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March 29, 2024

Dear Child Welfare Staff,

I'm writing today to share with you the report I commissioned from Public Consulting Group (PCG) that examines the organizational and leadership structure, communication, and culture within the child welfare division of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). As you know, I requested this rapid management audit to learn and get recommendations on how to best support you, and in doing so, the children and families we serve.

Commissioner Lambrew and I appreciate the time, thought, and perspective you invested in this process, as well as the participation of our valued partners. With the help of this input, PCG's report offers an objective external assessment of how we can improve our outcomes by reexamining the child welfare division's structure, organization, communication, and support. We will closely review the recommendations and continue to communicate with you as we consider them.

To that end, I will be scheduling District-level meetings devoted to collecting your feedback on the report. Those meetings will be structured to gather your perspectives in an efficient, organized, and meaningful way as we envision next steps.

My immediate priority is hiring the vacant Associate Director of Child Welfare Services position. Because this position is critical to supporting you and navigating potential additional changes, I am moving forward with adopting PCG's recommendation to revisit this position's title and responsibilities. I will be hiring for an Associate Director of Child Welfare Strategy and Services, who will work collaboratively with me in planning, directing, guiding implementation, and monitoring the successes and opportunities of our programs and services. This position will oversee continuous quality improvement efforts, identify operational issues through staff feedback and key data metrics, ensure and improve consistency statewide, and oversee the creation and implementation of plans for addressing issues. This will involve promoting a culture of support for staff and supervisors, professional development, and inclusiveness, with a major focus on ways to improve work-life balance in this challenging field. The job posting is available [here](#).

I believe PCG's report will help us build upon the honest and important feedback we have heard from you and others as we develop opportunities to improve our success in both practice and making OCFS a great place to work. My hope is to let you know the plan coming out of this report, in partnership with a new Associate Director, when I conduct District Office visits in the late spring.

Our greatest asset as an organization is you -- the dedicated staff who devote your lives to helping children and families. I believe we can make our child welfare system one that you are proud to be a part of and that results in the best possible outcomes for children and families.

Regards,

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW  
Director  
Office of Child and Family Services  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services

March 29, 2024

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW  
Director  
Office of Child and Family Services  
Department of Health and Human Services  
2 Anthony Street  
Augusta, Maine 04330

Dear Bobbi –

Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG) is pleased to have been able to support the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and you in assessing the current management structure of Maine's Child Welfare services. We want to express appreciation for the participation of so many Child Welfare staff, including frontline workers and leaders, across the organization who helped us to explore their roles and responsibilities, training and communication practices and the culture of OCFS in supporting recruitment and retention efforts.

Along with this letter, you will find our Final Report that summarizes the current state of OCFS Child Welfare services and offers recommendations which are informed from our findings, and experience and knowledge of child welfare programs and management practices as well as a literature review of peer state practices and other public and private sector agencies. We are also providing a PowerPoint presentation to help you inform OCFS staff and others of key findings, including your agency's strengths and challenges, and a snapshot of our recommendations.

We recognize you have a substantial journey in front of you and are pleased we were able to support you in that process. Please do not hesitate to contact PCG if we can be of further service.

Sincerely,

*Karen Hallenbeck*

Karen Hallenbeck  
Project Director

Maine Department Of Health And  
Human Services

Child Welfare  
Organizational Structure  
and Support Assessment  
**FINAL REPORT**

Public Consulting Group

March 29, 2024

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and its Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG) to assess the current OCFS Child Welfare management structure, including roles and responsibilities, training, communication practices, and staff engagement, to make recommendations for improvements that could better support management and staff and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families served by OCFS.

PCG developed eight central questions to help guide the assessment.

1. What management practices, structures, and training are associated with staff retention, positive workplace culture, and positive outcomes for children and families at child welfare agencies?
2. What is working well within OCFS' current organizational and management structure and what could be improved?
3. How can the consistency of management between the Central and District Offices and across District Offices be improved?
4. How can initial and ongoing leadership training and/or support (coaching) for managers and executive team members be improved?
5. How can communication and connection between the Central Office and District Offices, and managers and front-line workers, be improved along with overall workplace culture?
6. What are the metrics of success for OCFS to track when implementing organizational re-design?
7. What are the key attributes and skill sets for the Associate Director position?
8. How can Katahdin changes better reflect front-line worker feedback?

PCG used a mixed methods approach to assess OCFS' child welfare management structure and support, employing both qualitative and quantitative research. Our assessment and the eight central questions have been organized into four major research areas: 1. *Management Structure*, 2. *Professional Development*, 3. *Communication*, and 4. *Retention, Engagement, and Culture*.

Multiple data sources were used to inform the assessment including existing OCFS child welfare documentation, such as job descriptions, training curricula, organizational charts and management reports. PCG conducted a desk review for management best practices from peer state child welfare agencies, child welfare organizations, and management publications. In addition, PCG facilitated in-person and virtual interviews with over 110 OCFS child welfare staff and leaders, including approximately 6 former staff, representing all nine OCFS districts and Central Office leadership and disseminated a survey to all child welfare staff within OCFS, collecting 413 responses. PCG also met with approximately 10 leaders of selected partner organizations and former staff persons.

The following provides a high-level summation of the successes of the Office, its challenges and recommendations for improvement.

### Key Takeaways on OCFS' Child Welfare Current State:

<b>Management Structure</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	Staff members at all levels generally feel supported by their direct supervisors and trust the new Director. Collaborative problem solving using cross-functional teams and Safety Science are positive components of the office culture in some of the districts.
<b>Challenges</b>	There is a lack of role clarity across the district-level organizational chart, specifically among support staff and mid-level management roles, which leads to confusion around decision-making processes, staff feeling undervalued, and ineffective meetings.
<b>Professional Development</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	OCFS leaders feel prepared to fulfill their leadership responsibilities and have been active in developing training opportunities to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the children and families they serve.

<b>Challenges</b>	Training for supervisors and managers are not consistently delivered near the time of initial hire. Staff report that performance evaluations are not completed consistently, and the process for ensuring they are completed can be strengthened.
<b>Communication</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	Generally, staff believe their supervisors and district leaders are supportive and transparent. Staff noted that there are opportunities to provide feedback to leadership.
<b>Challenges</b>	Many staff do not think that Central Office leadership adequately considers or appropriately responds to staff feedback. They expressed that executive leaders make decisions that dictate how staff work and those decisions are communicated slowly and without sharing the reasoning behind those decisions.
<b>Retention, Engagement, and Culture</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	Child Welfare staff are passionate about the work they do, with their dedication to child and family safety cited as one of the primary reasons they stay working for OCFS. Frontline staff feel a sense of community and support from their peers and supervisors.
<b>Challenges</b>	Caseworkers reported a lack of transparency and emphasis on staff criticism when issues arise. Staff do not see a realistic path set forward by leadership for increasing healthy boundaries, work-life balance, and recognition of high-quality work. Many casework staff interviewed, including Children Emergency Specialists (CES), have experienced or are at risk of physical and psychological harm due to the job's nature and being overworked.

### High-Priority Recommendations for OCFS Child Welfare Improvement:

After assessing OCFS management structures and organizational practices, a series of recommendations for OCFS' continuous improvement emerged. Below are the *High Priority* recommendations within each assessment topic. Recommendations that were rated as high priority and low complexity are marked as *Quick Win*. A complete list of all recommendations is included in the report.

#### Management Structure:

1. *Quick Win*: Redesign the scope of the current Associate Director of Child Welfare Services role to be focused on continuous quality improvement and consistent implementation of agency strategy across the state's child welfare services and operations. Change the title to Associate Director of Child Welfare Strategy and Services to emphasize the strategy focus.
2. Revise the scope and job titles of the four Regional Associate Director roles:
  - Manager A: Strategy implementation
  - Manager B: District management and practice
  - Manager C: Child welfare statewide programs
  - Manager D: Policy and procedures, respectively

This will increase centralization of district office oversight and support and increase role specialization in priority areas of strategic focus for the agency.
3. Establish a Supervisory Model for OCFS to articulate OCFS' management philosophy. Set clear expectations for people management throughout the organization, aligned to past efforts to infuse coaching behaviors and current efforts to instill Safety Science practices and behaviors throughout OCFS.
4. Clearly define and communicate decision-making authority at every level of the organization. Leverage centralized decision-making authority among mid-level managers (APAs, PAs, RADs) to increase consistency between offices and to support more efficient decision-making by managers who are expected to have deep understanding of programs, impacts of decisions, and the need to communicate decisions to frontline staff quickly.
5. Maximize the value and utility of spaces where all district managers convene, such as the District Management Team (DMT) meetings. Utilize these spaces to address the most pressing staff

training, case practice, and staff morale challenges and opportunities in a centralized and organized fashion.

**Professional Development:**

1. *Quick Win:* Ensure supervisors conduct performance reviews at least annually throughout staff employment.
2. Develop a training curriculum specific to child welfare for supervisors, managers, and agency leaders focused on people management skills and techniques.
3. Direct supervisors to complete supervisory training prior to or within 3 months of assuming the position.

**Communication:**

1. *Quick Win:* Host virtual “office hours” with each District dedicated to hearing staff feedback and questions about policy and program updates so that staff have a direct line of communication to Executive leadership.
2. *Quick Win:* Distribute agendas to staff in advance of all-staff and unit meetings.
3. *Quick Win:* Work with district offices to implement meeting management practices such as using strong meeting facilitation, consistent agenda templates and distribution, notetaking, time management, clear next steps and follow up. (See specific meeting guidelines on page 28)
4. Tailor communications by staff level and send those via dedicated email distribution lists to caseworkers, case aides and other positions (as relevant).

**Retention, Engagement, Culture:**

1. Provide more secondary trauma training for district leaders to better support staff.
2. Develop structured shadowing program in all district offices for new caseworkers.
3. Extend salary increases to include support staff.
4. Work with Human Resources to make overtime pay available to all staff who are working beyond regular hours and are eligible for overtime pay.
5. Formalize a transparent decision-making process with a feedback loop to front line staff and provide an opportunity for discussion, explaining decisions made about their cases.
6. Assign responsibility of addressing work-life balance to the newly recommended role of Manager, Child Welfare Practice to regularly review workload and staff hours – discussing workload issues and reorganizing to achieve greater equity among staff.
7. *Quick Win:* Utilize Training Supervisor/Lead as an on-the-job trainer and observer – to accompany new caseworkers at meetings / visits and observe key practices (family team meeting, court hearings, kinship study, PPO action).



## BACKGROUND

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) has undergone a recent leadership change. At the end of the calendar year, the Commissioner of DHHS appointed Bobbi Johnson, a long-time member of OCFS, as Acting Director. When formally appointed to serve as the Director in January of 2024, Ms. Johnson made the commitment that “the theme of my priorities and the strategies we are undertaking is *people*, passionate individuals who have dedicated their lives” to this work.<sup>1</sup>

As one of ten offices under the Maine DHHS umbrella, the Office of Child and Family Services supports Maine's children and their families by providing children's behavioral health, child welfare, child protection, early intervention, and prevention services. In the same announcement of the new OCFS Director, DHHS indicated its intent to transition children's behavioral health services from OCFS to the DHHS Office of Behavioral Health. The transition will allow OCFS leadership to focus on child welfare and child care more intensely, both top priorities for the Governor and Legislature. OCFS is also responsible for licensing resource homes, and administering the Violence Prevention Program, among other programs. It has over 800 positions statewide and is managed by eight associate directors, acting associate directors or managers who report to the Director and who are responsible for the following functions: operations of the Office, child welfare services, early care and education, prevention services, communications and compliance, medical programming and financial responsibility. The Director supports engagement with the court system, education system, public safety system, and different oversight and advisory committees that are part of the larger child welfare ecosystem. The Director also focuses on prevention through the implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act and the State Child Safety and Family Well -Being Plan.

Focusing on child protection and welfare programs, four Regional Associate Directors (RADs) report to the Associate Director for Child Welfare Services, who, in turn, is one of eight positions that report directly to the Director, to provide leadership and guidance to eight districts as well as centralized Intake and Children's Emergency Services (CES). The nine districts, which are comprised of a dozen offices in different parts of the state, are led by a Program Administrator (PA) who is supported by a combination of Assistant Program Administrators (APAs) and/or Managers to provide oversight and guidance to local supervisors, caseworkers, and support staff. Local staff are responsible for conducting investigations of reports of alleged abuse or neglect, supporting families and children who remain in the home as well as children who are removed, obtaining permanency for children with a goal of reunification, adoption or guardianship, and licensing resource homes. For reference, the current organizational chart of the OCFS Central Office is included in the **Appendix**.

DHHS contracted with Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG) to conduct a targeted assessment of OCFS' Child Welfare services. The assessment examines the Office's current management structure, including roles and responsibilities, training, communication practices, and staff retention and engagement and its culture.

**NOTE: Throughout this report, we refer to “OCFS” for brevity. We intend for this to specifically refer to the Child Welfare Services within OCFS. This assessment did not include the other services or operations, e.g. early care and education, that sit within OCFS.**

## METHODOLOGY

PCG used a mixed methods approach to assess OCFS's management structure and support, employing both qualitative and quantitative research. Our assessment and the eight central questions used to inform the assessment were organized into four major research areas:

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<sup>1</sup> Hilton, A. (Feb 21, 2024). *New director of Maine's child welfare system talks improvements, priorities* | News From The States. Retrieved From: [https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/new-director-maines-child-welfare-system-talks-improvements-priorities?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/new-director-maines-child-welfare-system-talks-improvements-priorities?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

Management  
Structure

Professional  
Development

Communication

Retention,  
Engagement,  
Culture

These four research areas were integrated throughout the project in developing our interview and survey protocols, reviewing key documents and peer state research, and structuring this report.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

PCG conducted a scan of available sources that spoke specifically to organizational structure, management, communication practices, and staff training as they relate to child welfare agencies. PCG researched the state child welfare agencies listed below:

- Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS)
- Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

These state agencies were selected because they either are making promising gains in their case practice, are amid a child welfare agency restructuring or have engaged with our PCG team in the recent past, providing our team with knowledge of practices or structural considerations to inform this assessment. Through this research, PCG distilled management best practices that led to improved staff experiences and insights into the current impacts of agency restructuring. This research also included a review of agency leadership job descriptions to evaluate best practices and recommendations for a revised Maine OCFS Associate Director of Child Welfare Services job description.

