the threshold of evidence

required for a report to be mandated, removing a previous requirement for the reporter to have

direct contact with the child suspected of being abused. The new law, Section 6311(a)(2)

clarified that "the child need not come in person before the mandated reporter for a report to be

made" (JSGC, 2012, p. 49). For example, under the previous CPSL, if a mandated reporter heard

about an allegation of abuse secondhand concerning a child they did not know or work with

directly, there was no requirement to report the suspected abuse. Under the new law, persons

who work with children are mandated to report any knowledge of alleged child abuse. Failure to

report may result in being charged with a third-degree felony offense. The expanded definition

for mandated reporters contributed to an overwhelming increase in referrals, which resulted in at

least 22% of calls to ChildLine going unanswered in 2015 (DePasquale, 2016).

New CPSL Definition for Physical Injuries

Another revision in the new CPSL lowered the level of seriousness for a physical injury

to be considered child abuse. The language lowered the threshold for physical abuse from

"serious physical injury" to "bodily injury." Additionally, under the new CPSL, injuries to a

child were no longer required to be intentional to be considered child abuse, as the expanded

definition of child abuse removed the word "non-accidental" (JSGC, 2012, p. 54) from the

definition of an injury. The law's broader definition of child abuse, any incident where "a parent

or caretaker acts or fails to act in a manner that creates a reasonable likelihood of injury" whether

or not an injury actually occurs, may be child abuse (Act 108 of 2013 Amended §6303(b.1) of Title 23, Effective 12/31/14).

New CPSL Definition for Child Abuse Perpetrators

Before the law changed, the child welfare system only investigated and served cases involving allegations of family member abuse. To fall under the jurisdiction of the public child welfare system, perpetrators were required to be a caregiver or household member to meet the "person responsible for the welfare of the child" criterion. To be indicated as a perpetrator under the previous CPSL, incidents had to be "committed by a parent, the parent's paramour, or an individual over the age of fourteen residing in the same home as the child, or a person responsible for the welfare of a child" (JSGC, 2012, p. 54). Part of the philosophy that guided the definition of "perpetrator" at that time was the mission of public child welfare to provide services to stabilize and preserve families whenever possible. Abuse outside of the family setting was considered a criminal offense that was handled by police.

The new CPSL definition of "perpetrator" broadened the scope of responsibility for Pennsylvania's county child welfare agencies to investigate allegations of abuse that had previously been the responsibility of law enforcement. Act 117 of 2013 amended the CPSL definition to:

> spouse and former spouse of parent, former paramours, extended family not living in the home (persons related to the child within the fifth degree of consanguinity or affinity) and persons over the age of 14 years who are present in the child's residence at the time the abuse occurred.

Visitors to the child's residence were added to "ensure that children feel safe in their homes at all times" (JSGC, 2012, p. 54), with residence being defined as extending beyond the

child's home to "include the curtilage—the outbuildings and common areas associated with the

real property of the home" (JSGC, 2012, p. 54). The law further expanded the number of

possible perpetrators under child welfare mandates to include any adult working in a program,

activity, or service in any public or private educational or athletic programs. Athletic coaches and

adults involved in children's activities were now included in the new CPSL as potential child

abuse perpetrators through an expansion of the definition of perpetrators as,

> any person who, through a profession, employment or volunteer activity has access to
>
> children on a regular basis and is in a relationship of trust, such as a coach, instructor,
>
> leader, mentor, chaperone or other role in a program, activity or service (JSGC, 2012, p.
>
> 54).

Additional Responsibilities Added for Victims of Sex Trafficking

On October 28, 2016, Pennsylvania enacted Act 115 of 2016, which further expanded the

responsibilities of county child welfare agencies to investigate and provide services to child

victims of sex and labor trafficking (PA Child Protective Services Report, 2016). Act 115

amended the CPSL by adding language to the definitions of perpetrator and child abuse, to

ensure that children being trafficked by a perpetrator for sex or labor could be accepted for

services in the child welfare system. This legislation added requirements for caseworkers to work

along with law enforcement agencies to investigate and serve child trafficking victims, which

further increased caseloads.

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Impact of CPSL Changes

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Changes in the CPSL increased the number of incidents defined as child abuse, while

expanding the number of persons considered to be perpetrators (Joint State Government

Commission (JSGC), 2012). The CPSL also increased the number of mandated reporters

required by law to report suspected child abuse. Changes in definitions in the law not only increased referrals dramatically, but increased caseworkers' workload in other ways. County child welfare agencies were now responsible for investigating some abuse allegations that were previously completed by law enforcement, and caseworkers had additional documentation requirements. The crisis escalated since county agencies did not have enough caseworkers to comply with the new CPSL mandates and overwhelmed caseworkers began to leave their jobs. The unprepared child welfare system experienced a rapid rise in caseload sizes, and public child welfare agencies experienced a state-wide caseworker shortage.

Brian Bornman (2018), executive director of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA), reported that since the CPSL changed, the major challenges facing public child welfare agencies have been caseload ratios, unrealistic demands, and inadequate funding. In his testimony before the PA House Children and Youth Committee (2018), he reported that the changes to the child protective services act that went into effect at the beginning of 2015 dramatically increased the number of referrals coming to county child welfare agencies. Most counties have seen a 35-50% increase in the number of investigations they must complete, with some counties seeing sustained increases of over 100% in 2015, compared to 2014.

When the changes to the CPSL were implemented, the state's child welfare system was unprepared for the crisis that ensued. As one child welfare expert said, "In 2015, the dam just broke. We didn't have enough people or funding to keep up with the huge increases in workload for a staff that was already overworked and stressed out, and children suffered because of it" (DePasquale, 2017, p. 2). State-wide, caseworkers reported feeling overwhelmed by their caseloads, which grew from 12 to 20 cases per caseworker, to 50 to 75 cases per caseworker after the major legislative changes to the CPSL went into effect in 2015 (Moyer, 2016). Some

specific county examples of the increases include Lehigh and Northampton counties, where news media reports indicated that new referrals doubled, even though staffing levels remained the same (Assad, 2017). In 2016, the year after the new CPSL passed, Northampton county referrals increased by 78% to 5,617 reports (Assad, 2017). A Northampton County official reported that 2017 referrals were expected to reach 7,500, which was a nearly 140% increase. Even after realigning its existing agency staffing to increase intake staff from seven to ten workers, Beaver County intake caseworkers' caseload sizes grew from a ratio of one caseworker to ten cases in 2014, to an average of one caseworker to seventeen cases by 2017 (Reese, D., Beaver County Children and Youth Services, Intake Manager, Personal Communication, April 12, 2018).

As caseworkers became overwhelmed by the additional work, Lehigh County lost 12% of its caseworkers in 2015, and Northampton County lost 19% (Assad, 2017). In Bucks County, where caseworkers are among the highest paid in the state, child abuse investigations almost doubled after the CPSL was revised, leading to turnover rates that were twice as high in 2015 as they were in 2014, before the law changed (Ciavaglia, 2017). By July 1, 2016, six months after the new CPSL was implemented, Bucks County had lost 16% of its 113 caseworkers (Ciavaglia, 2017). York County experienced some of the largest caseworker turnover after 90% of its caseworkers left the county child welfare agency within a two-year period, leaving a large gap in an office that usually employed a staff of 146 (Lee, 2017). York County also suffered from a lack of experienced caseworkers to meet the demands, since 80% of the agency's intake unit, whose caseworkers are responsible for investigating child abuse and neglect referrals, had less than one year of experience (Lee, 2017).

Some Western PA counties experienced similar problems, such as Washington County Children & Youth Services, which faced a shortage of as many as 20 caseworker vacancies at

one time (DePasquale, 2017). Counties struggled to process an influx of referrals while also

updating their practices to comply with new regulations that were thrust upon county child

welfare agencies with little preparation and no additional funding (Hawkes, 2015). Luzerne

County referrals increased by over 1,000 reports between 2015 to 2016 (Learn-Andes, 2017) and

Bedford County Children and Youth Services' referrals increased from an average of 400

investigations annually to about 1,600 cases in 2017, with no increased staffing (Wu Tan, 2018).

Table 1 lists a sample of PA counties' percentage change in referrals between 2014

before the law changed and in 2015 after the CPSL was amended (DePasquale, 2017; Guza,

2015; Hawkes, 2015; Reese, 2018; Tierney, 2016). Since PA did not publish a total number of

referrals until 2016, these county statistics were based upon newspaper reports and personal

correspondence with one county.

Table 1

Comparison of Total County Referrals by Year for General and Child Protective Services

County	2014 referrals	2015 referrals	Increased percentage of change
Allegheny	9,062	13,112	44%
Armstrong	not available	not available	40%
Beaver	2,272	3,989	60%
Lancaster	not available	not available	77%
Westmoreland	2,639	3,226	22%

As Table 1 shows, Allegheny County Children Youth and Families reported a 44%

increase in child abuse calls (Tierney, 2016), Armstrong County Children and Youth Services

reported a 40% increase in referrals after the new CPSL passed (Guza, 2015), and Beaver

County's intake investigations increased from 2,272 children in 2014 to 3,989 children in 2015

(Reese, D., Beaver County Children and Youth Services, Intake Manager, Personal Communication, April 12, 2018). Lancaster County Children & Youth saw a 77% increase in reports of suspected child abuse and neglect (Hawkes, 2015), while Westmoreland County's Children's Bureau referrals increased 22% in 2015 after the law changed.

The high rate of caseworker turnover in PA raises a public concern, due to the negative impact it has on the quality of child protective services provided to vulnerable children and families. A shortage of caseworkers to monitor child safety may lead to higher rates of child injury and even death. In May 2015, PA created a Caseworker Retention Workgroup (CRW) to address concerns about the impact caseworker turnover was having on permanency outcomes for children (CRW, 2016). Thirty-eight professionals representing the juvenile dependency court, public and private child welfare service providers at the state and county levels, county commissioners, and legal professionals held ongoing meetings and conducted research to make recommendations about ways to improve caseworker retention (CRW, 2016).

Turnover of caseworkers results in additional fiscal expenses for agencies to recruit and train new workers (Ellett et al., 2007; Shim, 2014). In 2016, the CRW contacted seven county child welfare administrators to request information about county costs for caseworker turnover. Costs varied by county, dependent upon salary differences, training costs for new workers, salaries of personnel involved in the hiring process, and the dates caseworkers received their first cases. Table 2 indicates the cost analysis related to caseworker turnover for seven PA counties that were surveyed by the CRW. Considering this table includes only 10% of 67 counties, the total costs for caseworker turnover state-wide would be significant.

Table 2

Caseworker Turnover Costs Among Selected PA Counties during Fiscal Year 2015-16

County	Total number CYS staff	Total number direct service staff	Starting caseworker salary	Lost investment loss of one caseworker	Number of caseworkers who left the agency	Total turnover cost for 2015-2016
Bucks	191	113	$44,791.00	$33,760.98	12	$405,132.00
Erie	216	92	$33,910.00	$14,734.77	9	$132,612.93
Greene	31	16	$34,216.00	$7,323.86	15	$109,857.90
Lycoming	86	60	$36,296.00	$18,568.26	2	$37,136.52
Northampton	122	72	$39,466.00	$14,944.40	19	$283,943.60
Tioga	37	26	$30,160,00	$6,513.57	12	$78,162.79
Westmoreland	118	66	$38,863.50	$10,469.22	7	$73,284.54

In addition to financial costs, agencies experience a loss of expertise, as replacing knowledgeable, skilled, experienced staff takes time. Most PA counties report that it takes 3 months or longer to replace a caseworker (CRW, 2016). As part of class-action litigation for system reform in New York state, Farber and Munson (2010) interviewed 74 participants, including legal professionals and 21 current or former public child welfare agency representatives for a qualitative study designed to find ways to improve the quality and capacity of the child welfare workforce. Participants recommended that plans to improve the child welfare workforce needed to address the underlying problems within the child welfare system, which included improving the experience level of staff (Farber & Munson, 2010). The study also found that child welfare investigations and court proceedings may be disrupted when inexperienced caseworkers are reassigned to cases after an experienced caseworker leaves the job.

Scope of the Problem

Child Fatalities in PA

Pennsylvania's (PA) child welfare system was already struggling to meet its mandates before the new CPSL became effective on December 31, 2014. In 2012, approximately 10 out of every 1,000 children living in PA were reported as victims of suspected abuse and 14 PA children died from abuse (PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW), 2015). In 2013, 30 children died from abuse at a time when investigative caseload sizes in many counties already exceeded recommended levels of "no more than twelve active cases per month" (Hughes & Lay, 2012, p. 5). In 2014, the year prior to the implementation of a revised CPSL, 26 child deaths were indicated through child protective service investigations (DPW, 2015). Table 3 shows the number of child fatalities and near fatalities for the years 2011-2018 based upon PA Annual Child Protective Services Reports (2015-2018). The number of child deaths and near-deaths continued to rise after the CPSL was changed.

Table 3

Annual PA Child Fatalities and Near Child Fatalities

Year	Number of indicated child abuse fatalities	Indicated child abuse near fatalities
2012	14	29
2013	30	30
2014	26	49
2015	34	51
2016	46	79
2017	40	88
2018	47	89

Thirty-four children died from child abuse in 2015 (Esack, 2017). A year after the changes in the CPSL were implemented, the number of child abuse deaths continued to increase in 2016 (Esack, 2017) when 46 children died and 79 were abused or neglected to the point of near-death (DePasquale, 2017). Half of those 125 children had families who were already involved in the child welfare system (DePasquale, 2017). During 2018, 47 children died from child abuse and 89 were injured to the point of near-death due to abuse (DPW, 2019). These statistics show that children have continued to die in PA every year due to child abuse and neglect, in spite of the changes in the CPSL which were supposed to improve child safety. It is important to address a caseworker shortage that leaves children at risk in a system that remains understaffed. Long-term solutions to caseworker turnover are needed to ensure that children are protected.

County Requirements for PA's Child Welfare System

PA 55 Code Protective Services, 3490.53(a) (1986) requires that each county has an agency that is the "sole civil agency responsible for receiving and investigating reports of child abuse." PA county child protective services agencies provide legally mandated services that do not permit a waiting list for their services. Agencies are required to provide the same degree of services, regardless of whether they have adequate staffing levels. This applies particularly at the intake investigative level, where counties are unable to sub-contract this responsibility to private provider agencies. Before the CPSL changed, counties were already struggling to meet the needs of families under its previous, more narrow mandates. As caseloads increased across the state, caseworkers struggled to manage the strict documentation timelines required by the new CPSL and began to leave the system (DePasquale, 2017).

How PA Funding Structure Contributes to Turnover

Pennsylvania's child welfare system, as a state-supervised, county-administered system (United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), 2018) relies on federal, state, and local county financial resources to pay for child welfare services. PA Public Law 31 (1967) gives counties the ability to run their own child welfare agencies with state oversight. The state's commonwealth system requires that each of its 67 counties provide matching funds in order to get reimbursement from the state and federal government for the child welfare services the county provides. Most states have a centralized administration at the state level, which are called state-administered systems, because the policies and procedures for how child welfare services are provided is determined by the state, not individual counties. According to the USDHHS (2018), Pennsylvania is one of nine states that are county-administered, with California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, and Virginia having a similar structure. Maryland, Nevada, and Wisconsin are partially administered by the state and partially administered by counties.

Each county is tasked with interpreting and implementing local policies and procedures to comply with state and federal regulations required for child welfare services. Counties paying for child welfare services can incur unexpected expenses that go beyond their approved budgets. Pennsylvania counties are not assured that federal and state funding will cover their costs because courts, which hold the authority to adjudicate and remove children from unsafe homes, are not required to follow the same regulations as county child welfare agencies. Courts can order child placements or send children home without considering whether agencies have enough resources to meet the needs of the children in those settings. When a county government cannot or will not provide local funding to match the requests of the agency administrator, the agency is

unable to access matching state or federal funding. This can lead to an inability for a county child welfare agency to hire staff, even if the agency shows a documented need and gets approval and partial funding from the PA Department of Human Services (DHS).

Part of the reason that caseload sizes are problematic in Pennsylvania results from the way the state funds child welfare services, which leads to inconsistent salaries, benefits, staffing levels, and resources in the state's individual counties. The county-based child welfare system contributes to a wide variation in the way services are staffed and delivered, because each county must provide its own funding for services. The needs-based budgeting system that each county child welfare agency administrator submits annually requires matching local funds, approved by the county commissioners, to access state and federal funds for most of the services the agency provides.

The way the state currently funds caseworker positions impacts each county's ability to hire staff, as each county is required to provide 17% of the funds required to pay the salary and benefits of its caseworkers and other child welfare staff (PA Code 55, Chapter 3140, 1982). The legislative body for most counties is a group of three county commissioners or alternatively, a single county executive who set salaries for child welfare agency staff. County commissioners also approve funding and budgets that may impact the policies and procedures for how child welfare services will be delivered. Since counties across the state vary widely in the amount of tax revenue available, resources for individual county child welfare agencies to develop and implement services are impacted by their local county government's policies and budgets. County commissioners or county boards who make decisions about whether to fill vacant caseworker positions "may see open caseworker positions as a way to potentially save money, so they will not allow the administrator to fill the caseworker spot for a given length of time"

(DePasquale, 2018, p. 8). The matching funding system may present a barrier for county child welfare administrators, who are unable to resolve a caseworker shortage on their own because increased staffing decisions must be approved by county officials. Agency administrators and county officials may have different priorities for approving positions that impact staffing levels in public child welfare agencies.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that lead to caseworker turnover because turnover has a negative impact on the clients served in the child welfare system. Concerns about the ability of PA county child welfare agencies to protect children have risen, as more children have been placed at risk of maltreatment in a system that remains understaffed. Reducing caseworker turnover can improve the services that families receive, ensure that children are safe from abuse and neglect, and increase permanency and stability for children in the child welfare system (National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, 2018). High caseworker turnover leads to a lower quality of services and higher expenditures for the child welfare system and decreases resources needed to provide services to protect children and serve families. This exploratory study seeks to investigate potential factors that impact caseworker turnover in the public child welfare system to understand better ways to address this chronic problem.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced problems related to caseworker turnover. Caseworker turnover has a negative impact on children because it reduces the capacity of the child welfare system to protect children from maltreatment. Caseworker turnover has resulted in a system that lacks enough experienced professionals to adequately protect children from child abuse and neglect. Having experienced caseworkers who work with children throughout their involvement with

child welfare services leads to better outcomes in terms of child safety and permanency.

Updated definitions in the CPSL increased the scope of responsibility for public child welfare by expanding the number of mandated reporters, in addition to increasing the types of child abuse and neglect allegations under the jurisdiction of public child welfare agencies. Immediately after the new CPSL was implemented, the system became overloaded when the number of referrals counties were required to investigate increased dramatically. Without an increase in staff to process the influx of referrals, caseload sizes became unmanageable. Caseworkers left their jobs as they became dissatisfied with increased workloads without increased resources.

Caseworker turnover has a negative impact on the quality of services children receive. As child welfare services become diluted by large caseloads, children are placed at greater risk of child abuse and neglect. Although a direct correlation cannot be assumed between caseworker turnover and child deaths, after the implementation of the CPSL changes that were intended to improve child safety, the number of child deaths and near-deaths in PA increased.

The way PA funds child welfare services in a state supervised, county-administered system may be contributing to caseworker turnover, as individual counties have limited resources to resolve the problem. Millions of dollars are being spent to replace and train caseworkers, which impacts the amount of funding that is available to meet other human service needs. Long-term solutions to the problem of caseworker turnover in the child welfare system need to be implemented to effectively protect children. The costs to society are too high to ignore.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to caseworker turnover. To provide context for the discussion of changes to Pennsylvania's (PA) Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), this chapter includes a historical background of mandated reporting laws. The specific changes in PA's CPSL that contributed to an increased workload for caseworkers are explained. Ecological systems theory (EST) provides a framework to guide the literature review by organizing research findings according to the ecological system levels. An overview of ecological systems theory is provided to explain how this theoretical model was applied to an examination of turnover in the PA child welfare system. To identify strategies to reduce caseworker turnover, an examination of relevant literature included factors within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem levels of the child welfare system.

Historical Background of Mandated Reporter Law

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, child protection agencies were nongovernmental agencies that provided voluntary assistance to address concerns about child welfare (Myers, 2008). The federal government was not involved in child welfare policies, believing that child welfare services should be handled at the state and local levels. Amendments to the Social Security Act mandated that states fund child protection efforts as early as 1958, but child welfare services remained primarily the function of state and local governments, in addition to voluntary charitable organizations (National Child Abuse and Neglect Training and Publications Project (NCANTPP), 2014).

During the 1960s, most counties in the United States had no formalized protective services for children. A 1956 inventory found 84 private nongovernmental child protection

societies operating in the country, however by 1967 only ten remained (NCANTPP), 2014).

Many communities relied solely on voluntary agencies that lacked funding to serve all children

who needed protection (Myers, 2008). A 1967 survey by Children's Services at the American

Humane Association exposed concerns about inconsistencies in how child welfare services were

being provided nationally. Although most states had laws requiring governmental responsibility

to address child abuse, the survey found that "no state and no community has developed a Child

Protective Services program adequate in size to meet the service needs of all reported cases of

child neglect, abuse, and exploitation" (NCANTPP, 2014, p. 4). Inconsistent funding by state

and local governments led to gaps in child protection services across the United States and in

1967, thirty-two states had no private child protective services (NCANTPP, 2014). In his

testimony before Congress, Douglas J. Besharov, who later became the first Director of the

National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, reported, "Studies indicated that as many as three

quarters of the children whose deaths were suspected to be caused by child abuse or neglect

involved children who were previously known to authorities" (National Child Abuse and Neglect

Training and Publications Project, 2014, p. 7).

The responsibility for providing child welfare services continued to be treated as a local

issue until 1974, when the federal government passed legislation to mandate that states provide

child protection services. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which

became effective January 31, 1974, changed the child welfare system, as the first major federal

legislation to specifically address child abuse and neglect. Under CAPTA, federally funded

mandates designed to reform child protection efforts signaled recognition of child abuse as a

national problem. CAPTA led to the creation of the National Center on Child Abuse and

Neglect, whose role was to provide specific research on this issue and to serve as a national

clearinghouse of information related to child abuse and neglect (NCANTPP, 2014). CAPTA

influenced the future of child welfare services across the United States by requiring states to

develop systems for reporting suspected child abuse, and to make efforts to improve the quality

of child protective service investigations (Myers, 2008). A significant provision of CAPTA

required states to develop a system for citizens to report suspected child abuse and neglect, with

assurances that persons who did so would be given immunity from prosecution (National Low-

Income Housing Coalition, 2014). CAPTA defined certain professionals who had contact with

children as part of their employment to be mandated to report suspected child abuse. For its

reporting system, Pennsylvania established the state-wide Child Abuse Hotline and Central

Registry, ChildLine, in 1974 (PA Coalition Against Rape, 2014), a state agency that continues to

screen and process state-wide referrals for child abuse and neglect today. Changes in PA's

updated CPSL expanded mandated reporting laws beyond the original CAPTA mandates.

