

NC CHILD WELFARE WORKERS DESCRIBE SUPERVISION

AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2009 NC-DSS SUPERVISION BEST PRACTICE STUDY

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Introduction

In 2009 the NC Division of Social Services (NCDSS) conducted a survey of child welfare staff experiences with social work supervision. Why was NCDSS interested in surveying line staff regarding supervision? We recognize that supervision is critical to improving child welfare outcomes and to retaining trained social work staff. NCDSS wanted to hear directly from social work staff regarding good supervision practices. More than 1400 social workers responded to the survey, representing about half of the total child welfare direct practice workforce at the time of the survey. According to NCDSS staffing survey data from 2009, 99 counties reported 2,811 direct practice positions in North Carolina.

It is important to note that 1,400 respondents began the survey, however most questions had an approximate total of 1,100 responses. This is due to respondents beginning the survey and not completing the survey. This equates to a 39% response rate, which represents a diverse response from direct service social workers, and lends credibility to the thematic conclusions interpreted from this data. The survey was anonymous, however, respondents were asked to identify their position within child welfare services, the highest level of education completed, and the length of employment in their current agency.

Summary of Quantitative Responses

Table 1. Current Positions of Respondents

CPS Intake	151	10.8%
CPS Investigative Assessments/Family Assessments	426	30.4%
CPS In-Home Services	263	18.8%
Foster Care/Adoptions	349	24.9%
Foster Care Licensing	84	6.0%
Other	129	9.2%
Total	1402	

Table 2. Highest Level of Education Completed

BSW or equivalent	356	30.8%
MSW or equivalent	226	19.6%

Human Services related 4 year degree	390	33.8%
Human Services Related master's degree	88	7.6%
PhD or EdD	3	.3%
Other	9	.8%
Total	1155	

Table 3. Years in Current Agency

Less than 2 years	298	26.9%
Between 2 and 5 years	384	34.7%
Between 6 and 10 years	223	20.2%
Between 11 and 15 years	99	9.0%
Over 15 years	102	9.2%

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents Who Agree and Strongly Agree

Individual meetings two times per month	71%
Calendar to schedule meetings to protect time & prevent interruptions	64%
Use a specific tool to structure the meetings	52%
Encouraged to discuss case progress	84%
Interested in cases and offers feedback	82%
Reviews at least 2 cases per quarter	54%
Agency supports strengths-based practice	69%
Supervisor demonstrates strengths-based practice during interactions with staff	69%
Interested in supervisee's professional growth & development	70%
Supervisor cares & responds to issues supervisee thinks are important	72%
Gives informal praise and recognition to supervisee	70%

It is our assessment that overall, the quantitative data reflects a positive sense of child welfare supervision in North Carolina.

- 71% of staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they have individual twice monthly meetings with their supervisor.
- 82% of staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisor has an interest in the progress of their case and offers feedback regarding case management decisions.
- 72% of staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisor cares and responds to issues that they as important.
- 70% of staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they receive informal praise and recognition from their supervisor.

There are some concerns in respect to the following data results:

- 12% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that their supervisor demonstrated strengths-based practice in their individual interactions with staff.
- 12% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that their supervisor was interested in their professional growth and development.
- 13% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that they received informal praise and recognition from their supervisor.
- 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their supervisor used a formal tool to structure their individual supervision time
- 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their supervisor reviews at least 2 of their cases per quarter

Methodology

In addition to the quantitative data that workers provided about supervision in NC, they were invited to “describe the concept of good supervision” and provide “additional information... regarding the Supervision Best Practice Pilot.” The qualitative section of this report is an analysis of the responses workers gave to these open-ended items.

All comments were reviewed by the Workforce Collaborative team (including the project director and two graduate students) which identified common themes and critical issues. The analysis team hypothesized that respondents' comments would vary related to the length of tenure in the agency. Qualitative responses, therefore, were sorted into five categories based on the workers' years of experience. The number of respondents in each category is identified below:

Less than 2 years	298	26.9%
Between 2 and 5 years	384	34.7%
Between 6 and 10 years	223	20.2%
Between 11 and 15 years	99	9.0%
Over 15 years	102	9.2%
	1106	100.00%

As expected, the qualitative statements made by workers as part of the survey identify both strengths and needs. Some responses praise supervisors for demonstrating effective supervision skills, while other responses reflect workers needs for better supervision. This report represents the team's review of more than 1000 comments by survey respondents.

While some of the workers' qualitative responses fell into the category of *system level comments* (detailed later in the report), the vast majority of their responses fit into the following themes:

- Education
- Coaching and Support
- Leadership and Communication
- Accountability

A review of supervision literature helped define these categories and is included in the Effective Supervision Framework below.

Effective Supervision Framework

The Effective Supervision Framework is not meant to be a comprehensive "job description" for supervisors. It represents workers' perceptions of what they need from their supervisors, but does not include all of the administrative and other job functions that are expected of supervisors in the child welfare system.

Education

- Helps workers sharpen their practice skills and acquire knowledge of how to better meet the needs of clients (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)

- Contributes to the professional development of workers (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)
- Promotes employee learning that is targeted to the individual worker (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)

Coaching and Support

- Helps workers deal with stress, sustains workers' morale, cultivates teamwork, builds and sustains workers' commitment to the organization, and addresses work-related problems of conflict and frustration (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)
- Schedules regular standing times for supervision where workers have the undivided attention of the supervisor (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)
- Ensures workers have the resources they need to be effective in their jobs (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)
- Provides regular feedback about performance, including recognizing achievements as well as targeting areas that need work (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)
- Sets clear expectations (DHHS, 2004)
- Delegates responsibility for cases to workers; provides support for cases, but does not do the job directly (DHHS, 2004)

Leadership and Communication

- Establishes a positive climate/working environment/culture (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)
- Effectively interacts with people at all levels of the organization and with people from other departments and organizations in order to bring about desired changes (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)
- Models positive cross-cultural interactions and pays attention to the interactions among staff in order to reward staff for engaging in the process of creating and supporting an environment that recognizes and embraces difference and ensures that biased behavior will not be tolerated (Pecora, Cherin, Bruce, & Arguello, 2010)

Accountability

- Establishes structures of accountability and oversight, enforces agency rules and regulations, compliance with record keeping, fiscal procedures and reporting requirements (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)
- Sets and maintains high standards for performance (DHHS, 2004)
- Monitors and evaluates staff performance (Gibelman & Furman, 2008)

Summary of Qualitative Responses

- Child welfare social workers are confronted daily with intense family situations that require a high level of knowledge and skill to effectively intervene. Their practice is high stakes - mostly invisible within the community yet poor outcomes are highly visible. A child fatality may lead to both personal and public consequences for the worker and the agency and can invoke the outrage of the community.
- Despite the level of skill needed, DSS front line social workers are often newer practitioners with minimum professional work experience to inform their practice. Respondents in this study are typical of the workforce with about 27% having two years or less experience and more than 50% having five years or less. About half the respondents have a degree in social work (BSW 30.8% and MSW 19.6%) and the remainder identified themselves as having human services related degrees. This variance in experience and education has implications for supervisory practice. The demands and challenges are greater as supervisors must attend to the needs of a less experienced workforce who have diverse needs and have prepared for practice in many different ways. While much has been written about social work supervision in literature, the body of literature about supervision in the context of child welfare is limited.
- Supervisors are clearly seen as critical to the training and professional development of child welfare social workers. Staff expect supervisors to be well grounded in practice and policy. Supervisors are expected to have the skills to assess the learning needs of each worker as well as the workers' learning styles. Furthermore, supervisors are expected to customize training approaches to accommodate diverse individual needs and styles. Supervisors are expected to provide training via case consultation and to arrange for other professional development activities. Since many staff are relatively inexperienced, the role of teacher and trainer assumes greater importance for child welfare supervisors.
- Respondents consistently expressed a desire for supervisory feedback. They want to know when they are performing well and they want constructive criticism. They rely on supervisors to monitor work activities and ensure that work is timely and of high quality. Supervisors are expected to clarify standards and performance expectations and to fairly and consistently enforce these standards.
- In addition to the role as educator, trainer, and performance coach, staff expect supervisors to serve as buffers and advocates with upper management, community members, and families. Respondents want supervisors to be open-minded and fair. They expect supervisors to listen non-judgmentally and to respond to concerns in a manner that is perceived as fair and non-blaming. Respondents emphasized the need for relationships that are characterized by respect, trust, and fairness and contrasted this with a climate of blame, intimidation, and fear.
- These data have a strong theme of expecting supervisors to care about how the worker functions as a person as well as how the worker performs within the agency. Respondents expressed this by suggesting that supervisors serve as motivators and help staff deal with the stress of the work. Supervisors are expected to help workers set limits and to monitor workers for signs of secondary

trauma and burnout. They expect supervisors to have some awareness of each worker's personal life and to assist workers in balancing workload demands with those of the home and community.

- Finally, respondents made comments about supervisory accessibility and style. On the one hand, supervisors are expected to be available whenever needed by staff. They are expected to give their undivided attention to staff needs. But, supervisors are also expected to trust staff judgments and to avoid micromanagement.
- The workers' years of experience made little difference in this analysis. Regardless of tenure, staff want time with their supervisor. How this time is used by staff seems to evolve from a heavy emphasis on teaching policy and practice in the earlier years to consultation and support in the later years.
- Respondents had many comments about the pathways to a supervisory position. They emphasized the need for supervisors to be selected based on standards and qualifications. They were concerned that some supervisory selection processes were biased and relied too heavily on friendships and criteria not related to supervisor qualifications. Their suggestions about managing this included more attention to supervisor competencies and job descriptions as well as including staff in the supervisor selection process. Several comments noted the challenges associated with the transition from worker to supervisor. In addition to learning about the responsibilities of the new position, new supervisors must also manage the evolution of the relationship with staff who were formerly peers and have become supervisees.
- Respondents recognized the need for initial training and continuing education for supervisors. They suggested that supervisors need general education about supervision and some suggested that a social work degree and clinical licensure would be helpful. More specific needs for training included topics such as best practices in child welfare, managing diversity, and recognizing burnout. Several respondents noted that supervisors should be well-informed about the requirements of each of the positions they supervise. This latter area was sometimes linked with a concern about blended teams.
- Recognizing the intensity of practice in child welfare, respondents have high expectations that supervisors will establish a supportive and positive work climate based on respect, trust, and mutual support. They expect upper levels of administration to provide the types of support and training that may be necessary for supervisors to create this positive climate. Specifically, they noted the need for training about turnover prevention and management of secondary trauma.
- Many respondents commented about the relationship between supervisors and the next level of administration. Sometimes this was in the form of questioning "who" holds supervisors accountable for their practice and sometimes the comments seemed more related to supervisors receiving support and guidance so that they could support and guide their staff (parallel process). Some comments noted the variance in supervision across teams and suggested more consistency in supervisory practices. In addition to participation in selection of supervisors, some respondents recommended that staff have input when supervisors' performance is evaluated.