For topics where we found minimal research on child welfare best practices, PCG zoomed out to find supplemental research from other public sector agencies as well as the private sector, such as meeting management best practices. This broader literature review included sources such as:

- Children's Bureau
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Capacity Building Center for States
- National Child Welfare Resource Center for Management and Administration
- National Child Welfare Workforce Initiative
- University of Southern Maine, Cutler Institute of Health & Social Policy

While these sources provided valuable insight into effect practices in training and supervising staff and developing future leaders, they provided limited insight into organizations' infrastructure. As a result, exploration of organizational structures was largely limited to that of other child welfare agencies.

## DOCUMENT REVIEW

PCG analyzed documents received from OCFS leadership that provide information about the current state of OCFS management structure and communication and training practices, including:

- Reports used to inform management decision-making at the state and district levels;
- Communication protocols and strategies used to communicate between Central and District level staff, such as standing agendas for recurring Central Office meetings;
- Job descriptions of staff at all levels within OCFS, with a focus on supervisors on up through the leadership team;
- Organizational charts that demonstrate the management structure and capacity and number of organizational layers between district front-line staff and Central Office executive leaders; and
- Training materials for Supervisors, Program Administrators, Caseworkers, and other line staff that support their success in conducting their essential job responsibilities.

PCG reviewed these documents to determine their responsiveness and alignment to current staff responsibilities, community needs, organizational challenges, and staff training needs. Management reports and communication protocols were analyzed to explore what strategies managers might employ to review case practice and staff workloads and communicate successes and opportunities with staff.

## GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

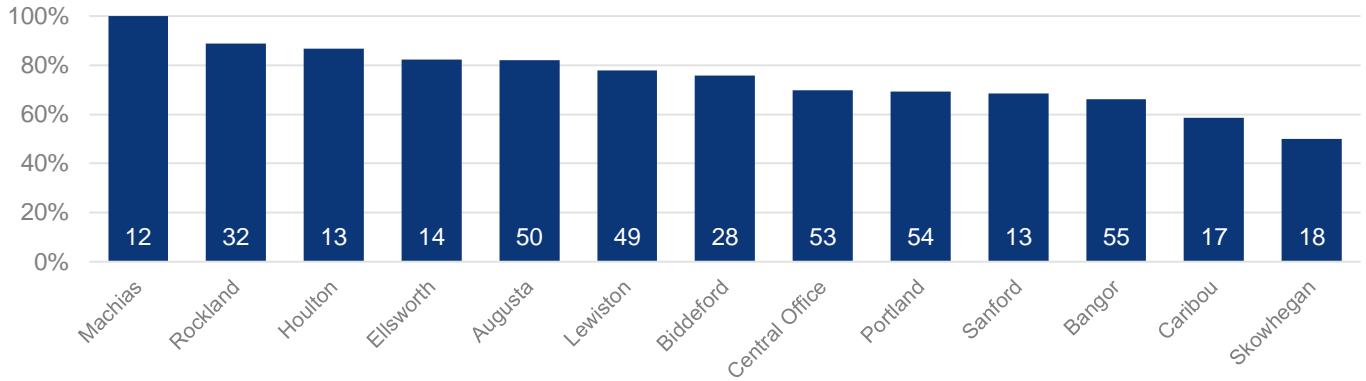
Within an expedited timeframe to complete this scope of work, our team conducted **interviews with more than 110 OCFS staff and leaders**, including a group of approximately 6 former staff, from a cross-section of positions within OCFS (Support Staff, Caseworkers, Supervisors, Program Administrators, Regional Associate Directors, Training Leads, and Central Office leadership). In order to select the former staff for interviews, OCFS provided a list of staff who were previously employed by OCFS, all of whom still work for state government. PCG also interviewed over ten external partners who collaborate with OCFS in various capacities, from service implementation to agency oversight. Interviews took place virtually or in-person, with the PCG team prioritizing visits to seven OCFS offices, including Biddeford, Lewiston, Augusta, Rockland, Skowhegan, Ellsworth, Houlton, to ensure staff in diverse areas of the state felt heard and valued. OCFS staff made significant efforts to accommodate PCG's interview opportunities when we were on-site, but some still could not make it, understandably, due to their schedules. PCG made every effort to make up such interviews virtually later, with staff from all nine districts represented across the numerous in-person and virtual conversations.

To ensure staff participants had positive interview experiences and sufficient opportunities to answer all interview questions, we randomly selected approximately three staff from each role (Support Staff, Caseworkers, Supervisors) in each office for these small group or individual interviews. In our random selection, we prioritized staff who had at least one or two years of OCFS work experience, selecting individuals representing a diverse array of program areas, such as Permanency, Child Protective Services and Licensing. After our initial random sample, substitutions were made to ensure equal distribution of tenure and program areas to fill in gaps where staff had departed the agency.

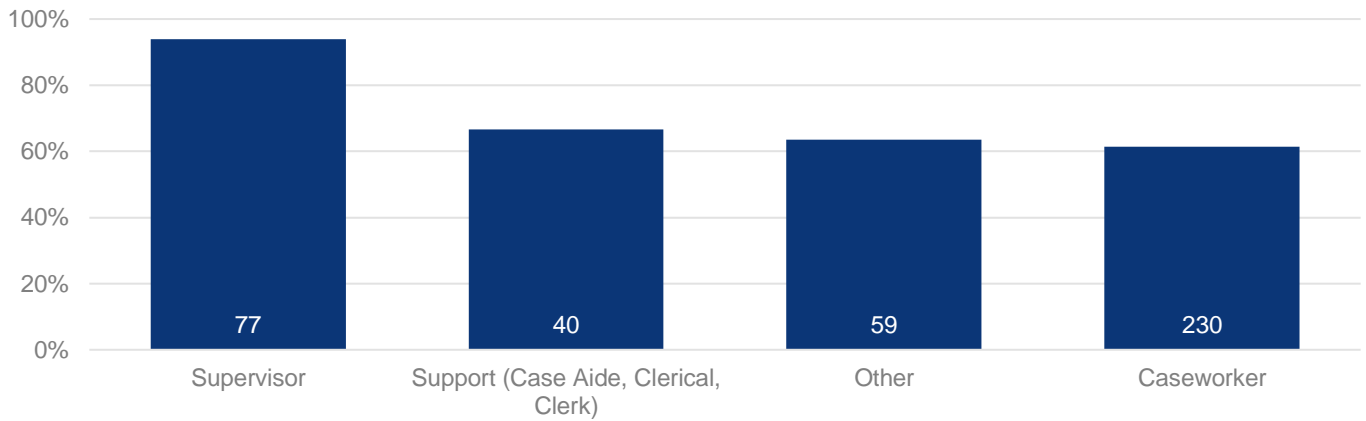
## SURVEY

PCG disseminated a survey to 615 OCFS staff members across all nine districts and Central Office and received a **total of 413 survey responses for a 67% response rate**. Survey responses were collected between Wednesday, February 28, 2024 and Friday, March 8, 2024. All survey questions were optional to mitigate any staff discomfort by conveying their feedback. Responses were analyzed in aggregate to maintain anonymity. The survey was completed by all role types in all offices. A series of multiple choice and Likert scale questions were used to collect feedback, with several open-ended questions included to provide staff with an opportunity to explain their answers and provide additional input. Survey questions were phrased to guide staff to provide their perspectives based on the current state of OCFS management, however it can reasonably be assumed that some staff provided responses based on their recent work experiences over the last six months. Complete survey results are in the **Appendix**. The two graphs that follow illustrate the number of staff who responded to the survey by office and by key staff roles.

**Response Rate by Office**



**Response Rate by Role**



**DATA ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT**

Following our data collection, the PCG team, including all seven team members who participated in the interviews plus our survey and document review analysis team members, engaged in dialogue to synthesize the data findings about OCFS’ current state from our interview meeting summaries, survey data, and document review. The team started by identifying key themes by role within the four major research areas to elevate different experiences across roles and to ensure perspectives from all districts were considered. The team then synthesized further into key themes across all roles. Our takeaways were organized around OCFS’ successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

The team engaged in robust discussion to identify concrete recommendations for how OCFS can improve its management structures and practices. The team also suggested metrics of success for OCFS to use to track the success of its organizational redesign if these recommendations are implemented. All recommendations are rated by Priority and Complexity on a three-point scale of high, medium, low. See below for guidance on how to interpret the different rating levels.

**3-Point Scale Definitions:**

	High	Medium	Low
Priority	Potential for substantial loss or poor outcomes if it doesn't occur soon OR	Moderate value; Potential for moderate negative	Has value, but the positive impacts will be smaller and not

	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
	Potential for very significant positive impact if implemented soon	outcomes if de-prioritized in short-term	addressing the most urgent challenges
<b>Complexity</b>	“Long haul” changes; Highly technical and coordinated planning required; significant number of staff affected	Moderate amount of coordination needed and staff affected	Quick Wins; Involves less capacity and resources; requires minimal collaboration or coordination

## PRIORITY AREA #1: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

### Central Questions Addressed in Section #1:

1. What is working well within OCFS' current organizational and management structure and what could be improved?
2. How can the consistency of management between the Central and District Offices and across District Offices be improved?
3. What management practices, structures, and training are associated with staff retention, positive workplace culture, and positive outcomes for children and families at child welfare agencies?
4. What are the key attributes and skill sets for the Associate Director position?
5. What are the metrics of success for OCFS to track when implementing organizational re-design?

At its core, an organizational and management structure defines the hierarchy of an agency, delineating roles and responsibilities and relationships across teams. A formal structure enables staff to understand their responsibilities, whom they report to, what decisions can be made by who, and how people and teams interact with others within the agency. Three research questions were asked to identify what is working well within OCFS' organizational and management structure, what can be improved and what is integral to promoting positive outcomes for children and families. Two additional questions were asked, one that focuses specifically on defining the position of the Associate Director. For all priority areas a last question is posed to help identify metrics to consider in addressing opportunities for improvement.

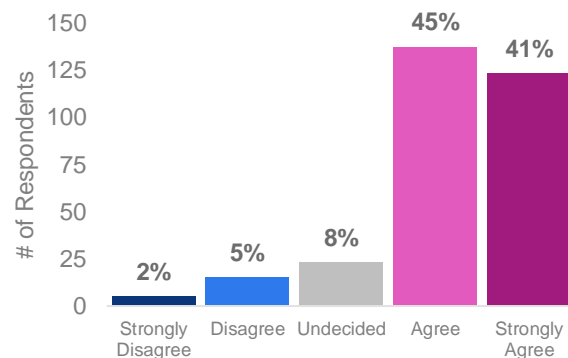
## OCFS CURRENT STATE FINDINGS

### Strengths of the Management Structure

Overall, OCFS has a backbone of structural strengths to build on. Staff trust and feel supported by their direct supervisors. The new Director is widely respected and liked. There are pockets of effective management within the districts. Current and well-regarded past change initiatives align with the kinds of behaviors staff want to see out of their leaders.

**Staff members at all levels generally feel supported by their direct supervisors.** In both the survey and interviews, staff members at all levels had positive things to report about their experiences with their current supervisors. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents who reported directly supervising OCFS staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel comfortable asking my manager for support." Similarly, 86% of respondents who do not supervise OCFS staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel comfortable asking a supervisor for guidance and/or support when making decisions or facing uncertainty." The number of people a supervisor supervises across OCFS generally does

**Survey Statement for Non-Supervisors: "I feel comfortable asking a supervisor for guidance and/or support when making decisions or facing uncertainty."**



not exceed best practice ratios.<sup>2</sup> The two established sources for supervisory ratio standards, the Child Welfare League of America and the Council on Accreditation, both identify the best practice standard for supervisor-supervisee ratios in child and family services to be 1:5.

**Staff members at all levels trust the new Director and feel that she genuinely wants to hear what they have to say and cares about their well-being.** Interview participants consistently voiced appreciation for Director Bobbi Johnson’s competence and leadership behaviors. Caseworkers, supervisors, and external partners who had opportunities to meet with her (e.g., when she visited with staff in districts or met with groups of external partners) all noted that she genuinely listened to and seemed interested in understanding and acting upon their thoughts and concerns. They also expressed appreciation for the depth and breadth of her experience with OCFS and overall competence as a public child welfare administrator.

**In addition to practice changes that are its primary focus, Safety Science appears to be a promising framework for strengthening consistency in management practice across both Central Office and the districts.** Safety Science emphasizes a collaborative problem-solving, teaming approach to child welfare casework that flattens the hierarchy, prioritizes eliciting insights over assigning blame, and honors relevant expertise and insights regardless of where in the organizational structure they reside. In interviews, several staff members expressed a fervent desire to see Safety Science become widely embraced and practiced across the organization, not only because it would help keep children and youth safe and stable, but also because it could lead leaders in Central Office and the districts to embed Safety Science behaviors into their work. Safety Science may also provide a lens through which to explore restructuring roles like the Associate Director and Regional Associate Directors (RADs) and functions, like Quality Assurance, to model and reinforce the tenets of Safety Science in how work is carried out and staff interact within and across the districts including external partners (where appropriate and applicable, for example in troubleshooting complex circumstances of families involved with OCFS).