Since the 1974 passage of CAPTA, numerous legislative changes at the federal level have

increased responsibilities for the child welfare system. In the 1970's two major pieces of

legislation included the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and Child Abuse Prevention and

Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978. In the 1980's, Child Abuse Amendments of 1984

P.L. 96-272 and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 were passed to address

child safety and child permanency concerns (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

The decade of the 1990's added the Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Adoption, and Family

Services Act of 1992, the Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act of 1993,

Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, The Interethnic Provisions of 1996, the Child Abuse

Prevention and Treatment Amendments of 1996, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997

and the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

More recently, the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-36) amended and reauthorized CAPTA. The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, P.L. 109-248, created a sex offender registry and in 2008, Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act amended Title IV of the Social Security Act to connect and support relative caregivers and improve outcomes for children and youths in foster care. In 2010, CAPTA was reauthorized, and the Affordable Care Act extended Medicaid coverage to all youths who exit foster care as young adults up to age 26 and added federal funding to support evidence-based home visiting programs to prevent child abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). CAPTA was further amended by the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-22, 5/29/2015) which required states to add procedures to assist children known or suspected to be involved in sex trafficking by May 2018.

Since the passage of CAPTA these numerous legislative changes have increased caseworkers' workloads. In order to access federal funds that accompany legislation, states were required to pass their own legislation to comply with the federal requirements. Along with each new piece of legislation, state bulletins and regulations added additional work and documentation requirements for caseworkers in the child welfare system.

The Initial Impact of the CPSL Changes

The failure of PSU officials to report their suspicions about the Sandusky child abuse incidents to police or the child welfare system brought a public outcry that led to a push to examine and update PA child protective services laws (Kelly, 2013). Changes in the state's child protection law were developed after PA Governor Thomas Corbett appointed a task force to examine concerns about improper reporting of child abuse. The PA Task Force on Child Protection released their final report in November 2012, after meeting for nearly two years. The report led

to more than twenty pieces of legislation that took effect on December 31, 2014. The new CPSL legislation increased the number of people who were mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect, and also added a criminal offense that made failure to report suspected child abuse a felony.

The impact of PA's CPSL changes resulted in an immediate crisis in the state's mandated reporting system that initially resulted in shutting down the ChildLine call center system, when the agency could not process the influx of increased referrals (DePasquale, 2017). Since ChildLine was understaffed throughout 2015, the agency failed to track or document nearly a third of the calls (DePasquale, 2017). Therefore, the number of reports is likely to be even higher than the reported 39% increase in referrals from the previous year (DPW, 2015).

The changes to the CPSL required a new case tracking system that would process child abuse referrals electronically. An additional state computer system called Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS), launched in January 2015, required counties to update their information technology equipment, training, and technical support to accommodate the CPSL changes under a strict, hard-and-fast deadline (DePasquale, 2017). Integrating a new computer system was further complicated by the fact that state and county levels had different computer software systems.

PA did not have one integrated computer system to process case documentation and fiscal procedures, which led to inconsistent procedures among counties. Two of the largest counties, Philadelphia, and Allegheny, had their own software programs, while 56 counties used a system called Child Accounting and Profile System (CAPS) (DePasquale, 2017). Another software program called ACYS was used by other counties, such as Bucks County, the state's fourth most populated county (DePasquale, 2017). Using five different software programs across

the state made it difficult for agencies to share information with one another (DePasquale, 2017).

PA Department of Human Services (DHS) required counties to fully implement the CWIS system during calendar year 2015 (January 1, 2015- June 30, 2015) to enable ChildLine and all the state's 67 counties access to a complete history of involvement for families and children from anywhere in the state's child welfare system (DPW, 2015). Adding the new CWIS computer system to process child abuse and neglect referrals required counties to change their procedures and train their staff to use the new system. Prior to the implementation of the CWIS online program, child abuse referrals from ChildLine were assigned to counties by telephone, 24 hours a day. Child abuse investigatory records were kept at ChildLine in Harrisburg, while general protective services case records were kept separately in each county. When families or children had previous involvement with another child welfare agency in a different county, investigators had difficulty accessing historical information.

The CWIS system was designed to provide timely data about children being served. The system also enabled counties to share information, which was helpful in identifying family cases assigned to multiple counties. The new system was designed to allow counties and the state to electronically share information in real time to improve how referrals were processed. Mandated reporters could now utilize CWIS to submit referrals online, rather than calling ChildLine, faxing, or mailing paper forms. CWIS was also designed to process applications for child abuse history clearances electronically (University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Resource Center, 2019).

The CWIS system was designed to improve the efficiency of documentation for child abuse investigations, but many counties were not prepared to quickly adapt their practices to implement the changes the system required. County agencies became overwhelmed adapting to

the new computer system at the same time that referrals across the state increased 50% state-wide (Assad, 2017). Additional computer equipment was needed to make sure caseworkers had access to computers after regular work hours, and the new electronic system increased the length of time to process a referral. Internet access was required for caseworkers to receive information and submit documentation, which could be a challenge in some rural areas. At least 800,000 Pennsylvanians lack access to high-speed broadband internet, an issue that impacts six percent of the state (Xian, 2018).

Rather than making their jobs easier and more efficient, the CWIS system increased caseworkers' workloads. Caseworkers complained that the computer system increased the time it took for them to document their work. For example, Brian Bornman, director of PCCYS, reported that:

> before 2015, when a CPS referral came in, a caseworker could visit with the family, come back to the office, fill out a CY-48 form, which used to be one page front and back, in about 15 minutes, and then fax it to ChildLine. Now, the CY-48 form is roughly nine pages and takes about an hour to complete (DePasquale 2017, p. 33).

Ecological Systems Theoretical Perspective

To understand the factors that may impact caseworker turnover, ecological systems theory (EST) was applied as the deductive framework for this research study. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), a developmental psychologist who developed EST, theorized that the processes taking place within and between persons, the environment, and the structure of environmental settings must be viewed as interdependent. Bronfenbrenner (n.d.) described the ecological environment as being "a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 22), which must be examined as an interdependent whole, to fully understand the forces

surrounding a developing individual. The ecological system levels that surround and interact

with individuals are known as microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The

system levels and factors that make up each level can nurture a caseworker in the center of the

ecological system or prevent them from achieving their highest potential (Besthorn, 2013).

This study analyzed the system levels surrounding the caseworker and the factors that

support or negatively impact the caseworker's ability to reach optimal development. To adapt

EST to this study, four ecological system levels, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and

macrosystem, frame the factors associated with caseworker turnover. A fifth outer layer, the

chronosystem, was an addition to Bronfenbrenner's original 1979 theory to encompass changes

that occur over time (Besthorn, 2013). The chronosystem captures how individual and societal

views change, based upon the era of time in which they develop (Pittenger et al., 2016). Since

the chronosystem examines broad changes over time, the chronosystem was not included in this

study.

Organizational Theories and Evolution of EST

EST has its roots in theories that focus on persons in their environments as a framework

to understand human behavior, as part of managing organizations. Theorists have studied how

organizations adapt to the constantly changing environment. Within sociology, the translation of

Max Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy into English in 1946 led to a movement to understand the

structure and functioning of organizations (Scott & Davis, 2007). Organizations consist of

groups of humans who share a common purpose and "organizations are first and foremost,

systems of elements, each of which affects and is affected by the others" (Scott & Davis, 2007,

p. 24). Every organization must function within physical, technological, cultural, and social

elements that make up its environment (Scott & Davis, 2007). In the 1940's, organizational

theories were created to understand how to organize groups toward achieving a defined purpose, such as finding better ways to manage prisons, political parties, unions, or factories, which were concerned with finding better ways to utilize resources and achieve goals more efficiently (Scott & Davis, 2007).

In the 1950's, an organizational analysis movement emerged in terms of viewing organizations as rational systems and natural systems (Scott & Davis, 2007). Rational theory proposed that people make rational choices based upon benefits versus costs, which governs their behavior. Natural systems theorists, such as Barnard, Selznick, and Parsons, proposed that organizations have needs that must be met in order to survive (Scott & Davis, 2007) and managing organizations could be accomplished by identifying and meeting those needs.

Following World War II, which ended in 1945, an open systems perspective emerged as part of a scientific movement that included a study of organizations (Scott & Davis, 2007). Social work's current view of systems evolved from Social Systems Theory developed by North American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951) and General Systems Theory (GST), which was developed by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) (Besthorn, 2013). Bertalanffy, who is considered the father of general systems theory, emphasized examining systems as a whole, instead of focusing on individual parts or processes within each system (Issitt, 2018). Bertalanffy was interested in applying the concept of open systems to human systems and the interactions taking place within and between living systems (Besthorn, 2013). Bertalanffy (1950) defined open systems as interacting with the environment with a subjective feedback loop that depends upon the perspective of participants. Closed systems are isolated from the environment and detached from nature (Bertalanffy, 1950).

A new theory called Systems Theory developed in the 1970's as an extension of GST.

Pincus and Minahan (1973) applied systems theory to social work practice (Munford et al., 2005) by recognizing that systems, including formal systems (community organizations), informal or natural systems (family and friends), and societal systems (e.g., government departments, hospitals, and schools) influence people's lives (Munford et al., 2005). Systems Theory offered a framework for social workers to understand the complexity of human behavior and organizations (Besthorn, 2013).

The EST Perspective in Current Literature

Researchers have widely utilized EST to understand how individuals are impacted by their environment (Neal & Neal, 2013). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2013) have recommended that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model can be utilized for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research for social, behavioral, and health fields. The theory originally identified four environmental system levels that were nested inside each layer, originally described by Bronfenbrenner as a set of Russian dolls (Neal & Neal, 2013).

Application of EST to This Study

This study's aim was to identify factors in multiple levels of the child welfare system that impact caseworkers' views about whether they will decide to stay in their jobs. To adapt EST for this study, four ecological system levels were examined to understand caseworker turnover. A caseworker at the center of the microsystem includes individual factors, such as the caseworker's gender, race, age, level of professional experience, or level of education. The next layer, the mesosystem, describes reciprocal interactions between the caseworker and their workplace (Besthorn, 2013), such as co-workers, supervisors, and the immediate work environment. The next outer layer, the exosystem, involves the indirect environment (Besthorn, 2013), such as the larger systems of the workplace that include the county government, the local court system. For

example, each PA county has different county government policies that determine salaries and

benefits for caseworkers, and each county also has its own local court system that impacts child

welfare practice. A fourth layer, the macrosystem, encompasses the state and federal levels of

resources and social problems in the community that indirectly impact the caseworker, including

social and cultural values that guide child welfare practice (Besthorn, 2013). Laws, funding, state

government, and the federal government are closely intertwined with the other levels. Social and

cultural values may impact how the public views the child welfare system, which in turn impacts

the resources the state and federal government allocates to counties and child welfare services.

Figure 1 provides a visual depiction for this study of how levels of the ecological system impact

an individual caseworker in a public county child welfare agency.

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner's System: Application to a County Child Welfare Agency
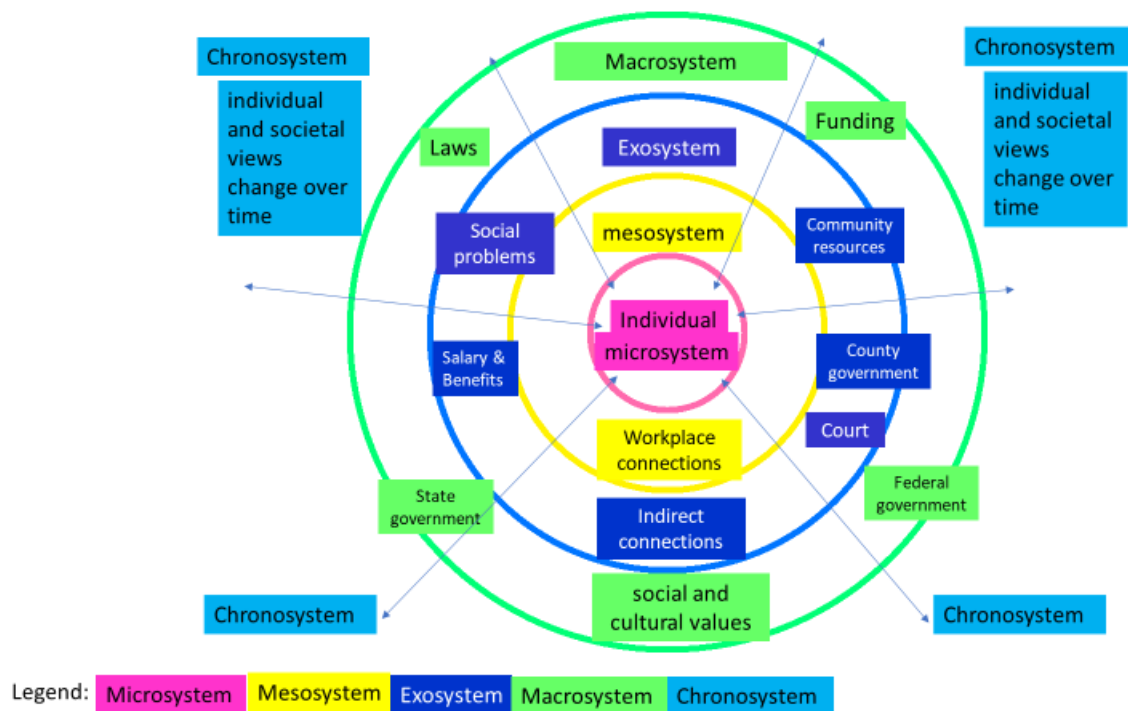
The literature review that guided this study was drawn from research related to caseworker turnover in the child welfare system and was organized according to the applicable levels within the ecological system. Literature related to the microsystem level focused on individual factors that affect turnover, such as personal well-being, gender, race, ethnicity, and level of education. Research findings for mesosystem level factors included work-life fit, stress and burnout, job satisfaction, professional commitment, involuntary clients, role ambiguity, supervision, and agency management. Organizational climate and communication strategies that impact turnover were also explored. At the exosystem level, urban and rural factors, the complexity of the child welfare system, and the impact of the juvenile court system on turnover are discussed along with salaries and benefits that are implemented at the county level, but strongly influenced by state requirements in the macrosystem. Macrosystem research examined factors such as social problems, safety risks and hazards, caseload size, documentation requirements, and time constraints. The ways state and national legislation impact caseworker turnover were also explored.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the smallest and most immediate environment in which caseworkers live and work. The microsystem lies at the center of the ecological system and is comprised of individual factors, such as personal well-being, gender, race and ethnicity, and educational level. As the center of the ecological system, the microsystem impacts the outer layers of the ecological system, which in turn, may influence how caseworkers will behave, including work performance and how caseworkers view their jobs.

Personal Well-being

One study of 82 human services workers found that workers who possessed better personal well-being when hired significantly predicted lower burnout, higher job satisfaction, and higher worker morale (Koeske & Kirk, 1995). Psychological well-being was positively related to retention of social workers, and older age was found to predict higher satisfaction with the job (Koeske & Kirk, 1995).

Gender

A survey of over 1,700 new California state public child welfare caseworkers between the years 2000 and 2001 found that males left the job 2.6 times more often than females, even though they did not express a higher intention to leave than females (Weaver et al., 2007). Rosenthal and Waters' (2006) study of federally subsidized social work education programs found females were less likely to leave than males. Madden et al. (2014) examined longitudinal data to study factors that affected length of employment among Texas public child welfare caseworkers employed between the years 2001 and 2010. At the completion of this 10-year study, only 47% of participants remained in their jobs and males were .83 times more likely to leave the job than females. Research about the reasons that male caseworkers are more likely to leave child welfare is limited; however, a demographic analysis of the child welfare workforce by Barth et al. (2008) found that 81% of caseworkers were females. Weaver et al. (2007) theorized that males may be dissuaded from child welfare careers because child welfare has been historically dominated by females, and gender stereotypes may discourage them from becoming or remaining caseworkers.

Race and Ethnicity

There is limited information available about the racial composition of child welfare caseworkers. In a quantitative study that examined 4 years of administrative records related to 839 caseworkers at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services along with supervisory performance evaluations for 382 caseworkers, Rosenthal and Waters (2006) attempted to identify predictors of caseworker retention. Race and ethnicity factors indicated that caseworkers of Hispanic or Asian-American ethnicity were less likely to stay in their jobs. Caseworkers who came from a higher social class background were more likely to leave the job (Koeske & Kirk, 1995). According to a demographic analysis by Barth et al., (2008), 67% of child welfare caseworkers in the United States were white.

Among PA counties, there is no consistent method of gathering racial information about all child welfare caseworkers. The PA State Civil Service Commission (SCSC) gathers race information at the time of hiring, but not all counties currently utilize SCSC for hiring child welfare caseworkers. Table 4 includes racial demographic information for new hires of PA caseworker I and caseworker II positions in the years 2018 and 2019. The data reflects new hires from 49 (73%) county child welfare agencies (PA State Civil Service Commission (SCSC), 2020). The majority of new hires in PA hired through the SCSC during years 2018 and 2019 were White (77%). The second largest race listed for new hires was Black/African-American (14.7%).

Table 4

Total Civil Service Caseworkers Hired for PA Child Welfare in 2018 and 2019 by Race

Race	2018	Percentage	2019	Percentage	Total
White	1161	79%	1147	76%	2308
Black/African-American	237	16%	203	13%	440
Hispanic/Latino	32	2%	26	2%	58
Asian	9	.06%	8	.05%	17
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	.02%	2	.01%	6
Native American/Alaskan	1	.007%	1	.005%	2
Undisclosed/Unknown	32	2%	129	9%	161
Total	1476		1516		2992

Note. These statistics reflect only SCSC caseworker I and caseworker II new hires.

Education

The type and level of education caseworkers have influences how they view their jobs. Nationally, almost half (48.8%) of child welfare caseworkers have a non-social work bachelor's degree, while 39.5 % of workers have a bachelor of social work (BSW) or a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree (Barth et al., 2008). Caseworker turnover has been linked to level of education and having an internship experience (Balfour, 1993). Level of social work education was found to impact caseworker turnover rates, as having an educational level of less than a bachelor's degree predicted a higher risk of termination (DePanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008). Auerbach et al. (2008) found that having a social work degree contributed to retention.

Rosenthal and Waters (2006) found that having a social work degree better prepared caseworkers for employment in the child welfare system. The study also found that caseworkers

who participated in Title IV-E funded social work education programs were more likely to

remain in their jobs. In a secondary data study of employment records of 841 child welfare

workers employed in the Oklahoma Department of Human Services between November 1, 1999,

and August 15, 2003, caseworker turnover was reduced by 39% under a Child Welfare

Professional Enhancement Program (CWPEP) contract (Williams et al., 2011). The study also

reported that caseworkers with a bachelor's degree in social work and previous work experience

were more likely to remain in their jobs.

A quantitative study that analyzed administrative data from the Illinois Department of

Children and Family Services found that caseworker turnover increased length of stay for

children in foster care and decreased chances of family reunification (Ryan et al., 2006). Higher

educational levels improved child outcomes, as children whose caseworkers held an MSW spent

an average of 5.15 months less time in placement, compared to caseworkers without a master's

degree (Ryan et al., 2006). Although having a social work degree influenced a higher intention

for caseworkers to leave, when organizations provided opportunities for professional

development, retention of caseworkers with a social work degree increased.

Mesosystem and Overlap between Microsystem and Mesosystem Factors

The mesosystem includes everything within the workplace, including co-workers, the

organization's leadership team (defined as "management"), and the requirements of the

workplace, which for most caseworker involves managing a workload of client cases. An

examination of turnover factors within the mesosystem must consider how the worker is

impacted by numerous factors within child welfare agencies. Literature findings related to

mesosystem-level factors include working with involuntary clients, caseload size, and the impact

of emotional demands, stress, and burnout.

Caseworkers interact with and are impacted by factors in the mesosystem. Issues that impact turnover at the mesosystem level include individual support systems, such as a partner, children, or extended family supports. When an individual interacts with factors related to the workplace (mesosystem), the way the individual copes with the demands of the workplace may impact turnover. In a fluid fashion, where the systems interact and impact one another, the way a caseworker perceives their job and whether they feel satisfied, impacts how they will interact with their family and peers, both positively and negatively (Strolin-Goltzman, 2009).

Work-Life Fit

Employers who support work-life fit, defined as "having positive feelings about the capacity to manage work and family" (Smith, 2005, p. 156), are less likely to experience turnover. Working as a caseworker in the child welfare system may impact not only the individual caseworker, but also their families. The level of support a caseworker receives from family and peer relationships impacts how they deal with stress at their job (Strolin-Goltzman, 2009). Caseworkers may rely on the job to financially support their families, in addition to meeting medical and other basic needs. Work-life fit falls between the microsystem and mesosytem levels of the ecological system since caseworkers' work often impacts their lives at home.

A 2004 national survey conducted by the American Public Humane Services Association (APHSA) found that the reasons child welfare caseworkers were dissatisfied with their jobs included feeling stressed and overwhelmed by having to work overtime. Since county child welfare agencies must be available to investigate child abuse emergencies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, many caseworkers must work on-call hours where they are expected to respond immediately, even when their office is closed.

A PA Retention Workgroup report (2016) indicated there is a wide variation among the 67 counties in how on-call duties are handled. Although some larger counties have various shifts and designated on-call staff to handle calls after office hours, most counties rotate staff who must cover on-call, in addition to their regular work duties. The frequency of being required to work on-call hours varies, dependent upon the number of caseworkers per county and individual county policies. In some counties, caseworkers are paid for on-call duties and volunteers may choose to work the on-call schedule to earn extra money. Working on-call can be challenging for caseworkers who need childcare to respond to emergency calls. Caseworkers may be out on an emergency call most of the night, then still be required to report to work the next day. In most cases, their regular caseload requirements are not adjusted due to on-call duties.

The way supervisors and management interact with and support caseworkers within the workplace (mesosystem) may impact caseworkers' decisions about whether or not to remain in the job. The hours involved in working in the child welfare system "vary and make it difficult to raise a family" (Moyer, 2017, p. A3). Caseworker burnout and stress result in caseworkers having less time to spend with their families and eventually leads to a decreased quality of work. Strolin-Goltzman (2009) examined the impact of organizational factors and supervisory factors on efficacy and job satisfaction related to caseworker turnover. Caseworkers who perceived their jobs as having a satisfactory work-life fit (Strolin-Goltzman, 2009) were less likely to leave an agency.

Stress, Emotional Demands, and Burnout

Hopkins et al. (2010) reported that child welfare employees who reported emotional exhaustion, role overload, and role conflict, defined as "stress," were most likely to begin to exhibit job withdrawal behaviors that eventually led them to exit their jobs. Social service

organizational environments, where service demands are high while resources are low, may set expectations for caseworkers as "being selfless, putting others' needs before their own, working long hours, and … going the extra mile" (Maslach, 1978, p. 68) to meet the needs of their clients. High demands may be viewed as part of the job, but excessive demands may diminish how individuals measure their own competence and therefore contribute to caseworker burnout. High caseworker attrition rates increase the likelihood of burnout because caseworkers must cover more cases and are forced to work overtime (Casey Family Programs, 2017). Caseworkers' stress increases because timeliness deadlines are not flexible, even when caseload sizes increase beyond recommended levels.