- Finally, the high workload for the typical supervisor was noted by many respondents. While essential to the overall role of supervisor, paperwork, meetings, and other administrative and community demands made supervisors less available for staff needs. There seemed to be widespread recognition that supervisors have a heavy workload.

Recommendations

What does this information mean? What conclusions can we draw from the survey results and what we've learned from the Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee (CWSAC). It is clear that supervisors must respond to varying needs based on the individual worker. However, there is consistency in the findings that when a social worker wants guidance, direction, policy interpretation, help with a case that is "stuck", they want their supervisor to be available. North Carolina formed the CWSAC in response to NC's Child and Family Services Review completed in 2007. The group is chaired by 2 county supervisors and a Division employee, and a supervisory strategic plan has been operational since 2009. The strategic plan was developed with assistance from The National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and The National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology. The following counties have been piloting supervision best practices: Person, Mecklenburg, Nash, Wilson, Johnston, Catawba, Cabarrus, Granville, Buncombe, Gaston, Wake, Cumberland, Harnett, Alamance, and Cumberland.

With assistance from the National Resource Centers, the CWSAC accomplished the following:

- Development of a long-range supervisory strategic plan
- Completion of a time study analysis
- Technology assessment
- Pilot of 5 best practice principles in supervision
- Development of an on-line supervisory toolkit
- Advisory group to NCDSS on policy and practice issues

The Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee is now prepared, after many lessons learned, to make systemic and practice recommendations related to supervision.

The following **Supervisory Practices** are recommended for statewide implementation:

- The supervisor holds weekly scheduled supervision with staff, at least two scheduled individual conferences per month.
- The supervisor protects scheduled time by being truly available.
- The supervisor and worker use a structured, purposeful format for supervision.

- The supervisor coaches and mentors staff to use supervision time more purposefully.
- The supervisor uses a consistent case review tool on at least 2 case records from each staff member each quarter.

The following **Systemic Recommendations** are endorsed by the Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee:

- Maintain and increase use of existing professional development resources for supervisors.
- Increase professional development opportunities for supervisors.
- Expand career advancement opportunities for line workers by creating a “lead worker” path for highly skilled/experienced workers who want to increase their responsibilities (and have workload and/or salary adjusted accordingly) but who do not have the interest/skills to perform administrative/management functions of a supervisor. For example, in counties with blended teams, Supervisors could administer the teams, and lead workers with expertise in the different job function areas could provide case consultation.
- Develop a career ladder pathway to supervision for staff people that aspire to supervision.
- Add a section to Preservice designed to help new child welfare staff become good consumers of supervision by developing realistic expectations about supervision (what to expect from supervision and how to use time with supervisors effectively).
- Examine the impact of blended teams on supervision practice and identify policy and/or staff development changes that may be needed.
- Strengthen transfer of learning. Supervisors need to be aware of what is taught in workers’ trainings and help the workers implement what they are taught. Supervisors already help implement “action plans” from Preservice, develop similar implementation plans for other staff development trainings.
- Recognize the impact of secondary traumatic stress on child welfare workers and supervisors. Review the supports provided to workers in other “first responder” systems (law enforcement, medicine, etc.) and adapt or develop similar methods of addressing secondary traumatic stress in child welfare workers and supervisors.

Many of the systemic recommendations are not quick fixes; some require data collection and analysis, changes to our training plan and collaboration with cross-system stakeholders to develop improvement strategies. NCDSS will include these recommendations in our long-range improvement plans, including our federally mandated 5-year Child and Family Services Plan as well as future Program Improvement Plans.

A supervisory toolkit was developed as an on-line resource to assist supervisors. The documents shared on this site are not required for use, but are meant to serve as a starting place for sharing resources. You can access the information at this address:

http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/best_practices_pilot/

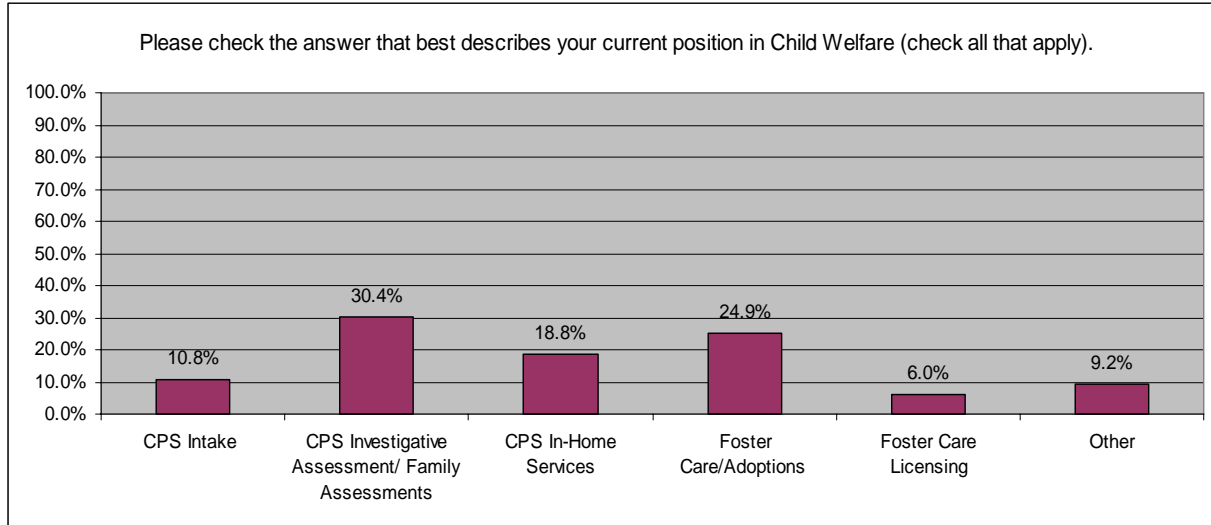
This site is ever-changing. If you have a tool that is helpful and you'd like to share with others, please send that information to candice.britt@dhhs.nc.gov

Appendix A

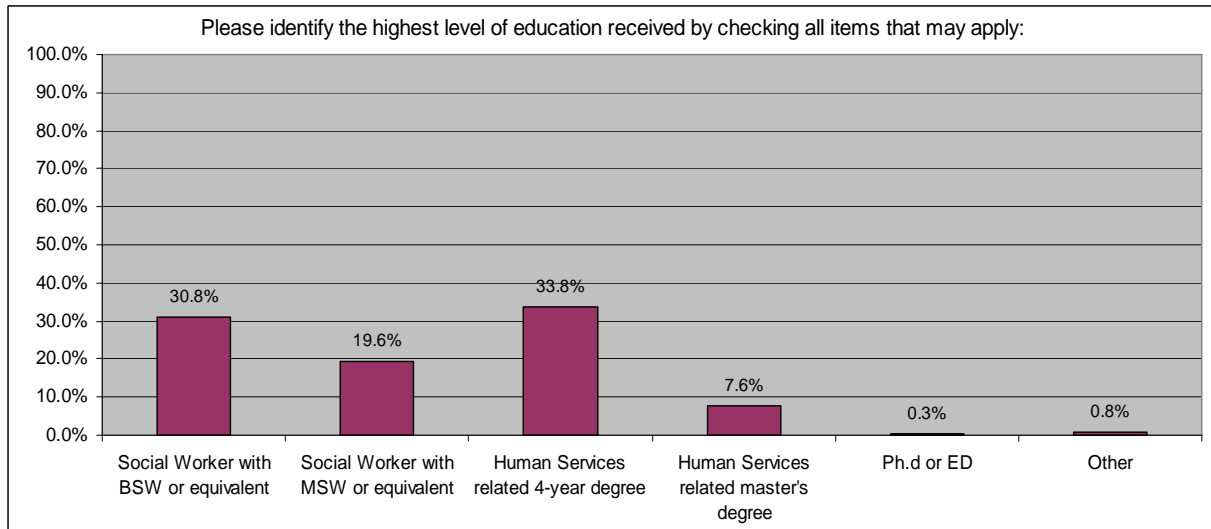
Quantitative Data: What Did Respondents Say?

The following graphs represent direct service social worker responses collected in the survey.