**In some districts and teams, collaborative problem-solving using cross-level and cross-functional teaming appears to be an ingrained part of management practice.** In a couple of districts, supervisors, Assistant Program Administrators (APAs), and Program Administrators (PAs) described using teaming approaches, which involves convening people from multiple levels of the organization to jointly troubleshoot complex cases or organizational challenges in ways that make each participant feel valued regardless of role in the hierarchy. Some interviews with caseworkers and supervisors (referred to hereon as “frontline staff”) in those districts suggested that the ways teaming has been operationalized showed a fair degree of variation depending on which PA, APA, and/or supervisor was the convener of the teaming process. In the end, we heard enough descriptions of effective and inclusive teaming with alignment to evidence-based practices like Team Decision Making and Safety Science to be confident that there are pockets of effective teaming that could be spotlighted as effective practices to be used as a foundation and expanded for application across OCFS.

## Challenges of the Management Structure

OCFS’ structural-related challenges center around role design at executive and frontline levels, lack of role clarity in key areas, underleveraged meeting mechanisms, and undervalued support staff.

**The frontline casework role is consistently described as challenging to do in a sustained, high-quality way as currently structured.** Caseworkers, casework supervisors, and former staff consistently described the casework role as one in which there are significant barriers to successfully fulfill job responsibilities. Even when caseloads are within recommended industry standard ranges for child welfare workers (e.g., 12-15 for established workers), many factors combine to make casework very challenging and stress-laden. Example of factors that influence the complexity of child welfare practice include the complexities of families and the multidimensional, simultaneous challenges they face (e.g., challenges related to housing instability, poverty, physical health, mental health, and/or behavioral health), stressful

<sup>2</sup> “The two established sources for supervisory ratio standards, the Child Welfare League of America and the Council on Accreditation, both identify the best practice standard for supervisor-supervisee ratios in child and family services to be 1:5.” Retrieved from <https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/>

hotel and hospital coverage requirements, and heightened administrative burdens associated with Katahdin. Interviewees particularly pointed to the unpredictability and inflexibility of hotel and hospital coverage as a root cause of many staff performance challenges and stresses in managing their work-life balance. This was voiced consistently by newer and more tenured staff. When interviewing staff, it was common for them to describe having feelings of professional failure due to unrealistic expectations of their job.

***There is a lack of clarity about decision-making authority and responsibility at middle- and senior-management levels, and particularly at the PA and RAD levels.*** PAs, APAs, and Supervisors expressed widespread frustration in interviews about a pervasive lack of clarity about who in the organization is authorized to make what decisions. PAs and APAs, for example, consistently described District Management Team (DMT) meetings, which are monthly meetings that APAs, PAs, and RADs attend to review organizational updates and discuss practice challenges, as “frustrating” and “unproductive.” Managers reported that productive discussions of potential policy or process improvements and solutions to case practice challenges are regularly concluded with the RADs communicating that they need to bring the issue to executive leadership for final decision-making. PAs and APAs said that often there is no loop back to the issue – no decision communicated to them, no report back on how executive leadership reacted to thoughts raised in the DMT as well as other meetings. Two people interviewed shared that DMT’s “need a decision-maker in the room.” Supervisors expressed similar frustrations related to suggestions raised and discussions held in statewide Supervisor meetings. PAs also shared a general lack of clarity about what decisions they were authorized to make versus needing to “run them up the chain of command.” There also seems to be inconsistency from District to District in the perceived decisiveness of PAs and APAs on the part of staff and supervisors, with reported variations being attributed to both PA and APA tenure in their roles and personality differences. More established District leaders are perceived as more willing and able to make routine decisions about operational matters in timely and efficient ways, while less established leaders are frustrating the supervisors and workers with an apparent inability to make, what has been described as, fairly basic decisions. One supervisor interviewed suggested as an alternative explanation for why decision-making authority at middle- and senior-management levels was so unclear is that “we’re all just too social-worky – no one wants to contradict anyone else.”

***Frontline staff, which includes supervisors, do not feel consistently empowered to make decisions they think they should be empowered to make.*** Multiple interviewed caseworkers and supervisors described incidences of case-related decisions that they thought they were authorized to make being overridden by staff “higher up the chain, with no explanation of why.” Interviewed staff in multiple districts also described communicating to upstream leaders and other Central Office staff plans to put in place solutions to acute challenges in the District that they thought they were authorized to make (e.g., scheduling coverage for children and youth temporarily housed in hotels or hospitals) but having these plans overridden without receiving what they felt was a clear explanation for why.

***Staff members at all levels in the districts generally do not feel supported by leaders above their direct supervisor in the OCFS hierarchy.*** While staff members interviewed reported feeling supported by their direct supervisors, the majority did not express similar thoughts about leaders two or more levels above them in the hierarchy. Forty-six percent of surveyed staff agreed or strongly agreed that “OCFS District-level Leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input and feedback on strategies to reach the agency’s mission,” and just 28% of surveyed staff agreed or strongly agreed that “OCFS Executive-level Leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input and feedback on strategies to reach the agency’s mission.” Staff members described not having much routine contact with upstream leaders, and particularly not having a lot of positive impact (a representative quote that captures what we heard from many interviewees is “I only interact with them when there’s a problem”). When describing frustrations with upstream leaders, many interviewees cited instances of Central Office staff coming to the District to meet with groups of staff members, only to “spend pretty much the whole time talking at us or yelling at us about something we were doing wrong” (with the notable exception of Director Bobbi Johnson, whose positive behavior in prioritizing listening to and asking questions of staff is in contrast with their previous experience of Central Office visits to the District). Interviewed staff members also cited the pattern of a lack of response whenever District staff made suggestions or recommendations to upstream leaders, a general lack of a rationale in communications about changes to policy or procedure, and a pattern



of upstream leadership overriding frontline casework decisions as evidence of a systematic lack of support from upstream leaders.

**Backbone meeting structures like the DMT and statewide Supervisor meetings are consistently described as poorly planned, managed, and followed up upon.** Staff members in interviews described a backbone of statewide (e.g., DMT, Supervisors) and District (e.g., all-staff) meetings that were regular and robust (e.g., with monthly or quarterly in-person meetings and, in some cases, spanning a full day) as generally being ineffective. Examples cited were a lack of agendas, a lack of end of meeting summaries of decisions and action steps (either verbal at the end of the meeting or in writing following the meeting), and multiple people running meetings (e.g., RADs running DMT meetings) without apparent clarity as to who should be doing what and with significant disagreements between them about answers to meeting participant questions (e.g., about policy and case practice). Interviewed staff members also described going over the identical material in multiple meetings (e.g., same policy-focused training presentation being used in both District all-staff meetings and statewide Supervisor meetings) and participants sitting through training sessions that they didn't see as relevant to their roles (e.g., adoption workers sitting through training on changes to investigation practices).

**Support staff describe their roles as being poorly defined and understood by others and appearing not to be consistently integrated into or valued within District teams or structures.** Support staff's answers to interview questions consistently indicated knowledge and passion about both their individual work and the broader work of their districts. Interviewed support staff and their supervisors also appeared to have "can do" attitudes, showing flexibility and adaptability in taking on roles beyond core job expectations (e.g., Case Aides stepping up in short order to take on work supposed to but not consistently being done by contracted vendors, including supervising parent-child visitation or providing transportation to youth in care) and supporting newer caseworkers with questions or in distress when there was not a duty supervisor present in the office.

Support staff interviewed also described not feeling consistently valued by District leadership. They describe receiving routine "thank you's" from frontline caseworkers but rarely if ever from supervisors, APAs or PAs. Support staff supervisors described not being included in District or statewide supervisor meetings, and not receiving the supervision skills training offered to casework supervisors. Frontline support staff reported never having been offered any training specific to their work, even among those with 10+ years of service to OCFS. They reported that District supervisors, APAs and PAs rarely if ever engage in casual conversation with them and therefore do not really know who they are. One newer support staff member noted that no one outside of her support staff colleagues has asked her about herself, and therefore no one else knows about her prior work experience that could be an asset to her team.

## LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

PCG conducted research of the organizational structure of peer state's child welfare agencies. According to the Capacity Building Center for States, an organization's structures, processes, and systems institutionalize practices, procedures, and rules to ensure they are consistently executed regardless of staff or leadership changes.<sup>3</sup> The organizational infrastructure also supports the organization in carrying out its vision, mission, goals, and values. Organizational infrastructure often sets the foundation for other organizational capacities, such as training systems to help build staff knowledge and skills.

The peer review of other states found that states use a regional structure, similar to that of Maine's child welfare system, to support their local offices. For example, in New Jersey, nine area offices and 46 local offices report to the lead for Child Protection & Permanency (CP&P) who is also responsible for adoption operations and resource families, the State Central Registry and adolescent services.<sup>4</sup> Staff who are responsible for carrying out family preservation and reunification as well as community prevention and family support services report to the First Deputy Director who in turn reports to the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families.

<sup>3</sup> Children's Bureau. (2019). Capacity Building Center for States Final Evaluation Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cbcs-2015-2019-executive-summary.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> State of New Jersey, Department of Children and Families, About Us. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/about/>

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families is administered by two Deputy Commissioners, one responsible for the state's four key program areas and the other responsible for administrative and support services.<sup>5</sup> The Division of Children's and Protective Services, guided by the Deputy Commissioner of Program Services, administers the protective services, supervision and placement service programs. The Division operates through five regional offices, each led by an Assistant Regional Coordinator advised by a Regional Advisory Board comprised of members appointed by the Commissioner for Children and Families. Among others, including professionals, community providers, parents and youth with lived experience, representatives of the Regional Advisory Councils participate in a State Advisory Council to review policies, recommend programs, legislation or other matters designed to improve services for children, youth and families; review and advise the Commissioner on the proposed agency budget; and perform public outreach to educate the community regarding policies, duties and programs of the Department.

In Arizona, the Department of Child Safety's central administrative structure is organized into four divisions: Field Operations, Administration, Operations, and General Counsel with each reporting to the Department's Director.<sup>6</sup> Field Operations is responsible for providing services for children and families and conducting child welfare investigations. Administration is responsible for human resources, fidelity and compliance services, resources and referral, finance, information technology and facilities and business support services, among other services. Some of the responsibilities of the Operations division include the Arizona Child Abuse Hotline, communications, foster care and adoption supports, permanency and youth services, learning and development and accountability. Lastly, General Counsel and Legal Services oversees policy and rules, central records coordination, statewide parent and relative locate services and Legislative services. Arizona's fifteen counties are managed by five regions which are responsible for the investigation of child abuse and neglect reports, case management, in-home and out-of-home services, and permanency planning.

Peer state research and broader literature review point to the importance of the supervisory role in achieving organizational outcomes. Supervisors are the hub of an organization. They are the leads of frontline workers. They implement systems in daily operations. They channel frontline needs and insights up towards the senior leaders of the organization. Research of other child welfare agencies was documented in the *Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision report*, co-authored by researchers at the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. In this report, they describe the importance of a coherent model for supervision and draw on best practices from the Colorado Department of Human Services to establish a Supervisory Model. A Supervisory Model enables supervisors to understand their job responsibilities and performance expectations. It provides the basis for training and coaching to help supervisors develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and mindsets to meet or exceed performance expectations. The overall goal of a supervisory model is to "build and sustain effective child welfare supervision by radically improving the ability of supervisors and the [agency]...to serve the needs of children and families in [its] cities, states, and tribes."<sup>7</sup> All supervisors have three overlapping functions:

Category	Function
<b>Administrative</b>	Implement organizational objectives and help to ensure the quantity and quality of work achieves the standards expected by the agency.
<b>Educational</b>	Help staff learn what they need to know to carry out their jobs.
<b>Supportive</b>	Create a psychological and physical climate that enables staff to feel positive about the job.

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut, Department of Children and Families. DCF Administration Regulations. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Policy/Regulations/DCF-Regulations>

<sup>6</sup> Overview of Department of Child Safety (DCS) Decision Making Process. Retrieved from: [https://dcs.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/cps\\_flow\\_chart\\_2015.pdf](https://dcs.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/cps_flow_chart_2015.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> University of Southern Maine. (2009). [Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision](#).

These functions can be mapped to high-level job responsibilities for all supervisors. Documenting an agency's supervisory model articulates the organization's practice philosophy and helps to clarify expectations for all staff who serve in a supervisory role. Research suggests that the most effective agencies identify competencies, in addition to responsibilities, for each function, which serve as the foundation for professional development and performance accountability that help supervisors and managers continuously improve skills, knowledge, abilities, and mindsets for effective supervision and management.

A best practice supervisory framework considers the following components:

1. Written description of the agency's child welfare practice philosophy and approach.
2. Clearly defined and described functions and specific job responsibilities.
3. Established manageable standards for child welfare caseloads which are carefully monitored.
4. Clearly articulated agency expectations for ongoing evaluation of case managers.
5. Supervisory support by management in their roles as unit leaders.
6. Involvement of supervisors in the hiring, selection, and training process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AT OCFS

### Management Structure Recommendations

#### Leadership Roles:

Taking the exploration of child welfare organizations one step further, PCG undertook a review of the current role and responsibilities of the currently vacant position of Associate Director of Child Welfare Services with a goal of proposing an alternative role and structure to strengthen the guidance and support this role and others provide to frontline staff. Currently, the Associate Director of Child Welfare Services is responsible for statewide oversight of the state's child welfare services delegated through four Regional Associate Directors. The Associate Director is also responsible for the Child Welfare Project Manager who oversees implementation of Maine's Child and Family Services Program Improvement Plan and coordination of other child welfare initiatives. In turn, the RADs are responsible for "helping build a model program response to child welfare and a coordinated and integrated response to children and families with behavioral health needs. The RAD position is responsible for overseeing intervention and case management services delivery for two to four districts and program areas and developing, implementing, and evaluating associated programs, policies, and resource allocations."