Individuals who experience a lack of social support or opportunities to develop professionally are at a higher risk of developing burnout (Maslach, 1978). Maslach et al., (2001) described burnout as involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, which has been shown to negatively affect social workers' physical and emotional health (Green et al., 2014). Feelings of burnout, often demonstrated as a lack of energy and a feeling of inadequacy, have been linked to depression (Maslach, 2003). Shim (2014) found that child welfare employees with higher levels of emotional energy are less likely to leave their jobs, especially if they have effective employer incentives and rewards for performing well on the job (Depanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008). Burnout leads to a loss of the feeling of personal accomplishment that comes from doing an excellent job, particularly in social work settings (Green et al., 2014). Employees in the child welfare field, whose work requires them to develop relationships with their clients, are at a high risk of experiencing burnout (He et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001). Dimensions of burnout such as emotional exhaustion can lead to reduced emotional energy to serve clients. This may result in a decreased amount of empathy

toward clients, which is indicative of depersonalization of clients (Green et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001). Depersonalizing clients can lead caseworkers to become indifferent to their clients' needs when they do not value them as individuals. According to Maslach (2003), exhaustion and cynicism reported by workers is often a result of work overload, social conflict, and a lack of resources to do their job effectively. These factors often lead to exhaustion, which may result in workers distancing themselves emotionally and cognitively from work, resulting in a feeling of dissatisfaction in the work environment that leads to burnout (Maslach, 2003).

Turnover in the child welfare system is often related to burnout. Maslach (1998) reported that situational variables in a workplace are more predictive of burnout than personal variables. Maslach and Leiter (1997) found that turnover may be impacted by a mismatch between an individual and their workplace. Six factors were evaluated on a continuum that defined an environment where the worker feels engaged as being more likely to lead to a good match for employee satisfaction and retention. The opposite end leads to burnout, dissatisfaction, and turnover (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). At the negative (burnout) end of the continuum, mismatches included workload (too much work without sufficient resources), control (rigid policies, tight monitoring, or chaotic work conditions), reward (salary and benefits, internal pride about work), community (chronic, unresolved conflict, fairness), and values (inequity of workload and pay, lack of mutual respect in the workplace). In a quantitative study, He et al. (2018) examined internal and external job resources that impact caseworker burnout. Having readily available access to resources to meet the needs of clients, such as mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence counseling, was significant in reducing caseworker stress (He et al., 2018).

Job Satisfaction and Professional Commitment

Williams et al. (2011) found that a caseworker's personal sense of accomplishment contributes to retention. Depanfilis & Zlotnik's (2008) review of nine studies related to turnover published between 1984 and 2005 (Cahalane & Sites, 2004; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Nissly et al., 2005) concluded that emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and personal accomplishment were three individual factors that predicted retention. Younger, less experienced workers are more likely to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion than older, more experienced workers. (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Weaver et al (2007) found that receiving a full caseload too quickly after being hired is related to caseworker turnover as a strong predictor of leaving the job. Role conflict, described as a mismatch between individual expectations about the job and the actual demands of the job, was related to leaving the job. General job dissatisfaction was found to be the "best measurable indicator of potential turnover" (Weaver et al., 2007, p. 22). Support from others at work (Dickinson & Perry, 2002) and professional support, according to the Work Morale Measure (Ellett et al., 2007), were both predictive of an intention to remain employed. Low co-worker support was significantly related to an intention to leave (Nissly et al., 2005).

A survey of Georgia state caseworkers designed to explore retention patterns (Williams et al., 2011) found that caseworkers' professional commitment to the agency and the families they serve was a personal factor that influenced retention rates. Job satisfaction and tenure on the job may also predict turnover or retention in child welfare employment (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Ellett et al., 2003; Jacquet et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2011). Longevity and seniority in an agency have been shown to contribute to retention (Williams et al., 2011; Yankeelov et al., 2009).

Working with Involuntary Clients

Involuntary clients are clients who are mandated to participate in treatment, under the coercion of a legal body or pressure from significant others, family members, or institutions, such as child protective services (Rooney, 2009). Most clients involved with the child welfare system are involuntary clients who were referred by others due to concerns about the health and safety of children in the home. Child welfare caseworkers are faced with the challenge of engaging in a relationship with clients who have no desire to participate in services. Clients may be combative or resistant to working with child welfare caseworkers because they immediately assume they have been labeled as being unfit parents (Turney, 2012).

Child welfare workers can find it emotionally challenging when trying to develop a positive working relationship with clients, while concurrently providing intrusive mandated protective services because "relationship-based practice with unwilling or involuntary clients is always going to be challenging" (Turney, 2012, p. 9). According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), social work values involve developing a trusting relationship with clients based upon a belief of dignity and worth of individuals and the importance of human relationships; however, child welfare caseworkers must be cautious in trusting clients who have been referred for alleged child maltreatment (Turney, 2012). Caseworkers must play a dual role of protecting children from maltreatment, while still trying to engage families to work toward change.

The involuntary nature of family involvement with child welfare services inherently involves conflict (Kopels et al., 2002). A study to determine ways to reduce turnover in Texas found that social work students may be unprepared for the nature of child welfare investigative work (Burstain, 2009). Since social workers are taught to collaborate with clients to achieve

mutually developed goals, child welfare investigative work may not be a good fit because child

maltreatment investigations often involve a short-term, authoritative, and adversarial process

(Burstain, 2009). Working with involuntary clients may raise ethical dilemmas for social workers

who value self-determination and may lead to dissatisfaction with the job. Utilizing the least

intrusive approaches that offer as much self-determination as possible and treating clients with

respect, while still ensuring child safety, may help social workers resolve this dilemma (Barsky,

2014).

Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict

Role ambiguity, role conflict, and challenges of the job have been shown to contribute to

burnout for social workers. Stress occurs when social workers feel a role conflict between client

advocacy and meeting agency needs (Lloyd et al., 2002). A caseworker's sense of control over

their job performance is indicative of psychological empowerment that is employee focused

(Spreitzer, 2008). Psychological empowerment for workers' feelings about their jobs involves

four distinct measures: "meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (Spreitzer, 1995,

p. 1444). Psychological empowerment of caseworkers is related to their intention to remain

employed in the child welfare system (Lee et al., 2011). When caseworkers feel individual

psychological empowerment, they believe they have influence over their jobs and their lives

through their choices and actions. Caseworkers who feel empowered at work are more likely to

feel competent in their jobs and have a feeling of control in their job duties. Feeling empowered

leads to higher levels of satisfaction and more likelihood of having a commitment to their

organization, which leads to less turnover (Lee et al., 2011).

A quantitative study that surveyed 234 public child welfare workers from a southeastern

state (Lee et al., 2011) examined the relationship between work environment and psychological

empowerment in public child welfare agencies, which utilized the Spreitzer scale as part of its

survey and data analysis. Spreitzer (1995) developed a 12-item multidimensional measure of

psychological empowerment in a work context that included items such as:

> The work I do is very important to me (meaning); I am confident about my ability to do
>
> my job (competence); I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work (self-
>
> determination), and I have significant influence over what happens in my department
>
> (impact) (Cearley, 2004, p. 314).

Results from the study indicated that when caseworkers felt empowered, satisfaction levels

among caseworkers improved.

Supervision

Empirical evidence of child welfare supervisors' impact on caseworkers is limited

(Carpenter et al., 2013). Bogo and McKnight's (2005) extensive review of thirteen scholarly

articles about research related to supervision in the United States found three studies related to

child welfare supervision, which were all conducted prior to 2000. Two studies focused on the

impact of policy and program changes in organizations. The first, an exploratory study by

Gleeson and Philbin (1996), examined how eight child welfare supervisors implemented a new

program requirement while also training caseworkers. Findings indicated that supervisors spent

an enormous amount of time training caseworkers about administrative and direct practice issues

(Bogo & McKnight, 2005). The second study examined how organizational climate impacted job

satisfaction for 70 child welfare supervisors (Silver et al., 1997). Supervisors expressed higher

satisfaction when they perceived trusting relationships among professionals within an

organization. A third study (MacEachron, 1994) examined links between organizational factors

and ethnicity between two groups of child welfare supervisors in Arizona. The results indicated

there were no significant differences between the groups, regardless of their child welfare

experience, the number of employees supervised, or whether they had a social work degree

(Bogo & McKnight, 2005).

Although supervisors hold key positions in managing agencies, there has been a lack of

focus on their needs. Zlotnik et al. (2005) found that job stress and poor working conditions

contribute to caseworker turnover, but there is little research that focuses on the needs of

supervisors. The limited data available about the needs of child welfare supervisors makes this a

key area for agencies to focus efforts to decrease caseworker turnover. Quality supervision is

critical to ensure that child welfare clients receive services that comply with the laws and

regulations that guide best practice standards. In addition to impacting caseworkers, the current

rate of turnover in PA has most likely added stress on casework supervisors, who play a critical

role in managing organizational changes. Regher et al. (2002) found that supervisors face

increased stress resulting from chronic caseworker turnover, which increases their

responsibilities of training and supporting new hires. Ensuring compliance with reporting

requirements and liability concerns increases stress for managers and supervisors (Regher et al.,

2002).

Caseworkers in the child welfare system are frequently promoted to supervisor positions

with little preparation or training for the new skills required to be successful as an organizational

leader (Strand, 2010). Frequent staff turnover impacts the experience level of supervisors,

meaning open supervisor positions are often filled with workers who have been promoted within

only three years of being hired (United States General Accounting Office (GAO), 2003). This

results in having supervisors who lack enough experience and knowledge to provide effective

leadership to new caseworkers. Supervisors may become overwhelmed by having insufficient

time to learn their own new job responsibilities. High caseworker turnover negatively impacts

the quality of supervision, as supervisors must cover caseloads for vacant positions. This reduces

the amount of time and energy supervisors are available to support their caseworkers, especially

new caseworkers who need more attention as they are learning the job (Westbrook et al., 2012).

In PA, the job of a supervisor may vary from county to county, as many supervisors also

perform administrative duties, such as managing and supervising contracted services,

interviewing and hiring new staff, training new staff, dealing directly with client issues,

testifying in court, covering for their caseworkers while they are out of the office, and reviewing

caseworker dictation and paperwork reports. As caseworkers leave agencies, the training and

orientation of new caseworkers falls onto supervisors, who may also be managing their own

caseloads due to a shortage of staff. New caseworkers in Pennsylvania are required to attend 120

hours of training outside of the office, and during this training period, their supervisor is

responsible for covering cases for them in their absence. Many supervisors shadow new

caseworkers in the field or assist new caseworkers with court appearances, in addition to having

to do their own field visits for cases they are covering. This impacts other caseworkers as well

since their supervisor is out of the office and unavailable to support them when they need

immediate assistance.

Quality supervision is critical to retain caseworkers and provide effective services in

child welfare agencies (Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Ellett, 2000; Ellett et al., 2003;

GAO, 2003; Westbrook et al., 2012). A (GAO) study (2003) of national caseworker retention

issues found that "high quality supervision and adequate on-the-job training" (p. 3) influenced

workers' desire to stay on the job. However, the study also indicated that newly promoted

supervisors felt unprepared to sufficiently meet the demands of the job (GAO, 2003). Broad

approaches to address caseworker recruitment and retention issues include strengthening the skills of supervisors to become more effective leaders and acknowledging the difference in needs between experienced staff and inexperienced staff (Zlotnick et al., 2009).

High supervisory support has been shown to reduce caseworkers' desire to leave an organization, while low co-worker support predicted caseworker turnover (Nissly et al., 2005; DePanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008). The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (2014) reported that "having highly skilled supervisors is a primary focus of efforts to improve the capacity of the child welfare workforce and is identified as a critical component to developing an effective child welfare workforce" (McCrae et al., 2015, p. 171). Child welfare supervisors need training and support to help them understand how to respond to the diverse needs of new and experienced caseworkers. A study by Spence et al. (2001) found that supervisors reported they received little training in how to supervise, which resulted in supervisors who were not adaptive to the individual needs of their supervisees, even when they believed they were. Inexperienced supervisors tended to feel more comfortable using directive supervision, assigning specific tasks to their employees, while experienced supervisors preferred a supportive style of supervision that allowed their employees flexibility in deciding how to complete their job (Carpenter et al., 2013).

Supervisors may impact caseworkers' intentions to stay in their jobs, dependent upon whether caseworkers feel they receive supportive and competent supervision (Smith, 2005). Workers value "positive relationships, mutual communication, support, and delegating responsibility" (Carpenter et al., 2013, p. 1844) from supervisors who are skilled and provide practical support. Being an effective supervisor has been defined as guiding caseworkers to understand how their work is helping children and families (Chen et al., 2012). Support from the

immediate supervisor is predictive of job satisfaction (Landsman, 2007). An APHSA (2005) survey found that "good supervision, with a supervisor who cares about the worker as a person" (p. 42) was the highest rated factor under organizational and personal factors that child welfare administrators considered to be important in impacting staff retention. Qualities shown to impact caseworker retention included having a supervisor who respects caseworkers' autonomy and competency while still being available to provide support and consultation when needed (Ellett et al., 2006; Zlotnik et al., 2009, p. 13).

A meta-analysis by Mor Barak et al. (2009) included a portion of seven studies that included child welfare cases out of a total of 27 studies. Since responses were not primarily from child welfare professionals, generalizability of findings was limited. The study found that job satisfaction, workers' commitment to the organization, well-being, and perceived effectiveness were all positively related to their supervisor's task assistance (Carpenter et al., 2013). Task assistance was defined as the "supervisor's ability to provide tangible, work-related guidance, and social and emotional support in responding to the worker's emotional needs and stress, through interpersonal interaction" (Carpenter et al., 2013, p. 1844).

The effectiveness of supervision is improved by allowing supervisors to participate in designing and implementing training (Landsman, 2007). Westbrook et al. (2012) analyzed survey responses in a state-wide qualitative study of more than 1,000 child welfare staff from a southern state and found that caseworkers rely more on their supervisors for support than from agency administration. The study supported previous research that caseworkers' level of satisfaction with supervision impacts retention rates. Caseworkers who reported an intent to continue a career in child welfare rated supervisory support (Westbrook et al., 2012) with significantly higher positive ratings than respondents who were less likely to remain in the job.

A quantitative study by Smith (2005) that focused on assessing the role of supervisor support in job retention analyzed actual departures of staff who left the job, rather than just an intention to leave. Data about factors that influenced job retention were gathered through in-person surveys of 269 workers in public child welfare staff two separate times, 15 to 17 months apart. Findings suggested that employees who felt they had a "supportive, competent supervisor" (Smith, 2005, p. 156) were more likely to remain on the job. Supervisors may increase caseworker satisfaction by more clearly delineating the reasons for work requirements and by providing more immediate positive feedback and praise to caseworkers (Chen et al., 2012).

Quality supervision is a key factor in child welfare retention, especially in retaining direct service workers (American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), 2005; Jacquet et al., 2007; Zlotnik et al., 2009). Supervisors are an important key to improving communication barriers between management and frontline workers. Supervisors were found to be caseworkers' preferred source to receive relevant job information, particularly when implementing change (Cao et al., 2016). Within organizations experiencing change, "the supervisor was considered the 'architect of change'" (Cao et al., 2016, p. 46), who is best equipped to communicate the vision at the unit or group level.

Management and Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is determined by the way the work environment operates, which depends upon how the organization is managed. A gap exists in literature related to the needs of managers and administrators in public child welfare settings, even though research has shown that organizational climate influences agency turnover (Shim, 2010).

Managers and supervisors in child welfare have been largely ignored in the professional literature, other than to focus on how to support workers (Regher et al., 2002). The structure of

management teams varies between counties, but all PA counties have a director or administrator who is responsible for monitoring, funding, staffing, and implementing agency policies and procedures that align with county, state, and federal governmental requirements. Potter and Brittain (2009) report that management is responsible for setting routines and monitoring day-to-day activities, allocating resources, planning for short-term goals, and providing a problem-solving and decision-making structure through which to accomplish the work. Some counties, dependent upon their size and resources, may have a management team that also includes an assistant director and/or manager who performs similar tasks that support the agency mission.

Child welfare leadership requires being "skilled at dealing with the internal and external complexities of a changing environment" (Bernotavicz et al., 2013, p. 403). Defining what is needed for child welfare management and leadership is difficult because of a lack of research and consensus about the qualities needed to be a successful child welfare administrator or manager. There is no generally accepted definition for child welfare leadership, no dominant paradigms for studying leadership, nor best strategies to be successful for preparing social work practitioners for leadership (Bernotavicz et al., 2013).

The relationship between employee turnover and organizational performance is most often explained using human and social capital theories (Shaw et al., 2005; Strober, 1990). Human capital theory contends that more experienced employees accumulate specialized tacit and formal knowledge and skills through extended task-specific practice, training, and experience (Kacmar et al., 2006). The loss of these experienced employees through turnover damages organizational performance because of the loss of their accumulated expertise. Although organizations can replace employees who leave, organizational performance suffers

because newer employees require time to develop similar levels of competence (Williams &

Glisson, 2013).

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) (2002) developed an

Excellence in Child Welfare Leadership Program that consisted of 13 competencies:

"communicating vision and direction, promoting ethics, leading by example, continuous

learning, strategic thinking, decision making, systems thinking, championing innovation,

organizational astuteness, interpersonal communications, developing leadership, team leadership,

and supporting the community" (Bernotavicz et al., 2013). According to the U.S. Department of

Human Services (2010), "effective leadership and a strong shared vision are critical to the

success of any organization, particularly one facing system-wide change" (p. 5). Achieving a

systems change is challenging because the successful implementation of new policies and

programs must support the desired outcomes (Kreger et al., 2007).

In a mixed methods study to identify the experiences of child welfare supervisors and

managers within a large non-profit child welfare organization in North America, Regher et al.

(2002) sought to identify the stressors experienced by supervisors and managers in the midst of

systemic child welfare reform efforts. The agency had been publicly scrutinized after two high

profile child death coroner's inquests. At the time of the study, the agency was experiencing high

caseworker turnover, increased workload, and additional accountability as part of child welfare

reform efforts, which were found to increase stress at all levels of the organization. The study

suggested that personality characteristics and leadership styles of supervisors and managers have

a significant influence on the ways they support their staff and recommended that focusing on

effective leadership was essential to improve child welfare services.

A recognition of a lack of effective training for child welfare management leaders led the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) (2013) to develop and synthesize the most promising approaches into a leadership development initiative to identify the competencies needed to effectively lead child welfare agencies to make adaptive change (Bernotavicz et al., 2013). The NCWWI Leadership Model was developed after evaluating numerous leadership models, which led to developing recommendations to address the unique nature of leading in the turbulent world of child welfare. This model has been used to provide national leadership development training for child welfare managers with a mission to develop effective child welfare leadership. Five pillars of leadership seen as fundamental principles of the desired qualities and values of effective child welfare leadership include: adaptive, collaborative, distributive, inclusive, and outcome focused, which also align with child welfare values (Bernotavicz et al., 2013). The model has been used to provide national training focused on the skills needed for effective child welfare leadership and agency management.

Organizational climate and culture influence how individuals working within an organization behave (Cahalane & Sites, 2008). Organizations with an engaged climate, where workers feel high levels of personal accomplishment, low levels of emotional exhaustion, and low role conflict, have lower turnover rates (Glisson et al., 2006). Scholarly literature indicates that in addition to the quality of supervision and management, turnover within organizations is impacted by organizational climate. Organizational culture has been shown to predict an intent to remain employed (Depanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008; Ellett, 2000), and overall job satisfaction also predicted retention (Cahalane & Sites, 2004; Depanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008). A qualitative analysis of 154 documents found how caseworkers perceive administrative support predicted an intention to remain employed (DePanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008, p. 1006). Having clear and effective incentives

for child welfare employees to do an excellent job may significantly influence a caseworker to continue working in the public child welfare system (Shim, 2010). Retention of competent workers is critical to child welfare services because the way caseworkers interact with clients determines the quality of the social services that are provided (Yoon & Hyun, 2017). Having quality outcomes is important to meet the needs of clients, as well as meeting regulatory requirements for funding.

Hopkins et al. (2010) attempted to identify behavioral signs indicative of a caseworker's intent to leave by examining data from an online survey completed by 621 public child welfare employees in a mid-Atlantic state. This quantitative study found that employees planning to leave often engage in a continuum of behaviors that precede turnover. Organizational withdrawal behaviors, such as being late for work, taking long lunches, absenteeism, and missing meetings, were good predictors of actual turnover (Hopkins et al., 2010). The study suggested that employee stress, safety, and inclusion in decision-making, were more critical indicators of turnover than how they were supervised, but organizational climate impacted a desire to leave.

Although research findings specifically focused on management in child welfare settings are limited, child welfare administration and upper management have historically been unresponsive to the needs of caseworkers. For example, a grand jury in a 2009 child death case in Sacramento, California, that cited frequent caseworker turnover as an issue also found a "longstanding effort on the part of management to avoid responsibility or accountability" (Quinn, 2017, p. 41) and a tendency to shift blame onto employees. A government study by the District of Columbia's Office of the Inspector General (2011) found that low morale, defined as having elevated levels of stress, poor quality of supervision, and workers who reported they did not feel valued by the agency, led to caseworker turnover (Quinn, 2017).

Improving ineffective management practices may be difficult when organizations are resistant to change. A study involving exit surveys from a Texas Department of Human Services study of child welfare turnover (2014) found that one of the top reasons given by employees for leaving employment with their agencies was having issues with a supervisor (Quinn, 2017). In this study, quality of supervision was defined as the degree of trust between the supervisor and employees, which has been shown to be a factor that directly influences the quality of the work climate. Even though the Texas state legislature had required the child welfare system to develop a human resource management plan to address caseworker turnover, two years later, the problem persisted. Caseworker exit interviews still indicated that poor supervisory support and a lack of management support were the reasons they left (Quinn, 2017).

A mixed methods study (Griffiths & Royce, 2017) that surveyed former child welfare employees about the reasons they left their caseworker jobs found the primary reason given for their dissatisfaction with the job was a lack of support from the organization's upper-level management. A comparison to results from a previous survey two years earlier indicated that the reasons caseworkers gave for leaving their jobs had not changed (Griffiths & Royce, 2017). Upper management was viewed as not being supportive, responsive, or caring. Specific reasons given included unrealistic expectations, a lack of interest in employees' stress or concerns, and inadequate recognition for their challenging work.

Williams et al. (2011) surveyed 260 Georgia caseworkers who reported they felt committed to their agencies and felt management was competent, but they also felt their supervisors and agency management were not supportive of their needs. A lack of caring and absence of a culture of leadership left caseworkers feeling they were not valued. Reasons for dissatisfaction included a lack of recognition or respect from supervisors and no incentives to do

a good job. The study recommended that training was needed to improve supervisors' supportive and leadership skills, with a recognition that new supervisors and experienced supervisors have different training needs.

Communication Strategies of Management

The way organizations engage employees when implementing change can impact how employees react to change. Managing an organization using high transformational leadership strategies, where leaders are energetic, enthusiastic, and focused on helping all members of the organization succeed has been associated with significantly lower ratings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Corrigan et al., 2002) that lead to turnover. A national survey about turnover by the American Public Humane Services Association (APHSA) (2005) that involved 43 states, recommended that "67% of child protective services caseworker turnover could be prevented" (Cyphers, 2001, p. 4) using strategies such as improving the professional culture of the organization and ensuring that workers feel valued and respected (APHSA, 2005). These were defined as ways agencies could increase retention rates without requiring significant resources (APHSA, 2005). High transformational leadership has been shown to increase ratings of personal accomplishment (Green et al., 2014), which reduces turnover.