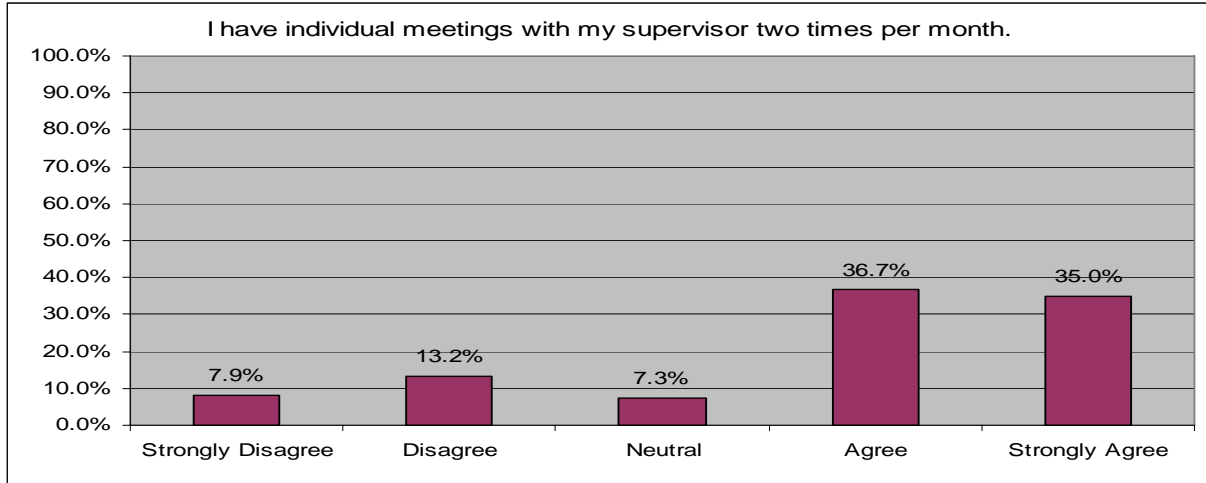
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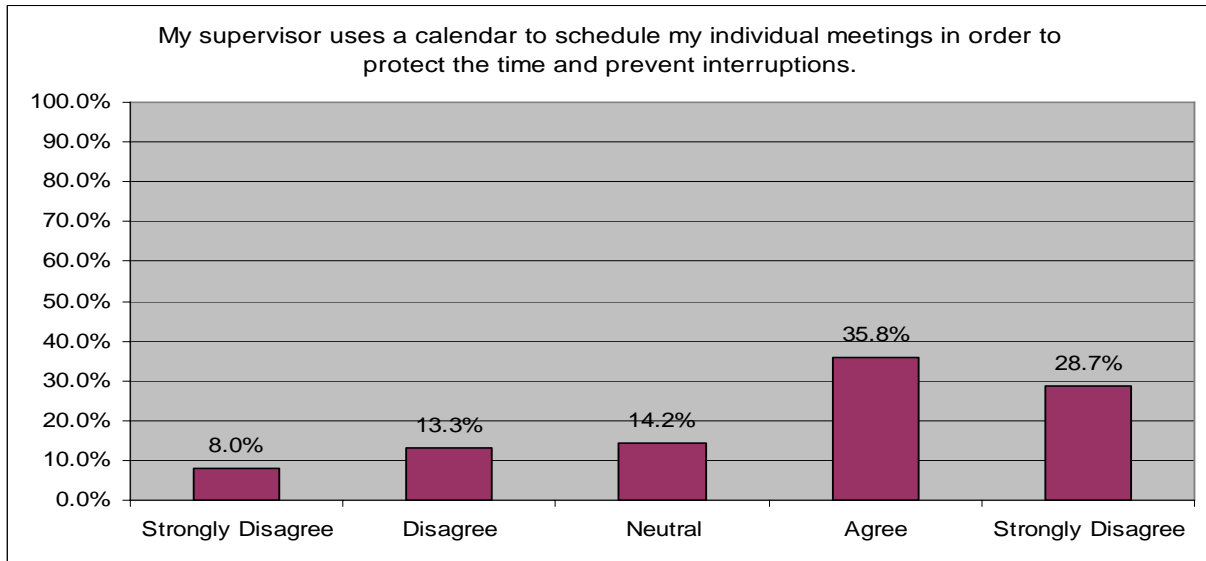
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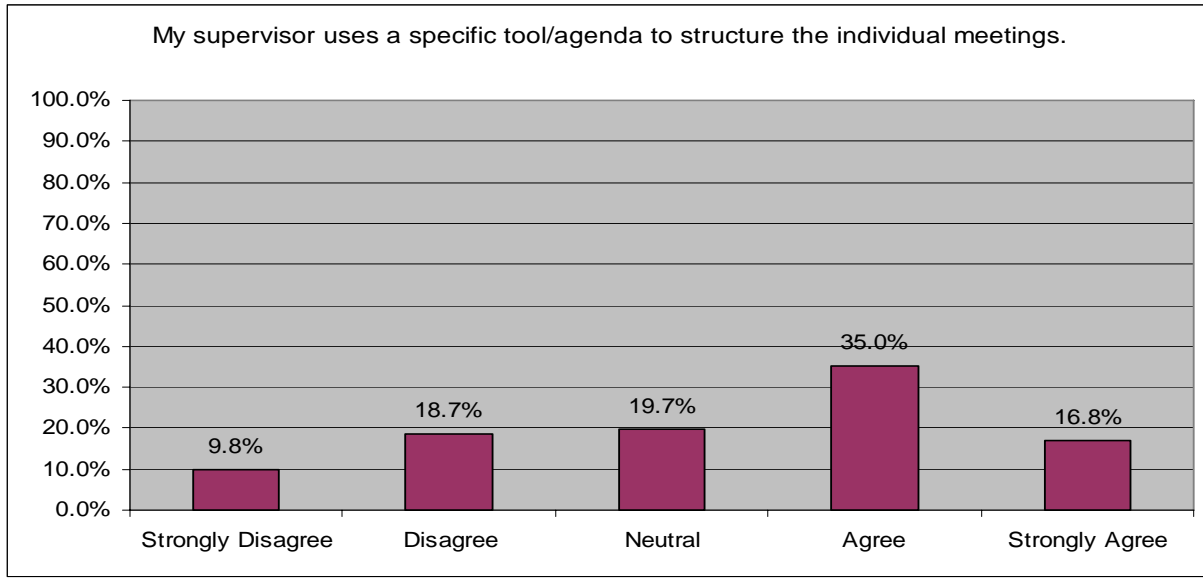
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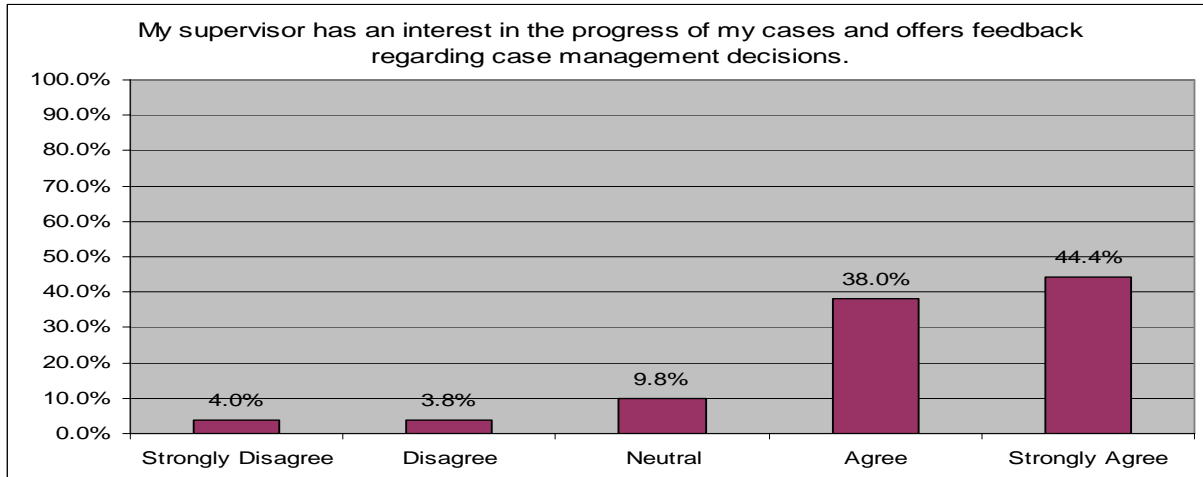
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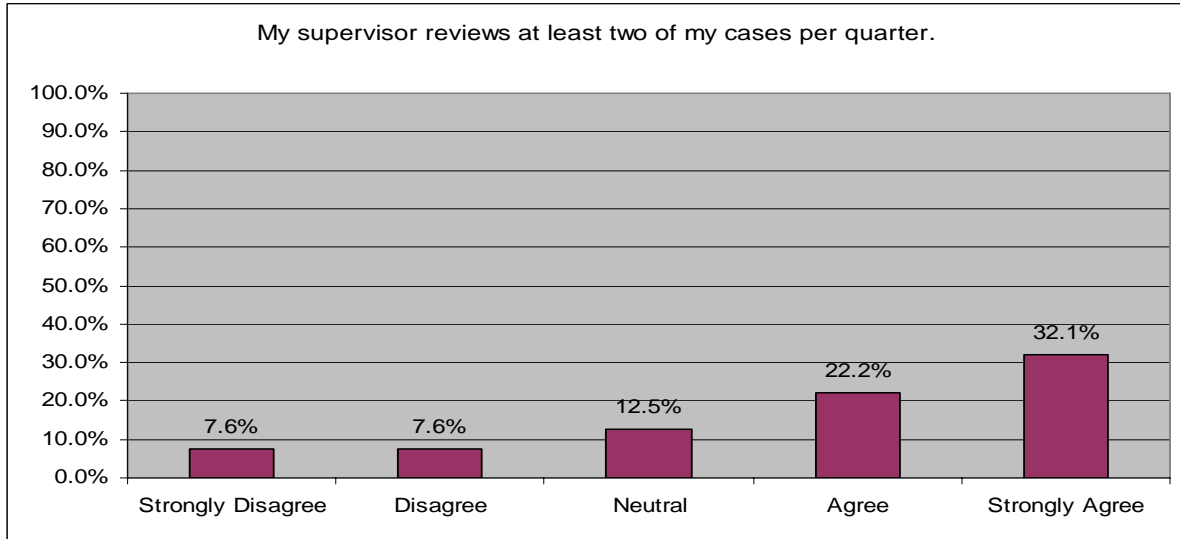
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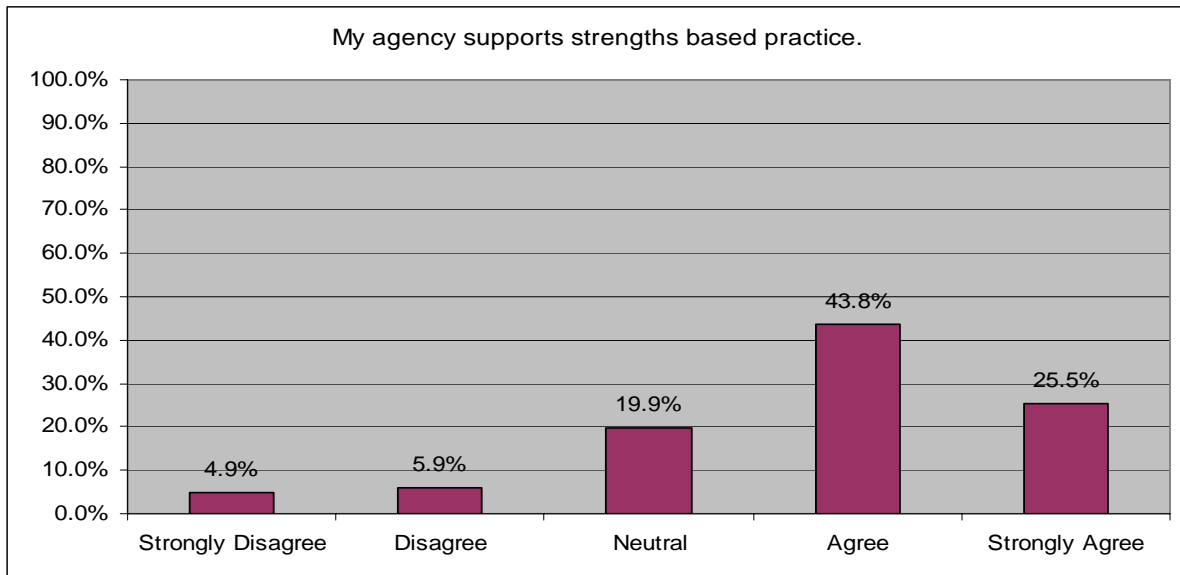