**Considering the organizational structures of other child welfare agencies and observed needs at OCFS, PCG recommends the following structural changes to OCFS Child Welfare leadership organizational chart:**

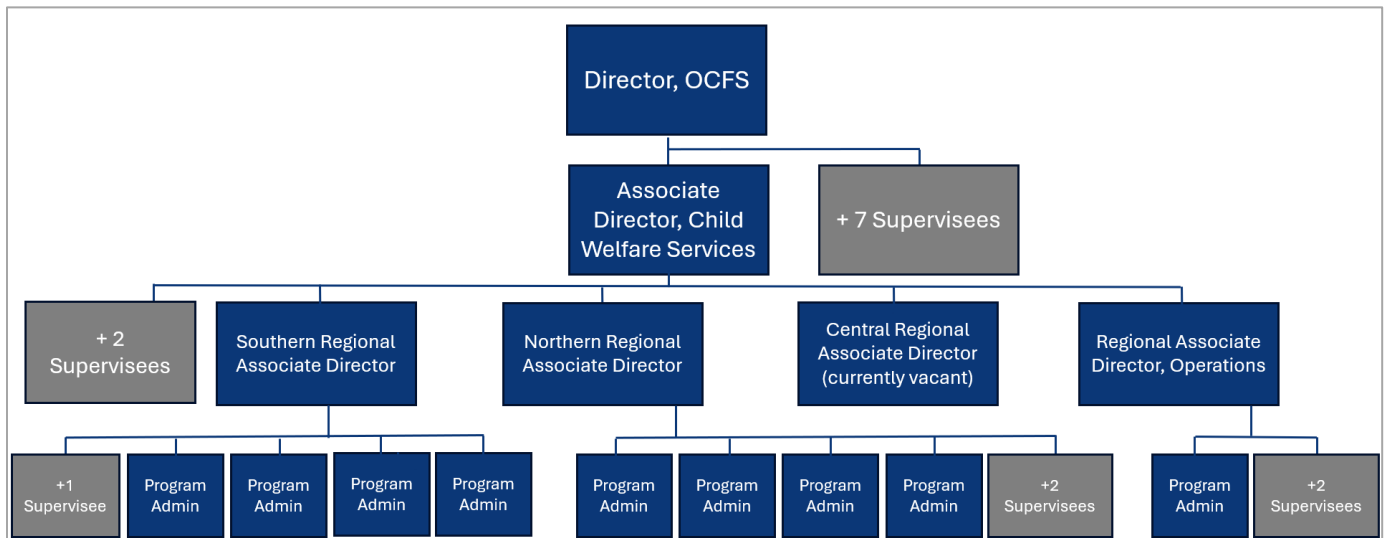
1. **Clarify the scope of the current Associate Director of Child Welfare Services role and change the title to Associate Director of Child Welfare Strategy and Services.** There is a need for this role to become more focused on continuous quality improvement and consistent implementation of agency strategy across the state's child welfare services and operations. Elements of the strategy to be implemented more consistently include child welfare practice, organizational management practice, and agency culture. To reflect this clarified focus, we recommend adding the word "strategy" to the job title. Based on our review of Associate Director roles and other adjacent leadership roles (e.g., Chief of Staff roles) in other state child welfare agencies, we have provided recommended attributes and skills for the future-state position below on page 17. Examples of adjacent peer state roles are in the **Appendix**.
2. **Revise the scopes and job titles of the four Regional Associate Director positions.** To support the Associate Director's focus on strengthening consistency in practice, management, and culture, we recommend restructuring the four RAD positions into four positions focused on:
  - Manager A: Strategy implementation;

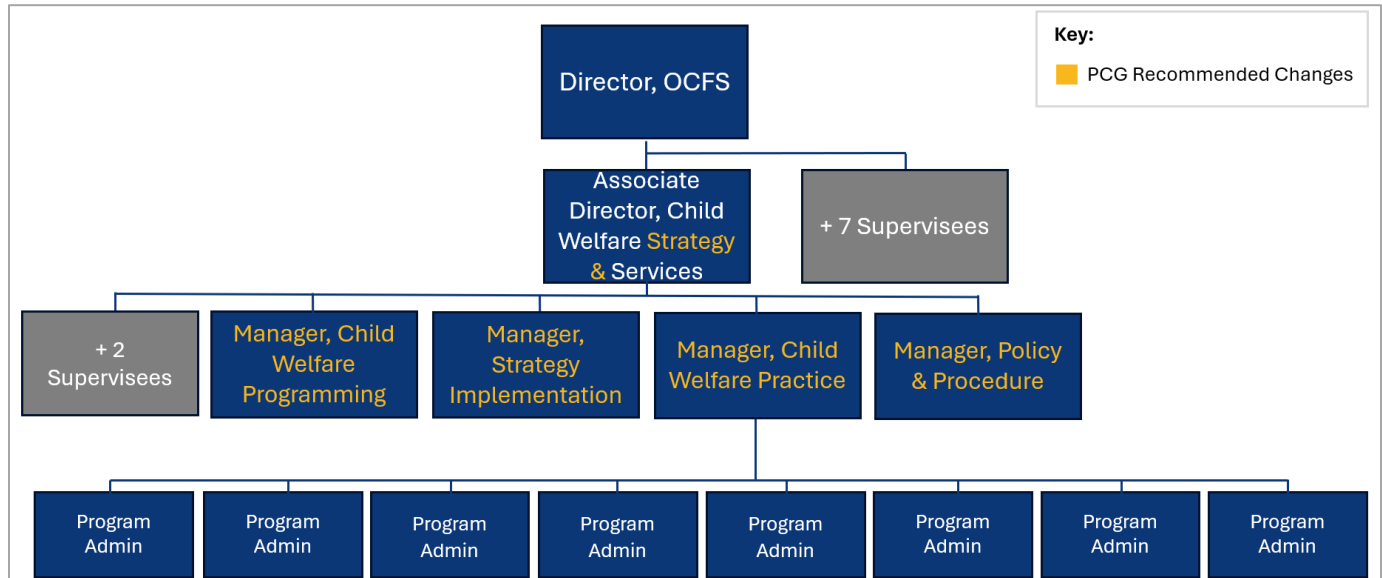
Manager B: District management and practice;  
 Manager C: Child welfare statewide programs; and  
 Manager D: Policy and procedures, respectively.

This change would require a title change for RADs because the scope of their revised roles would no longer have a regional focus. We recommend changing titles from “Regional Associate Director” to “Manager” to draw a clearer distinction between these roles and the one to which they report. Manager A, Strategy Implementation, would manage planning, roll-out and continuous improvement of all strategic initiatives to strengthen child welfare practice, organizational management, and agency culture. This role would include managing data, statewide training, and statewide contracts (as these are key “levers” for implementing strategy consistently across the state). The Policy and Procedure Manager (Manager B) would oversee development and continuous improvement of all written rules and guidance governing agency activities, including child welfare practice, management practice, and values-based behaviors that set the organization’s culture. Manager C, Child Welfare Programming, would provide oversight to all statewide child welfare programs, including but not limited to Intake, CES, Adoption, Youth Transition, and Resource Parent Programs. Lastly, Manager D, Child Welfare Practice, would focus on providing centralized oversight for all District office operations and directly supervise the eight District PAs. This role – divided previously along geographic lines among three RADs – would position OCFS to establish clearer lines of authority, streamlined channels of communication, and greater consistency in organizational communication and implementation among District staff of statewide child welfare and organizational management policy and procedure. Based on our review of similar leadership roles, we have provided recommended attributes, skills, and job responsibilities for these new positions below on page 18.

Below is a visual comparison of the current state, followed by the future state, of the child welfare leadership roles PCG recommends.

**Current State OCFS Child Welfare Organizational Chart – Abbreviated Leadership Levels**



**Future State OCFS Child Welfare Organizational Chart – Abbreviated Leadership Levels**

**Note:** This future-state chart does not include the additional supervisees currently reporting to the RADs. We provide additional considerations related to those roles in the *Leadership Role Implementation Considerations* section below.

Here are sample job responsibilities, assets & skills that PCG recommends for revamping the current Associate Director of Child Welfare Services role (recommendation #1 above):

**Sample Attributes & Skills for the Associate Director of Child Welfare Strategy and Services position:**

- Ability to effectively lead teams, including clear communication, delegating tasks, motivating team members, and resolving conflicts
- Ability to effectively collaborate in teams, including clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, and resolving disagreements constructively
- Ability to communicate with a variety of audiences, including Central Office staff, District Office staff, external public and private sector partners, and children, youth and families in ways that maximize audience member understanding and reinforce a culture of dialogue and mutual respect
- Extensive knowledge of management principles, organizational development, leadership development & succession planning, project management, fiscal administration, information technology in order to ensure quality
- Strong people leadership and management attributes and demonstrated behaviors that align with Coaching and Safety Science, including high emotional intelligence, empathy, active listening, using powerful questions, collaborative goal-setting, and group process management
- Knowledge of decision-making best practices and demonstrated ability to make decisions that are appropriately grounded in data and consultation
- Knowledge and experience with relevant Child Welfare policies, processes, regulations and quality standards
- Ability to oversee formulation, updating, and enforcement of policies and procedures for the Department to address organizational challenges
- Experience in developing and implementing short- and long-term agency strategic plans; design and implement business strategies, plans and procedures
- Experience in designing and overseeing long-term and short-term departmental plans and goals
- Experience with executive communication and public speaking, conflict resolution and mediation techniques

- Ability to recommend policies and programs to the Commissioner, Director, and Legislature for improving and/or establishing child welfare programs
- Knowledge and experience in performance and operations management with the ability to set and monitor the achievement of strategic objectives
- Knowledge of organizational quality improvement frameworks and best practices that are applicable to child welfare

Here are sample attributes and skills that PCG recommends for the four redesigned Regional Associate Director positions (recommendation #2 above). As stated above, we recommend that OCFS changes the job titles for these three positions to remove the regional focus, e.g., change their titles to Managers.

**Sample Attributes and Skills for the four Manager (formerly RAD) positions:**

- Ability to supervise staff in ways that align with Coaching and Safety Science, including high emotional intelligence, empathy, active listening, using powerful questions, collaborative goal-setting, and group process management
- Ability to effectively collaborate in teams, including clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, and resolving disagreements constructively
- Ability to communicate with a variety of audiences, including Central Office staff, District Office staff, external public and private sector partners, and children, youth and families in ways that maximize audience member understanding and reinforce a culture of dialogue and mutual respect
- Broad familiarity with policies, processes, practices, regulations and quality standards across the child welfare continuum of services
- Expert-level knowledge and experience in best practices, regulations and quality standards specific to their particular areas of focus
- Ability to formulate clear written guidance and update policies, processes, and quality standards aligned to OCFS strategy
- Knowledge of decision-making best practices and demonstrated ability to make decisions that are appropriately grounded in data and consultation
- Ability to establish, document, and implement a set of standard processes and routines that instruct the way staff are expected to complete tasks

**Leadership Role Implementation Considerations:**

The effectiveness of organizational restructuring can vary widely depending on how effectively changes are communicated and implemented, including how impacts of changes are considered. The following are implementation-related elements for Department leadership's consideration:

- The Department should consider how additional structure changes could position reconfigured leadership roles for success and rationalize lines of supervision throughout Central Office. Rationale for additional structure changes might include maintaining direct supervisory responsibilities for the Director and other executive leaders at manageable levels and having leaders oversee all major organizational functions relevant to their respective roles. Examples might include but are not limited to:
  - Having the Family First Prevention Services Manager report to the Associate Director for Child Welfare Strategy and Services versus to the Director
  - Having the Program Financial Officer indirectly report to the Chief Operating Officer versus to the Director
  - Having program managers (e.g., Resource Parent, Adoption) and the Child Welfare Program Specialist report to the Manager, Child Welfare Programming
  - Having the Child Welfare Project Manager and Training Team report to the Manager, Strategy Implementation (with related clarification and potential splitting out of the Policy & Training Program Manager's roles related to policy and training, respectively)
- The Department should also aim to implement changes to the organizational structure in accordance with change management best practices. Examples might include but not be limited to:

- Communicate to people currently in roles being reconfigured or moved why the changes are being made and what their options are (e.g., stay in the reconfigured role, apply for new or reconfigured roles without current incumbents, leave the agency without any hard feelings), doing so in ways that allow them to react and ask questions, and timing these communications ahead of the changes being announced publicly
- Communicate to the broader OCFS staff and external partner community the rationale for organizational changes, their anticipated impact on and planned benefits to staff, external partners, and families served by the agency
- Identify learning and development needs for people taking on reconfigured or new leadership roles and putting professional development supports in place (e.g., executive coaching, coaching by supervisor, training)

Additional PCG recommendations for management structure improvements are described in the table below. We have included considerations related to prioritization, feasibility, and sequencing for each recommendation provided. All recommendations are rated by Priority and Complexity on a three-point scale, as defined by the color key below.

Rating Color Key:

■ = high   ■ = medium   ■ = low

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
		Redesign the scope of the current Associate Director of Child Welfare Services role to be focused on continuous quality improvement and consistent implementation of agency strategy across the state's child welfare services and operations. Change the title to Associate Director of Child Welfare Strategy and Services to emphasize the strategy focus.
		<p>Revise the scope and job titles of the four Regional Associate Director roles:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Manager A: Strategy implementation                      Manager B: District management and practice                      Manager C: Child welfare statewide programs                      Manager D: Policy and procedures, respectively</p> <p>This will increase centralization of district office oversight and support and increase role specialization in priority areas of strategic focus for the agency.</p>
		Establish a Supervisory Model for OCFS to articulate OCFS' management philosophy. Set clear expectations for people management throughout the organization, aligned to past efforts to infuse Coaching behaviors and current efforts to instill Safety Science practices and behaviors throughout OCFS.
		Clearly define and communicate decision-making authority at every level of the organization. Leverage centralized decision-making authority among mid-level managers (APAs, PAs, RADs) to increase consistency between offices and to support more efficient decision-making by managers who are expected to have deep understanding of casework practice requirements, impacts of decisions, and the need to communicate decisions to frontline staff quickly.
		Maximize the value and utility of spaces where all district managers convene, such as the District Management Team meetings. Utilize these spaces to address the most pressing staff training, case practice, and staff morale challenges and opportunities in a centralized fashion.

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
		Standardize job expectations for support staff role. Set and enforce clear expectations for PAs, APAs, and frontline supervisors to model and reinforce integration of support staff as full and valued members of District teams.

