



# ND Child Welfare Supervision

March 2019

In 2017, there were 2,064 child victims of child abuse and/or neglect in N. D. and there has been a 42% increase in the number of children in foster care since 2012. The numbers have increased in many regions, and the situations are more difficult than most can imagine.

In addition to high caseloads and increased complexities in cases, case workers in Child Welfare face a daunting and difficult task of balancing their legally mandated responsibility to protect children from neglect and abuse, while working with the goal of keeping families together. Mental health, addiction, poverty, domestic violence and social perceptions of their role within the community further complicate the situation.

Recruiting and retaining professionals in these roles has become increasingly more difficult over time. It is rare to see a case worker that has been working in child welfare for more than 10-15 years as many leave the profession before that time arrives. **Supervisors play a critical role in the recruitment and retention of case workers on the front line.** In fact, the primary reasons workers stay in the child welfare field include: personal characteristics (sense of personal mission, personal pride), the culture within the agency (opportunities to learn) and the supervisory relationship (support from and a good relationship with an effective supervisor).

**DID YOU KNOW?** Social Work is one of the fastest growing professions in the US with about 110,000 more social workers expected to enter the profession in just 7 years? Taken from: US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019

## Workers Seek Support in Different Ways:

- **Task Assistance:** Offer to assist a worker with coverage of a case; assisting through action can be helpful in many ways and shows your staff that you are not afraid to “dig in” and help when necessary. It also provides you the opportunity as the supervisor to model skills as well as to observe the skills of the worker in situations.
- **Social and Emotional Support:** Check in with workers after a hard day. Make sure self-care is a priority and model the importance of good self-care: ask the worker if they have time to take a quick walk outside; provide flexibility within the work day if possible for workers to leave early, take a break, etc. Recognize the signs of Secondary Trauma and have regular discussions to promote awareness within staff of Secondary Trauma and how you and your agency can be of assistance and support.
- **Supervisor Interpersonal Interaction:** Workers should know that their supervisor cares about them as a person and has respect for them and their work. Personal and professional growth is important as well as being recognized for a job well done. Recognition can come in many forms!

**Need More Inspiration???** **Additional Resources:** Books: “How Full is Your Bucket” by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton; “1501 Ways to Recognize Employees” by Bob Nelson; Video: “One Heart Can Make A Difference”

<https://vimeo.com/291974230>

# The Importance of Recognition in Child Welfare

*“When you think about other first responders- police, firefighters, etc.- they have a strong internal culture and public recognition that their work is challenging and dangerous, which helps them to rise about the negative public perceptions. That just hasn’t been built within most child welfare agencies, and that’s why caseworker recognition and respect within a worker’s own agency is so important”*

Mary McCarthy, Co –Principal Investigator, National Child Welfare Workforce Institute.(NCWWI)

## **IS YOUR AGENCY DOING WHAT IT TAKES TO RETAIN AND RECOGNIZE QUALITY WORKERS?**

**According to research conducted by the Gallup Organization, the following questions measure the critical elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented employees:**

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the training and the skills that I need to do my job?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In these last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my agency make me feel my job is important?

9. Are my co workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a close friend at work?
11. In the last six months has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunity at work to learn and grow?

## **THE SIMPLEST ACTS CAN MAKE THE MOST DIFFERENCE. TAKE THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSES AS WELL AS HARD WORK**

**The Gallup Organization also Found that employees who receive regular recognition and appreciation:**

- Are more productive
- Are more engaged
- Are more likely to stay at the agency, say good things about it and strive for excellence
- Are more customer centric
- Are more safe on the job
- Provide positive verbal feedback in a timely manner

## **Simple ways to show recognition:**

1. Provide words of appreciation and encouragement during difficult times, verbally or in written form.
2. Celebrate work anniversaries and tell the workers how much they are appreciated.
3. Advocate for raises and flexibility within their schedules
4. Talk about achievements in staff meetings, share success stories!
5. Promptly respond to their questions and requests so they know those things are important to you as well.
6. Taking time to personally connect with workers after a weekend or special occasion.
7. Celebrate milestones!
8. Find reasons to celebrate and create get-to-togethers for workers to connect on social level
9. Have Thank You notes available in a central location so that workers can thank each other with ease. Model this behavior as a supervisor

**References:** NASW Social Work Month 2019 “Elevate” taken from: <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Social-Work-Month>; California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership “Balancing Head and Heart California’s Child Welfare Workforce” taken from: [https://ncwwi.org/files/Education\\_Professional\\_Prep\\_\\_UPs/CCW\\_Co-Invest\\_Insights\\_brochure\\_Dec\\_DIGITAL\\_FINAL\\_121817.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Education_Professional_Prep__UPs/CCW_Co-Invest_Insights_brochure_Dec_DIGITAL_FINAL_121817.pdf)