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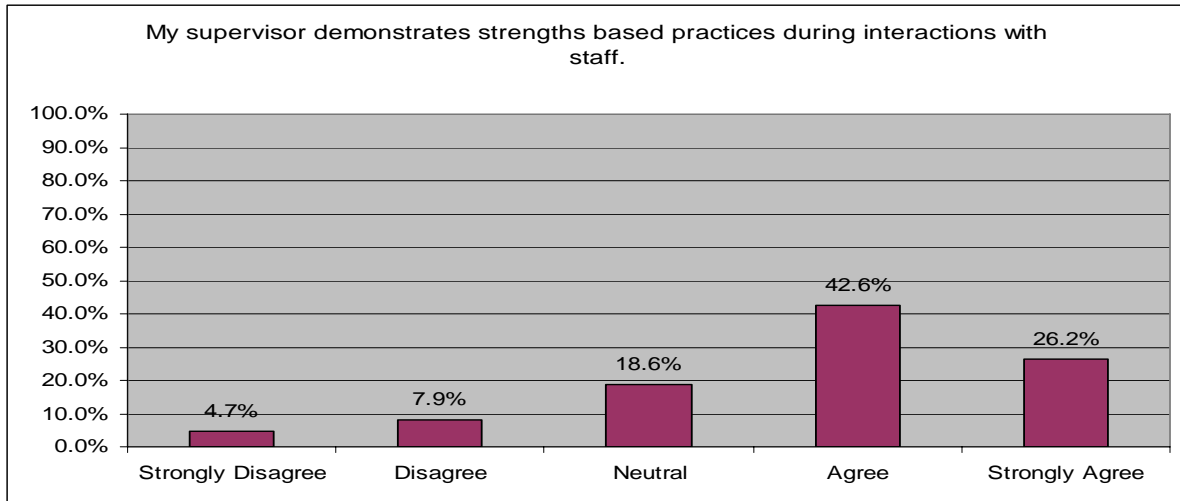
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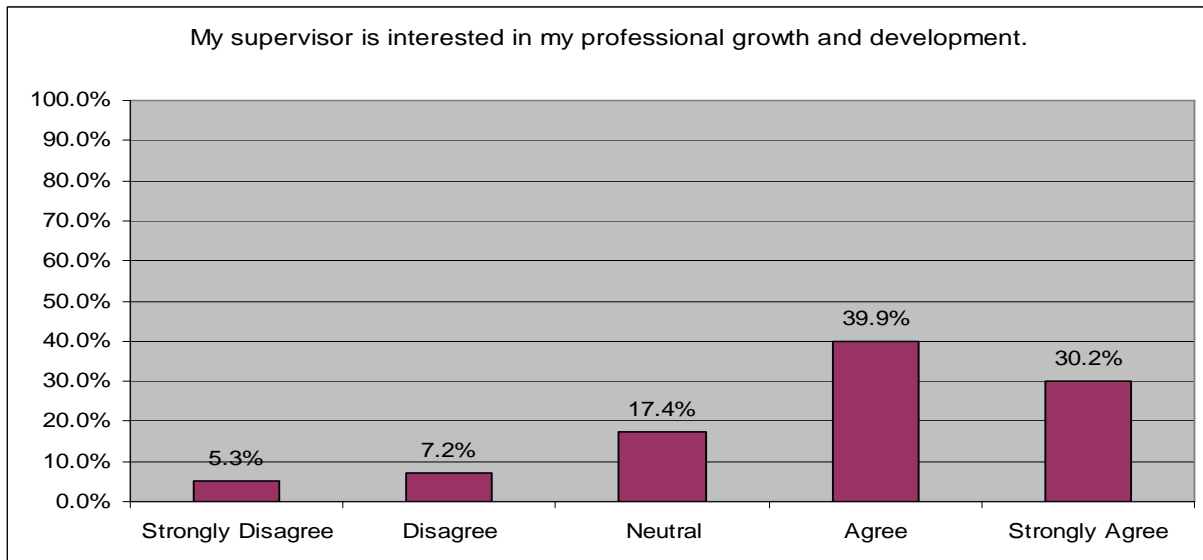
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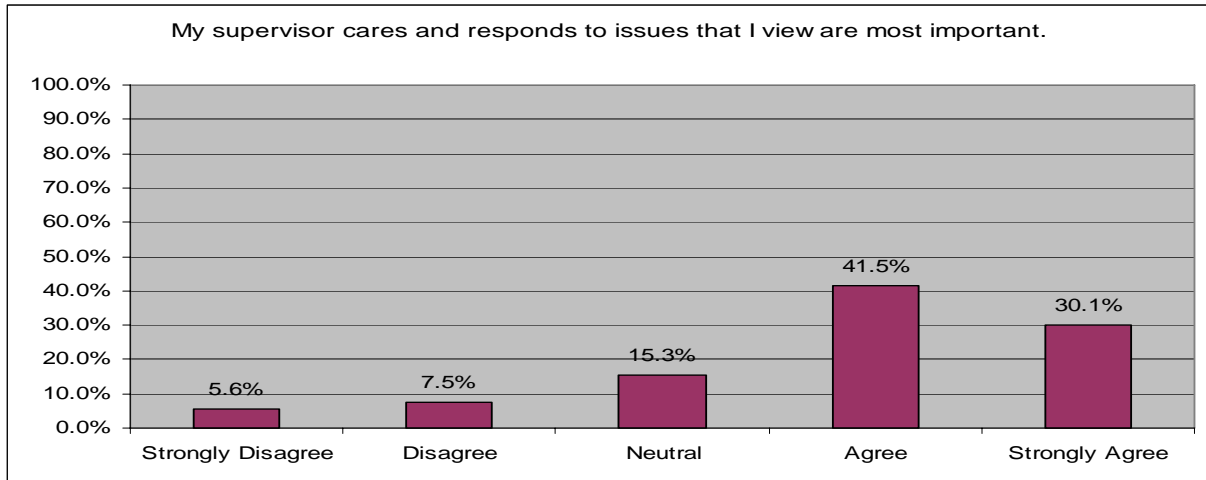
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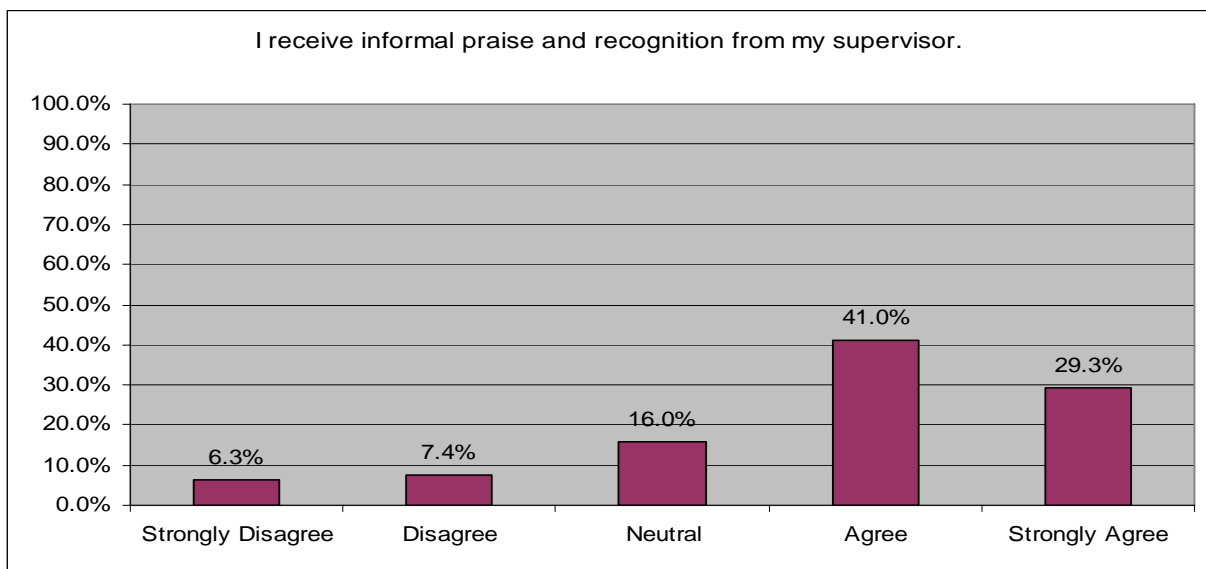
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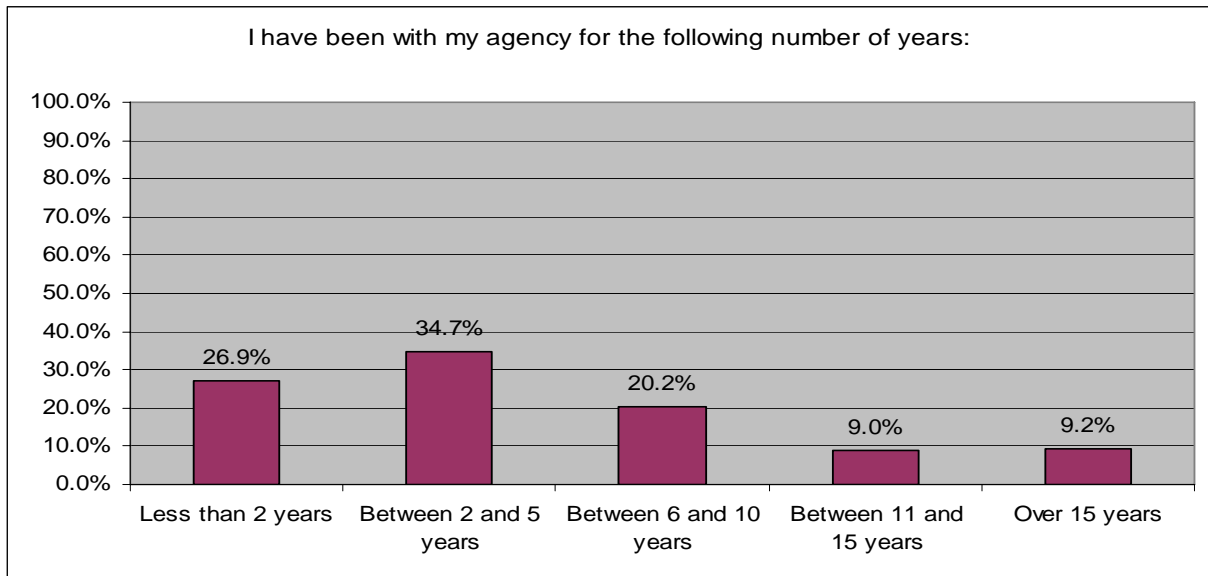
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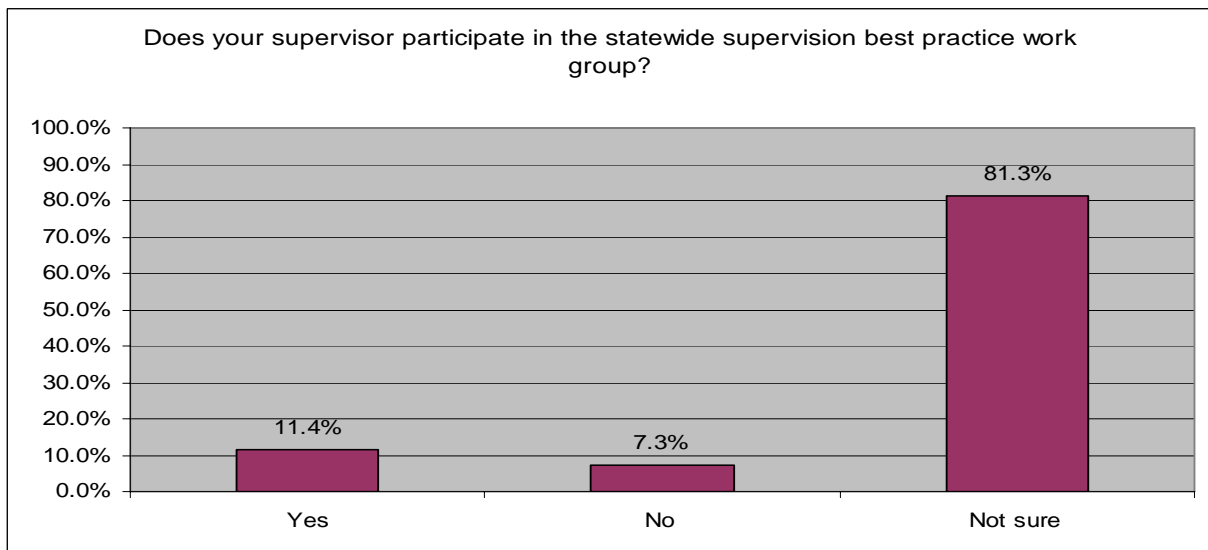
Question 12