**Metrics of Success for OCFS to Track**

Impact Area	Metric of Success	Reporting Frequency
Decision-making authority & Meeting management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive staff feedback that meeting facilitation of DMT and Supervisory all staff meetings:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are organized and productive, and</li> <li>○ Include a clear and consistent process for decision-making.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>See additional meeting management metrics in the Communication section.</p>	Annual engagement survey  Plus ad hoc collection via email three months after initial implementation of decision-making process to a sample of DMT attendees
Decision-making authority & Staff support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive staff feedback that staff:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understand the expectations of their role</li> <li>○ Feel that they are set up to succeed</li> <li>○ Have an opportunity to inform decisions that impact them</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Positive staff feedback is obtained across roles, including the support staff role in particular</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey

**PRIORITY AREA #2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Central Questions Addressed in Section #2:**

1. How can initial and ongoing leadership training and/or support (coaching) for managers and executive team members be improved?
2. What management practices, structures, and training are associated with staff retention, positive workplace culture, and positive outcomes for children and families at child welfare agencies?
3. What are the metrics of success for OCFS to track when implementing organizational re-design?

As illustrated on the Health & Care Professions Council’s website, effective leadership and supervision has multiple benefits: supports professional practice and reflection, supports continuing professional development, improves well-being, improves the work environment and culture, and leads to better client



outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Strong leadership skills promote a positive work environment, lead towards increased productivity and job satisfaction, and influence overall performance and employee well-being. Effective and informative leadership training is paramount for executive teams, managers, and supervisors to be successful. In this section, we examine what types of leadership training are being offered and to whom and how might it be improved, and what are the management practices, structures and training that foster a strong and committed workforce that contribute to positive outcomes for OCFS' clients. As before, we also examine metrics to be considered in measuring success where change is needed.

## OCFS CURRENT STATE FINDINGS

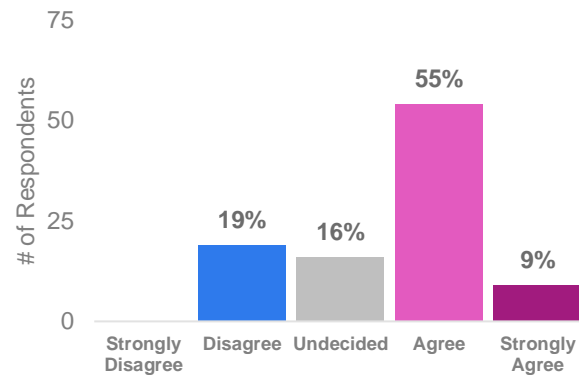
### Strengths of Leadership Training and Support

**PCG interviews and survey results confirmed that leaders feel prepared to fulfill their leadership responsibilities.** Many leaders reported believing they have the skills and training needed to be a manager, support their staff, and provide ongoing guidance and coaching. Of the 98 respondents who reported directly supervising staff, about two-thirds (64%) agreed or strongly agreed they “feel well-prepared to provide guidance to support all members of my staff on their performance and professional development.”

In interviews, leadership reported being able to identify the needs of their district staff and recognize, despite the large number of vacancies, that staff are working hard to see the children and families in their charge and working long hours to meet the requirements and expectations of the job, while trying to maintain a semblance of work/life balance. Each level of staff interviewed acknowledged the hard work and high expectations required of frontline workers, and their ability to work with limited resources, staffing vacancies and increasing documentation requirements. Staff reported exhaustion, compassion-fatigue and burnout due to the demands of their job. Yet, the resounding response when asked why they stay, was passion for the work and wanting to help families and children succeed.

**Many of those in leadership roles have been active in developing training opportunities to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the children and families they serve.** One PA reported developing a training schedule in collaboration with community partners, such as law enforcement, to support the work done by frontline staff. This effort to give staff tools, resources, and information crucial to address caseload needs is an example of leadership helping their caseworkers without waiting for higher levels within the organization to address the needs.

**Survey Statement: "I feel well-prepared to provide guidance to support all members of my staff on their performance and professional development."**



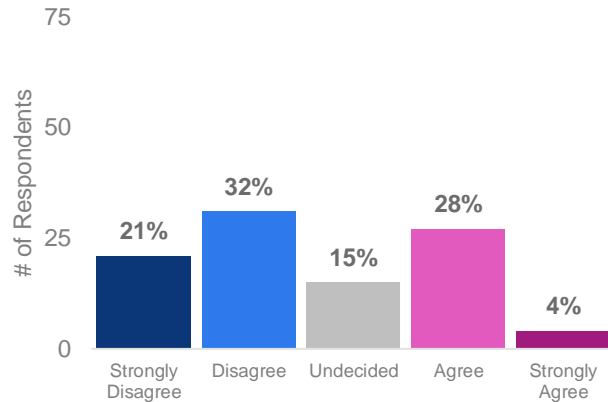
<sup>8</sup> Health and Care Professions Council. The Benefits and Outcomes of Effective Supervision. (Sept. 27, 2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/meeting-our-standards/supervision-leadership-and-culture/supervision/the-benefits-and-outcomes-of-effective-supervision/>

## Challenges of Leadership Training and Support

### ***Training for supervisors and managers are not consistently delivered upon initial hire.***

Challenges reported by supervisors and those in a management position varied from district to district. Reported issues ranged from training taking place well after starting in a leadership role to training not being specific to the role. Of the 98 supervisor/managers who responded, just one-third (32%) agreed or strongly agreed they “received training/onboarding guidance upon beginning my position as a supervisor/manager that prepared me for this role.” Supervisor training is scheduled infrequently. Hence, if someone begins in that role after the scheduled training time, the formalized training may not occur for several months. It was also reported that limited child welfare-specific formal training curricula exist for staff in a leadership position above supervisor (i.e., PAs, RADs or APAs). Staff accounts of training seem to be focused on frontline staff responsibilities. Training received by those in supervisory roles largely focuses on the human resource aspects of the position. There are State of Maine management training courses available, but they are not specific to child welfare.

**Survey Statement: "I received training/onboarding guidance upon beginning my position as a supervisor/manager that prepared me for this role."**



***Performance Evaluations are not consistent and the process for ensuring they are completed needs to be strengthened.*** Multiple levels of staff reported inconsistent completion of evaluations. One staff member reported, despite working for OCFS for many years, having received the first performance evaluation only recently. While there is a staff member who is responsible for tracking performance reviews for all offices and disseminating monthly evaluation status reports, the process for ensuring incomplete evaluations are followed up on could be strengthened. Also, a few supervisors reported having performance evaluations overridden by upper management when they are completed with no clear rationale for the changes. The evaluation of performance ties to an earlier recommendation of having clearly defined roles and job expectations. Job descriptions can help define expected duties and responsibilities and can be leveraged by supervisors to assess staff performance based on standard criteria. These defined criteria can support supervisors to engage their staff in productive dialogue around their strengths and areas for improvement to support their performance and advancement. The performance evaluation structure should reflect job responsibilities, meaning staff who fulfill different roles should not be assessed based on the same criteria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

### New Jersey DCF

DCF has invested in building capacity at both the local office manager and supervisory levels to help manage staff and effectively lead without being overly directive or punitive. For example, DCF in 2019 trained supervisors in Leading a Multi-generational Workforce to help them understand the unique strengths that millennials bring to an organization and the role supervisors can play in setting them up for success.

Implemented supervisor and manager training re: managing staff

Similar to Maine OCFS, DCF launched one of its core strategies, Collaborative Safety, which incorporates the type of Safety Science used in aviation and healthcare to prevent adverse events and learn from critical incidents in January 2020. This process helps build a safety culture within DCF for staff and families served. In the past, the process of inquiry following a critical incident felt full of blame and shame. Caseworkers and supervisors felt targeted or attacked, which resulted in mistrust and low morale among staff. The

Collaborative Safety model creates an inquiry process that allows for a full-circle review of the incident, including any organizational or systemic barriers that may have impacted staff decision-making around a specific case.

DCF also gives supervisors the opportunity to enroll in a Masters Child Welfare Education Program to strengthen their skills in clinical social work practice and supervision, and obtain a Masters in Social Work.<sup>9</sup>

### Arizona DCS

All DCS Field Operations Supervision Coaches, Program Supervisors, Program Managers, Lean Coaches, Quality Coaching Managers, and Program Administrators actively engage in continuous development as leaders by participating in the Supervision Coach Program.<sup>10</sup> All Supervision Coaches, DCS Program Supervisors, Program Managers, and Program Administrators take the SAFE AZ knowledge assessment, are observed conducting clinical supervision and administrative supervision, and develop and follow an Individual Expert Development Plan. DCS Program Supervisors and Program Managers participate in monthly individual coaching sessions with their assigned Supervision Coaches.

Utilization of supervision coaches that includes observing staff performance monthly

Supervision Coaches observe their assigned Program Supervisors and Program Managers conducting administrative supervision and clinical supervision, and provide observation feedback in a supportive environment, at least monthly. The feedback discussion includes the assessment of proficiency. At least one time per month, the Supervision Coach and Program Manager complete a joint observation of a Program Supervisor conducting clinical supervision. The Supervision Coach Program is designed to develop leaders in DCS Field Operations, including Supervision Coaches, Program Supervisors, Program Managers, and Program Administrators. Supervision Coaches assist in building leaders' proficiency in vision-driven highest quality practice that is delivered with compassion, respect, teamwork, and fidelity by communicating and modeling DCS' values, principles, culture, and practice expertise.

The Supervision Coach Program supports development of proficiency in the following areas:

- Safety Assessment: Application of the DCS SAFE AZ Safety Assessment and Safety Management practice model through all stages of a case.
- Case Management Practice: Application of family engagement practices and the intentional use of the DCS Specialist relationship with children and caregivers to achieve child safety and strengthen families.
- Clinical Supervision: Ability to conduct proactive strength-based case progress discussions and consultations, intentionally using the parallel process and a coaching approach to develop critical thinking skills and move children toward safe permanency and well-being.
- Administrative Supervision: Ability to set and maintain expectations, manage performance and process, practice people development, identify and implement improvement actions, identify problems and solutions and promote shared accountability using a coaching approach
- Coaching in Child Welfare: Ability to use structured and goal-oriented interactions and to help others realize their own potential to think critically, discover solutions, take action to solve problems, and obtain proficiency through self-directed and individualized learning
- Culture of Safety and Learning: Ability to create a safe work environment that allows for the humility and vulnerability that encourages problem identification, self-reflection, growth, and continuous improvement

Supervision Coaches:

<sup>9</sup> How does New Jersey maintain a stable child welfare workforce? (Feb. 7, 2022) Retrieved from: <https://www.casey.org/new-jersey-staff-turnover/>

<sup>10</sup>Arizona DCS, Coaching and Leadership Development. Chapter 7, Section 15. Retrieved from: [https://extranet.azdcs.gov/DCSPolicy/Content/Program%20Policy/07\\_Records\\_Legal\\_QA\\_Supervision/Supervision/C/H7\\_S15%20Coaching%20and%20Leadership%20Development.htm](https://extranet.azdcs.gov/DCSPolicy/Content/Program%20Policy/07_Records_Legal_QA_Supervision/Supervision/C/H7_S15%20Coaching%20and%20Leadership%20Development.htm)

- Spend at least one day per month in each assigned unit's office;
- Conduct a monthly individual coaching session with each Program Supervisor and Program Manager;
- Provide informational resources, learning opportunities, and observation with feedback as identified in the Program Supervisor's and Program Manager's IEDPs; and
- Engage in at least monthly observation by conducting an individual coaching session or a clinical or administrative observation. (The majority of observations shall be conducted in person; however, virtual coaching sessions may occur periodically).

### Competencies & Strategies for Leadership Training

Child welfare agency leaders utilize a variety of leadership competencies to lead a team that improves outcomes for children and families. The Children's Bureau states it is critical for child welfare agency leaders to be:

1. Dedicated to the mission, vision, and goals of the organization;
2. Skilled in strategic thinking, analysis financial judgement, technical leadership, adaptive leadership, and ensuring effective performance to reach outcomes; and
3. "on board" during change and implementation efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Leaders should be able to:

4. Manage existing resources and gain additional resources to support the work;
5. Change structures as necessary to support innovation;
6. Communicate clearly with internal and external stakeholders about partnership and innovation;
7. Manage group dynamics;
8. Value and be highly skilled in cultural competence;
9. Support a healthy organizational culture and climate dedicated to learning, experimentation, and building on staff strengths; and
10. Hold those same staff accountable for performance and outcomes through evaluation and continuous quality assurance processes.

These leadership capacities can inform the development of training content. It should be recognized that these capacities require skills in communication, self-awareness, team building, ethical decision-making, problem solving, change management, mentorship, diversity, and inclusion.<sup>12</sup>

Below are some additional strategies for designing effective leadership training that enable meaningful change:

1. *Focus on whole-person growth:* Leadership talent development is less about specific tactical skills and more about honing broad capabilities, such as self-awareness.<sup>13</sup>
2. *Provide opportunities for self-reflection and meaning-making:* Training should be an opportunity to take a temporary pause from daily demands and take stock of what's working well and what needs more attention. By facilitating opportunities for leaders to inform their post-training path to increased success, training will recognize and leverage leaders' skills and infuse leader buy-in to the process.
3. *Offer targeted programs to support leaders with acute or chronic stress:* High-quality trainings are often tied to stress reduction. In child welfare, this is a particular opportunity to offer productive venues for supervisors and mid-level managers to reflect on and address chronic challenges.
4. *Ensure that short-term growth leads to sustained, long-term impact.* After the training, support trainees in translating initial changes into long-term habits. Identify metrics of success for

<sup>11</sup> Children's Bureau. (2018). What is organizational capacity and what does it look like in child welfare? Washington, DC. Retrieved from: [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/what\\_is\\_organizational\\_capacity.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/what_is_organizational_capacity.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Effective Leadership Training: Key Components and Strategies. (Oct. 30, 2023). Retrieved From: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/c-suite/effective-leadership-training-key-components-and-strategies/articleshow/104825223.cms>

<sup>13</sup> Harvard Business Review; What Makes Leadership Development Programs Succeed? (Feb. 28, 2023). Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2023/02/what-makes-leadership-development-programs-succeed>

implementing the skills and frameworks reviewed during training and set up a process for periodically reviewing their progress.