A study to determine how public child welfare professionals perceived strategies used to communicate change (Cao et al., 2016) involved five focus group interviews with 50 caseworkers from an organization of 700 employees. The study examined how participants had learned about a proposed initiative to improve children's access to the county's behavioral health care system. Caseworkers favored communication approaches that engaged them in planning and implementing changes (Cao et al., 2016). Participants had strong negative reactions to giving feedback and input through surveys and disliked symbolic gestures from administration,

described as times they were asked for input, then never received feedback (Cao et al., 2016).

Communication strategies also influenced caseworkers' opinions about how sincere the

administration was in wanting to engage them in the change process (Cao et al., 2016).

Qualitative interviews with court personnel and child welfare workers reinforced that leadership

is considered to be important in achieving client outcomes. The interviewees believed that

progress in cases reflected times of good leadership and stalled during times of bad leadership

(Farber & Munson, 2010). The results of the study also indicated that having strong leaders, who

also had practical child welfare or human services experience, was important in providing quality

child welfare services (Farber & Munson, 2010).

Exosystem

How an individual sees the system meeting their own needs and the needs of those

around them, including how caseworkers view the clients they serve, is impacted by the

exosystem. The exosystem includes factors at the county level that are outside of the direct

workplace but still have a strong effect on the child welfare practices, such as the courts and

county government. County government may impact how county officials view and fund child

welfare work in each county. Counties vary widely, as they have different resources,

philosophies, and approaches. County government influences public child welfare turnover

because county funding impacts agencies' ability to hire staff or develop new programming to

meet the demands of the child welfare system. Caseworker turnover is directly affected since

each county may face unique barriers to resolving local turnover issues.

Urban vs. Rural Factors

At the exosystem level, the workplace and the surrounding community interact with the

other levels of the system. Studies have indicated mixed results in terms of turnover in suburban,

rural, or urban settings. According to the U.S. Census (2010), 60 million people, 19% of the U.S.

population, live in rural areas, defined as any "population, housing, or territory not in an urban

area." A demographic analysis of U.S. child welfare caseworkers by Barth et al. (2008) indicated

77% were employed in urban settings. Weaver et al.'s (2007) evaluation of turnover among

1,165 child welfare workers in California found that caseworker turnover was higher in rural

areas than in counties with more dense populations.

Williams et al. (2010) studied retention patterns of 260 child welfare workers in the state

of Georgia in both rural and urban areas. The mixed methods study explored worker retention

patterns of Georgia child welfare workers in relation to management style and professionalism of

supervisors. The study found that rural counties needed more training in cultural knowledge, but

no differences were reported between geographic areas in terms of problems related to

supervision and management.

Comparing rural, urban, and suburban child welfare districts in public welfare agencies in

the state of New York, Strolin-Goetzman et al. (2008) found that intentions to leave were lower

in suburban areas than in urban or rural communities. Secondary data from a 2005 survey of

organizational excellence of 2,903 public child protection caseworkers and supervisors from the

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services was analyzed to see how personal and

organizational factors impacted an intention to leave for workers residing in urban, small-town,

or rural counties (Aguiniga et al., 2013). Geographical location was not found to be a predictor

of intention to leave; however, differences were found among urban, small-town, and rural

employees (Aguiniga et al., 2013). Workers residing in urban areas were more likely to have a

master's degree and be members of a racial or ethnic minority group, while workers in small-

town counties were more likely to be older with more longevity within their agencies (Aguiniga

et al., 2013). Caseworkers in nonurban settings earned less than their peers in urban settings (Barth et al., 2008).

Salary and Benefits

Salary and benefits cross multiple levels of the ecological system because funding is determined at federal, state, and county levels of the macrosystem. Since the differences in PA caseworker salaries are strongly impacted by county polices, they are being listed as an ecosystem level factor, with recognition that the state and federal governments also influence salaries and benefits. The funding structure that requires counties to contribute matching funds for caseworker salaries was discussed earlier in Chapter 1.

Low salaries may lead caseworkers to feel devalued in their jobs. Augsberger et al. (2012) found that a key factor between workers' perceptions of respect in the workplace and their intention to leave, was financial. Fair salary and benefits have been reported to equate with feeling respected and valued for one's work (Augsberger et al., 2012). Frequent reasons given for leaving the job were low salary, lack of pay increases, inadequate benefits, and pay not commensurate with the high workload (Augsberger et al., 2012).

A 2016 study by the Pennsylvania Auditor General's Office found that the average starting salary for county caseworkers was $30,018, which was at least $20,000 less than other starting salaries in 2016 for professionals with a bachelor's degree (DePasquale, 2017). According to PA DHS guidelines (2018), a family of three qualifies for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) if they earn $32,676 a year, which means the salary many caseworkers are earning is below the level needed to provide basic family sustenance. In Snyder and Montour counties, caseworker pay starts at just over $21,000 a year, and in Northumberland

County, it is just over $22,000 (Finnerty, 2017). The low salaries provided to caseworkers may

impact how caseworkers view their jobs to be less valued in society.

Complexity in the Child Welfare System

Learning the job requirements for a caseworker in the child welfare system can be

overwhelming. All children from ages birth to 18 years old qualify for involvement with the PA

child welfare system, if they are alleged to meet the definition of the PA Juvenile Act 6302 of

"without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care

or control necessary for his physical, mental, or emotional health, or morals." Parenting

problems that contribute to child welfare case involvement may include multiple issues that

require clients to work with other systems that intersect with the child welfare system. Medical

providers, housing programs, welfare services, educational systems, behavioral health systems,

drug and alcohol services, law enforcement, early intervention services, intellectual disability

services and court systems may all share clients who are being served by the child welfare

system.

Navigating multiple complex systems may be difficult for caseworkers, especially new

caseworkers who are still learning their own job responsibilities. Providers may have different

perspectives, strategies, and goals for working with clients, which may lead to conflict when

providers do not communicate and collaborate effectively (Kopels et al., 2002). Each different

service provider may have different policies, funding, or legal, political, and social environments

that can create challenges in working collaboratively with the child welfare system (Darlington

et al., 2004). In a collaborative project between a public child welfare agency and a school of

social work, Kopels et al. (2002) worked with a child welfare service delivery system and its

legal, domestic violence, and substance abuse communities to improve collaboration. Findings

indicated that agency teaming and collaboration was improved, and conflict reduced when system partners shared their perspectives, unique concerns, and contributions in working with families (Kopels et al., 2002).

The Impact of the Juvenile Court on the PA Child Welfare System

The juvenile court impacts the child welfare system in many ways, since the court provides the authority for child welfare agencies to intervene to protect children who are being maltreated. PA's Juvenile Act (1972) governs when abused and neglected children can be removed from their homes. In addition to defining crimes for children under the age of 18 years-old, the act defines how any child, ages birth to 17 years-old, may be adjudicated dependent. An adjudication of dependency results in the court assuming authority over a child. The juvenile court can take custody of children, determine case goals and actions, decide where children will live, and order reasonable efforts that child welfare agencies must make to preserve families. Once a child is adjudicated dependent, the juvenile court may retain authority for decision-making about the child's best interests until the child reaches 21 years-old.

The judicial system impacts individual decision-making on cases, in addition to larger legal precedents that impact the entire system. Research about how the juvenile court impacts decision-making in the child welfare system is limited; however, PA caseworkers have reported that court requirements impact their workload (Johnston-Walsh et al., 2010). In a study to measure how juvenile court staff influence caseworker practice, Carnochan et al. (2006) reported that caseworkers' conflict with the juvenile court stems from tensions based upon different ideologies. Child welfare caseworkers are trained to support and preserve, while juvenile court staff are trained to work in an adversarial approach (Carnochan, 2006). This study also documented child welfare and legal professionals' criticisms of each other, with each side

questioning the others' competence. In a qualitative study of child welfare caseworkers, Smith and Donovan (2003) found that some caseworkers felt pressured to choose the type of family interventions on their cases, based upon ones they believed the juvenile court personnel would approve, not necessarily based upon their own opinions of best practice.

Although counties are required to adhere to the same laws, standards, and judicial rules, juvenile court practices across PA are inconsistent (Johnston-Walsh et al., 2010). In 2007, the PA Supreme Court adopted state-wide court rules for the juvenile court to provide more uniformity among counties. However, courts still have local rules that vary between counties (Johnston-Walsh et al., 2010), which may reflect the values of the judges who preside over the courts. Within each county, the courts may adopt local rules of procedure. Local court rules may impact caseworkers' workload, such as the type of paperwork that caseworkers must submit to the court, deadlines for when and how often paperwork in each county must be submitted, and variations about who will review the paperwork within the court system. Local rules can impact how often dependency review hearings will occur, dictate the circumstances for county child welfare agencies to file with the courts, and set requirements for who must appear and testify at hearings.

Research into how caseworkers view the juvenile court indicates a history of conflict, based upon a difference in values, overlapping responsibilities, and negative perceptions between caseworkers and court employees (Carnochan et al., 2006). Disagreements about how to handle cases can lead to conflict between county child welfare agencies and the court system. For example, despite opposing recommendations from child welfare agencies, the juvenile court can order child welfare agencies to remove children from their parents, decide where children will be placed, and mandate how agencies must supervise cases. Juvenile courts have the authority to order child welfare agencies to provide additional services, such as increased home visits,

transportation services, and professional evaluations. Courts can make decisions without regard to staffing limitations, an agency's ability to pay for placements or services, or the agency's ability to supervise a placement setting, even if the setting is hours away. Child welfare agencies that disagree with court orders have little recourse, except to file legal appeals. County agencies may be reluctant to file appeals out of fear of repercussions from the judge, political concerns, or due to the expense and time involved in filing an appeal.

The Kids for Cash scandal that occurred in a PA county between 2003-2008 illustrates the power the juvenile court has in making decisions over children in the child welfare system. In this case, two Luzerne County judges accepted nearly $2.6 million in kickbacks from two private for-profit juvenile facilities in exchange for agreeing to place children into their institutions. According to the Juvenile Law Center (2018), a child advocacy organization that filed a lawsuit on behalf of the children who were affected, this judicial corruption case involved more than 6,000 cases that came before the juvenile court. At least 2,500 children were ordered to live in substandard, expensive residential programs, often for minor offenses. These court-ordered placements depleted the resources of the county child welfare agency that had to pay for these court-ordered placements.

In 2007, a Children's Roundtable Initiative began with a mission to improve the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court System. According to the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC), the agency that guides PA juvenile court practice in dependency proceedings, the roundtable model provides collaboration on child welfare dependency practice between the Juvenile Dependency Courts, OCFC, the Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families (DHS/OCYF), and other relevant stakeholders. PA judges' roundtables have influenced how judges view their role in child welfare cases since guidance was issued through

the PA Dependency Benchbook, which was written by PA judges and released in July 2010. The

roundtable structure offers guidance to individual county dependency court systems; however,

each judicial district still has the option of adapting practices to meet their individual needs.

Among the hierarchy of county courts, juvenile and family courts are often seen as

having less status within local court systems, leading to frequent turnover of judges that results in

"a lack of expertise and continuity," according to Chief Justice Ronald M. George, as cited in

Carnochan et al. (2006). Johnston-Walsh et al. (2010) surveyed lawyers and social workers from

34 of the 67 PA counties and found that although counties are required to meet the same legal

standards and judicial rules, court practices vary widely from county to county. A lack of

consistency among county courts across the state leads to different county child welfare practices

since the views and decisions of each county's juvenile court judges influence local child welfare

practices.

Efforts to improve the juvenile court system have impacted workloads for child welfare

caseworkers. For example, a recommendation to increase the number of dependency court

reviews has increased permanency review hearings for children in placement in many counties,

from once every 6 months to every 3 months. This has doubled the frequency that caseworkers

must attend court hearings and increased the paperwork that must be done for every hearing.

Caseworkers must complete reports and petitions to courts, send hearing notices to all

parties, and complete other paperwork required after hearings. Caseworkers may be required to

transport clients to and from court and supervise children on their caseloads, while waiting an

entire day to appear at a hearing. Additional tasks related to court reviews may involve meetings

with attorneys, contacting witnesses, preparing testimony, and completing reports before and

after court reviews. The increased court oversight of cases has increased court influence about

how casework services are provided to children and families. Although frequent hearings may provide benefits such as achieving more timely permanency in some cases (Johnston-Walsh et al., 2010), the increased frequency of court hearings decreases the amount of time caseworkers have to work directly with their clients.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outer layer of the ecosystem that influences all the levels within. State and federal laws impact funding that determines the resources the child welfare system has to address social problems and also influence the workplace. For example, a crisis ensued when the CPSL changes increased the workload for public child welfare agencies without sufficiently addressing county agency resources needed to meet the additional requirements. The pressure to quickly implement CPSL mandates impacted agencies who were unable to effectively manage the changes, and when caseworkers became overwhelmed, turnover increased state-wide. Although federal and state requirements are the same for all PA counties, the CPSL requirements impacted counties differently because resources and social service needs vary between counties. By requiring the same expectations for all counties regardless of their ability to comply, the state system does not recognize or address the barriers individual counties face. Factors listed in the macrosystem frequently interact and overlap with the other system levels where the impact may be more visible. Federal and state funding and regulations often influence the work of child welfare caseworkers.

Community Social Problems

The social problems in communities impact child welfare services. For example, PA has experienced an opioid epidemic that has resulted in many parents being unable to appropriately care for their children. Drug abuse, particularly opioid abuse, has been described by the PA

Department of Health (2019) as "the worst public health crisis in Pennsylvania." According to

the PA Annual Child Protective Services Report (2019), general protective services

investigations in the state during 2018 involved 86,345 of valid allegations, which included

19,946 (23%) of cases that involved parental substance abuse, indicating there was evidence to

that parental drug abuse was a child safety concern.

Safety Risks and Hazards

Safety risks and hazards are a constant concern for caseworkers in child welfare services.

Workplace violence impacts caseworkers' psychological well-being due to the demands in

working with involuntary child welfare clients (Robson, 2014). An investigation of PA child

protective services workers (Skiba & Cosner, 1990) found that almost 50% of respondents

reported they were verbally assaulted and over 25% reported they had been physically assaulted

by a client. A literature review of studies related to work-related violence involving social

workers between 1982-2012 reported annual rates of psychological violence that varied from

37% to 97%, while rates of physical violence ranged from 2% to 34% (Robson et al., 2014).

A quantitative study (Newhill & Wexler, 1997) that surveyed NASW members from PA

and California found that caseworkers from child welfare experienced threats, property damage,

and attempted or actual attacks at significantly higher levels than other social work practitioners.

Of the 10% of total respondents (N=111) who self-identified as practicing primarily in the field

of children and youth services, 75% reported they had experienced at least one incident of being

either verbally or physically assaulted by a client (Newhill & Wexler, 1997).Caseworkers may

have to travel to neighborhoods where they face environmental safety risks during home visits.

In qualitative interviews (Kim & Hopkins, 2017) with 37 caseworkers, respondents reported

experiencing frequent verbal or physical threats from clients and unsafe environmental

conditions during their home visits. Besides concerns about being victimized by clients, caseworkers also experienced being victimized by non-clients. Caseworkers also expressed concerns about visiting neighborhoods known as drug or gang areas, or areas where recent violence had occurred. During home visits, caseworkers were concerned about unsanitary clients' homes because of risks to their own personal health (Kim & Hopkins, 2017).

The way caseworkers perceive their personal safety impacts caseworker turnover since feeling unsafe at work is associated with fatigue and disengagement from work (Kim & Hopkins, 2015) that may lead to burnout (Maslach, 1998). In qualitative interviews, Lamothe et al. (2018) asked 14 child protective caseworkers, whose jobs required making home visits to clients, to describe their own experiences of violence. Caseworkers reported they usually had to make home visits alone and they faced psychological and physical violence, or threats of violence. Minor incidents of psychological violence were described as "sarcasm, passive-aggression, slamming doors," while more serious incidents involved "insults, threats of complaints, and destroying property" (Lamothe et al., 2018, p. 312). Caseworkers worried about working alone in the field where they had to rely on their own skills to deal with client violence.

Caseload Size

The macrosystem and exosystem overlap in terms of child welfare practices and social problems in each county, which also impacts caseload sizes. Caseload size is impacted at the macrosystem level, where the state and federal governments set requirements for PA public child welfare agencies in each county. For example, as previously discussed, the PA CPSL changes dramatically increased the number of cases that were referred to the child welfare system and widened the criteria for cases to be accepted for services. Although caseload size varies among

counties at the exosystem level, problems related to caseload size begin at the macrosystem level because state and federal laws mandate which cases must be accepted for service.

The Children's Bureau, a division of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, distributes federal child welfare funding and monitors how states provide child welfare services through Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) (USDHHS, 2017). States can lose federal funding if they do not meet CFSR outcome measures, which are designed to maintain quality standards (Yamatani et al., 2009). Since 2001, during CFSR evaluations across the country, when evaluated for compliance with federal government outcome measures, states stressed that caseload sizes need to be reduced in order to achieve the federally regulated outcomes for child safety, permanency, and well-being (USDHHS, 2018). When agencies fail to maintain reasonable workloads, caseworkers have difficulty complying with regulations.

According to Casey Family Programs (2017), high caseload sizes can lead to increased caseworker turnover. The problem of recruiting and retaining qualified child welfare caseworkers has been a national issue for over four decades (Strolin-Goltzman, 2009), as 90% of states have reported that staff attrition due to high caseloads is a key concern for child welfare agencies (Cyphers, 2001; GAO, 2003). According to a report by the federal government, high child welfare caseloads of 24 to 31 children are too high to provide effective services to children and families (GAO, 2003). A survey of former child welfare caseworkers by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2006) found that 75% reported they left because they had excessive caseloads that required frequent overtime work, which was often unpaid (Yamatani et al., 2009). Overloading caseworkers can harm children when overburdened caseworkers make mistakes, which leave agencies vulnerable to liability repercussions. Resulting lawsuits can have

a devastating impact on an agency (Yamatani et al., 2009).

Documentation Requirements

Part of the workload in child welfare involves documenting casework activities to

provide evidence of compliance with regulatory requirements. Paperwork requirements are

designed to ensure that quality services are being provided, often in response to legislation that

requires specific documentation to qualify for funding. An investigation into problems within the

child welfare system by Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale (2017) found that the

new CPSL requirements have increased paperwork for each referral. Caseworkers have

numerous paperwork requirements that include case notes, safety assessments, risk assessments,

court reports, and fiscal paperwork. The new requirements have resulted in caseworkers

spending up to three hours documenting a 45-minute visit with a family, and up to 5 hours filling

out forms documenting an assessment for one family (Ciavaglia, 2017).

A qualitative study by Gibson, Samuels, and Price (2018) that involved in-depth

interviews with 28 child welfare professionals working in a Midwestern city, found that

caseworkers viewed paperwork requirements as a barrier to providing quality services to clients.

Paperwork was seen as conflicting with social work values because of its impact on effective

child welfare practice. Compliance with documentation was seen by caseworkers as being more

valued by the agencies than meeting the needs of clients. Participants shared concerns that

paperwork took time away from developing relationships with clients, particularly in terms

limiting face to face meetings (Gibson et al., 2018). Caseworkers perceived that their views

differed from management in how quality services were measured, since completion of

paperwork was rewarded, while work that involved successfully engaging clients was not

recognized.

Time Constraints

Child welfare casework involves numerous time limits that are regulated by child welfare policies. An abrupt increase in workload can negatively impact caseworkers' emotional conditions when caseworkers are no longer able to complete their work in a timely manner. Adding strict deadlines to a job that is already emotionally demanding adds to the stress levels of caseworkers. Young et al. (1998) listed "the four clocks" faced by caseworkers in their daily practice as "competing timelines for permanency planning, federal assistance time limits, caregiver substance abuse recovery, and developmental timetables related to children's well-being" (He et al., 2018, p. 50). Caseworkers are affected by other time-sensitive issues such as responding to emergencies on cases, in addition to meeting deadlines for preparing court paperwork, case plans, and other documentation requirements (He et al., 2018). Other time-sensitive activities include requirements for home visits to clients and having family visits for children in substitute care. Time spent on paperwork, traveling, transporting clients, and having inadequate resources to meet clients' needs results in caseworkers feeling dissatisfied with their jobs (APHSA, 2004).

Pressure from time constraints is significantly associated with job burnout (He et al., 2018). A quantitative study project by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute examined a secondary data analysis of survey data responses from two Midwestern states and a large county in a Western state (N=4250) to determine how job demands and access to external resources affected burnout for public child welfare caseworkers (He, 2018). Job demands related to job stress and time pressure were found to be significantly and positively related to client-related burnout, which may contribute to caseworker turnover.

Opportunities for Professional Growth

Using a secondary data set collected in 2004 from a sample of 269 public child welfare caseworkers, an exploratory quantitative study by Chen et al. (2012) found that pay and benefits were less important in retention rates than responding to caseworkers' needs for growth. Growth needs were defined as "having a sense of accomplishment, making a difference, and fulfilling personal career goals" (Chen et al., 2012, p. 2091). A qualitative study to measure organizational climate found that growth and advancement within an organization were important for staff retention (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998). The reasons caseworkers left child welfare were dissatisfaction about a lack of opportunities to utilize their skills and abilities, not being allowed to use their own judgment in decision-making, and a lack of recognition of their efforts in working with a challenging client population (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998).

A federal GAO study (2003) reported that ways to improve caseworker retention rates included accreditation, leadership and mentoring programs, competency-based interviews, and recruitment bonuses (APHSA, 2005). Caseworkers who perceived that their agency supported continuing education were more likely to feel supported as professionals (APHSA, 2005). University training partnerships, such as PA's Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) Program, where tuition is subsidized to allow caseworkers to earn a master's degree in social work, have also been shown to improve retention (Cahalane & Sites, 2008). Caseworkers who remained employed in public child welfare after graduating with their master's degrees were motivated to remain by growth and advancement opportunities (Cahalane & Sites, 2008).

Legislation and Funding

State and federal legislation are part of the macrosystem that impacts caseworker turnover. The way the state funds child welfare services creates problems at the macrosystem

level that impact all of the inner levels of the ecological system. Governmental mandates affect

caseworkers' workloads due to legislated job requirements for the child welfare system. Funding

is dictated by government appropriations, which impacts caseworker salaries and the availability

of resources caseworkers need to do their jobs.

PA's county-based funding structure impacts caseworker turnover, as it leads to a wide

variation in county practices. To understand how counties access resources, it is necessary to

look at the complicated funding system that each county's child welfare agency administrator

must navigate to obtain funding to increase its workforce or other programming resources.

Federal and state governments require paperwork and other documentation to maintain

accountability for how their services are being delivered and how funds are spent. Each PA

county agency is monitored by the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF), which is a

department of PA's Human Services Division. OCYF provides regulations and oversight to

ensure that counties comply with the state regulations derived from state and federal legislation

(DePasquale, 2017). Since the funding formulas for child welfare services require each of its 67

counties to provide matching funds to access state and federal funding, it is important to

understand the burden that counties face in having to pay for child welfare services.

Table 5 shows how funding for child welfare services was distributed between the state,

county, and federal governments in 2016 based upon DPW annual reports (2013-2017). PA

counties contributed more to fund child welfare services than the federal government, in order to

comply with services that include federal mandates (Depasquale, 2017).

Table 5

Comparison of State, County and Federal Child Welfare Spending by Fiscal Year

Pennsylvania child welfare funding	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
State funding	$1.077 billion	$ 1.036 billion	$1.426 billion	$1.5 billion
County funding	$411 million	$398 million	County and state combined	County and state combined
Federal funding	$356 million	$350 million	$346 million	$300 million

Note. PA changed the way it reported funding after fiscal year 2014-15 to start separating county funding from state funding contributions.