Question 13



Question 14



APPENDIX B

Qualitative Data: What Did Respondents Say?

The comments included in this report were selected using one of two criteria.

Comment Selection Criteria

1. the quote is an exemplar of a common, recurring theme
2. the quote represents a strong strength or need perspective

In many instances a comment illustrated more than one theme and a decision was made to categorize the comment according to the primary theme addressed by the respondent. The following is a sampling of workers' comments related to each area of the Effective Supervision Framework, organized by years of experience. To aid readability, the comments are edited for spelling, punctuation, grammar and formatting. The meaning of the comments has not been altered.

Education

Less than two years child welfare experience

1. "Offers supervision on the level each worker needs and is aware of each worker's needs and offers assistance while allowing the worker to do his job."
2. "Good supervision includes not only case supervision and direction, but enhancing social work practice, professional development and growth. A good supervisor learns what methods of guidance a social worker responds to, what learning styles workers have, and is able to recognize social worker biases and works during supervision to assist worker in recognizing their own biases, areas to improve on and ways to promote self-care. Good supervision is not a social work supervisor waiting on retirement, collecting a paycheck, and uninterested in best practice, social worker development, or their own professional growth."

Two to five years child welfare experience

3. "Staff with me with all of my cases. Make sure that I am following the mandates and help with all important decisions. Make sure I have continuing education."
4. "Provide opportunities for workers to participate in professional growth activities"

Six to ten years child welfare experience

5. "To help the worker to develop good judgment and allow them to demonstrate it."

6. “Supervisors set the tone of a team, and how workers perform. The impact supervisors have on workers is important. Workers are all different, and unique in their own way. Supervisors have to realize the same style does not work with everyone, and everyone does not work at the same capacity.”
7. “Assisting those in acquisition of new family-centered skills or in strengthening the skills the individual already possesses to maximize quality of work with our families.”

Eleven to fifteen years child welfare experience

8. “Training me and then trusting me to do my job well.”
9. “Encourages learning and professional development”
10. “My concept of a good supervisor is one who listens and implements new ideas to help make social work jobs less stressful. A good supervisor addresses problems and issues as they arise and advocates for their social workers. Promotes ongoing training.”

Over fifteen years child welfare experience

11. “One who is honest and will support and encourage professional growth.”

Coaching and Support

Less than two years child welfare experience

12. “Supervisors should be caring about your personal life and understand that your job can be stressful at times and it’s important for you to take care of yourself.”
13. “Good supervision is not about just the work we do with families but a supervisor’s overall engagement into the worker as a person!!! Does the supervisor take the time to understand their worker as to what makes them tick?”
14. “I believe supervision is an excellent time for the supervisor to ensure that the worker is not suffering from any type of burn-out or stress. I think supervision is a way to identify these individuals and put ‘interventions’ in place to assist the worker. The turnover is high in child welfare and the effective use of supervision can assist in decreasing the turnover rate. Also, there needs to be better ‘checks and balances’ to ensure that supervision is being conducted.”
15. “Specific time for supervision, supervisor is engaged in the supervision (i.e., physically present when it is scheduled for, not answering the phone, checking email, etc.). Providing me with feedback on what I did well and what I can continue to improve on. Providing me with suggestions for interventions to use with families (whether this is theoretical or community resources).”
16. “Good supervision is listening and assisting in areas that are needed. It’s knowing the policies and being able to explain and show why the steps are being taken. Good supervision is taking time out and being available. Sharing your knowledge to show outcomes, training.”

17. “Good supervision is when your supervisor is available any time for her staff and their questions. A good supervisor schedules meetings and ensures that they start on time; they ensure that cases are closed in a timely manner. A good supervisor is at work and provides feedback to her staff instead of ‘talking down to them.’ A good supervisor is there when her staff needs them and does not expect other members of the team to help make decisions. A good supervisor understands that if they're not available the staff should be able to meet with another supervisor, without fear of getting in trouble for it.”
18. “A good supervisor hears complaints about you and remains neutral until she has had a chance to get all of the details and assesses the situation.”
19. “Meeting with my supervisor regularly to discuss our cases and to brainstorm ideas on how to better engage families in services while ensuring the safety of the child.”
20. “A social work supervisor that acts as an overseer of the social worker’s work, not as the director. Social work supervisor allows social worker to express information and opinions, and respects differences of opinion.”
21. “Supervisors should know that their job is to work harder than front line staff. They are not paper pushers and should develop lists of contacts and resources to be shared with front line staff as well as regularly develop means by which staff time can be saved or utilized more readily.”
22. “Recognizes and understands that overloading social workers with excessive cases can lead to less than wonderful results.”

Two to five years child welfare experience

23. “My supervisor is very detailed during staffing. She helps identify strengths and needs of the families I work with and makes suggestions that would benefit the families. She puts her phone on ‘Do Not Disturb’ while we staff and is very dedicated to staffing time. She asks at the end of our staffing if I have any questions or concerns about anything related to my job.”
24. “Your supervisor discusses your cases regularly. Your supervisor offers his/her opinion or thoughts about any concerns. Your supervisor speaks up for you when you don’t feel you have any support. Your supervisor pitches in and helps when you start feeling overwhelmed or getting behind. Your supervisor allows you to manage your own schedule to fit your individual needs and preferences. Your supervisor allows you do work at your own pace and in your own style as long as the job gets done appropriately. Your supervisor guides you back on track when you are off in left field. Your supervisor accepts your individuality and unique styles in work ethic and personality, and attempts to build upon each individual’s unique strengths.”
25. “A supervisor that is fair and does not show favoritism. It is important for a supervisor to be a good example; practice what you preach. Lastly, the sign of a good leader is someone that is not afraid to hurt someone’s feelings (even if that person is a friend) if they are not doing their job.”

26. “When your supervisor keeps up with what’s going on in your caseload and can respond appropriately without you having to keep reminding them about what needs to be done and/or coming up with a situation or case decision. Someone who cares about their workers' welfare, someone who’s not intimidated by their workers and someone who’s not selfish and seems to care about themselves and what works best for them before or instead of their workers. Someone who doesn’t avoid work or their workers because they have something personally to take care of. Someone who takes the time to learn and know their workers instead of just assuming that the practice works best for them also works best for that worker.”
27. “I believe a good supervisor is someone who is willing to provide constructive criticism as well as praise. One who uses all cases as teaching moments. Each case is different and requires different responses; a good supervisor is able to recognize the priorities for each case as well as to assist in providing the best outcome for each case. A good supervisor is able to recognize the signs and symptoms of ‘burn-out’ and help a worker through these issues by either providing extra assistance or moral support.”
28. “A good supervisor is readily available during work hours and during extended hours when the social worker is on-call for that week; will reprimand the social worker when needed; will provide support and guidance; will be open minded; will follow MRS policy when being strength focused; will praise the social worker when needed; **WILL BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGN OF A SOCIAL WORKER BECOMING OVERWHELMED AND ALSO WILL NOT SAY OK I UNDERSTAND AND HERE'S ANOTHER REPORT.**”
29. “One that expects the best out of a worker can be a model to the worker, to teach the worker to use their tools such as manuals in order for the worker to achieve independence. Good supervision is when a supervisor sees the worker taking on more than what he or she is able to manage. Good supervision should consist of knowing the workers limits and help push those limits without overwhelming the worker. Understand that many workers do have a life outside DSS and try to help them with not working late hours so much. When I say late hours I mean anything after 5:00. I am lucky. I have not had many late nights but when I do it causes stress at home because the children need to be fed, homework needs reviewed and corrected, bedtime bath and reading a book with each one of them and don’t forget the demanding teen that just needs to talk about the day... can make any worker leave the field.”