### Sequence of Leadership Training

When done right, leadership training programs make a substantial positive impact on an organization. Developing leadership skills can fuel progress toward agency goals, address operational inefficiencies, provide leaders with common language for implementing best practices, and increase employee motivation. It is worth noting that many leadership trainings encounter pitfalls that prevent the realization of training value. Flawed assumptions that can be embedded in leadership training design include:

- a) Problems of organizational behavior and performance stem from the deficiencies of individuals.
- b) Improving employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes will strengthen organizational effectiveness and performance.<sup>14</sup>

The target for change and development in both of these assumptions is the individual. While these may seem logical, the common root cause of problems of organizational behavior and performance issues are poorly designed and ineffectively managed systems. For this reason, it is useful for agency leaders to invest in organizational strategic planning and quality improvement initiatives prior to designing or redesigning a leadership skill training program. This enables leaders to gather observations from their managers and employees about barriers to strategy implementation. With this insight, leadership can then map the future-state training to certain leadership competencies or responsibilities that are tantamount to strategic success and addressing barriers to implementation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AT OCFS

### Professional Development Recommendations

PCG's recommendations for professional development improvements are described in the table below. As in the previous section, we have included considerations related to prioritization, feasibility, and sequencing for each recommendation in the table, with each recommendation rated by its anticipated Priority and Complexity.

Rating Color Key:

■ = high   ■ = medium   ■ = low

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
		Ensure supervisors conduct performance reviews at least annually throughout staff employment.
		Develop a child welfare training curriculum for supervisors, managers, and agency leaders focused on people management skills and techniques.
		Direct supervisors to complete supervisory training prior to or within 3 months of assuming the position.
		Provide training and coaching for people managers in the Coaching and Safety Science-aligned behaviors they're expected to exhibit.
		Ensure timely and job-specific performance evaluations happen for all staff.

<sup>14</sup> Harvard Business Review; *Why Leadership Training Fails – and What to Do About It*. October 2016. Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-training-fails-and-what-to-do-about-it>

### Metrics of Success for OCFS to Track

Impact Area	Metric of Success	Reporting Frequency
Performance and Coaching	Positive staff feedback that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have opportunities to develop professionally in their role</li> <li>• Have a supervisor who is invested in their growth</li> <li>• Feel supported by their supervisor in exploring their professional development goals and interests</li> <li>• Have access to timely training opportunities that are relevant to their job and the professional challenges they face</li> <li>• Understand the criteria they have to meet in order to advance</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey
Training	Positive feedback from supervisors that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how to access and are satisfied with training opportunities to develop and enhance their people management skills</li> <li>• Know how to support the professional development goals of their staff</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey

## PRIORITY AREA #3: COMMUNICATION

### Central Questions Addressed in Section #3:

1. How can communication and connection between the Central Office and District Offices, and managers and front-line workers, be improved along with overall workplace culture?
2. What are the metrics of success for OCFS to track when implementing organizational re-design?

Communication is integral to the success of any organization, and, for child welfare agencies, it is integral to understanding case practice, seeking guidance from others, and fostering a supportive network. Within OCFS' current organizational structure, communication is a multi-tiered, dynamic system, with communication coming from OCFS leadership, branching across regions and districts, and within offices – from the top down and from the bottom up. The focus of our assessment of communication is designed to understand if the efficacy of bottom-up and top-down communication is effective and to identify opportunities for improvement. Here too, we explore tactics that can be used to measure progress in improving outcomes where needed.

## OCFS CURRENT STATE FINDINGS

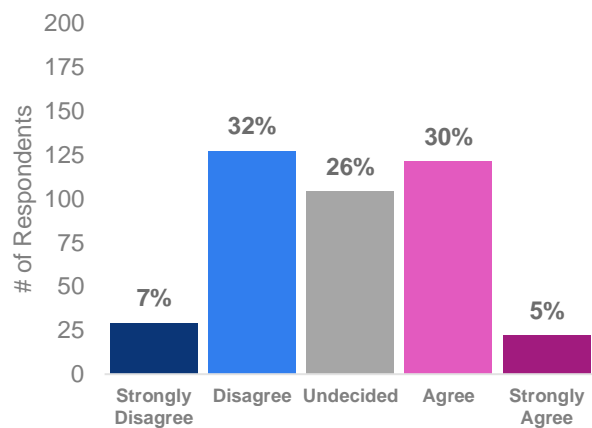
In the absence of formal agency communication protocols, PCG reviewed agendas of on-going Central Office meetings that involved District managers, key community partners and coalitions, and the child fatality notification communication protocol. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews was reviewed for major themes regarding frequency and quality of communication from staff to leadership and across management within districts.

## Communication from Central Office to District Offices

**Many staff do not feel that Central Office leadership adequately considers or appropriately responds to staff feedback.** A review of the agendas for standing OCFS meetings shows consistent communication from Central Office to District leadership in these venues regarding major unit-wide and policy updates. These agendas appear to lack regular forums for staff to engage with leadership, such as a time dedicated for staff to provide feedback or review findings, based on the recent staff survey administered by PCG. This sentiment came through in survey results where 42% of respondents stated that they strongly disagree or disagree with the statement “OCFS Executive-level Leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input and feedback on strategies to reach the agency’s mission.” However, staff are hopeful for the future. Several staff reported that they feel positive communication, feedback and support from newly appointed OCFS Director Bobbi Johnson.

**The current concerns staff have about executive leadership are specific to input on the decisions that ultimately dictate how they do their work, the reasoning behind those decisions and how timely they are communicated.** Survey data show a lack of bi-directional communication between executive leadership and staff. Of 404 respondents, 50% of people agreed or strongly agreed that “changes in policies, procedures, and other organizational matters that directly affect my position are clearly communicated.” Interestingly, only 40% of the 40 support staff who responded to the question agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. Similarly, 35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am given an opportunity to review and provide input as policy and practice decisions are made.”

**Survey Statement: "I am given an opportunity to review and provide input as policy and practice decisions are made."**



**Generally, staff believe their supervisors and district leaders are supportive and transparent.** Several qualitative survey responses demonstrate that staff think they can get the support they need from their supervisor and share their concerns. Supervisors reported through interviews, however, that they would collect feedback from staff and share it up to leadership, only to receive no response (positive or negative) to pass back down to staff. This puts them in compromising positions and negatively affects staff morale.

**Staff appreciate opportunities to provide feedback to Central Office leaders, but often reported that their input was not adequately considered or followed up on.** Staff across all districts appreciated the recent office visits conducted by the new Director and felt that considerable time was spent listening to their experiences and input. While visits from the Director tend to be historically infrequent, the most recent round of visits seemed to make a meaningful impact and sent a message to staff that the Director cares deeply about the work they do and that their voices are important. Staff acknowledged that leadership takes many opportunities to gather their feedback, concerns and ideas, but interviewed staff reported that there is not much follow-up about solutions or updates on progress provided back to frontline staff. They are left questioning whether their concerns were heard accurately or whether they are being addressed. A staff member replied in the survey that “Caseworkers voices are heard, however the time it takes to find solutions matter. I've observed workers burnout, while waiting for their caseloads to get lighter.” Another replied about what they would like to see from OCFS Leadership – “listening to and believing district staff without assuming they are dysfunctional and whiny.”

## Strengths and Challenges of Communication between Managers and Front-Line Workers

Some districts have stronger communication across staff than others. **Staff surveyed in rural areas report having better communication with their district leadership than those in urban areas.** While overall 46% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “OCFS District-level Leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input and feedback on strategies to reach the agency’s mission,” that figure was higher for rural respondents (55%) and slightly lower for urban respondents (43%). That divide was also borne out in views on Executive-level leadership, where 39% of rural respondents agreed or strongly agreed that executive leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input, as compared to just 23% of urban respondents. These specific survey question results contained some of the biggest rural vs. urban splits. This regional difference could possibly stem from differences in the size of teams or inconsistencies in leadership communication between districts or other factors. For this analysis of OCFS’ Child Welfare services, PCG defined “urban” offices as offices located in municipalities with more than 10,000 citizens based on March 2024 population data. An office was categorized as “rural” if it is located in a municipality with less than 10,000 citizens.

Classification	OCFS Offices
Urban	Portland, Augusta, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Sanford, Central Office
Rural	Caribou, Ellsworth, Houlton, Machas, Rockland, Skowhegan

**Time and opportunity for bi-directional communication plays a significant role in staff engagement with messaging relayed to front-line staff through their own supervisors and managers.** Many staff members shared that they do not feel they have the time to participate in meetings and are struggling to manage casework on top of all-staff and other meetings. Staff shared that these venues often feel disorganized, with agendas not shared in advance. This makes it challenging for staff to prioritize attendance among other duties.

Staff reported that many of the communications and updates they receive from Central Office are not always relevant or actionable. In interviews, staff reported that they received too many email communications about organizational updates and information that isn’t relevant to their daily work. This not only leads to “information overload” but also the sense that staff were not going to be kept in the loop on important decisions, status updates that are most important to them. Additionally, staff are not equitably experiencing a value-add from all staff meetings at the district level. Case Aides and other non-caseworker staff noted that they do not think their needs are adequately addressed through the all-staff meetings. This group also reports that they do not have consistent 1:1 meetings with their supervisors and thus have a sense of being out of touch with what is going on in the department.

## LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

A scan of other child welfare agencies found that states use communication strategies similar to OCFS’ Child Welfare services, including in-person and virtual meetings conducted by offices, regions and statewide; newsletters; and Central Office leads as well as the Director conducting in-person field office visits, among others. With limited documentation identified on formal communication strategies used by other child welfare agencies, PCG expanded its review to consider guidance by other leaders in the child welfare and social services fields.

### How to Conduct Effective Meetings

The American Public Health Services Association (APHSA) developed guidelines for effective meeting facilitation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> © 2012 American Public Human Services Association. Public Consulting Group.



**Purpose:** Meetings are a primary mechanism to get business done. Our values demand that we work in groups to generate work products that are stronger for having drawn on the diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences of our staff, and that we support our clients in doing so as well. Our values further demand that we continuously improve the way we do all our work, including our use of meetings, and that we demonstrate respect for our staff and clients by ensuring that time they spend in meetings is time well spent, generating value-added work products and sustained progress toward organizational and project goals.

**Procedure:**

All **participants** in meetings are expected to do the following:

- Respond in a timely way to meeting inquiries by:
  - Accepting or not accepting
  - If needed, asking for clarification about the purpose of the meeting
- Ensure that they are clear about their role and the rationale for their participation. If they are unclear, they are to ask the meeting leader for clarification
- Participate actively by listening actively and speaking when they have something to contribute
- “Call the question” when they have thoughts or questions about the direction of and conclusions from a meeting, for example:
  - “Are we done? Have we completed the work we came together to do?”
  - “Where is this discussion going? How does it contribute to what we’re here to do?”
  - “Did we make a decision? If yes, what precisely is it?”

All **leaders** of meetings are expected to do the following:

- Define the purpose of the meeting – the reasons for calling the meeting, what the meeting aims to accomplish, expected work products, and agenda
- Set an appropriate roster for the meeting – have people participate whose participation is needed to generate the desired work product
- Ensure that everyone knows why they are participating in the meeting
- Use a written agenda to manage the meeting
- Agree on ground rules for the meeting
- “Park” content / take something “offline” that bogs down forward progress toward work products
- Probe participants to be specific in their input by, for example, giving specific examples or making specific recommendations
- Take effective notes:
  - Clear, organized, categorized
  - Notes are the shared product of the group versus “owned” by the individual leading the meeting, for example, by checking with participants during the meeting that notes accurately capture their input and by circulating draft work products following the meeting for review and feedback by participants before identifying the work products as “final”
  - Thought should be given to how notes are taken (e.g., flip charting in front of the room, individual pen and paper, laptop) and who takes them (e.g., designated note taker, meeting leader/facilitator)
- Adjust the timing of the meeting as needed:
  - Cut it short if the work is done
  - Extend the time or agree to reconvene at another time by group consensus if more time is needed
  - Only having a meeting when one is needed to generate a work product

- Involve key people not able to be in the meeting by developing work products in a continuous mode (e.g., drafting work products from meeting discussion and continuously improving them through intersession / offline conversations, email input, etc.)

The following are **minimum requirements for work products** from meetings:

- Notes focus on what is important:
  - Decisions made
  - Actions required and who, by when
  - Key context for decisions and actions (e.g., areas of agreement or disagreement, steps followed to make the decision)
- Notes from all meetings include specific next steps
- Monitoring notes include progress, impact, and lessons learned from follow-up on next steps from the last meeting

In addition, thought should be given as to whether the results of the meeting should be processed into a tool (e.g., tips, do's & don'ts, templates) to guide future work and share with colleagues who could benefit from using the tools.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AT OCFS

### Communication Recommendations

PCG recommendations for communication improvements are described in the table below. As in the previous sections, we have included considerations related to prioritization, feasibility, and sequencing for each recommendation.