PA's state fiscal year budget runs from July 1 through June 30, which is different than a county's budgeted January 1 through December 31 fiscal year. Federal fiscal years cover dates between October 1 through September 30. The different funding for fiscal years results in a complicated system that may delay funding being received at the county level when budgets at the state and federal levels are not approved in a timely manner.

Summary

In summary, high turnover of caseworkers should concern our society because an organization's ability to provide quality services to address child maltreatment depends upon its ability to recruit and retain competent and committed staff. The literature review of scholarly research explored factors within the ecological system levels that impact caseworker turnover at the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem levels. Research findings on individual factors that affect turnover were limited (Edwards & Wildeman, 2018), which indicates this may be an area that needs further research. Understanding which individual

characteristics are associated with lower turnover might lead to improved hiring of caseworkers who would be more likely to stay in the field of child welfare.

Supervision has been found to be important to child welfare retention; however, more research is needed to understand how to effectively train and support supervisors in the child welfare system. Since quality supervision has been shown to reduce caseworker turnover, increasing support for supervisors who are overloaded with numerous responsibilities may allow them to have more time to focus on supporting caseworkers. Research related to how child welfare management impacts turnover is limited. More research about the needs of child welfare management practices would be helpful to identify how to train and support child welfare administrators and managers to reduce caseworker turnover.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the research design and approach selected for the current study about caseworker turnover. Included in this section is a description of the methods used to analyze and interpret a secondary data set that included multiple-answer responses and open-ended responses. Data was obtained from a workforce assessment survey collected by Kim and Kovarie (2017-2018). The workforce assessment survey consisted of multiple-answer questions, followed by open-ended questions that provided descriptive data in caseworkers' own words to identify factors that impact turnover from the perspective of child welfare caseworkers. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania approved the study (IRB approval number: 10092018, Appendix C).

Research Questions

The goal of this exploratory research was to better understand why caseworkers leave their jobs. Research questions were developed following a literature review of previous findings related to caseworker turnover. Three research questions for this study were formulated:

1. What factors impact caseworkers' views about reasons they want to leave their jobs in public child welfare services?

2. What factors impact caseworkers' views about reasons they want to stay in public child welfare services?

3. Do caseworkers' views of supervisors and agency management impact whether or not they want to leave their jobs?

The third research question was added after the literature review identified a gap in research on supervision and management. Quality supervision and management have been

shown to reduce caseworker desire to leave an organization. This study analyzed written responses from caseworkers to determine how supervision and management impact their desire to stay in the job. Finally, this study explored what caseworkers want from supervisors and agency management that may reduce turnover.

Background of Workforce Assessment Data

Kim and Kovarie developed a 100-item electronic online workforce assessment survey, distributed to PA public child welfare agencies in December 2017 through January 2018 with the cooperation of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association (Kim, Kovarie, & Marsh, 2019). The data set included responses from caseworkers actively employed in a public child welfare agency at the time of the survey. No compensation was provided for their voluntary participation.

Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association (PCYA), a branch of County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) that represents PA county child welfare administrators, assisted the researchers in gaining access to county child welfare agency administrators by endorsing the survey. The online questionnaire was sent to all county caseworkers in participating public child welfare agencies via PCYA's database of email addresses. The data captured from the survey consisted primarily of quantitative responses, but also included four open-ended questions that encouraged participants to clarify their responses by sharing comments in their own words. Appendix A provides text from the survey.

Description of the Sample

Thirty-three of PA's 67 county child welfare agencies participated in the study. The sample of 511 caseworkers contained 511 closed-ended responses, and 401 caseworkers also

provided open-ended responses. To obtain demographic information, the survey requested

participants answer these questions:

"How old are you?" (open-ended question)

"What is your gender?" (female, male, other, please specify)

"What is the highest level of education you have completed?" (open-ended question)

"What was your undergraduate major?" (open-ended question)

"What was your graduate major?" (open-ended question)

"What is the name of your agency (organization)?" (open-ended question)

"Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one):

- o   American Indian or Alaskan Native

- o   Asian/Pacific Islander

- o   Black or African American

- o   Multiple ethnicity/Other (Please specify) _____

- o   Hispanic

- o   White/Caucasian

Demographic information of the sample is presented in Table 6. Descriptive analysis was

conducted to compute the frequency and percentage of demographic information of the

participants. Participants ages ranged from 21 years old up to 68 years old, with a mean age of

37.89 years old (SD=11.42). The gender of the sample was primarily female, with 388 females

(75.9%), 70 male participants (13.7%), and 8 classifying themselves as other, while 48 persons

did not report their gender. The racial composition of respondents was primarily White,

numbering 425 (83.2%), with 15 (2.9%) Black or African American, 9 (1.8%) Hispanic

respondents, 2 (0.4%) American Indian or Alaskan native respondents, and 8 (1.6%) respondents

self-identified as being multiple ethnicities. Fifty-two (10%) respondents did not indicate their

race/ethnicity. In terms of education level, 355 respondents (59.7%) reported they had at least a

bachelor's degree and 99 (21.2%) respondents had completed graduate school. The level of

education for 45 (8.8%) respondents was not provided.

Table 6

Survey Respondents' Demographic Information

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	13.7%
Female	388	75.9%
Other	5	.097%
Not reported/Unknown	48	9.4%
Race/Ethnicity		
Multiple Ethnicity/Other	8	1.6 %
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	.4%
Black or African American	15	2.9%
Hispanic	9	1.8%
White/Caucasian	425	83.2%
Not Reported/Unknown	52	10.1%
Education		
Graduated from college	305	59.7%
Some graduate school	53	10.3%
Completed graduate school	99	19.4%
Education not reported	54	10.6%
Age		
21-30	129	25.2%
31-40	154	30.2%

41-50	93	18.2%
51-55	24	4.7%
56-68	39	7.7%
No response/Unknown	72	14.0%

Survey Questions Utilized for This Study

Multiple-Answer Questions

Table 7 contains a list of 28 prescribed choices that were provided to participants to choose their top 3 concerns that made them think of leaving their job. The responses have been organized to reflect the four ecological system levels that most often apply to each response. The table shows that several response choices overlap. IBM SPSS 24 software was used to tally the total number of responses for each of the choices.

Table 7

Survey Response Choices for Top Three Concerns That Make You Think of Leaving

Concerns That Make You Want to Leave	Definition
Microsystem	
Depression	A common but serious mood disorder which affects how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working
Determination to continue	A refusal to let anything prevent you from doing what you have decided to do
Emotional demands	Dealing with strong feelings such as sorrow, anger, desperation, and frustration at work
Interpersonal conflict	Direct conflict between the worker and colleagues

Physical demands	Physical tasks required to perform the job
Prefer to work in non-social services industry	Respondent has a desire to work in a job outside of the social services industry
Psychological strain	Emotional reaction due to at least two stressors, either pulling or pushing an individual in different directions

Microsystem & Mesosystem

Negative spillover from work to family	Work negatively affects the way the respondent interacts with their personal life and family
Pursue higher education	Desire to attend further post-secondary academic schooling
Work-home conflict	Conflict between work and family responsibilities which may be due to time constraints, missed work, or family activities, which leads to spillover of stress from work to home or vice versa

Mesosystem

Demanding contact with patients	Behaviors that make interactions unpleasant and may negatively impact the relationship between caseworkers and their clients
Emotional dissonance	Conflict between experienced emotions and emotions expressed to conform to organizational rules, which may lead to job dissatisfaction
Job insecurity	Probability that an individual will lose his/her job
My salary cannot support my college loan	Ability to repay educational loans with current salary
Harassment by clients	Any form of behavior that a caseworker does not want and does not return that offends, humiliates, or intimidates them

Responsibility	Job requirements related to protecting children from harm and working with families to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being of children
Risks and hazards	Job-related risks that may impact caseworker safety
Role ambiguity	A lack of clarity about the expectations for the role of caseworkers
Role conflict	The difference between the role assigned to the caseworker and their actual performance. Worker perceives a conflicting set of demands and feels that his or her roles are in opposition

Exosystem

Complexity	Volatility and unpredictability managing risk with respect to outcomes, dealing with uncertainty in decision-making, and managing conflicts and cooperation with others that impact the job. Includes county government and courts
Performance demands	Outcome measures developed by the organization or regulatory requirements that define what is expected as part of the job
Salary and benefits	The amount of compensation paid for the job that includes financial renumeration as well as health benefits, paid time off, and other employee benefits. Although impacted by the macrosystem funding, for this study salary and benefits are currently influenced strongly at county level

Macrosystem

Accidents and injuries	Work-related accidents or physical injuries
Adverse events	An undesirable experience that seriously impacts the health or safety of a child or adult client of the agency, or has a negative impact on the agency

Risks and hazards	Job-related risks that may impact caseworker safety that may happen during the course of work
Time Pressure	Feelings resulting from deadlines for completing job requirements
Unfavorable work conditions	Work conditions that do not meet the needs of the caseworker
Work overload	Amount of work exceeds the worker's capacity to complete within normal work hours and causes additional stress

Table 8 provides a list of 24 prescribed choices that were provided to participants to choose the top three reasons that make them want to stay in their job. The multiple-answer choices have been organized to reflect the ecological system levels that most often apply to each response. The table shows how some survey responses may overlap between system levels.

Table 8

Survey Response Choices for Top Three Reasons That Make You Want to Stay

Reasons That Make You Stay	Definition
Microsystem	
Hope	A feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen, particularly related to improvement in child welfare system
Life Satisfaction	The way people show their emotions, feelings, and how they feel about their directions and options for the future

Microsystem & Mesosystem

Organizational commitment	Individual's psychological attachment to the organization that leads them to feel an obligation to contribute to the organization's needs
Spillover from work to family	Impact of work on the home domain through the transference of work-related emotions from the employee to others at home
Professional pride	A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction which comes from your work achievements and professional training

Mesosystem

Advancement	A promotion in rank or standing within the organization
Social support from colleagues	Informal emotional responses of empathy, trust and caring from co-workers
Social support from supervisor	Expressions of empathy, trust, and caring by the supervisor toward the caseworker
Supervisory coaching	Regular communication from a supervisor to a caseworker to encourage ways to improve performance and development
Team cohesion	Tendency for a group to be in unity while working towards a goal or to satisfy the emotional needs of its members
Trust in management	A belief that management of an organization can be believed in terms of what they say and do. Trust in management is viewed by employees when management exhibits transparency, honesty, communication, consistency, and predictability

Exosystem

Appreciation	A feeling or expression of admiration, approval, or gratitude within the workplace
Innovative climate	Atmosphere within an organization that fosters creative mechanisms to achieve organizational outcomes and procedures that are conducive to creative and innovative ideas
Participation in decision-making	Extent to which employers allow or encourage employees to share or participate in organizational decision-making

Skill utilization	Using skills when performing job duties
Task variety	A variation in job duties that results in reduced boredom with the job's responsibilities

Macrosystem

Goal clarity	Ability to set a clear and specific objective that all affected parties understand and can work toward achieving. Often impacted by federal and state regulatory requirements
Financial rewards	Monetary incentives that an employee earns as a result of satisfactory performance. They are impacted by funding from state and federal governments
Opportunities for professional development	Access to learning to earn or maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees, formal coursework, attending conferences, and informal learning opportunities to improve professional skills and practice which are impacted by federal and state funding
Performance feedback	The ongoing process between a caseworker and supervisor where information is exchanged concerning the performance expected and the performance exhibited. These are impacted by federal outcome measures
Procedural fairness	Consistent procedures used by a decision-maker when making a decision that follow rules for best practice. These are impacted by state and federal requirements for due process
Safety climate	An environment where caseworkers perceive they are protected from harm through organizational policies, practices, and procedures, that prioritize and ensure the protection of their psychological health and safety, including caseworkers' personal safety outside of the office when making home visits to clients. Environment may vary dependent upon location, but are often impacted by factors related to state and federal government requirements

Service quality	An assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations or outcome measurements such as the federal Child and Family Services Review outcomes measures
Team performance	Results produced by a group of people linked to a common purpose. This may occur multiple systemic levels but is impacted by resources from the state and federal government

Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

In this descriptive exploratory study, a secondary analysis of the open-ended survey responses was conducted using qualitative techniques. The open-ended responses provided a better understanding of the respondents' individual beliefs, experiences, and the situations they encountered working in the public child welfare system. The goal of the open-ended questions was to capture information that may have been missed in the multiple-answer questions and to allow respondents to add any other information they wanted to share. After making their top three choices for reasons to want to leave and to stay, respondents were asked to briefly explain their thoughts for each choice in their own words. Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide further clarification and input with this open-ended question: "Please provide any other thoughts you think will be helpful."

Qualitative Secondary Analysis

This study conducted a secondary analysis of open-ended responses utilizing qualitative techniques. Qualitative secondary analysis (QSA) is emerging as a legitimate approach to qualitative research (Gladstone et al., 2007). QSA has been described as an "invisible enterprise for which there is a notable silence amongst the qualitative research community" (Gladstone et al., 2007, p. 431). One focus of secondary analysis that applies to this study involved supplementary analysis, which utilizes a sub-sample of the primary study population (Heaton,

2004). In this vein, this study focused primarily on responses to multiple-answer questions

(n=511) and examined the open-ended responses (n=401) as supplemental analysis.

Coding of Open-Ended Responses

Four hundred and one caseworkers provided open-ended responses. Coding open-ended

responses involved looking for repetitive patterns and consistencies to grasp meaning from the

words (Saldana, 2009), while avoiding imposing a pre-existing framework onto the data

(Williams & Moser, 2019). Saladana (2009) describes the process of coding in qualitative

inquiry as assigning a short phrase to symbolize, interpret, and summarize an attribute of the

data. Consistency in the use of codes is ensured by a coding manual. The researcher first

developed 27 codes a priori based upon the literature review. Appendix B lists nodes used to

electronically code the qualitative responses.

The researcher coded the open-ended responses in a line to line format in an attempt to

identify nuances and themes within the responses, in addition to coding paragraphs, where it was

necessary to keep the narrative together to provide an accurate interpretation of the response

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Open-ended responses were categorized according to questions about

"why want to leave" and "why want to stay" in addition to "Other" comments. During the coding

process, the researcher looked for patterns of similarity, frequency of responses, or relationships

between caseworkers and reasons for turnover, utilizing NVivo 12 software to code the open-

ended survey responses into nodes that organized the data into units for analysis. New nodes

were developed as needed when a response was identified that required a distinct code for

analysis, and when broader units of information became apparent (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to

accommodate new categories and trends. Assessing the reliability of the coding helps establish

the credibility of qualitative findings (MacPhail et al., 2015). To increase the validity of the

coding, another doctorate level researcher independently reviewed the coded responses to check for intercoder agreement. The rate of agreement was 99% and the researchers discussed areas of disagreement about responses that needed clarification for consensual coding.

After coding of all comments was completed, the researcher reviewed all the open-ended responses of those who chose "trust in management" or "social support from the supervisor" as top reasons to stay. The additional review was related to assessing how caseworkers described responses related to supervision and management. This additional analysis of the data was utilized to identified themes related to ways supervision and management impact caseworker views of turnover, in addition to identifying themes for supervision or management practices that may encourage caseworker retention.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter examines the results of the descriptive statistics and analysis of survey responses from caseworkers who were actively working in the child welfare system. There are two major sections of findings presented, which include the findings related to the top three reasons to leave and top three reasons to want to stay in the job, followed by findings based upon an analysis of caseworkers' open-ended responses in their own words. Findings related to the research questions will be discussed.

Results of Descriptive Analysis of Multiple-Answer Responses

Quantitative Data for Reasons to Leave the Job

Table 9 lists the most frequent answers chosen by respondents from a list of 28 unordered options for the reasons caseworkers want to leave their jobs. Results indicated that low salary (52.6%), work overload (49.3%), and a salary that cannot support payment of college loans (22.7%) were the top three reasons caseworkers chose for wanting to leave their jobs.

Table 9

Top Survey Responses Chosen by Respondents to Want to Leave Their Jobs

Reason to leave the job	Number of responses (N=511)	Percentage of responses
Salary	269	52.6%
Work overload	252	49.3%
My salary cannot support my college loan	116	22.7%
Performance demands	111	21.7%
Time pressure	98	19.2%
Psychological strain	97	19.0%

Negative spillover from work to family	87	17.0%
Unfavorable work conditions	75	14.7%
Risks and hazards	68	13.3%
Responsibility	51	10.0%
Hope	62	10.8 %

Multiple-Answer Responses for Reasons to Want to Stay in the Job

Table 10 provides the top answers 511 caseworkers chose from a list of unordered choices when asked to pick top three reasons to want to stay in the job. The top reasons for wanting to stay in the job were social support from colleagues (37.8%), professional pride (33.1%) and hope (29.2%).

Table 10

Top Survey Responses Chosen by Respondents to Want to Stay in Their Jobs

Reason to stay	Number of times chosen	Percentage
Social support from colleagues	193	37.8%
Professional pride	169	33.1%
Hope	149	29.2%
Social support from supervisor	112	21.9%
Life satisfaction	82	16.0%
Opportunities for professional development	68	13.3%
Skill utilization	63	12.3%
Financial rewards	60	11.7%
Appreciation	54	10.6%
Team cohesion	54	10.4%
Task variety	53	10.4%
Organizational commitment	53	10.4 %

Note. Since respondents chose three options, the total response percentages exceed 100%.

Findings Related to Open-Ended Responses

Open-Ended Survey Results for Reasons to Leave

After participants chose their top three reasons to leave the job from a list of prescribed

choices, they were asked two open-ended questions: (1) "Briefly explain your answers for each

choice" and (2) "Please provide any other thoughts you think will be helpful." The responses to

these questions resulted in 401 open-ended responses. The researcher developed and utilized the

code book in Appendix A to guide consistent coding of responses. Among 570 total items coded

as reasons to leave, most frequently coded open-ended responses for reasons to want to leave the

job were low salary, workload, and emotional demands. Table 11 lists the most frequent open-

ended responses coded as reasons to want to leave the job.

Table 11

Results for Open-Ended Responses Coded as Reasons to Want to Leave the Job

Reasons to leave	Frequency of coded responses (from 570 total coded open-ended responses coded as reasons to leave)*	Percentage of coded open-ended responses
Salary	230	40.5%
Workload	212	37.2%
Emotional demands	202	35.4%
Caseload size	127	22.3%
Time management/deadlines	119	20.8%
Negative view of management	114	20.0%
Documentation	113	19.8%
Work and family balance	108	18.9%
Responsibility of job	82	14.4%
College loan repayment	66	11.6%
Work schedule flexibility	65	11.4%

Note. Qualitative responses sometimes resulted in a duplicated count since responses could be coded under multiple categories.

Table 11 summarized the top reasons coded by the researcher as reasons to leave from 570 comments first coded as reasons to leave. Each of the top ten nodes coded as reasons to want to leave the job (based upon the open-ended responses) will now be described in detail. Excerpts from participants' own words are included.

Salary

Low salary was the most frequently coded node for the open-ended responses given as a reason to want to leave the job. Caseworkers' responses indicated that their salaries do not reflect their level of education, nor support their basic needs. Survey participants reported that their salaries were particularly low compared to other professions that require a bachelor's degree. For example, this caseworker reported that her reasons to want to leave include a low salary that does not recognize the inherent safety risks involved with the job:

> The salary is a complete joke! You get paid $30,000 a year to investigate some serious
>
> things and take parent's children away, go into unsafe situations and are first responders,
>
> yet get paid so little compared to any other first responder. That is also ridiculous!

Some caseworkers reported working two jobs, but still struggling to meet their basic financial needs, such as this respondent, "I work more than a 40-hour work week and can't afford to take care of my own family without the additional pay of a part-time job. It is extremely frustrating."

Another caseworker wrote, "It is a disgrace to the profession that a single mother working as a caseworker qualifies for the same welfare benefits afforded to the clients."

Experienced caseworkers, who are often asked to train new caseworkers, complained that there is little reward for longevity, reflected by having their salaries frozen for years without cost

of living increases. This caseworker's response indicated that salaries do not necessarily improve, even with longevity, "I don't get paid enough to do the work that I do. I have been at my job for over 10 years and only make a little over $30,000 and that is after I do on-call and over time."

Another caseworker stated, "I cannot afford to raise my family on my current salary. My children qualify for free lunches and I have been with the Agency for 15 years!"

Along with low salary, concerns about the rising costs of benefits, particularly health insurance, were a recurring theme. Respondents often tied increased costs of benefits to a lower net pay, with concerns that salaries have not increased as costs have risen. For example, "With the cost of benefits going up so rapidly, I will be making less money next year than I do this year. I do have extensive student loans that I struggle to repay with this salary." Another said, "Salary minus cost of benefits is not a living wage."

This respondent expressed that addressing low salaries may be a solution to caseworker turnover:

> I truly believe that if caseworkers were paid a more appropriate wage, the agency would be able to recruit more qualified candidates, and workforce turnover would decrease. It takes several years for a caseworker to really learn to do quality work with these families, and the majority of our caseworkers don't stay for more than 2 years.

This respondent described how low salaries and a lack of community support are reasons to leave the job, "I believe that my knowledge and experience is underpaid, and my salary reflects to others that my work is not valued or important."

Work Overload

Open-ended responses were coded for work overload 212 times (37.2%) and

included comments where respondents felt the amount of work required for the job was excessive. Both a lack of sufficient time and resources to do the job are reported as reasons caseworkers feel work overload.

One caseworker explained how numerous expectations for job duties of caseworkers can become overwhelming:

There is continued pressure from the clients/families, judges, schools, and management to manage unexpected caseloads each month. The average workday is 8-12 hours, sometimes just to ensure that monthly visits, school meetings, court hearings, attendance at evaluations and paperwork is completed and yet things still get missed.

Another caseworker shared, "The amount of work that I am responsible for is MUCH higher than it should be. I am responsible for far too many cases with limited time. The psychological strain itself is demanding." This caseworker, who reportedly has worked in child welfare for many years, expressed how an increase in duties have diluted an emphasis on child safety:

Child welfare has become a catch all. We cannot be all things to all people. Stay focused on child abuse and neglect. Right now (child welfare) is involved in too many things such as: truancy, mental health, addiction, and cognitive delays.

Workload has been increased by the CPSL changes and caseworkers are unhappy about the regulatory changes, such as this caseworker who said:

We all know that Child Welfare grossly overreacted to the Sandusky situation by deputizing thousands of mandated reporters without even defining the term 'allegation of abuse.' The huge influx of calls has made every child less safe, not more safe, due to lack of resources. Child Welfare needs to stop all mandated reporter training until a more reasonable and educated system is established.

 Another caseworker who chose work overload as a top reason to want to leave the job

mentioned how the CPSL changes have increased caseworkers' caseloads:

> Since the Sandusky laws have kicked in and the overwhelming drug trade caseloads have
>
> gone up significantly... In reality, placements have increased, caseloads are higher and
>
> more involved, parents continue to be evasive, transports for clients to visits with their
>
> children and medical appointments have gone up significantly, meetings for our agency
>
> and other committees, our own caseloads, Ages and Stages, parenting appointments,
>
> assisting caseworkers, obtaining resources for your own caseload and caseworkers, notes
>
> and documentation, monitoring office visits, etc. It keeps trickling down with no end in
>
> sight.