Six to ten years child welfare experience

30. “Management is not about a position but knowing what to do and when it is appropriate to do it. Management requires that one understands that sometimes supervision is not from the head down, but is often best done from the line up. If you cannot accept that sometimes you can learn from those you supervise then you limit your growth and miss out on a wealth of knowledge and opportunities to understand and better serve the populations we deal with day to day. Supervision should not require micromanaging a subject's time and style but being a guide and a resource, serving as a practice tool, helping to frame a system of learning, training and implementation of learned skills that workers can take into to any field, any area of life. Supervisors need to be quick to recognize that workers are not

just 'bodies filling positions' but people who may carry some of the same needs we find in our families with coping skills and resources that separate us. Supervisors need to grasp that the average worker is aware that in dealing with certain populations we can forego the expectations that our interventions are desired and presence appreciated. We even accept a level of hostility and disrespect. But when we enter the professional environment there must be a mutual display of respect and professional courtesy. Good supervision recognizes that you do not have to hold the position to demonstrate concrete, consistent leadership skills."

31. "Availability for crisis, consistent information, taking responsibility for saying 'I don't know the answer' when clearly has no clue."
32. "To be knowledgeable, and helpful when needed, but not micromanage or question your worker's every decision."
33. "Having a supervisor that understands work-life balance; supports your views but at the same times understands what is required by policy in order that you can effectively and efficiently work you cases."
34. "Being able to provide information on policy, being able to demonstrate good ethical, strengths-based practice at all times. Especially during times of extreme high stress."
35. "One who understands that sometimes there is more than one way or their way to get a desired outcome."
36. "There when I need it. Positive and affirming, yet sets clear expectations and helps provide guidance early when problems start to arise. Helps to utilize natural strengths to overcome areas that are problematic. Moreover able to utilize the group of my peers in a way that their natural talents work together for the best outcome of the whole."

Eleven to fifteen years child welfare experience

37. "Making sure that the employee is well versed in what they are doing and not micromanaging. Giving praise when deserved. Keeping abreast of what is going on with the employee's caseload and knowing the employee well enough to recognize burn-out."
38. "To me good supervision allows for the worker to do his/her job in the way that he/she thinks is best and is available whenever necessary for guidance, direction or information. Good supervision also takes the initiative to ask how specific cases or families are doing. Good supervision involves availability, guidance and helping the worker to practice and improve best social work practices."
39. "Someone who listens and responds in an effective manner, providing both positive feedback and constructive criticism. Also someone who trusts direct worker's opinions on case decision making"
40. "Good supervision is about motivating the employee to do his/her best, it is about trusting the individual without making the subordinate feels he or she is being watched all the time, it is about making the individual feel like he/she is part of the team, supporting the individual, so that at the end of the day the subordinate will still feel good about herself and her job. Most importantly it is about treating the subordinate(s) like a human being."

41. "Supportive, willing to stay late and help out when a case blows up/need to take custody, will help find the correct answer to any questions if supervisor does not know it, provides positive and negative feedback, addresses concerns, will stand up for you/back you up to others"
42. "There when I need it. Positive and affirming, yet sets clear expectations and helps provide guidance early when problems start to arise. Helps to utilize natural strengths to overcome areas that are problematic. Moreover, he/she is able to utilize the group of my peers in a way that their natural talents work together for the best outcome of the whole."

Over fifteen years child welfare experience

43. "Monitoring the workers progress, staffings at least once a month, assist where and when they can when a worker is unable to be at work, advocate for their unit, make sure the workers have tools necessary to perform their job responsibilities."
44. "A good supervisor KNOWS their program area sufficiently so as to build a relationship with their workers such that the worker knows what is expected, gets support when they accomplish that expectation, and gets re-direction when they don't meet that expectation. This is not a friendship, but it can appear to have some aspects of that if there is enough open communication. It means being able to LISTEN to what is going on; being on top of what my workers are doing and how they are doing it, to the extent that I can fill in for them at any time and maintain the continuity of the plan/service. Being able to support as well as critique the work that is being done....right then/there, not later after any damage is done. Being AWARE of WHAT is going on and WHY it's going on; being open to listen to the clients' perspective because maybe the worker is just 'spinning' their version of what/how things are going. Being able to advocate for the workers when they meet up with a brick wall, or when they are going too far over their boundaries. Not taking everything for granted, but checking what the workers are doing/saying, and using that to 'trouble-shoot' with them. Being able to advocate/search/arrange for supportive services for the workers themselves. And finally, being able to hire good workers and being able to fire the workers who can't/won't respond to being taught. This also goes back to the basic level - being able to recognize and utilize the potential in a worker so as to help them be as successful as possible."
45. "Being there! Being available and not feel that you are imposing on their time even though you know they have a million things to do also!"
46. "Supervisors need to be strength based with clients and workers. Workers are very stressed and need to hear positive things from the supervisor. This could help decrease burnout by helping the worker feel better about their job and performance."
47. "I would like supervisors to remember that it is very difficult to get everything done in this field. Sometimes it comes at us all at once and we need help. Sometimes we need reminders that our jobs are doing some good. We see the bad cases day in and day out and we see all of our hard work not benefit the children as the parents make poor choices. It is easy to tell someone to 'get this done,' 'complete that,' or 'I want this to be your focus' ... but without coming along side and finding out

what is happening or is already scheduled/planned you will not be able to support that social worker and the chances of it all getting done are slim on top of wearing out the worker.”

48. “The most obvious is that the supervisor must be grounded in CPS and must have the ability to think critically about the concerns that brought the family to the attention of DSS, and the changes that a parent is making. If the supervisor lacks these skills, he or she will be unable to teach these skills to the social workers under them.”
49. “Some supervisors need to be weeded out---they may interview well but are not good coaches/supervisors at all. Get supervisors out in the field more often so that they do not lose touch with what a front line social worker has to deal with on a daily basis. There are some of us who choose to stay on the front line because of liking the job and wanting to work out in the field--but agency could use the veteran social workers to help with certain issues/employee retention.”

Leadership and Communication

Less than two years child welfare experience

50. “A good supervisor shares when she is going to be out of the office and it was planned in advance.”
51. “It is important that a supervisor or anyone in supervision never raise their voice at the worker, talk about them to other workers and never assume that they have the same knowledge as someone that is a seasoned employee.”
52. “A good supervisor trusts worker's instincts and judgments unless there is reason to doubt it. A good supervisor acts as a buffer between the worker and irate clients when necessary, and never calls a worker out in front of peers or clients.”

Two to five years child welfare experience

53. Best supervision practice is MUTUAL RESPECT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It should not be based on FEAR and INTIMIDATION!!! Most of all it needs to be CONSISTENCY ACROSS THE BOARD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It can't be this way one day the next day, something different” <original formatting>
54. “Someone who is fair and practical and can advise wisely. Someone who will advocate for their workers when situations arise or workers have strong concerns about practice. Someone who listens to the concerns that their workers have and takes them into consideration when making decisions that will affect many of the workers within the agency (department).”

Six to ten years child welfare experience

55. “Good supervision is an atmosphere of team efforts to insure the mission of the agency is fulfilled. Supervision that entails workers able to speak out about concerns, and present suggestions without fear of retaliation.”
56. “Good supervision means leaders are accountable for their actions. Retaliation is not a part of good supervision.”
57. “Supervisors need to remember that when a line worker comes to them for help negative comments are not good when the social worker is asking for help. The job is stressful enough and if social workers cannot go to a supervisor without being talked down to then the turnover rate will continue.”
58. “Good supervision is when the supervisor will allow the worker the freedom to grow. Freedom of being asked and allowed to express his or her opinion. Good supervision is when the supervisor treats all of her workers the same regardless of the color of one’s skin. Good supervision is when the supervisor will assist all workers with problems cases not just the worker that she has a close relationship- best friend relationship. Good supervision is when you TRUST your employees!”

Eleven to fifteen years child welfare experience

59. “Good supervision is when someone in the position to supervise has the same standards for all employees. A good supervisor does not micromanage their employees or undermine their employees during meetings.”
60. “Treating seasoned workers with respect for their judgment, not micromanaging, not creating more paperwork than is already necessary to make supervisor’s life easier, and standing behind the worker’s decision even when the supervisor disagrees.”
61. “one that knows the job; willing to do what it takes to get the job done; compassionate, one with integrity; wisdom; teachable; one that models what they teach; one that is able to train staff; supportive”
62. “Much of what managers and supervisors do is solve problems and make decisions. This starts with defining the problem with input from team members. Team building activities for support, trust, and strong working relationships among members.”

Over fifteen years child welfare experience

63. “I don't always feel supported by management when there is another agency involved and that agency's opinion differs from CPS worker's opinion.”
64. “A good supervisor has the following qualities: loyalty, positive thinking, genuine interest in worker/people, initiative, decisiveness, tact and courtesy, fairness, sincerity and integrity, teaching ability, and self-confidence.”
65. “Supportive, won’t throw you under the bus to save herself. Our agency is very punitive and it is easy to get fired or on the bad list. You can’t trust management here.”

66. "Apply the 6 principles of MRS to employees!!"
67. "I do not believe that an agency can care about the people they serve without the same regard for the workers who are serving the people."
68. "Someone who is able to listen, process and provide appropriate feedback. Someone who tries to address the needs of the team and the families we serve. Someone who is accessible. It would be nice to have someone who does not gossip or talk bad about you behind your back."