Rating Color Key:

■ = high   ■ = medium   ■ = low

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
High	Low	Host virtual “office hours” with each District dedicated to hearing staff feedback and questions about policy, program updates so that staff have a direct line of communication to Executive leadership.
High	Low	Distribute agendas to staff in advance of all-staff and unit meetings.
High	Low	Work with district offices to implement meeting management practices such as using strong meeting facilitation, consistent agenda templates and distribution, notetaking, time management, clear next steps and follow up. (See meeting guidelines starting on page 28)
High	Medium	Tailor communications by staff level and send those via dedicated email distribution lists to caseworkers, case aides and other positions (as relevant). PAs can partner with the RADs to build this distribution system and cultivate role-specific messages.
Medium	High	Assess the current staff feedback protocol employed as part of policy and procedures development and document how this feedback is incorporated in final versions of policies and procedures.
Low	Medium	Create a repository of memos and leadership updates that make it easy for staff to see the sum of all decisions. Central Office IT could support this add-on to OCFS intranet.
Low	Medium	Develop and implement a formal, transparent case review communication process - where participants seek to understand the root causes and second story behind

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
		decision making in critical incidents such as child fatality or serious injury reports, and then learning points and recommendations for system improvement are shared with frontline staff.

**Metrics of Success for OCFS to Track**

Impact Area	Metric of Success	Reporting Frequency
Transparency	<p>Positive frontline staff feedback in employee engagement survey on the following metric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are provided with standard communication following investigation of critical incidents to explain findings and lessons learned</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey
Meeting Management	<p>Positive staff feedback in employee engagement survey on the following metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff understand their role and responsibilities in meetings</li> <li>Staff feel comfortable speaking when they have something to contribute</li> <li>Staff understand the purpose of meetings and why they have been asked to attend</li> <li>Leaders define the purpose of meetings at the start of meetings</li> <li>Agendas are disseminated in advance</li> <li>Meeting dialogue is appropriately facilitated, i.e., staying on topic, tracking towards decisions</li> <li>Meeting notes are taken and disseminated</li> <li>Incomplete agenda topics are appropriately followed up on after the meeting</li> <li>Decisions made post-meeting are communicated out appropriately</li> <li>Action items are followed up on</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey
Communication	<p>Positive staff feedback on town halls collected via survey that participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the content shared</li> <li>Knew how to engage in the town hall event</li> <li>Thought that the content shared was relevant to them</li> </ul>	Collected via a short, electronic survey at conclusion of town hall

## PRIORITY AREA #4: RETENTION, ENGAGEMENT & CULTURE

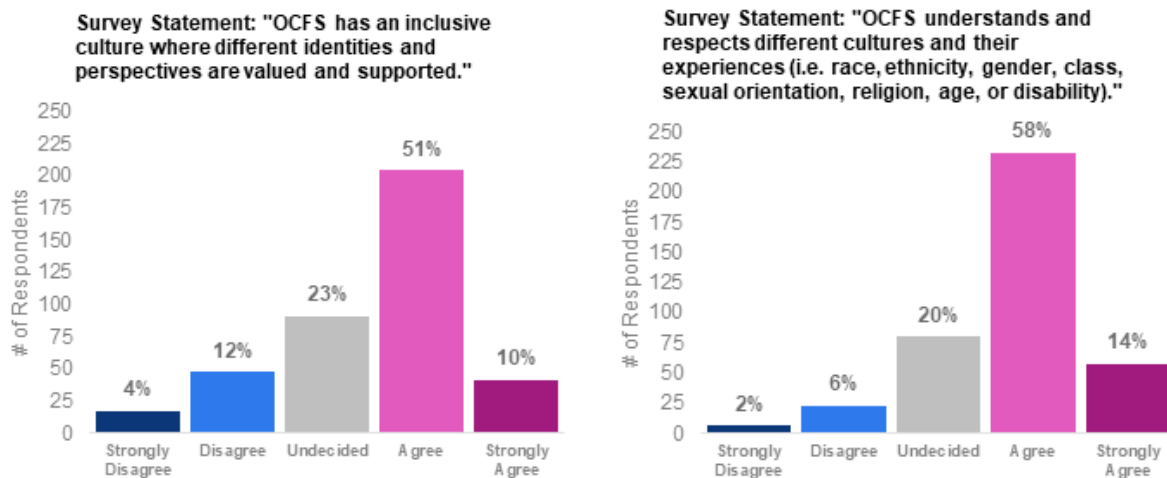
### Central Questions Addressed in Section #4:

1. What management practices, structures, and training are associated with staff retention, positive workplace culture, and positive outcomes for children and families at child welfare agencies?
2. What are the metrics of success for OCFS to track when implementing organizational re-design?

Maine's child welfare program is facing a high turnover rate exacerbated by the pandemic as are many other states. Turnover can be caused by high caseloads, negative work environment, loss of work-life balance, sense of being unsupported, and poor communication, among other factors. PCG was charged with exploring opportunities to improve staff retention and the workplace culture as part of this assessment. When staff work in a positive and supportive environment, they are more likely to retain their positions and achieve positive outcomes for those they serve. Here too, metrics are explored to measure progress in improving the retention, engagement, and culture of OCFS' valuable workforce.

## OCFS CURRENT STATE FINDINGS

### Strengths and Challenges of Staff Retention and Workplace Culture



## RELATIONSHIPS

**Frontline staff feel a sense of trust and support from their peers and direct supervisors. They report insecurity and confusion in their relationships with PAs, APAs, and RADs.** In some offices, frontline staff report a strong, team-like bond with their peers, including a likelihood of receiving support and advice when needed. These staff members expressed camaraderie, understanding, and compassion within their offices. For caseworkers, this sentiment often extended to their supervisor. Of the 226 caseworkers responding to the survey PCG administered, 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel comfortable asking a supervisor for guidance and/or support when making decisions or facing uncertainty." Often the same sense of support did not extend to the PA and other leaders above the PA level. Supervisors reported varied experiences with their PA and APA, some described a positive relationship, while others described their PA and APA as distrustful of frontline staff and lacking awareness of the day-to-day work of frontline staff. Distrust of frontline staff was not expressed by the PA, APA or RAD explicitly but appears to

be shown to staff through management's use of authority to override case decisions. Relationships seemed to be impacted by these decision-making processes and the lack of transparency that frontline staff experience with district leaders.

Sentiments of exclusion, feeling dismissed or generally insecure about sharing concerns with district leaders without fear of criticism were heard across offices during interviews with frontline staff. Caseworkers also expressed confusion at the paradox of this apparent distrust of their work from leaders, while they are being asked to work independently, often with little support or oversight. These experiences of frontline staff are juxtaposed with a group of leaders who expressed during interviews a strong desire for frontline staff to feel empowered to make decisions. OCFS leadership is clear that they expect supervisors and caseworkers to be capable of working independently day-to-day and making decisions as needed without explicit direction from PAs, APAs, or above; however, this expectation is not consistently being conveyed effectively through the actions of those leaders.

## TRANSPARENCY IN DECISION-MAKING

**Frontline staff commonly report receiving limited information about decision-making when PAs and APAs intervene and have unsatisfactory experiences of resolving errors.** Frontline staff across multiple offices described their experience of being excluded from the decision-making process that emerges when there is disagreement between the opinions of district leaders and caseworkers, and its resulting negative impact on their confidence. Frontline staff who were interviewed described circumstances where no explanation was given for why a decision was overturned or how those who overturned a decision came to that conclusion, leaving staff confused and concerned about why they weren't consulted on their intimate knowledge of the case and family. Caseworkers who were interviewed reported frustration that a PA and/or APA may not be available when guidance was requested, and that they are unclear how or why a PA became involved in overturning a case decision they made. This friction was cited as a reason for job dissatisfaction but was also noted that it could be repaired if they were more included in the process and provided with more explanation to understand how and why decisions are made.

During interviews, district staff from caseworkers to PAs reported that they are not informed about the outcomes from the case reviews and investigations that may occur following an issue or problem when they come to the attention of leadership. Caseworkers and supervisors interviewed described being questioned by leadership about a case issue or problem (e.g. "Why did you do that?"), and receiving criticism for choices made, leading them to believe the blame was being placed solely on them. Caseworkers reported commonly receiving destructive criticism – focusing only on the problem and bad decision-making versus guidance and learning on how to improve. In the survey PCG conducted, 28% of respondents cited "Negative work environment" as one of the top 5 reasons for staff turnover at OCFS. Staff are eager for a more comprehensive understanding of the entire organization, including lessons learned across the state that have been discovered through case reviews and the investigation of critical incidents.

## CONSISTENCY / RELIABILITY

**Caseworkers welcome the guidance of their supervisors, and supervisors welcome the support and involvement of their PAs; however, the receipt of that support varied, and involvement sometimes seemed reactive.** This inconsistency of district management was reported in interviews across offices and included references to the presence, engagement and availability of middle management – PAs, APAs and RADs – to engage with staff, and to provide guidance or support around crises to supervisors and caseworkers. Some district leaders are more involved and aware of case details, while others are less hands-on with the day-to-day work and may expect supervisors and caseworkers to handle the work and only become involved if there is an issue.

While many of the caseworkers and supervisors interviewed believe they work well and are confident in their work within their office, they reported inconsistent practices/processes across districts that lead them to feel prone to criticism. Interviews with frontline staff revealed inconsistent messaging and practices

across districts, and sometimes among leaders within a single district, is causing confusion, distrust, and frustration for frontline staff – sometimes leading to concerns about child safety and family outcomes.

Frontline staff reported inconsistency with directives and guidance on cases and overtime opportunities, and the presence of PAs in the office. In more than one interview with supervisors, the same example was provided, where information delivered at a statewide supervisor meeting had conflicted with a directive given at a district office. In some circumstances, supervisors who identified these conflicts had been told to apply district guidance versus guidance from central office leadership. This is not to say that the district guidance itself was problematic, but rather that it left supervisors feeling confused and unclear about the correct process, and also wary that leaders are following different processes. These supervisors reported feeling uncertain about making decisions after receiving this conflicted guidance. Staff have expressed a desire for standard guidance so they can have confidence in their work and can reduce the fear of being reprimanded by another manager with a different opinion or approach.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

**OCFS leadership expressed a desire for child welfare staff to practice healthy boundaries and wanting all staff at OCFS to experience a work-life balance, but the sentiment may not be consistently conveyed or applied in practice by all district leaders.** The workplace experience of frontline staff described in interviews is one with limited flexibility, without the support needed to practice healthy work-life boundaries.

**“Please select the top 5 factors that you think contribute to staff staying at OCFS”**

**Most frequently chosen answers:**

*“Relationships with leaders or coworkers”:*

77%

*“Salaries/benefits”:*

62%

*“Client-focused philosophy or belief in the mission”:*

41%

**“Please select the top 5 factors that you think contribute to staff turnover at OCFS”**

**Most frequently chosen answers:**

*“High caseload sizes”:*

83%

*“Secondary traumatic stress / burnout”:*

77%

*“Lack of work-life balance”:*

73%

Caseworkers and some supervisors report being overextended, working beyond what would be considered typical boundaries and job expectations (taking into consideration the expectations for salaried child welfare staff to work beyond a 40-hour work week). Hourly staff have reported that they regularly work overtime – sometimes without having been approved for overtime pay – knowing that no one else would pick up critical, time-sensitive work. With child safety on the line, staff reported feeling uneasy about leaving certain tasks uncovered and felt concerned about unethical practices or safety consequences if they were to end their workday timely. In interviews across several offices, staff report minimal support for solving day-to-day crises or workload problems above the supervisor level. Knowing there is no one else who will pick up the work in their absence fuels a strong sense of responsibility to work beyond “expected” boundaries. Several staff described feeling dehumanized by knowing that district leaders continue to be aware of the level of overtime currently required by child welfare staff to properly conduct the work, yet do not take significant action – verbal or otherwise – to remedy the situation. Staff feel a conflict inherent in leadership’s earnest promotion of self-care

and the staffs’ experience of being “on their own,” which may result from a lack of staff and leadership capacity, resources and/or meaningful action to ensure boundaries are able to be maintained.

Many casework staff interviewed, including Children Emergency Specialists (CES), have experienced and described circumstances that would put them at risk of physical and/or psychological harm due to the job’s nature and overworking. Staff reported lack of sleep due to hoteling and emergency department (ED) shifts, and interrupted sleep for those on standby coverage, and felt worried about the risks associated with driving

after being awake for an exhaustive period of time – typically without an alternative for shift coverage. Many staff reported the quality of their work suffers from this scheduling requirement. It appears some of this stress is also associated with aspects of the job where they are alone to handle crises with concern of potentially dangerous situations. Of the 399 respondents of the survey PCG conducted, just one-third (34%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Leadership invests in building a trauma-informed system that addresses the secondary trauma and safety of the workforce.” When limited to just the 226 caseworkers who responded to the question, the agree/strongly agree percentage drops to 28%. A staff replied in the survey that *“the LCSW within the districts (from Spurwink) is a great idea - many caseworkers will utilize the LCSW as an ear to help process the secondary - and primary - trauma we experience; they are also a great resource for handling situations with a trauma-informed mindset, and learning what services could be of benefit for our families.”* A common theme that came from interviews was the unreliability and lack of support from district management to help pick up the burden when staff need them, during a crisis or other workload issue. Other examples provided in interviews include:

- During afterhours coverage, some staff, including supervisors, report they do not have anyone reliable to call for help with decisions.
- Several staff reported incidents where they were contacted during time off and asked to work through previously approved personal leave time known to their supervisor, including examples during both vacation and bereavement leave.
- Caseworkers and supervisors have described an inclination to respond when called to handle a crisis, even if it means extending their workday.

During interviews, some staff expressed a perceived disregard for their well-being from supervisors and predicted this could be the determining factor in whether they stay in the job, more significant than salary. While frontline staff realize there are limits to their ability to conduct overtime, they acknowledge that the work of child welfare naturally will require their after-hours presence to attend to crises. In interviews, they describe a willingness to put in this extra time and would feel more valued if that effort was met with appreciation.

***Frontline staff feel appreciated and valued by their direct supervisors but desire more appreciation from district leaders.*** When asked about reasons for staying in their child welfare jobs, most staff began by describing their passion about the work they do, and their dedication to child and family safety. Due to closeness and knowledge of the families and cases, they have a unique perspective and insight into the work. Survey results indicate the following top three factors<sup>16</sup> that contribute to staff staying at OCFS:

- Staff passion, or alignment with a client-focused philosophy or belief in the mission, was a main reason for retention (chosen as a top five factor for staying in the role on the survey by 41% of respondents);
- Staff relationships with their leaders and coworkers was the top factor driving staff retention (chosen as the top factor for retention by 77% of respondents);
- The increase in salaries implemented over the last several years have encouraged many caseworkers to stay working at OCFS (chosen as a top five factor for staying in the role on the survey by 62% of respondents).