This respondent's comment highlights how caseworkers feel overwhelmed by their workloads:

> We are given a huge workload with constantly changing expectations for what ... needs to
>
> be done and when it needs to be done. It is impossible to do everything that this job
>
> requires in terms of client contacts, dealing with emergencies, documentation, plans,
>
> paperwork, etc.

This caseworker, who chose work overload as a top reason to want to leave the job, described it

as, "too much work, not enough time, too many mandates, psychological strain—my anxiety and

depression have gotten out of hand because of work."

Expectations for caseworkers are high, and as this caseworker claims, work hours may

not always be compensated:

> A caseworker needs to be available 24/7, anything outside of that is an indication that
>
> CW [caseworker] does not support mission of agency. Caseworkers are told to not work

off the clock to try to get caught up and are not authorized overtime. However, criticism

comes when not 'donating' time.

Caseworkers may be compensated for on-call duties, dependent upon the county. One respondent

described being on-call 24 hours this way, "With the work overload it leaves caseworkers

exhausted and unable to provide quality casework to the families and completely ensure the

safety of children and families...work excessive continual hours on-call 15-20 hours straight

without rest."

Emotional Demands

Open-ended responses were coded as emotional demands 202 times (35.4%), making it

the third most frequently coded node for a reason to want to leave the job. Emotional demands

were often described in combination with work and personal conflicts, and some respondents

described how emotional demands of the job even impacted them physically. For example, this

caseworker described how the job has impacted him personally:

> Overall, my mental and physical health has suffered greatly in my position and therefore
>
> my interpersonal relationships suffer. I have little ability to participate in self-care as I am
>
> working well into the evening to see the children on my caseload with little to no
>
> supervision or concern that I am burned out and unable to meet the demands of the job
>
> with criticism of overtime and the perceived expectation to work overtime consistently.
>
> My work, in return, is suffering and I am no longer the person and professional I can be
>
> and have been in the past.

Professionalism in the job sometimes requires caseworkers to suppress their own emotional

reactions. This may create an emotional conflict in situations where they feel powerless to

address child safety concerns without sufficient evidence. For example, this caseworker wrote, "I

have to keep my emotions hidden, as I am required to report facts. Sometimes there is more to a

home situation than what can be proven." Another shared:

> Emotional demand is strenuous because we see these children in situations that are
>
> unacceptable. The drug epidemic has hit our office hard and the conditions in which we
>
> find these children is deplorable. You invest not only your time, but yourself, and your
>
> own solicitor declines going to court (because she is overwhelmed as well). We often feel
>
> as if she works harder for the defendants in these cases than the children at risk. Then
>
> judges decline placement, don't consider case history adequately, or the conditions we
>
> find little ones in. Not surprisingly, they go back home, and you start again. We end up
>
> worrying endlessly for some and the emotional toll is hard.

Some respondents described how the emotional demands of their work impacts

caseworkers' energy to meet their responsibilities outside of work. This response presents

concerns about how the job impacts them personally, "Emotionally this job is exhausting and

there are times when you go home and cannot address the emotionally draining components of

my personal life." This caseworker's response indicates that emotional demands are present at

many levels within child welfare agencies, "The work at CYS takes an overall emotional toll on

direct service employees, supervisors, and managers. The work never stops and there are an

ever-increasing list of new demands (initiatives) from various sources."

This caseworker, who had expressed an interest in a lifelong career in child welfare,

explains how the emotional demands have led to a desire to find employment elsewhere:

> I have been in child welfare for 4 years in two different counties. I always thought my
>
> purpose was to be a CPS (child protective services) caseworker and that I would be a

'lifer.' Unfortunately, after employment with the second agency, I have been physically

and emotionally drained and am now pursuing careers in other fields.

Caseload Size

Caseload size was coded 127 (22.3%) times as a reason to want to leave the job.

Although caseload size is considered to be part of workload, coding for caseload size helps

clarify a specific reason for work overload. This caseworker wrote about how caseworker

turnover has impacted caseload size, "Our agency recently hired a whole new intake unit because

everyone left or was fired. Unfortunately, that increased my own caseload."

Another said, "We have so many cases per worker, it's hard to actually case manage."

This respondent expressed similar concerns, "We are overwhelmed with cases and too few

caseworkers. It is too stressful. We are expected to do more and more with less and less

staffing."

Caseworkers may be receiving caseloads more quickly than in the past, due to the

shortage of caseworkers. For example, this caseworker wrote:

> I was hired 6 months ago and was immediately given 4 ongoing cases. My caseload
>
> reached the level of a seasoned caseworker very shortly (2-3 months) after my hire date.
>
> The caseworker who gave me these cases was missing a significant amount of
>
> information, so for a lack of better words I "started in the hole" and was never able to get
>
> myself out of it.

Another inexperienced caseworker shared, "I was not eased into the workload. There should

have been a transition period where case levels were limited. Instead the water is rising to my

neck before I have learned how to swim." Another new caseworker reportedly felt unprepared to

meet the needs of a high caseload:

As a new employee who just received cases, I felt overwhelmed with the amount of cases

I was given, especially because I still had to attend training. Being new to casework, I'm

not sure what all my job entails, and I often only get told to do something after being told

I should have done it. I got passed on cases that were behind on paperwork and I had to

try to catch them up on top of doing everything else in a timely manner. Very stressful

and many nights working off the clock.

Experienced caseworkers may also be feeling the pressure of increased caseloads, such as this

caseworker who shared, "The caseloads from year to year keep exceeding the previous year, with

the same amount of time and caseworkers to do the job."

High caseloads appear to be reducing the amount of the time caseworkers have to spend

with their clients, as indicated by this response,

The job as a caseworker in CYS is to assure the safety of children; however, we are

overloaded with a high caseload, as well as a high volume of paperwork. These factors

are hindering our ability to spend adequate time out in the field.

This caseworker expressed concerns about how high caseloads are impacting his ability

to meet regulatory requirements, "Caseloads are high, which can cause workers to violate

compliance, and therefore be fired/want to quit before being fired." This caseworker's comment,

"The only thing which would make me stay is to keep caseloads under 15 at a minimum"

indicates that reducing caseload sizes may be an incentive to retain some caseworkers.

Time Management/Deadlines

In addition to caseload size, one of the factors that increase stress for caseworkers is the

regulatory requirements that set time limitations to complete their work. This caseworker wrote:

"It is very difficult to accomplish everything in 40 hours per week when overtime is not

permitted. I do a lot of work at home, just to keep my head above water." Dealing with the responsibility of ensuring child safety without sufficient resources is a concern of many caseworkers. Numerous paperwork deadlines are a concern, as this caseworker who wrote, "When a child ends up severely injured or worse, dead, incomplete paperwork looks a lot better than that child having not been seen." Another caseworker commented:

> There are too many paperwork demands, time frames to meet with clients, too many cases, that you are often spending more time trying to get work done and you spend less and less time with your own family and children.

Negative View of Management

Negative view of management was coded 114 times (20%) as a reason to want to leave the job. Responses were coded for negative view of management when the comment indicated a lack of support from the agency director or agency leadership that impacted work conditions. For example, this respondent said, "The work conditions are based on the fact that the director is incompetent as a leader for our agency. This makes the job difficult to come to every day." Since views of management were not included among the prescribed choices for the reasons to leave or reasons to stay in the job, the open-ended responses offered more insight into how management in an organization may impact turnover. Views of management will be discussed in depth later under the discussion related to the research questions.

Documentation Paperwork and Computer Work

Documentation was coded 113 times (19.8%) as a reason for caseworkers to want to leave the job. Paperwork and documentation are considered to be part of a caseworker's workload but were additionally coded as a separate category because paperwork was frequently mentioned as leading to dissatisfaction with the job. For example, this caseworker wrote, "The

workload (paperwork) is unbearable, as I can't keep up with deadlines while providing a service to my clients." Responses indicated that the amount of documentation required is reducing the amount of time caseworkers have to work with clients, such as this caseworker who said, "The demand of paperwork vs. getting time with clients comes down to a compromise. Hard to find a balance." Another caseworker wrote, "often feel over worked ...We are expected to do so much paperwork, but we are expected to provide all these services to the families we serve, it's unrealistic at times." Another caseworker shared, "The amount of paperwork has significantly increased, but none has been taken away to replace the new forms."

Computers have not reduced the time needed to complete required documentation, as evidenced by this response, "The amount of paper work and documentation into CAPS [computer software] with the amount of caseloads, makes it extremely difficult to meet with families and then get all the documentation done." This caseworker shared how new regulations have increased documentation requirements, "It seems as though new requirements for paperwork keep getting added and nothing is ever taken away, making an already difficult task less manageable."

Caseworkers see state oversight as being focused on compliance with regulations, rather than being concerned about the quality of services. For example, this caseworker wrote, "OCYF's approach seems to be to pretend as if caseloads are manageable and that documentation demands are realistic. CYS is held to such high standards but is not given the resources to meet the standards."
Another caseworker commented, "Just when we think we have them, OCYF puts out a new regulation or policy. The bar is set a little higher. There is more being asked than what can reasonably be done."

Work and Family Balance

Work and family balance was coded 108 times (19.9%) for responses that indicated that work negatively affects the caseworker's ability to meet both their work requirements and personal life or family needs. For example, this caseworker shared how the job impacts her life at home:

> ...in terms of work/home conflict, I miss my child's events and time together due to having to work late several nights a week and when I am home, I am exhausted. My spouse feels like work always comes first and the family is not my priority (which is far from the truth, though I understand why my spouse feels that way). I feel like I am saving other people's children while not having time for mine.

Another wrote, "I have given everything to assist families in bettering their own situations that it has drained me to the point that I have nothing left to give my own family."

Some respondents indicated that their job interferes with the time they are available for their own families, such as this caseworker, who wrote:

> I have a hard time balancing the demands of my job with spending time with my family- I am accused of working too much. I struggle with the emotional toll of cases- I think about them often and sometimes it's hard to sleep; I worry a lot and second guess myself.

Another said:

> The negative spillover into my personal life, performance demands, and work overload go hand in hand. I am young, single, with no children, so I am expected to work late and am not given the same opportunities to take scheduled time off as my co-workers with families. I work not only past our designated 4:30 PM, but until 8:00 PM at least 7 out of the 10 days in the pay period. This does not include weekends that I work. I have little to

no time to see my family, nor take care of basic necessities such as car inspections due to

the hours I work and having no natural supports to help me.

This caseworker's comments characterize a struggle in balancing casework responsibilities with

family needs, "The demands of this job create havoc in my life outside of work. I love my job,

but it is a struggle to effectively do this job with young children who need you too."

According to this respondent, caseworkers are sometimes not financially compensated for

extra hours they work, which also takes away from family time, "The pay is barely enough to

support my family. In addition, my family suffers from the amount of hours that I do put in that I

am not compensated for in money." This caseworker shared concerns that her agency may not be

recognizing or addressing caseworkers' needs for work and family balance, "There is too much

work for each caseworker. The agency makes it seem like you can have no personal life."

Responsibility of Job

Open-ended responses that addressed caseworkers' feelings about their responsibility for

child safety and client needs were coded 82 times (14.4%) under the responsibility of job node.

The responsibilities of the job were discussed in terms of the frustration caseworkers feel when

their efforts to meet the responsibilities of the job are not positively recognized, such as this

comment:

Child welfare is a demanding job with little to no positive recognition from supervisors.

They will always tell you what you can do different or better, but not that you are doing

good work with your families. The salary is low considering the stakes at risk. We are

expected to go into situations that often police will respond to and may have to remove

children from an unsafe environment with only a notebook and a badge for identification.

We then have to return and document everything that happened while in the home, when

it is impossible to document everything that happens in the field in high stress situations, and you are the only worker at the home. The work we do also has a high rate of vicarious trauma with no real way to deal with it.

Another caseworker expressed frustration with the salary paid for "the amount of responsibility that we are asked to assume for such low wages. This job also has the ability to wear on you mentally with the serious issues that you must evaluate and work with on a daily basis."

This caseworker who chose performance demands as a top reason to want to leave the job wrote, "Sometimes it seems that our focus is deadlines and preparing for audits, rather than focusing on the families that we serve. There is a lot expected out of us." Sharing unique insights about the stress that results from the responsibilities of working in child welfare, this caseworker explained:

I don't think that anyone quite understands the stress you go through unless you actually work in this field. I am constantly dealing with hostile people and filthy conditions. I am constantly drug down with the size of my caseload and the amount of work required for each case, which doesn't even begin to explain if you have kids in placement or high-risk cases that you are seeing weekly. Then you have collateral contacts to make for each family, paperwork to do, and dictation to catch up on. And to top everything off, all of these things have time frames for completion. If these things aren't done and you get audited, you risk losing your job. I just don't think that anyone quite gets the frustration that we caseworkers deal with, in regard to the balance.

The next response highlights the constant pressure caseworkers face in trying to balance job responsibilities related to documentation while finding time to interact with families to ensure child safety. This caseworker shared, "The workload is very demanding and there is not enough

time to equally balance seeing/interact with families and complete required paperwork in timely

manner." Another caseworker wrote:

> There are times that I have trouble completing all the paperwork associated with this job,
>
> along with making sure all the children are seen and assessing their safety, while feeling
>
> that there is more and more cases and families added to my workload.

College Loans Repayment

Repayment of college loans was mentioned 66 times (11.6%) as a reason to want to leave

the job. Most caseworkers are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, so the loans

that result from preparing for a career in child welfare are a burden for many caseworkers.

Repaying student loans was mentioned in the context of low salaries, and caseworkers expressed

frustration that their salaries did not equate to what other bachelor's level professionals earn. The

reasons for the difference are unclear; however, it may be due to differences in the dates when

respondents attended college—the students who are more recent graduates could have more

student debt at the time of the survey. Difficulty paying college loans is most likely related to the

low salaries that caseworkers reported as the number one reason to leave the job. Open-ended

responses indicated that student debt coupled with low salaries is leading to financial difficulties

for caseworkers. For example, this caseworker shared, "I have 80k in student loans and on a

salary of a caseworker, I have to struggle every month to pay those loans, plus my car payment

and mortgage." Other responses raised concerns about the future of child welfare in attracting

new social work students.

Another caseworker who was already looking to leave the job wrote, "I am currently

pursuing a career as a school counselor, as I do not want to work as a social services worker all

my life. The salary is not nearly enough, nor can support my ongoing school loans...the work is

very tiresome and I often times feel overloaded and overwhelmed."

This caseworker shared how school loans from her bachelor's degree are preventing her

from pursuing higher education:

> Caseworkers have to have an education in order to perform their job. Unfortunately, we
>
> also have student loans we have to repay. I finished my education as a single mother and
>
> now am working on whittling down the enormous expense of that education. My children
>
> are now college age and I would love to continue my education and get a master's degree.
>
> I cannot, due to the expenses I have already incurred and the time that I already have to
>
> take away from my family to be a good caseworker.

Work Schedule Flexibility

Scheduling flexibility in child welfare was expressed as a reason to leave the job when

caseworkers were given less autonomy in setting their own schedules. Frequent mandatory

meetings required by agency management can interfere with other work responsibilities. This

caseworker complained that his agency has "too many mandatory meetings and redundant

trainings that interfere with the ability to complete work timely." Agencies may require

caseworkers to come into the office to complete paperwork that could be done remotely. This

caseworker explained how more flexibility would improve her view of the job, "I feel that I

would be more productive working from home to complete office work and coming into the

office 1 or 2 days per week, having more flexibility, more time off would help in the demands of

this position." Being a caseworker requires working nontraditional hours to meet the needs of the

caseload, as this caseworker explained, "The requirements of seeing each client is often outside

of my normal work hours. I have had to travel overnight to see clients due to distance." Another

explained how the work hours can be overwhelming, "this is not a 9-5 job. I work weekends, evenings, and holidays, even if it's only to address an emergency or unresolved situation...yet I am compensated for 37.5 hours regardless of how many hours I work."

This caseworker wrote about how child welfare places more demands on caseworkers than in other social services jobs, "We are 'county caseworkers' which means ... seeing clients all hours of the day and night and paid the same as 'caseworkers' in other departments who ONLY EVER work 8 to 4:30." This caseworker explained how requirements to schedule home visits according to client availability may be a burden in meeting other job requirements that may also interfere with personal time, "There is an expectation/requirement to do late visits and occasional weekend work, without the ability to take off time, to make up for it, due to the overload amount of work."

Open-Ended Survey Results for Reasons to Stay

The analysis of data that follows is related to the second research question, which explored the factors that impact caseworkers' views for the reasons they want to stay in public child welfare services. After respondents chose their top three reasons to stay, their qualitative responses to two open-ended questions: (1) "Briefly explain your answers for each choice" and (2) "Please provide any other thoughts you think will be helpful," were coded and analyzed to calculate the frequency of responses for coded categories.

Table 12 lists the frequency of coded response categories from comments caseworkers provided in their own words. Respondents provided 401comments in their own words that were then coded 380 times as a reason to want to stay in the job. Among 380 comments coded as a reason to stay, the sub-categories of personal accomplishment, positive co-workers, and positive client relationships were the top open-ended responses. Within open-ended comments

categorized as personal accomplishment, 46.8% reported a desire to help their clients and

wanting to make a difference as reasons to stay in their jobs.

Table 12

Top Open-Ended Responses Coded as Reasons to Stay in Job

Reason to stay	Number of coded open-ended responses from 380 total comments coded as reasons to stay*	Percentage
Personal accomplishment	178	46.8%
Positive co-workers	131	34.5%
Positive client relationships	115	30.3%
Positive supervisory support	85	22.4%
Hope	62	16.3%
Salary	60	15.8%
Employee benefits	56	14.7%
Work schedule flexibility	34	8.9%
Flexibility in job duties	30	7.9%
Workload	27	7.1%
Professionalism in work environment	25	6.6%

*Note. Open-ended responses may be a duplicated count since responses may be coded under multiple categories.

Each of the top nodes coded as reasons to stay in the job will now be explained in more detail.

Personal Accomplishment

Personal accomplishment was coded 178 times (46.8%), making it the top open-ended

comment about why caseworkers want to stay in the job. Personal accomplishment was coded

for responses that described feeling competent and successful, having feelings of positive

achievement about their work, or feeling fulfilled by helping others by using their professional

skills. This response reflects how caseworkers see themselves as professionals who are

motivated by helping others and are dedicated to providing quality services, "I value my professionalism and my background experience that I bring to the table, which in return will allow for professional advancement." Another caseworker said, "I give so much of myself to this job. It is extremely important for me to do the job well, as we are dealing with people's lives."

> Another shared:
>
> I entered this field in hopes to be able to help children and families, that is my main reason for staying in this field. I feel that I maintain a professional commitment and pride in the work that I do. I feel that I am confident and competent in completing the work that I do.

This respondent shared how the job provides personal satisfaction, "I am good at what I do and get satisfaction from that."

Positive Co-Worker Relationships

When asked to choose their top three reasons for wanting to stay in the job, 22.9% of respondents chose social support from colleagues. Through comments provided in their own words, 34.5% of caseworker comments reflected that support among co-workers was a reason to want to stay. Caseworkers reported they rely heavily on their co-workers to help them deal with the stress in their jobs, such as this caseworker who shared, "The main support I feel at work is through my colleagues." Many reported that co-workers were the primary reason to stay in the job, such as this caseworker who said, "The reason why I stay is because I have very supportive and knowledgeable co-workers who are willing to help me in any situation. We work very well as a team." and this respondent who shared, "I stay solely for the reason of having made friends within the work place who keep me sane," and this caseworker who responded, "My work family is the main reason that I stay."

Positive Client Relationships

The third most frequently coded response was positive client relationships, which was

coded 115 times (30.3%). Respondents shared the satisfaction they feel from working with

clients is a top reason they want to stay in the job. For example, this caseworker wrote:

I am proud that I have been given the opportunity to change peoples' lives. I truly enjoy

working with families to change their outlook on Children and Youth agencies. I enjoy

working with children to find them permanency for the remainder of their lives.

Another caseworker said, "I take great pride in the work done with and for families and their

children. I LOVE being able to help others feel valued and important and increase their

satisfaction with life." This response highlights the importance of client relationships as a reason

to stay in the job, "I think something that is overlooked is the relationships that we build with the

families we work with. Sometimes making a difference for one family keeps me in the job a little

longer."

Positive Supervisory Support

Positive supervisory support was coded 85 times as a reason for caseworkers to want to

stay in the job. For example, caseworkers like this one, who said, "I believe that I have a great

supervisor who provides me with guidance and support. She is knowledgeable, respectful,

trusting, and appreciative when guiding me," reinforced the importance of supervisory support as

a reason to stay in the job. This category will be discussed in depth later in this chapter under the

research question that examines whether caseworkers' views of their supervisors is a major

reason to want to stay or leave their jobs.

Hope

Hope, a feeling, expectation, or desire for something to happen, was coded 62 times (16.3%) as a reason for caseworkers to stay in the job. The reasons caseworkers discussed hope varied, with some reporting a general hope that job conditions will improve, such as this caseworker who said, "Hope that something will change..." and this caseworker who said, "There is always hope that we will get more staff and our caseloads and paperwork will go down."

Others chose hope as a reason to stay due to a desire to help their clients. For example, this caseworker wrote, "I stay because I have the hope that people can change, and our services can make a difference with the families we work with." Another caseworker, wrote, "I hope things will eventually improve and the State will realize how important these jobs are to the safety of the children."

This caseworker reported hope for clients as:

> I have hope that I can help at least one family better themselves. I truly believe in what the purpose of the Agency is. I believe that I will look back on this time of my life and feel a great accomplishment if I have one client that is successful.

Another caseworker shared similar sentiments as, "My reasons I do this is for the children, and the hope they would have a safe, better, happier life than when we begin services with the family. To keep all children safe is my goal." Others reported they hoped changes would occur in their salaries, such as this caseworker who wrote, "I am hoping that the job becomes better and I get a pay increase," and this caseworker who wrote, "I am skilled in my practices throughout the child welfare system, and I am eternally hopeful that our need for increased salary will one day be honored."

Salary

Salary is the amount of monetary compensation provided for performing job duties. Although 230 (74%) of coded responses expressed that low salary was a reason to leave, not all caseworkers were dissatisfied with their salaries. Sixty coded responses (15.8%) indicated that salary was a reason to stay in the job. For example, this caseworker said, "The money is good with lots of opportunity for overtime," and this caseworker who said, "While the money is not nearly enough, it is more than I would make elsewhere." Another shared, "The overtime is available and lucrative" and this caseworker who responded that a reason to stay was, "Financial, because it supports my family and I am blessed to be this young and have a decent paying job, investment, and benefits." Other respondents reported that an increase in salary would likely increase their willingness to stay in the job, such as this response, "Advancement with advancement in pay would be great," and this response:

> A good salary can bring a lot of comfort and stability to the adversity of the family. With a good salary you can plan and save your money to better manage your bills and enjoy events with your family. Without a good salary you struggle and fine it hard to manage and stay on top of your priorities. That will make you look for another job.

Employee Benefits

Employee benefits, defined as receiving employer-provided medical insurance and paid time off, vary by county. Paid time off and medical benefits were seen by some as positive reasons for caseworkers to stay in the job. This caseworker's response, "there is excellent, affordable health insurance that I would have trouble finding elsewhere." Another wrote, "Good pay and benefits. I need a job," and another responded, "Because I am older, it is hard to change positions because of the benefit of insurance." Another said the "opportunity for compensatory

time and insurance benefits" were reasons to stay. On the other hand, this respondent brought up

a concern about the rising cost of health benefits, "The cost of medical insurance further cuts into

my salary reducing my bring home pay." Another said, "... my dental and vision insurance is so

poor that I have to pay $70 extra a month for separate plans, just to make sure that my family is

covered if services need to be used, because our county barely covers anything."