Accountability

Less than two years child welfare experience

69. "I feel that good supervision is when workers are held accountable to standards and proficiencies and when a supervisor is available to answer questions, guide workers, and teach/encourage professional growth."
70. "Good supervision, involves a supervisor that is at work more than they are not at work."
71. "Checks over my work to ensure I am doing everything correctly."
72. "A good supervisor also reinforces policy, state mandates, and laws to keep all workers current with any changes and to make sure they are being met. A good supervisor randomly picks cases to review more deeply to make sure that the worker has not missed something and is doing things correctly."
73. "There should be no surprises in evaluations because a good supervisor discusses strengths and needs on a regular basis."

Two to five years child welfare experience

74. "Knows agency policies, available for supervision, meetings etc., respects my assessment of a family, reads my documentation, and provides negative and positive feedback about my CPS skills"

Six to ten years child welfare experience

75. "Good supervision is a supervisor who takes his or her job seriously but also understands how it feels to be a worker. He or she is always thinking of ways to improve the work load of their workers and of ways to be a better supervisor."
76. "Supervisor being open to accepting feedback or ideas about the practices to implement or revise positive changes that best meets the needs of the customer and agency. Supervisor needs to be prepared and focus during supervision time with individual worker. Supervision should not be about just the supervisor looking out to protect themselves but solution focused."

Eleven to fifteen years child welfare experience

77. “Good supervision to me means being accessible, dedicated to meeting the needs and overall well being of employees and our clients, open and fair minded, while holding employees accountable for their work. In other words, someone who can step all over my feet without messing up the shine on my shoes.”
78. “Being able to provide information on policy, being able to demonstrate good ethical strength based practice at all times. Especially during times of extreme high stress. Listening to me and assisting me with prioritization.”
79. “The ability to understand that your team members are human and some things out there are out of their control at times. Also to understand that if we are overloaded with cases or types of cases, we cannot do everything.”

Over fifteen years child welfare experience

80. “Written feedback and performance reviews at least twice a year so that I know what my strengths are and areas I may need to address.”
81. “Good supervision has to include recognition for good practice/decision making, and also instruction on how to improve the quality of a social worker's work. A good supervisor will encourage the social worker to identify specific reasons why the social worker is making a specific decision or recommendation, and not just the old standby of ‘they completed the case plan.’ Good supervision would result in the social worker being challenged about whether the parent has actually changed the practices that led to the finding of In Need of Services. Completing a case plan does not automatically mean the child is safer. A good supervisor forces the social worker to evaluate the improvement of the parent's ability to care for the child. This is especially critical with new CPS workers who need to be encouraged to go beyond the superficial accomplishments of a parent to the changes in their thinking. Getting a job may satisfy a part of a case plan, but it does not necessarily mean that the child is protected better.”
82. “That supervisors need to be held accountable for their actions or lack of actions when it comes to the people they supervise. They also should be held accountable immediately and not have their supervision present the impression that nothing is being done to correct issues.”
83. “I am not sure what criteria my agency uses when selecting supervisors but I have noticed that some individuals who have been promoted to supervision in recent years are not quality supervisors because they were not quality social workers. They also have problems themselves following the agency's policies and procedures and do not spend their time wisely throughout the day. Perhaps this pilot can help upper management do a better job of selecting supervisors who are hard working professionals.”

System-Level Comments

At the request of the NC Division of Social Services, the analysis team extracted comments that reflected system-level concerns or ideas. Not all comments are quoted in this report; however the comments that are included reflect the concerns and ideas of survey respondents.

The system-level comments included in this section fall into the categories described below and represent workers' with all levels of experience.

Selection of Supervisors

84. "Supervisors should be selected based on supervisory skills, not because they have been there longer than a more appropriate selection."
85. "Not all workers who are supervisors should be supervisors and the responsibility is on the Department that put them in that position."
86. "I feel that supervisors should treat their workers with respect. The workers are representing the agency. The workers are the ones fighting for families and making sure that the children are not being abused or neglected. You have some supervisors who act like they are the ones that have done all the work and want you to change around what the family has said or done because they are the supervisor and they have control. That is not right. Sometimes the state and upper management need to look at the supervisors that they are choosing to provide supervision over workers. Everyone can not be a good supervisor but might be an okay worker."
87. "There is a problem with hiring friends to be supervisors, don't want to hire staff without supervision experience, but yet there is no way to gain social work supervisory experience."
88. "It seems like there should be some way to monitor those who are promoted to being supervisors with no experience and no 'people skills'."
89. "All supervisors have strengths and weaknesses. Maybe some thought should be given to these before promoting some people. I would also like to see agencies fall in line with what companies do in the private sector--promote from within and groom people to fill certain roles."
90. "I believe that it should be mandatory that workers in a unit be able to take part in the hiring process instead of it being limited to supervisors, including supervisors from other units who are not privy to the day to day operations of that unit."
91. "Promote people who have a passion for their job; don't promote because they are your friend."
92. "I am not sure what criteria my agency uses when selecting supervisors but I have noticed that some individuals who have been promoted to supervision in recent years are not quality supervisors because they were not quality social workers. They also have problems themselves following the agency's policies and procedures and do not spend their time wisely throughout the day. Perhaps this

pilot can help upper management do a better job of selecting supervisors who are hard working professionals.”

Professional Development

93. “Attend course in social work if they do not have the background. It is hard to have a supervisor who does not understand the concept of social work as well as supervisors who do not have social work degrees.”
94. “That all the supervisors be trained in each area to gain a full understanding.”
95. “I believe that supervisors should attend trainings every year to learn how to deal with different personalities and signs of being overwhelmed, etc. I believe that supervisors should meet weekly with the social workers to conference or assess SW's status.”
96. “I think it would be highly beneficial to have supervisors that are clinically licensed. I worked in another state where each supervisor had to have a license to work in county/city social services. These standards make the position you hold more accountable and professional just as a physician or lawyer would be in their respective professions. Also, decisions are more consistently made and not just dependent upon a supervisor because the supervisor is following a specific standard. Tools are worthwhile but could just be seen by supervisors as more paperwork for all involved.”
97. “I hope this pilot will contain information on diversity training and the importance of a supervisor's one on one training with new members on their team. The importance of comprehensive training and open door availability so staff can ask questions and learn from mistakes.”
98. “I think a good supervisor meets with workers individually to discuss the cases and any issues, promotes development of the staff, is available for questions or concerns and is fair between the workers. Also I think a good supervisor should be trained as much as the workers to build and maintain their knowledge and skills. Good supervisors are clear in their direction and with instruction. They are able to handle conflict.”
99. “Our agency does not have travel money for social workers or supervisors to attend trainings. We get little training except for what the agency calls ‘in house training’. A good supervisor keeps up with the work their workers are doing and helps people on their team to stay focused on task and give reminders of deadlines. Everyone gets busy and needs reminding. Also, I feel it is very important for all supervisors to know the social workers’ roles and what their job functions are. That way they can help lead, guide, and direct the social workers when they need the help. Give the social workers praise and recognition for doing a wonderful job. Some need to hear it more than others. Give recognition if the social worker has done a good job for the month with everything being turned in on time and all deadlines met. I feel it will inspire others to work harder to get the recognition. I know it is hard being a supervisor because you are working with so many different personalities and people. You cannot make everyone happy all the time. Supervisor could give social workers a task list if needed so they can check off things once completed if the social worker got behind. This may help the social worker stay focused on the job at hand.”

Accountability and Performance

100. “Due to the nature of our work a good supervisor can make or break a social worker--despite the agency, co-workers, caseload, or whatever. It's possibly the single most telling factor in a worker's satisfaction, stress, and longevity. A good supervisor can bend their style a bit here and there to assist the worker and make them better at what they do. Feeling supported by a supervisor is also huge as we make decisions that are life changing and in which there is a certain amount of risk.”
101. “Turnover is high in child welfare and the effective use of supervision can assist in decreasing the turnover rate. Also, there need to be better "checks and balances" to ensure that supervision is being conducted. Meaning, program managers need to ensure that the supervisors are conducting staffing twice a month with each worker. This pilot program will only work if everyone works together to ensure its success.”
102. “My supervisor specifically is great. The concern is management above the team supervisors. I believe that all of the CPS teams should run the same. When there are changes the program managers should ensure that all of the supervisors are educated on them so there is consistency across the board. There should be written policy on the way that everything is run on a case from start to finish and which worker does what on the case specifically when a child is taken in to custody and you are working with reunification. There should be no verbal policies that the program managers make up and there is no written policy. Program managers should be welcome for all staff to address their concerns and not make them feel like they have no voice and if they do speak up then they are pointed out and may even feel threatened to lose their job. In order for supervision to work it should start at the top and then come down. So maybe there should first be a Program Manager Best Practice Pilot beforehand. Social workers are educated to advocate and when they are constantly informed within their agency not to complain and are not given a voice then how can there be a better practice?”
103. “Employees should be able to rate supervisors on formal evaluations so that their trainers or supervisors and themselves can work on their areas of weakness.”
104. “Have not heard anything about it and have not noticed a change in my supervisor. Does this apply to upper management also? We are currently working under a regime of fear, intimidation, and unwarranted scrutiny.”
105. “I don't know anything about it. I guess its something that once again the supervisors know about, but it isn't passed down to line workers. All I can say is the upper management here is GREAT. The middle management needs a lot of work.”
106. “I do not believe that the ‘Good Supervision’ policy being developed in this pilot program can or will happen, instead I believe we will continue with the standard practices which will continue to lead to low morale and high turnover. As long as there is no formal recourse for the line worker to pursue or standard of accountability for those who are in charge there will be no reason or motivation for those in charge to alter their behavior, attitudes or supervision styles. Only when a person is faced with serious and significant consequences for failing to comply with established and expected practices will he or she change their behavior. Furthermore, without an independent outside arbitrator to bring one's grievances to it is all a big waste of time.”