Since public child welfare caseworkers are county government employees, retirement

pensions offered by counties were viewed as a reason to stay by at least seven respondents.

Comments related to pensions included, "I am close to retirement that's why I stay," and "I have

spent a lot of time with the agency, and I've learned a lot. I would be proud of myself for sticking

it out through to retirement." These employees who already had longevity in their agencies

wrote of plans to leave when they are able to retire, "At this point, I am very close to a retirement

and only plan to stay until then," and another who wrote, "I am close to retirement, that's why I

stay. I do have the ability to strongly advocate for what is right while I'm still here." This

respondent suggested that, "Some kind of longevity reward would be very helpful in keeping

employees longer."

Work Schedule Flexibility

Although most responses indicated dissatisfaction with late working hours as a reason to

want to leave the job, 34 (8.9%) responses indicated that a benefit of the job was being able to

set their own schedules. This caseworker describes the importance of being able to set her own

schedule:

> Each case and every caseworker if different and their work schedules revolves around
>
> their caseload and the complexities of the cases so every caseworker needs to feel
>
> supported and understood that they may need the overtime and that we just want to focus

on our work without worrying about time adjusting or time constraints. A caseworker

with 4 cases that are in home cannot be treated the same as a worker with 9 cases, when

that worker has the most court involved cases, the most placement cases and the furthest

away children/teens.

Responses indicated that flexibility in scheduling varied not only between counties, but also

within counties, dependent upon the supervisor. As one caseworker wrote, "Some supervisors are

more flexible to their worker's needs, (Your kid is sick, work from home, while others are very

stringent in that they do not allow any flexibility)." Another who found flexible work hours an

advantage shared, "I have flexibility in my hours should my family need me." This caseworker

confirmed that a flexible schedule can be a reason to stay in the job, "I really only stay for the

flexibility of time and benefits."

This caseworker suggested that more control over her schedule would be a reason to stay:

I feel that CW [caseworkers] should be able to adjust their daily schedules to better meet

the needs of their family, as well as the agency. If I had a choice, I would come into the

office earlier so that I could leave earlier in the day to enjoy more time with my family. I

also feel as though CW should be able to work from home, if necessary. If it is a day that

a CW does not have any scheduled visits and is only doing dictation, they should be able

to work from home.

Another caseworker suggested, "If I come in at 7 or 9 on the days I don't have court, why does it

matter if I am getting everything done ... I know it sure would make a big difference in why

some stay."

Flexibility in Job Duties

Caseworkers' comments were coded 30 times (7.8%) for flexibility of the job as a reason to want to stay. In these comments, caseworkers found benefits in having a variety of tasks that make each day of the job different. Comments such as, "I get bored with doing the same things over and over again, so the variety keeps me interested," and "I love that not every day is the same" were reasons to stay. Another who chose task variety as a top reason to want to stay commented, "I enjoy having new/different situations to handle daily." This caseworker enjoys the variety of being in the office and working in the field, "I also appreciate that I'm not stuck at my desk all day, and I do get to travel every now and then."

Professionalism

Professionalism was coded as positive when respondents reported that they were seen as a professional. A theme of caseworkers taking pride in helping their clients and meeting the mission of child welfare was evident throughout the comments. For example, this caseworker shared, *"*I take great pride in the work done with and for families and their children. I LOVE being able to help others feel valued and important and increase their satisfaction with life." This caseworker who chose professional pride as a top reason to stay in the job said, "I really love being a social worker and using my degree." This caseworker shared how his career in child welfare is a source of professional satisfaction with the job, "Child Welfare is a job that most of the general public would not do. Some workers take pride in being able to do a job that would be difficult for others."

Views of Supervisors and Management

The next research question explored whether caseworkers' views of their supervisors and agency management impact whether or not caseworkers want to leave their jobs. Among the top

three survey choices to want to stay in their jobs, social support from the supervisor was chosen

by 21.9% (112) of respondents. The coding definitions for open-ended comments related to

supervision as a reason to stay or leave the job are listed in Table 13.

Table 13

Coding Definitions for Open-Ended Comments for Supervisor Support

Negative supervisor support	Respondent reports having an unsupportive relationship with supervisor(s) that hampers their ability to do the job effectively.
Positive supervisor support	Respondent has complimentary comments about the relationship with supervisor and reports that supervision meets their needs to do the job effectively. Supervisor reportedly provides emotional support to meet the caseworker's needs due to job-related stress.

Table 14 provides a comparison of the open-ended responses that were coded for

supervision as a reason to leave and supervision as a reason to stay. Caseworkers were more

likely to provide positive comments (22%) about supervisory support, compared to negative

comments (3.5%) about the support they received from their supervisor. Caseworkers were much

more likely to choose supervision as a reason to want to stay in the job, with many caseworkers

sharing that they see their supervisors as competent and helpful. Positive supervisory support

was the fourth most frequently coded node as a reason for caseworkers to want to stay in the job.

Table 14

Comparison of Open-Ended Responses Supervision as Reason to Leave vs. Reason to Stay

Reason to leave the job	Reasons to leave (from 570 total coded responses codes as reason to leave)	Reasons to stay (from 380 total coded responses coded as a reason to stay)
View of Supervision	20 (3.5%)	85 (22%)

Views of Supervisor as a Reason to Leave

Respondents who reported a negative view of their supervisors often listed this as a primary reason to want to leave their jobs. Lengthy responses reflected strong negative feelings about supervisors who respondents believed were not supportive of their efforts. For example, "Child welfare is a demanding job with little to no positive recognition from supervisors. They will always tell you what you can do different or better, but not that you are doing good work with your families."

This caseworker expressed concerns about having a supervisor who would not support his recommendations for a family because the supervisor "has own biases against a family and will not approve the correct services to help a family." Some caseworkers complained about a lack of consistency and fairness. For example, this caseworker felt caseloads were not distributed equally:

> There are caseworkers that do not correctly perform their jobs and the supervisors are aware of it and nothing is ever done. Depending on which supervisor is assigning cases can [affect] who is getting the reports and who is getting out of reports.

This caseworker shared concerns about the quality of supervision:

> There is a complete lack of reprimand, Supervisor that are on power trips and being nasty to everyone, including foster parents...Also supervisor that does not know how to do the job. Supervisor that is extremely hard to work for due to basically being crazy, and so much more.

This caseworker complained about not having input into decision making due to budget constraints, "It's terrible to see an opportunity to finally make a connection with a family (by providing a ride or a service) shot down by your supervisor because of budget constraints."

Another caseworker shared that supervisors could improve by giving more personalized attention to support caseworkers:

> There is too ... little emotional, 'human' support from our supervisors. Our supervisors give great case direction but do very minimal work when it comes to taking care of their employees as people. We don't want Christmas presents, we want our supervisor to ask us if we're okay when we return from a tough report, or even better, ask us if we want him/her to assist us on that home visit for back-up.

Some caseworkers reported feeling resentful of supervision when they felt it was overly intrusive. For example, one caseworker commented:

> I feel as though my supervisor should exude a sense of trust in the direct care staff. If this were done, the staff would rise to that level of expectation. Sometimes too much supervision or advice is detrimental and almost promotes a sense of helplessness or lack of confidence in the staff.

Views of Supervisor as a Reason to Stay

Open-ended responses indicated that supervisors vary in terms of their skills, knowledge, and behaviors. Those who are seen as being supportive appear to contribute to caseworkers' intent to stay in the job. Participants reported that supervisors need to balance their oversight of caseworkers, based upon the needs of each individual caseworker. Supervisory support, knowledge, and respect, were frequently mentioned in what caseworkers valued in a supervisor, such as this caseworker who shared, "She is knowledgeable, respectful, trusting, and appreciative when guiding me."

Some caseworkers reported they preferred supervisors who allowed autonomy and participation in decision-making. This caseworker who praised her supervisor said:

I have an extremely supportive supervisor who encourages good mental health and

whatever positive means I need to achieve that. She does not micromanage, but she is

aware of what is going on with my cases. She allows me the freedom to use overtime as I

need it, knowing that I will not abuse it.

Another positive response about supervisors included, "I have been fortunate enough to have a

supervisor who gets it and is more than supportive," while another caseworker said:

I truly believe in what we do, and I am thankful to be at the agency I am, which works

very hard to keep families intact. I have a great supervisor and am very proud of the

support I provide families.

Views of Management as a Reason to Stay

Although more coded responses indicated that management was seen as being

unsupportive and a reason to leave the job, 24 responses were coded as positive management

being a reason to want to stay in the job.

Table 15

Coding Definitions for Open-Ended Comments for View of Management

View of management seen as positive/supportive	Quality management is characterized as communicating vision and direction, promoting ethics, leading by example, continuous learning, strategic thinking, decision-making, systems thinking, championing innovation, organizational astuteness, interpersonal communications, developing leadership, team leadership, and supporting the community. Respondent reports that there is a feeling of positive support from administration and management. View of management is seen as positive/supportive. Respondent reports management supports their needs. Respondent feels supported by management in a way that meets their needs to achieve an agreed upon agency mission.

View of management seen as unsupportive/ not positive	Respondent feels that management does not support caseworker and/or policies and procedures in the organization do not support the caseworker's needs. There is a lack of communication and disagreement about the agency mission and management does not lead by example to exemplify quality practices. View of management seen as not supportive/not meeting their needs. Respondent feels that management does not support the work of caseworker and/or policies and procedures in organization do not support the caseworker's needs.

Table 16 shows views of management based upon open-ended responses coded as a reason to leave the job versus a reason to stay. Results from an analysis of coded open-ended responses indicated that more respondents reported that a negative view of management made them want to leave, than respondents who viewed a positive view of management as a reason to stay.

Table 16

Comparison of Coded Responses Based Upon Positive or Negative View of Management

Reason to leave the job	Reasons to leave (from 570 responses coded reason to leave)	Reasons to stay (from 380 responses coded reason to stay)
View of Management	114 (20%)	20 (5.2%)

Caseworkers' views of management were coded as both a reason to leave and a reason to stay, dependent upon the comments of respondents. Negative view of management was coded 114 times out of 570 coded responses (20%) for caseworkers' reason to leave. Coding of open-ended responses found that responses coded as negative management were more often a reason to leave than the 20 responses (5.2%) coded as viewing positive management as a reason to stay.

This variation may be representative of caseworkers' views of different management styles between counties. Negative management was coded for comments characterized as being unresponsive to caseworkers' needs and when respondents reported feeling a lack of trust, respect, and support from their management.

Views of Management as a Reason to Leave

The qualitative open-ended responses indicated that management is a likely to be a factor that impacts the reasons some caseworkers want to leave their jobs. Although comments from individual county results remain confidential, the researcher noted a definite pattern within counties with respect to views on management, as either positive or negative. Caseworkers who first chose view of management as one of their top three concerns that make them want to leave shared why negative agency management practices made them want to quit their jobs. One response highlighted a lack of trust and support from management due to a management style based upon fear. Another respondent who reported a strong negative view of management wrote:

> Throughout the agency there is minimal trust in the entire leadership team, there is a culture of mistrust and fear of being terminated, on a daily basis. We feel that our safety and well-being is not considered, nor is our voice heard when we express concerns, most people who speak out suffer some form of retaliation, and there are select few who receive true support, respect and guidance from leadership.

Another respondent, who indicated a negative view of agency management wrote, "Well, management can start treating those under them as actual humans who they interact with positively."

A view that some management teams may lack professionalism is evident in this response, "Management is unsupportive and unprofessional and sends emails to other staff

regarding personnel issues," while another shared, "I wish I felt appreciated by someone other than my immediate supervisor." Other responses indicated that agency administration may have a direct impact on caseworker turnover, especially in how they communicate with caseworkers and acknowledge their efforts. For example, one caseworker said, "I love my job and appreciate feedback from my supervisor, although we don't get much positive feedback from upper administration. We are only told what needs done, not why or how it will help in the end." Another respondent who felt agency management was a reason to leave wrote, "This job is unappreciated, I expected the clients to not appreciate me, but the management at this job have no appreciation for me or what I do, they do not trust me, and seem to try to make this job as difficult as possible."

Respondents indicated that agency management may be able to improve retention rates by supporting caseworkers and acknowledging the challenging work they are doing. As one caseworker suggested, "There needs to be more POSITIVE feedback and celebration of accomplishments."

Respondents who identified themselves as being experienced caseworkers reported frustration about salary freezes and a lack of opportunity to advance within their organizations. Citing top reasons to leave, complaints such as, "I chose unfavorable work conditions to cover complete favoritism in the workplace," "there is only room for advancement if you are personal favorite of those in charge" and "qualified candidates ... were turned down for a supervisor position because they were not favored by the higher ups" indicated that some caseworkers perceived that promotions within their agencies were made due to personal relationships with management, not merit.

Views of Management as a Reason to Stay

The open-ended responses for positive view of management coded as a reason to want to stay in their jobs indicated those caseworkers felt supported by management. Positive responses about management as a reason to stay included this caseworker who wrote, "My agency has a good team, as well as good management. I am committed in my position at this time." A respondent who chose trust in management as one of their top three reasons to stay wrote:

> I trust that the ongoing management is taking serious efforts to make positive changes in the overall environment of the Agency and taking a stand against the departments that are not willing to make efforts. I trust that the ongoing management is sincere in their efforts to recognize the trauma that the CW [caseworkers]experience in the field and the inter-agency trauma that happens.

Listening to what caseworkers said they need from agency management provided insights into ways to support caseworkers and reduce turnover. This caseworker emphasized how communication with management was improved when a new director asked for input:

> We got a new director. The first thing she did is send out an email asking to meet with front line workers, if they wanted to, in order to find out what is working and what is not working. That's what a LEADER does!

> Insights from a caseworker who worked in two different counties illustrates how management differences may impact how caseworkers view their jobs. After choosing participation in decision-making as a top reason to want to leave the job, this caseworker stated:

> During my first county, there was much more input for CPS workers to make decisions and influence decisions. The worker was considered the expert on the case. Whereas, the second county often makes decisions with minimal caseworker input.

Another caseworker who transferred between counties shared, "I recently left a county that was deficit-focused with little support to the staff. I feel supported at [my new county] and I have enjoyed the service that I am able to provide to families."

Comparison of Data for Multiple-Answer and Open-Ended Responses

Reasons to Leave

Table 17 shows a comparison between the multiple-answer choices from top three reasons to leave the job compared to the open-ended responses coded as reasons to leave the job. The top two categories for both the quantitative and qualitative responses were salary and work overload, however, other responses were more varied.

When asked to choose three reasons that make you want to leave the job from the list of multiple-answer survey options, results from the quantitative data analysis indicated that salary was the top reason chosen by 269 respondents (52.6%) to leave their jobs. Similarly, low salary was also the most frequently coded node given as a reason to want to leave the job for the open-ended responses. Work overload was also the second most chosen response for both categories. Table 17 shows the difference between quantitative and qualitative findings through a comparison of the top 3 reasons to leave the job from multiple-answer questions, compared to the open-ended responses coded as reasons to want to leave the job.

Table 17

Comparison of Top Multiple-Answer and Top Open-Ended Responses for Reasons to Leave

Multiple-answer responses reasons to leave	Percentage	Open-ended coded responses reasons to leave	Percentage
Salary	52.6%	Low Salary	40.5%
Work overload	49.3%	Workload	37.2%
My salary cannot support my college loan	22.7%	Emotional demands	35.4%
Performance demands	21.7%	Caseload size	22.3%

Time pressure	19.2%	Time management/deadlines	20.8%
Psychological strain	19.0%	Negative view of management	20.0%
Negative spillover from work to family	17.0%	Documentation	19.8%
Unfavorable work conditions	14.7%	Work and family balance	18.9%
Risks and hazards	13.3%	Responsibility of Job	14.4%
Responsibility	10.0%	Work schedule flexibility	11.4%

Reasons to Stay

Comparing the multiple-answer responses to coded open-ended responses, the reasons to stay in the job varied. Table 18 shows a comparison between the multiple-answer responses and the open-ended responses coded as reasons to stay. Social support from colleagues was the top reason chosen from multiple-answer choices for top three reasons to stay, compared to personal accomplishment, which was the top reason to stay in the open-ended comments. Professional pride was the second highest multiple-answer choice, while positive co-workers was the second most coded reason to stay in the open-ended comments. The closed-ended response hope was the third highest response to stay in the job, while positive client relationships was the third highest of the coded open-ended responses.

Supervisory support was chosen in both categories as the fourth most common response to want to stay in the job. Social support from their supervisor was chosen 112 times (37.8%) when caseworkers were asked to choose their top three reasons to want to stay in the job. Within responses of comments in their own words, positive supervisory support was coded 85 times as a reason for caseworkers to want to stay in the job.

Table 18

Comparison of Top Multiple-Answer and Top Open-Ended Responses for Reasons to Stay

Multiple-answer responses reasons to stay (N=511)	Percentage	Open-ended coded responses reasons to stay (N=380)	Percentage
Social support from colleagues	37.7%	Personal accomplishment	37.8%
Professional pride	33.1%	Positive co-workers	33.1%
Hope	29.2%	Positive client relationships	29.2%
Social support from supervisor	21.9%	Positive supervisory support	21.9%
Life satisfaction	16.0%	Hope	16.0%
Opportunities for professional development	13.3%	Salary	13.3%
Skill utilization	12.3%	Employee benefits	12.3%
Financial rewards	11.7%	Work schedule flexibility	11.7%
Appreciation	10.6%	Flexibility in job duties	10.6%
Team cohesion	10.4%	Workload	10.4%
Task variety	10.4%	Professionalism in work environment	10.4%
Organizational commitment	10.4%		

Summary

Responses to the survey's open-ended questions provided insights from respondents about factors that influenced caseworkers' views of their jobs. While the findings are not generalizable to all caseworkers, this study sheds light on the experiences of public child welfare caseworkers in one state. The top reasons chosen from multiple-answer survey choices for reasons to want to leave their jobs were salary and benefits, work overload, and a salary that does not support the cost of college loans.

Analysis of the open-ended comments from caseworkers indicated that salary, workload, and emotional demands of the job were the primary reasons respondents want to leave their jobs. The open-ended survey comments in caseworkers' own words added clarity to understand the

reasons for turnover in the field of child welfare. Although many respondents found their jobs to be rewarding and shared a desire to stay in their jobs, caseworkers who prefer to stay in their jobs are leaving because of low pay and bureaucratic requirements that have led to dissatisfaction with the job. Since caseworkers are usually required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, college loans were raised as a concern by caseworkers who reported their salary is insufficient to repay their loans and meet their basic needs. Concerns about being unable to meet the basic needs of their families was a major concern that is impacting caseworkers to want to leave the job.

Social support from colleagues, professional pride, and hope were the top three choices selected to stay from the multiple-answer choices. In terms of the top open-ended responses coded as reasons to want to stay in the job, personal accomplishment, positive co-workers, and positive client relationships were the top reasons given to stay and indicated that most child welfare caseworkers enjoy working with their clients. They want to stay in their jobs to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Caseworkers are motivated to stay in the job by a desire to provide quality services that meet the needs of their clients. Co-workers were the most frequent source of emotional support to help caseworkers deal with the demands of the job and were a top reason to want to continue to work in the field of child welfare.

Most caseworkers want to stay in their jobs but are being driven from the field by low salaries and excessive workloads, but they also hope things will improve. Caseworkers' main motivation to stay is a desire to help their clients and meet their agencies' mission to keep kids safe from child abuse and neglect. Caseworkers report they are overworked, underpaid, and are unable to meet the needs of their clients in a system that is being overwhelmed by regulations.

Supervision and management practices appear to influence caseworkers' reasons to stay or leave their jobs. The majority of caseworkers reported they see their supervisors as a reason to want to stay in the job. More caseworkers viewed management was a reason to quit than a reason to want to stay in their jobs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the views of public child welfare caseworkers to learn more about their reasons for wanting to stay or leave their jobs. The study examined ecological system levels within the PA child welfare system to identify factors that influence caseworker turnover. Themes about turnover became apparent as the data coding and analysis progressed. This chapter will highlight themes related to this study's findings, which have been categorized according to their relationship to turnover or retention. Survey responses from 511 caseworkers included 401 open-ended responses, through which six themes emerged. First, four themes related to turnover will be highlighted, then two themes will highlight issues related to caseworker retention.

Caseworkers are feeling frustrated about their jobs due to factors beyond their control that are limiting their ability to effectively serve their clients. In an effort to support or refute the findings, the researcher conducted an additional review of the literature for each of the themes identified during the open-ended analysis. These themes suggest that policy changes are needed to improve child welfare practices that would reduce caseworker turnover. The limitations for this study and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Themes Related to Turnover

Theme 1: Low salaries are the primary reason why caseworkers want to leave the job.

Responses indicated that low salaries are contributing to caseworker turnover, with respondents selecting salary as the top multiple-answer choice for why caseworkers want to leave their jobs. Open-ended responses indicated low salary was the most frequent reason to want to leave the job, with caseworkers reporting that salaries are inadequate to support their

families. Caseworkers' salaries often do not improve, even when caseworkers stay in the job or pursue higher education. Experienced caseworkers, who often help train new caseworkers, complain that there is little reward for longevity, reflected by having their salaries frozen for years, sometimes without even cost of living increases. Work hours and overtime compensation vary by county. Although some counties pay for overtime work, most respondents complained about not being compensated for overtime, having to work extra hours from home, and working long hours to try to keep up with the demands of the job.

Literature supports that low salaries are contributing to turnover. McGowan et al. (2010) reported that the major reason social workers were leaving the profession resulted from a dissatisfaction with salaries. PA Auditor General Eugene DePasquale (2017) reported that "Pennsylvania caseworkers, particularly those at the entry level, earn a remarkably low salary given the educational requirements, daily work complexity, and potentially dangerous components of their jobs" (p. 37). Caseworkers earn less than other bachelor's level professionals, who in 2016 earned an average starting salary of $50,556. A caseworker I position starting salary averaged $30,018 ($14 per hour) in 2016 (DePasquale, 2017).

Theme 2: Caseworkers' workloads are too high, and new caseworkers need more time and improved training before receiving a caseload.

Work overload was chosen as a top reason to want to leave the job. Caseworkers are frustrated by having to juggle numerous responsibilities with time constraints that make prioritizing difficult. Agencies dealing with high rates of caseworker turnover along with an increased number of cases may feel pressured to assign caseloads to new hires, even when they feel ill-prepared for the job. Newer, inexperienced caseworkers want more training before they are assigned cases.

Training new caseworkers before assigning an independent caseload is a critical time to support vulnerable caseworkers and a strategy to decrease turnover. A qualitative study by Falk (2015) found that inadequate training may leave new caseworkers feeling overwhelmed, which leads to dissatisfaction with the job. New workers desire a longer training period to apply their skills and need additional supervisory support as they learn their jobs. Newly trained workers find the process of applying new knowledge from training to real life crisis situations to be difficult (Falk, 2015).

A lack of agency support for professional development training can also undermine its effectiveness. The quality of training that caseworkers receive impacts how prepared they are to effectively work with families. Newly hired caseworkers who feel overwhelmed with their caseloads see training as an additional burden when they are not given sufficient time to attend training while also meeting the needs of their caseloads. Caseload sizes for caseworkers should be reduced for new workers as part of their training process.

Theme 3: Child welfare management practices across PA are a reason some caseworkers want to leave the job.

The way caseworkers view management in their organizations is likely to impact their desire to stay or leave their jobs. Twenty percent of respondents had a negative view of management that was making them want to leave the job. Respondents who reported that management influenced their reasons to want to leave shared strong statements about agency management practices that make them want to quit their jobs. Favoritism was one reason caseworkers frustrated by a lack of room for advancement in many counties complained, citing that promotions are made due to personal relationships with management and not by merit. Other issues with management were a lack of support and feeling management did not appreciate how

hard caseworkers work. Caseworkers complained that management was too focused on meeting regulatory requirements instead of helping families, and caseworkers were not allowed to have input into decision-making on their cases.

High turnover of PA county child welfare administrators is concerning, since almost half of the child welfare agency directors who were expected to implement the 2015 CPSL legislative changes have left the child welfare system. Thirty of the state's 67 county children and youth directors retired or resigned within two years of the CPSL changes, according to Brian Bornman, executive director of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association. (Assad, 2017). The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) (2005) has recommended using strategies such as improving the professional culture of the organization and ensuring that workers feel valued and respected as ways to increase caseworker retention. The PA Caseworker Retention Group (2016) reported that counties are making efforts to retain staff by conducting stay interviews, providing caseworker appreciation days, enhancing supervisory skills, offering flexible schedules, using interns to assist caseworkers, and offering "quiet-time" for caseworkers to complete paperwork, however these are likely to be 'band-aids', if systemic issues that are causing excessive workloads turnover are not addressed. Additional research to find and implement ways to improve child welfare management practices is recommended to reduce turnover.

Theme 4: The county-based child welfare system is leading to wide differences between counties. Updated CPSL regulatory requirements have increased caseworkers' workloads, which makes them want to leave their jobs.

The organizational structure of PA's county-based child welfare system has resulted in wide differences between counties, with inconsistent salaries, workloads, and management and

supervision practices. The way child welfare is funded creates a barrier for some counties that are unable to hire enough caseworkers to keep up with increasing demands. The requirement for matching local funds approved by the county commissioners in order to access state and federal funds is a barrier to being able to hire enough caseworkers to meet regulatory requirements. Caseworkers are aware of the differences between counties, which has contributed to transferring from one county to another to improve their salaries and employee benefits. Other differences between counties that make caseworkers want to leave include workload, level of emotional support, and expectations of the courts.

Caseworkers' responses indicated that the CPSL changes have reduced the amount of time they have to work with families. Caseworkers are overwhelmed by regulatory requirements such as paperwork and timelines. Respondents noted that time pressures created by deadlines for paperwork are causing stress due to workload requirements that cannot be completed within normal work hours. Survey responses reflected that caseworkers view the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF), the state agency that develops regulations and oversight that guides county caseworker requirements, as overly focused on enforcing regulations and not recognizing or addressing concerns about work overload.

Themes Related to Retention

Theme 5: Caseworkers are motivated to stay in the job by a desire to protect children and help families.

Professional pride was chosen as a top reason to stay by 169 respondents (33.1%). A majority of respondents reported they feel rewarded by making a difference in the lives of their clients. Reasons cited for wanting to stay in the job included enjoyment working in a field where they were able to use their professional skills and a strong desire to achieve their agency's

mission to serve children and families. A continuing theme about why caseworkers want to stay in their jobs was the hope that things will get better.

Similar findings were found in an Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) Caseworker Retention Workgroup survey sent via email to all county child welfare administrators on March 23, 2016. Administrators were asked to forward the survey to county caseworkers, which yielded 1,359 responses during the 4-month period the survey was open. In that study, respondents chose "the ability to make an impact on children and families" (State Roundtable Report Caseworker Retention, 2018, p.3), as the top reason for caseworkers and supervisors to stay in the job across all years of service.

Theme 6: Emotional support from co-workers and supervisors are top reasons caseworkers want to stay in the job.

A predominant theme that emerged from the analysis of the data was that personal relationships in the workplace significantly impact whether caseworkers want to continue working in public child welfare agencies. Positive relationships with supervisors and co-workers impact whether caseworkers want to stay in their jobs. Caseworkers rely on their co-workers as a source of emotional support, as *social support from colleagues* was chosen as a top reason to want to stay and *social support from their supervisor* was the second top reason to stay. Similarly, other studies found that co-worker support was positively related to retention (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Nissly et al., 2005; Williams et al., 2011). Developing a culture of emotional support within the organization is suggested as a strategy to improve caseworker turnover.

Implications for Social Work

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) defines the primary mission of social work as enhancing human well-being, particularly for people who are vulnerable, oppressed, or living in poverty. This study of factors related to caseworker turnover utilized ecological systems theory (EST) to identify the needs of individuals working in the child welfare system. NASW (1999) has defined six core values to guide professional social work practice: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. All the core values apply to caseworkers in the child welfare system; however, service, social justice, and competence are most relevant to the results of this study. Service is the primary responsibility of social workers, whose goal is to address social problems by helping people in need (NASW, 1999). Caseworkers in the child welfare system must address issues of social injustice such as poverty, child abuse, and neglect by advocating for resources to meet the needs of their clients. A child welfare system that is not being fully staffed or adequately funded is also a social injustice concern. More advocacy is needed to address the low caseworker salaries and excessive workloads in the child welfare system.

The NASW Code of Ethics (1999) requires that social workers develop and enhance their professional expertise and not practice above their level of competence; however, this study's findings suggest that caseworkers are being required to practice without proper preparation. Although all caseworkers are mandated to attend training before being assigned a caseload, a shortage of caseworkers has resulted in a need to assign cases before new caseworkers feel prepared. Caseworkers want more time and experience before they are assigned a caseload and also need emotional support to help them cope with emotionally strenuous work.

Implications for Child Welfare Practice and Higher Education

Chapter 1 explained how changes to PA's CPSL have increased caseloads. Updates to the CPSL were implemented to improve child safety, but unintended consequences have led to increased caseworker turnover. Survey respondents indicated that the CPSL changes have negatively impacted their ability to be effective in working with families. Inadequate staffing has created concerns about children being left at a higher risk of maltreatment. Analysis of the data reinforced that caseworkers are experiencing frustration about the current state of the PA child welfare system because caseloads are too high for caseworkers to keep up with work demands. PA regulations still allow for caseloads of 30 cases per caseworker, which is twice as high as recommended best practice standards.

Utilizing an ecological systems framework to examine barriers to caseworker retention suggests that reducing caseload sizes cannot be resolved at the county level alone. Even though the problem of having unmanageable child welfare caseload sizes has been a documented concern for years, the duties of caseworkers continue to increase. According to the United States Children's Bureau (2016), caseworkers are increasingly expected to do more assessments, searches, notifications, visits, team meetings, plans, referrals, court testimonies, and documentation.

The findings from this study suggest that reimbursement for educational costs related to caseworkers' social work degrees could be a strategy to both recruit and retain caseworkers. One of the top three reasons chosen to want to leave the job was *my salary cannot support my college loan,* indicating that college loan debt was problematic for them, with caseworkers expressing that their salaries were insufficient to meet their loan obligations. Caseworkers also complained that their salaries were not comparable to salaries earned by other bachelor's degree

professionals.

Research into ways to subsidize college costs for child welfare caseworkers may be an avenue to increase retention. Funding opportunities should be explored to offer child welfare caseworkers loan forgiveness in a timely manner. Programs to reduce student debt should be offered immediately upon graduation to attract more applicants to the field and reduce turnover among existing caseworkers.

Literature supports the need to address loan forgiveness. A study by Fakunmoju and Kersting (2016) examined results from a survey of 569 social workers by the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers to examine whether Student Loan Forgiveness (SLF) would decrease social workers leaving their jobs. Slightly more than half (50.3 %) of participants held up to $49,999 in student loan debt. The study found that high student loan debt causes significant stress, which is often exacerbated by low salaries. Social workers reported that having SLF would ease the pressure for them to leave their jobs.

PA has educational programs to encourage a limited number of social workers to consider a career in child welfare. The Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program offers tuition payments for one year at 15 undergraduate social work degree programs in PA accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (Bradley-King, 2020). As of 2016, 1,051students graduated from CWEB since the program started in 2001 (Cahalane, 2016). CWEB graduates have completed internships and have been employed in 90% of PA counties. In return for an educational fellowship that provides free tuition, participants in the CWEB program must agree to a contractual obligation to accept employment in a PA public child welfare agency immediately following graduation.

The Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) program provides an opportunity for child welfare caseworkers who have completed two years of service to get a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from 12 accredited schools of social work in PA. CWEL students receive tuition, fees for books, and travel expenses for both full- and part-time students, in return for a commitment to the employing county child welfare agency upon graduation. According to the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work (2020), who monitors the contract for both the CWEB and CWEL programs, the cooperative funding for this initiative is provided by the United States Administration for Children and Families, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Child and Youth Administrators.

A desire to earn an MSW was mentioned 26 times by respondents, so expanding the CWEL program or creating other ways to reimburse caseworkers for their tuition costs may be a strategy to reduce turnover. Participation in the CWEL program is up to the discretion of each county and the number of openings is limited, so not all county caseworkers who are interested can participate. As of 2016, 1,282 child welfare professionals earned an MSW through the CWEL program, with 92% of CWEL graduates remaining in the child welfare field (Cahalane, 2016). Since this program has been so successful, expanding higher educational opportunities to serve more caseworkers interested in pursuing educational opportunities is recommended as a recruitment and retention strategy to attract and keep more master's level professionals working in the child welfare system. Schools of Social Work should include strategies for working with involuntary clients as part of their curriculum.

Caseworkers who perceive their agency supports continuing education are more likely to stay in the job, and social workers may be motivated to engage in continuing education programs to further their own professional abilities rather than for organizational reasons (Zimmerman,

2013). Since the number of supervisory and management positions are limited, providing

opportunities for experienced caseworkers to utilize their knowledge and skills may increase

their desire to stay in the job. Experienced caseworkers could train or mentor new caseworkers,

serve on advisory boards for other agencies, participate in public speaking events, help on special

projects, or serve on local and state-wide teams, providing input on implementation of new

programs or services. Moving MSW graduates into supervisory positions and providing more

opportunity for advancement may increase retention efforts and help agencies implement

program improvements (Deglau et al., 2015).

Policy Implications

Based upon this study's findings, CPSL changes have influenced county caseworkers'

desire to leave the job because they are overwhelmed by regulatory requirements. Survey

responses reflected that the Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF), the state agency that

develops regulations and provides oversight that guides county caseworker requirements, has

been unresponsive to their needs. Regulatory revisions are needed to either increase the number

of caseworkers or decrease the mandates and strict timelines required for caseworkers. Ways to

reduce the documentation requirements of caseworkers should be explored.

Caseworkers are struggling to meet the demands of the job, which increased after the

CPSL changes. Caseloads are too high, and caseworkers feel that the agency mission to serve

families is being compromised because of excessive documentation requirements. Funding is

needed to add paraprofessional support services, such as human services case aides, or to

contract with private agencies to help caseworkers with transportation, supervising visits, and

completing paperwork to allow caseworkers to spend more time with their clients.

Higher salaries are needed to attract and retain more qualified applicants to caseworker positions. Changes in the way the PA child welfare system is funded are recommended to address inequities between counties that are contributing to low salaries, the primary reason for caseworker turnover. PA should explore ways to fully reimburse counties for all costs related to child welfare salaries and benefits.

To ensure consistency among county salaries, the state should set a minimum salary requirement that is comparable to other bachelor's degree level professional positions. This would likely decrease the turnover that is occurring when caseworkers change counties due to differences in salaries and benefits. Higher salaries would improve caseworker retention and attract more applicants to the child welfare field. Responding to concerns about caseworker turnover and inadequate staffing at the county level, a 2018 report from the PA Auditor General's office recommended that "Pennsylvania should pay for 100% of CYS caseworkers' salaries up front instead of requiring counties to do so" (DePasquale, 2018, p.7). The County Commissioners Association of PA (2017) has also recommended that PA state funding be changed to provide 100% state reimbursement for salaries for all children and youth caseworkers. These changes would require approval by the PA state legislature.

Funding to increase caseworker salaries may already be available through the federal government. PA could access additional federal Title IV-E funds at no increased costs to state and local taxpayers. An additional $140 million in federal funding is available if the PA legislature would pass legislation to comply with federal Title IV-E requirements for how private foster care provider agencies bill the state for their services (DePasquale, 2018). An OCYF estimate predicted that it would cost the state an additional $90 million annually to fund 100% of caseworkers' salaries (DePasquale, 2018). Paying the total costs for all caseworker salaries

would be a minuscule amount in an annual total state budget of more than $30 billion

(DePasquale, 2019).

Limitations of Study

The secondary data set utilized for this study was limited in racial diversity. Caseworkers

from 49% of PA counties participated in the survey, which provided a sample taken from the

state's 67 counties. The state's two largest counties, Philadelphia, and Allegheny were not

identified as participating in the survey, which likely limited the number of caseworkers from

urban areas. Other studies have found caseworkers living in nonurban areas are more likely to be

Caucasian (Barth et al., 2008), which impacts the generalizability of the findings to larger urban

settings. Since the two largest counties contain most of the state's urban settings, racial

demographics of caseworkers state-wide are likely to be more diverse than this study's sample.

The survey tool did not include a category to choose *Management* as either a top reason to want

to stay or leave the job. A category of *Other* would also have allowed respondents to add

categories that were not listed as a choice under the multiple-answer questions.

This study's survey data was not collected utilizing random sampling, so there are

limitations for the generalizability of findings. The cross-sectional survey represents only a

snapshot of PA caseworkers during the data collection period and random sampling would have

provided a more accurate representation of the caseworker population (Delice, 2010). Future

studies may want to explore longitudinal research by looking at variables related to caseworker

turnover over an extended period of time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given this study's findings, future child welfare research should continue to examine

barriers that increase turnover and facilitators that encourage caseworker retention. Follow-up

research about the patterns of caseworker turnover over time would be helpful to understand caseworkers' needs. Additional studies would be improved by adding individual interviews or focus groups to gather more in-depth information about caseworker turnover. For example, the CPSL changes may have impacted experienced caseworkers differently than new workers, based upon longevity of employment. As new employees are hired and trained, they are less likely to be impacted by the changes that resulted from the updated CPSL, as they will be only be trained in the new procedures and less likely to make comparisons to previous practices. Future research to compare how the CPSL changes have impacted new caseworkers, compared to experienced caseworkers, is recommended to learn more about the retention needs of caseworkers based upon longevity of employment.

Management practices appear to influence caseworkers' intent to stay or leave the job, but more information is needed to understand how and why caseworkers are dissatisfied with agency management. Since this study found that 20% of caseworkers comments reflected they wanted to leave their jobs because of their views of management, more information is needed to identify specific needs and best practices for child welfare administrators. A large turnover among PA child welfare administrators has likely changed the training and support needs of child welfare directors. Research is needed to identify best practices to train and support those in management positions about ways to improve caseworker retention.

Conclusions

This chapter discussed themes related to the reasons caseworkers want to stay or leave their jobs. Caseworkers want and deserve salaries that reflect their level of education and professionalism. Low salaries are indicative of caseworkers not being recognized as educated, skilled professionals, working in a very challenging job, that is essential to meet the needs of our

society. Caseworkers are desperate for changes that would reduce their excessive workloads.

They also want better training and support to help them in their jobs, including more recognition

and support from management teams within their agencies. Caseworkers take pride in their

mission of helping families, reflected by findings of *professional pride* as one of the top multiple

answer choices for caseworkers to want to stay in the job. Similarly, *personal accomplishment*

*w*as a top reason why caseworkers want to stay, according to the coded open-ended responses.

Caseworkers want changes to reduce caseloads, excessive documentation requirements,

and unrealistic demands. Caseworkers want to stay in their jobs and love working with families,

but excessive regulatory requirements are preventing them from having enough time to work

effectively with their clients. Caseworkers need manageable caseloads to be able to ensure that

children are protected from abuse and neglect. Caseworkers enjoy the emotional support they

receive from their supervisors and colleagues, but excessive demands of the job are making them

want to quit.

Listening to the input of caseworkers provides a parallel for how organizations that fail to

listen to their staff may experience employee dissatisfaction that makes them want to leave their

jobs. Low salaries, high workload and caseload sizes, and regulatory deadlines are all things that

must be addressed through legislative changes to improve the working conditions for

caseworkers. Updates to the CPSL were developed from a desire to make children safer;

however, we must now recognize that caseworker turnover has been an unintended consequence

of the CPSL changes. Caseworker turnover is unacceptable when it leaves vulnerable children

unprotected and changes are needed to improve PA's child welfare system. If we listen to the

voices of caseworkers, turnover can be improved through an investment of resources into the

child welfare system. Caseworkers are holding out hope for this to happen.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions Extracted from the Original Survey

1.Check your top 3 concerns that make you think of leaving the job (from the following

options):

- Complexity

- Computer problems

- Demanding contacts with patients

- Emotional demands

- Emotional dissonance

- Interpersonal conflict

- Job insecurity

- Negative spillover from work to family

- Harassment by clients

- Performance demands

- Physical demands

- Salary and benefits

- Responsibility

- Risks and hazards

- Role ambiguity

- Role conflict

- Time pressure

- Unfavorable shift work schedule

- Unfavorable work conditions

- Work-home conflict

- Work overload

- Accidents and injuries

- Adverse events

- Depression

- Psychological strain

- Determination to continue

- Prefer to work in non-social services industry

- Pursue higher education

- My salary cannot support my college loan

2. After making their three choices, respondents were asked to briefly explain their thoughts for each choice utilizing a qualitative response in their own words.

3. Respondents were given an opportunity to provide further clarification and input with this qualitative question: "Please provide any other thoughts you think will be helpful."

4. Check your top 3 three reasons that you want to stay in the job (from the following options):

- Advancement

- Appreciation

- Autonomy

- Financial rewards

- Goal clarity

- Innovative climate

- Opportunities for professional development

- Participation in decision making

- Performance feedback

- Positive spillover from work to family

- Professional pride

- Procedural fairness

- Safety climate

- Social support from colleagues

- Social support from the supervisor

- Skill utilization

- Supervisory coaching

- Task variety

- Team cohesion

- Trust in management

- Hope

- Life satisfaction

- Organizational commitment

- Service quality

- Team performance

4. Respondents were asked to provide qualitative responses in their own words to briefly explain their thoughts for each choice

5. Provide any other thoughts you think will be helpful.

6. Demographic questions:

- "How old are you?"

- What is your gender?   Female, Male, Other (specify)

- What is the highest level of education you have completed? Drop down menu options included: Completed high school or GED, Graduated from College, Some graduate school, Completed graduate school.

- Race/ethnicity that best describes you? (Please choose only one.) Options: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian/ Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic, White/Caucasian, Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify).

Appendix B

Codes for Qualitative Analysis

Name	Description
Advancement opportunities	Availability of upward advancement within the field or organization
Advancement opportunities not available	Respondent reports that they do not have access to opportunities for advancement within the organization
Educational loans	Educational loans are reported as a factor related to turnover
Caseload size	Amount of cases and time to do the work required
Client relationships negative	Respondent reports problems with clients impact their feelings about jobs. Respondent comments about clients are negative in terms of their working relationship
Client relationships positive	Response indicates a positive feeling about relationship with clients and ability to help them
Community Resources not available	Respondent reports there are not sufficient community resources to them to effectively do their job or meet the needs of their clients
Continuing education is available	Response indicates desire to have continuing education or feels the continuing education is a benefit to staying in job
Continuing education not available	Respondent reports that they do not have access to continuing educational opportunities to improve their knowledge or skills
County and local issues	Response indicates a local issue related to agency or specific county
Court issues	Respondent feels that court has an impact on views of the job
Co-worker support negative	Response indicates that there is a lack of support that causes low morale or leads to negative feelings about job
Co-worker support positive	Response indicates positive relationships with co-workers or positive morale that leads to positive feelings about the job
Cynicism	Indifference or a distrust of the motivation of others
Decision making bad	Respondent has no input into decision making; Feels disempowered about lack of say about decisions on their cases
Decision making good	Respondent has positive feelings about input into decision making and caseworkers report they feel their opinions are valued

Name	Description
Depersonalization Maslach	measures an impersonal response or numbness toward recipients of one's service, care treatment, or instruction
Documentation	Paperwork and computer input related to documenting work requirements
Emotional Demands	Job duties that impact caseworkers in a negative way that causes stress
Emotional Exhaustion	Feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work
Employee Benefits	Health insurance, Paid time off
Flexibility in job duties	Respondent reports favourable response to variety of work and flexibility of duties
View of Management seen as positive/supportive	Respondent reports that there is a feeling of positive support from administration and management
View of Management seen as not supportive/not positive	Respondent feels that management does not support the work of caseworker/policies and procedures in organization do not support the caseworker's needs
Negative supervisory support	Respondent reports having an unsupportive relationship with supervisor(s)
Decision making negative	Reports that no input allowed in decision making leads to frustration or negative feelings about job
Decision making- positive	Response indicates allowed to have input to decision making
Personal Accomplishment Maslach	Respondent feels competent and successful and reports feeling a positive achievement about their work
Positive supervisory support	Respondent has positive comments about relationship with supervisor and reports that supervision meets their needs
Professionalism good	Respondent reports that they are treated respectfully and are seen as a professional
Professionalism is not good. Respondent reports a lack of professionalism from supervisors or management	Respondent reports they are not treated as a professional with expertise in their job
Public Perception	Response indicates that respondent views a negative public attitude about their job or public child welfare negatively impacts their own view of their job
Reasons to leave	Response given for reasons to leave the job

Name	Description
Reasons to stay	Response listed under categories for reason to stay on job
Responsibility of job	Respondent's feeling about job duties and responsibility for child safety and client needs
Safety issues	Being threatened, yelled at, cursed at, going into dangerous settings impacts your desire to stay or leave the job
Safety supports meet the caseworkers needs	Cell phone, vehicles, police escorts, team home visits, safety training. are available and support safety
Safety supports do not meet the needs of caseworkers	Cell phone, vehicles, police escorts, team home visits, safety training are not available or do not support a feeling of being protected from safety threats
Salary	Amount of salary respondent is paid for the job
State requirements increasing workload	Respondent comments relate to state requirements that are impacting their workload and ability to do their job effectively
Support and Appreciation is shown to make me feel valued	Respondent reports receiving support and appreciation within the agency (from supervisor or management)
Support and Feeling of Being Valued not happening	Respondent reports not receiving support or appreciation from their supervisor or management
Themes	Researcher notes of themes that emerged while coding data
Time management	Ability to get work done during regular work hours
Training supports caseworkers needs	Response indicates a relationship to training that supports job skills
Transportation and travel	Driving to visit clients, field work, and transporting clients
Work and family balance	How respondent feels about how job impacts family
Work environment negative	Work environment is not conducive to work productivity
Work environment positive	Work environment is conducive to work productivity
Workload	Amount of work, which may vary dependent upon job assignments
Work schedule flexibility	Hours worked/overtime required/ flexible schedule impacts your desire to stay or leave the job
Family Life	Respondent feels job is interfering with ability to meet family needs