107. “I believe that front line workers have a lot of responsibility in this agency and are held accountable. How are supervisors held accountable? Policy and procedures often include time frames and expectations from line workers but not supervisors, why is this? If workers felt that they had more support from their supervisors and felt that supervisors were just as responsible for these cases and offered help instead of going home every day at 5:00 p.m. while we were still in the field, social workers may feel appreciated and stay longer. Also why is it that social workers work hard to close cases sit on the supervisor’s desk one week to two months? What a liability. Hold these supervisors accountable! Get feedback from workers, we know what makes a good supervisor.”
108. “Micro-supervision. I took some cases to HR at <county name deleted> and the body in place to supervise the supervisors is not doing its job. Hence, it is time for the state to micromanage the counties in its jurisdiction.”
109. “For the agency: CLEAR DEFINED POLICY THAT IS KNOWN BY ALL. NO CLOSED DOOR DECISION MAKING.”
110. “Sometimes I think supervisors have been out of practice of working with families for so long and the management is so focused on numbers and figures they forget about best interest of children and families.”
111. “For accountability to spread throughout the agency, upper management should be on board as well and learn to respect and allow individuals to grow in their professional careers.”
112. “Something should be addressed re: program managers’ supervision.”
113. “I see more work needing to be done in the area of upper management (program managers, division directors, agency directors) than with line supervisors. Line supervisors cannot effectively do their jobs with line staff when they do not receive support from management. Also many of the managers/directors have not done the job in so long or some have never done the job that they do not know what we actually do every day. Management does not encourage supervisors to attend trainings and are not strengths based.”
114. “I am not at all surprised that a ‘tool’ is being used, since that seems to be the answer to every aspect of social work lately. A tool is only as good as the user of that tool. Bad/inept supervisors will fill out that tool and STILL miss the signs/symptoms of a weak social worker. Good/active supervisors will fill out that tool because they have to, and it won't make any difference to how they supervise their workers. The only way to get a good supervisor is to make sure you have good workers who can rise up and turn around to teach other workers. A good worker can be effective with their clients, even with a bad supervisor; but a bad worker can't do the job regardless of their supervision.”
115. “I would like to see a formal tool used to provide supervision. Written feedback and performance reviews at least twice a year so that I know what my strengths are and areas I may need to address. Tools/training to address issues, provide career advancement and/or professional growth.”

Managing Secondary Trauma/Creating a Positive Work Environment

116. “There needs to be an outlet for staff to process ‘burn-out’ and ‘compassionate fatigue’. If this is not accomplished CPS will continue to have a high turnaround of staff.”
117. “I would like to see supervisors trained in recognizing ‘burn-out.’ The agencies lose many good workers because of excessive stress. Supervisor training should also include program managers and directors. I believe these individuals must remember all workers have a limit and provide sufficient time or resources to assist workers before these limits are reached.”
118. “Nobody goes into child welfare for the money or stress-free environment. A person's leader will make the difference in making it or jumping ship. In discussions with coworkers about CPS, we seem to be at a consensus that if our supervisor leaves, we will be shortly behind. She is constantly coming up with new ideas to make an unpleasant, stress filled job more manageable.”
119. “It sounds like a GREAT concept but will it really work when you have certain administrators that have supervisors scared to make a sound decision, afraid to stand up for what is morally and socially right for the employees and families in which we serve on a daily basis? Who wants to be micromanaged and beat down on a daily basis? Who wants to work in an environment in which you are constantly having to look over your shoulder or afraid to share your concerns and frustrations without it getting back to upper management and seen in a negative light? Best supervision practice is MUTUAL RESPECT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It should not be based on FEAR and INTIMIDATION!!!!!! Most of all there needs to be CONSISTENCY ACROSS THE BOARD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It can't be this way one day and the next day, something different.”
120. “I believe that supervisors should attend trainings every year to learn how to deal with different personalities and signs of being overwhelmed, etc. I believe that supervisors should meet weekly with the social workers to conference/or assess the social workers’ status.”

Workload

121. “In the same way that it is difficult for front line workers to properly and adequately do their jobs when they are overloaded, it is difficult for supervisors to provide adequate supervision to their workers when both the workers and the supervisors are overloaded. The result is workers that feel unsupported and resentful and supervisors that are doubly overburdened. I believe that good supervision is one of the most powerful tools that enable a social worker to do their job but good supervision does not seem to be a priority in this environment.”
122. “Supervisors are often pulled in many directions - my supervisor is often unavailable due to being in meetings most days.”
123. “A new supervisory model that is going to add paperwork and documentation to our already overburdened staff will be counterproductive!!”

124. “Increasing supervision is not the answer to decreasing the social worker turnover rate. No matter how hard the supervisor may try to offer good supervision, no supervision will ever be good enough to promise that the staff will be able to meet all of the state’s unrealistic demands. Social workers are either going to be behind in family contact due to documentation or behind in documentation due to making family contact. The system makes it impossible to do this job in the most effective way due to the unrealistic expectations that are put on social workers. Workers continue to try and meet the state’s demands and eventually the workers burn out and there’s nothing that supervision can do about that unless they can change the way the manual is written.”
125. “I believe there should be a staff developer position created in all counties across the state where the individual would actually work hand in hand in cases for several months modeling the task in the beginning. Then allow the worker to work one on one with the staff developer in following a caseload where the staff developer can guide the staff in decision making choices for a period of time. What traditionally happens in the agency is the staff will shadow for a few weeks then go to training and come back with a caseload. They staff twice a month and are just fumbling around trying to find out answer for the clients when they do not even know the answers themselves-- it is a baptism by fire so to speak, learn as you go. In my observation this is a very frustrating time for the new staff. The supervisors do not have the time to work one on one with the new staff because of the need for their attendance in completing monthly reports and meeting attendance. I feel this is the real missing link in the program. We have good supervisors but their job is much like the direct line staff time- not enough hours in the day to complete all the required tasks timely. If you look at industry or other business you will find they have staff developers in their professional structures along with supervisors. This is a suggestion that I feel would be worth the while of all agencies. It has worked for other companies large and small why should the state and county overlook a position that has been tested to tried in true in the business sector?”
126. “Some people are here for only a check and do not really care to help others. A second reason there is such a turnover in this field is because of the hours. The state needs to look at how much work is put on the social worker with the time frames, size of the caseload and now because it has turned into a second shift job with family assessment. Social workers that are mothers cannot work effectively at DSS because they want to be home with their children. Coming in late to keep from having overtime and having evening appointments with families takes away from their time with their children and husband. I agree with FA but we should still have the right to say we have to meet before 5:00 p.m. I do not think that bad or lack of supervision is the primary issue with worker retention. I have heard the above statement at trainings with other social workers and within my own agency.”
127. “I have a great supervisor; however, my supervisor has an enormous amount of responsibilities because we are a small county. I feel that she is unable to provide social workers (especially new workers) adequate time and supervision because of the other responsibilities.”
128. “I worked for a private company for 5 years and I learned that if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the company. The social workers here at my agency, are hard-working, honest, supportive of one another, and caring individuals that want to serve their community. They genuinely want to help families and children. But because we are constantly bullied with threats of our performance evaluation, submitting paperwork, watching our comp time, meeting this deadline and ASAP (that are not directly related to services or funding) we offer questions ‘what in the world is going on? I need to cancel this meeting or this visit, just to get paperwork in?’ It is frustrating and we often feel beaten down and unappreciated.”

129. “BLENDED TEAMS do not provide support to one another. The way that our county has done them has isolated teams and areas. They have done districts by pin #s so that you are in certain areas. Each program manager has certain areas. The program managers are not supportive of helping one another when they are swamped with cases which means you have some sections where the workers are getting 12 to 15 to 18 reports a month and other areas in which the workers are getting 8. Supervisors are not willing to help one another either. When all assessments were under one program manager and treatment under another then there was SUPPORT for overload. This is one reason for the turnover in the county in which I work.”
130. “Limited knowledge about this program. It seems that regardless of how good the program might be that social work supervisors are so busy with individual workers, families, documentation reviews, CFSR, crisis management and internal meetings and trainings (providing and attending) that there just is not more room to put anything else on their plates.”
131. “Find a way to reduce paperwork.”
132. “The state has set a number of cases that each worker is to have. The state has set the number for a reason. If that number is not realistic then someone should not only look at intake but there also needs to have some consideration given to staffing problems.”

Appendix C

Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee Members

Bridget Happney, Co-Chair, Mecklenburg County DSS

Kristy Perry, Co-Chair, Person County DSS

Jamie Blevins, Wilson County DSS

Andrew Payne, Wilson County DSS

Robert Tarpey, Johnston County DSS

Terri Crisp, Harnett County DSS

Jennifer Teska, Wake County Human Services

Kelle Joyner, Nash County DSS

Kelsie Costner, Gaston County DSS

Claudia Phillips, Cumberland County DSS

Jon Cloud, Granville County DSS

Maria Cooper, Cabarrus County DSS

Beth Clore, Catawba County DSS

April Greenhill, Catawba County DSS

Joy Holland, Alamance County DSS

Beverly Ramsey, Buncombe County DSS

Jeff Olson, NCDSS

Patrick Betancourt, NCDSS

Ginger Caldwell, NCDSS

Dawn Cambridge, NCDSS

Candice Britt, NCDSS

Kevin Kelley, NCDSS

A Good Supervisor is Everything to Everyone

“A worker is as good as his/her leader. Good supervision entails guidance, support, feedback, and opportunity to help you grow as a worker. There are times in child welfare where the day can be hectic and supervisors are pulled in different directions. As a worker I understand that, but there are also times the supervisor has to focus on the need of a worker, who may be experiencing something that needs their attention. Supervisors set the tone of a team, and how workers perform. The impact supervisors have on workers is important. Workers are all different, and unique in their own way. Supervisors have to realize the same styles do not work with everyone, and everyone does not work at the same capacity. Also, my expectations of good supervision entail my supervisor knowing the policy and being able to share the information with me. Supervisors need to make decisions based on fact, and allow workers to express their concerns. Supervisors need to LISTEN, and not just hear the worker. CPS requires a lot of mental focus, due to you spending day after day addressing the safety of children. Good supervision will allow an agency to retain its workers. I am a firm believer that supervision is the key factor to social work retention. Remember supervisors set the tone of their team, and supervisors impact the work their workers are able to produce. **Supervision is more like being the mommy and daddy of the team.** Making decisions and choices, but also allowing you to learn and grow, and trust yourself. If you can't trust yourself and the decisions you make as a worker, it will have a negative effect on you. This comes with good supervision and guidance. So, supervisors wear many hats, and they mold the worker to being successful, stressful or just a worker (no compassion and receiving a pay check).”

Sources

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