In the survey, 70% of caseworkers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “Supervisors recognize good work,” while 57% of support staff agreed/strongly agreed. This confirms what staff shared during the interviews – that they typically receive significant support from those who directly support them. Many staff expressed a desire to receive more appreciation from district leaders for taking on these responsibilities, instead of it being an expectation. It seems time is not being prioritized for staff inclusion and recognition. Despite their wealth of knowledge, staff commonly reported having the sense that management does not appreciate or value the knowledge they bring, nor the intensity and volume of their work. Evidence of staff commitment is seen in many aspects of their work – including their willingness to continue working beyond the limits of the business day. The lack of inclusion and recognition by district leaders extends to support

<sup>16</sup> While staff responded to PCG’s survey with their top five answers, three factors stood out as the top contributing factors.

staff as well, many of whom are also overburdened due to vacancies and an uncertain workplace experience with different assumptions about their role coming from different leaders. During the interviews, frontline staff voiced that the PAs APAs, RADs and OCFS leadership often do not understand or acknowledge the magnitude of their work – including what they describe as an inability to complete all required work during a normal business day – and therefore underestimate the degree to which caseworker capacity is overstretched.

Staff are hopeful that the CES unit will bring some relief around after-hours / late night coverage of case crises; however, it was noted that any emergencies that arise before 4:00 pm are not the responsibility of a CES. A significant amount of work can result from a crisis arising during the late afternoon. A sense of tension between CES and district staff was reported because of unclear/uncertain expectations around responsibilities and support for casework that arises in the later part of the day and may spill over into after hours. Staff reported an absence of written guidelines around the CES process and how the CES interacts with districts, and a desire for more clarity about roles and processes.

**High job expectations, a lack of work-life balance, and staffing gaps are key reasons for staff turnover and dissatisfaction.** A combination of elements is the likely cause of continued staff turnover<sup>17</sup>, including:

- The taxing nature of the work, including secondary traumatic stress/burnout (chosen as a top five factor for staff turnover on the survey by 77% of respondents) and sometimes physical risks;
- The lack of work-life balance (chosen by 73% of respondents); and
- Staffing shortages causing high, unmanageable caseloads (chosen by as a top five factor for staff turnover on the survey by 83% of respondents).

While a limited number of survey participants voiced concern about the quality of supervision and engagement of leadership, the results are presented below as they were common concerns that were noted by individuals who participated in in-person and virtual interviews or listening sessions.

- Low-quality supervision (chosen by 38% of respondents);
- Lack of effective, engaging leadership (chosen by 19% of respondents).

The number of vacancies was cited by frontline staff as an element exacerbating many of the underlying causes of the culture issues identified earlier in this section – with everyone reporting that they are stretched thin to cover cases that would otherwise belong to vacant positions. With an insufficient number of support positions, coupled with the shortage of third-party contracts, the work of transportation and visitation will likely continue to fall on caseworkers – another major point of friction among frontline workers, in addition to hoteling and ED coverage. One responder reported in an interview that “*certain practices such as hoteling children in our custody, are very concerning to me, ethically and personally. I don’t feel that caseworkers should be put in positions to do caregiving.*” This sentiment was echoed throughout the districts as a reason for job dissatisfaction. Another area of frustration that staff noted was when overtime compensation is not extended to all staff who feel required to work after hours – either in relation to hoteling practices or regular casework<sup>18</sup>.

## TRAINING / JOB PREPARATION

**Staff desire more onboarding support, such as mentoring and on-the-job training, in their first few months on the job, and supervisors struggle to prioritize new staff observation due to competing priorities.** A common experience reported by caseworkers was not having been provided sufficient onboarding, such as on-the-job training or shadowing, prior to engaging in significant, critical components of child welfare work. During interviews, caseworkers described the stress they experience related to uncertainty and not feeling set up for success in their initial months on the job. Staff reported feeling unprepared and nervous when entering a situation that they had never had the opportunity to observe from

<sup>17</sup> While staff responded to PCG’s survey with their top five answers, three factors stood out as the top contributing factors.

<sup>18</sup> All overtime must have prior supervisory approval for overtime eligible staff.



a supervisor or peer. A staff member replied in the survey that *“new workers lack the quality mentoring necessary to develop into competent, well-balanced workers, and a lack of qualified applicants as well as competent, sufficient resources leads to things not running smoothly on so many levels.”* They described examples of mistakes they made on the job in the early months as a caseworker when they had to figure things out on their own.

Frontline staff discussed their fear of blame and punishment for making mistakes and the belief that leadership is prone to blame the caseworker for an error. Of the 189 non-supervisors who had been with OCFS for five years or less, just 13% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The training and onboarding I received prepared me for my role.” Comparatively, two in five of those who had been with OCFS for 10 to 20 years and 20+ years agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement (40% and 39%, respectively). An ongoing lack of confidence and stress for newer staff may be a contributing factor in terms of staff turnover.

One supervisor outlined the expectation they have to complete one field observation each quarter for each member of their unit, but they do not always meet that goal. In interviews, supervisors attributed this to both their own lack of time for staff observation, and the high prevalence of caseworkers on their teams who are not experienced enough themselves to mentor new staff. A staff member reported in the survey that *“Supervisors are very supportive, but they are so overworked that they cannot properly support field workers.”* Some caseworkers explained in interviews the scarcity of opportunity to shadow with qualified peers – and in some cases when they requested help or guidance, they were directed to look for a peer on their own. Due to the complicated nature and unique circumstances of families, it takes ample experience to become a well-versed caseworker who is able to skillfully navigate the day-to-day tasks and decisions inherent with child welfare services and to understand how to prioritize work on their own. Without a formal shadowing / mentorship program, caseworkers with the appropriate level of experience to provide this type of supportive exercise may not be organically available across every office to connect with staff who could benefit from their direction and guidance.

Training staff expressed a desire to provide mentoring and on-the-job training but have been instructed to maintain a boundary where on-site, field observation and support is not their role. It seems the current model of the Policy and Training Unit is more focused on delivering classroom training. However, training staff are aware of the need for more mentoring and shadowing to support new caseworkers, while recognizing the constraints of supervisors and peers to provide such support. Several staff referenced a semi-formalized shadowing program that had been established in the past and was limited to the Portland office. It has since dissolved but was remembered as being structured and helpful to those who experienced it.

The introduction of the impending Training Lead/Training Supervisor position in the district offices is being met with hope and excitement for change. It is clear that child welfare staff understand the critical nature of this job and want to perform it well – to serve children and families as best they can. They seem to know what they need to improve their day-to-day work that may cause concern or doubt – the areas where they feel unprepared and need additional guidance. The hope is for these new training positions to bridge the critical gap of providing observation, mentoring and on-the-job training in district offices where child welfare staff are aware they need additional guidance.

The Policy and Training Unit is currently not structured to participate in the consumption and analysis of information from performance reports, such as the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) data, to inform district training. It seems that Quality Assurance may be involved but working separately from the Training Unit. There is opportunity for the Training Unit to play a larger role in analyzing data from performance reports, such as Program Improvement Plans (PIP) and the CFSR, to propose training solutions and enhance approaches to solving the problems facing Child Welfare. Training Unit staff reported an interest in being able to use data from performance reports to inform their work – eager to convert lessons into tangible solutions via training and other learning opportunities to address areas of deficiency. With consistent, formal guidelines to enhance the role of the Training Unit this may be a valuable way to draw upon an existing, motivated workforce and more acutely address areas needing improvement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

### Workforce Support

In New Jersey, CP&P has maintained a turnover rate between 6% and 10% since 2006.<sup>19</sup> This is a result of strategic activities, including the adoption of a new case practice model and implementation of a set of comprehensive workforce development policies. Across all categories of child welfare staff and supervisors, the vacancy rate is consistently less than 2.5%. Among caseload carrying staff, the turnover rate in the state was 4.3% in 2020, compared to 14.7% in 2005. Only 114 out of over 2,500 caseload carrying staff left CP&P in 2020, a clear indicator that New Jersey's child protection workforce remains stable.

Over the last 15 years, DCF leaders have demonstrated how highly they value their workforce by implementing a comprehensive set of strategies to support the CP&P staff's professional satisfaction. Middle managers have maintained this commitment and provided consistent leadership despite changes at both the commissioner and governor levels.

#### **The six key strategies DCF has implemented to support its workforce include:**

- Positive organizational culture and peer support, including the creation of a department-wide Office of Staff Health and Wellness.
- Concrete resources, such as manageable caseloads, salary, benefits, and equipment.
- Opportunities for education, training, and professional development.
- Deliberate recruitment and selection processes.
- Connecting to community.
- Communication and transparency.

DCF has placed a high priority on organizational support for workforce development and wellness. In 2019, DCF created a commissioner-level office focused on workforce development and well-being: the Office of Staff Health and Wellness to focus on health and wellness to ensure that staff are working in environments that set them up to succeed in engaging with children, youth, and families.

DCF's 2019-2021 Strategic Plan recognized that family is the agency's primary focus — including the family of staff — and established staff health and wellness as one of the agency's four major priorities to achieve DCF's transformational goals. Core approaches to support both staff and the families they serve include race equity, healing centered practice, collaborative safety, family voice, and the protective factors framework.

Child protection work can be intense and emotionally taxing. DCF responded to this reality by creating the Worker2Worker program in 2013 to provide support to the workforce through a confidential peer-counseling helpline and help staff cope with the everyday challenges of frontline child welfare practice. The peers who work in the program are retired employees with extensive experience in the agency and knowledge in how to address common stressors of the job. A psychologist leads the Worker2Worker team, which provides real-time mental health support and connects caseworkers to therapeutic supports.<sup>15</sup>

In Arizona, to support the goal of reducing turnover, DCS implemented the following statewide strategies:

- The Department continues to streamline hiring and selection processes for DCS Specialists. The DCS Recruitment team participates in monthly Community of Practices (COPS) hosted by the Arizona Department of Administration. COPS provides recruiters from different state agencies with opportunities to network and engage in activities and discussions to make recruitment practices more efficient and improve candidate experience.
- The Work Force Resilience Program continues to provide a resource to aid Department employees with the unique challenges of their roles and the impact on their personal and professional lives.

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<sup>19</sup> How does New Jersey maintain a stable child welfare workforce? (January 2022). Retrieved from: <https://www.casey.org/media/21.07-QFF-HO-Workforce-Stabilization-in-NJ.pdf>

- The Department continues to encourage non-case carrying employees with previous DCS Specialist experience to assist field offices experiencing a high case load volume.

The Department continues to improve staff satisfaction and retention by implementing Safety Science Principles. The Department joined the National Partnership for Child Safety, a convening of multiple county and state jurisdictions working to utilize a safety science approach to reducing maltreatment. The Department will further the learning of the application of safety science through organizational surveys to gain insight into culture, emotional exhaustion, mindful organizing, psychological safety, personal/work safety and safety climate.<sup>16</sup>

### Recruitment and Retention

The following section describes four successful practices that peer state research indicated led to positive recruitment and retention outcomes:

#### Continuing Education

Pennsylvania utilizes a Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program that is a cooperative effort among the Administration for Children and Families, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and 15 undergraduate social work degree programs in Pennsylvania accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The program addresses both the recruitment and retention problems that currently exist in child welfare and encourages prospective child welfare caseworkers to pursue academic degrees that will prepare them for child welfare practice in Pennsylvania consistent with the best practice models available.

The goal of the program is to recruit qualified staff to strengthen public child welfare services in Pennsylvania by providing educational opportunities for undergraduate social work majors preparing for employment in one of Pennsylvania's 67 public child welfare agencies. Qualified persons who are full time social work majors in their senior year at any of the 15 approved schools may receive an educational fellowship in return for a contractual obligation to accept employment in a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency immediately following their studies. The employment commitment is not waived or postponed for graduate study.

Participant benefits include:

- Fully paid in-state senior year tuition and fees
- Fellowship payments of \$600 a month for 8 months
- Upon hire in a county agency, a bonus payment of \$640
- \$100 book allowance for child welfare class
- Smooth transition from student to employee<sup>20</sup>

Child Welfare agency benefits include:

- Upon hire, staff are prepared with child welfare knowledge and experience
- Increase the amount of trained staff
- Provide a mass of professional staff to set standards for good and effective casework practice

#### Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Another approach that PCG identified to increase recruitment and retention efforts is implementing a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). RAPs are a proven model of job preparation, validated by the Department of Labor or a recognized State Apprenticeship Agency, which combine paid on-the-job learning with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. RAPs are also a business-driven model that provide an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain workers. RAPs allow workforce partners, educators, and employers to develop and apply industry standards to training

<sup>20</sup> Child Welfare Education of Baccalaureates. Retrieved from: <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-programs/child-welfare-education-baccalaureates>

programs, thereby increasing the quality and productivity of the workforce. RAPs offer job seekers immediate employment opportunities that pay sustainable wages and offer advancement along a career path as they complete their training. The key elements of all RAPs include:

- Industry Led – Programs are industry-vetted and approved to ensure alignment with industry standards and that apprentices are trained for highly skilled, high-demand occupations.
- Paid Job – Apprenticeships are jobs. Apprentices earn progressive wages as their skills and productivity increase.
- Structured on-the-job learning/mentorship – Programs provide structured on-the-job training to prepare for a successful career, which includes instruction from an experienced mentor.
- Supplemental Education – Apprenticeships are provided supplemental classroom education based on the employer’s unique training needs to ensure quality and success.
- Diversity – Programs are designed to reflect the communities in which they operate through strong non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and recruitment practices to ensure access, equity, and inclusion.
- Quality and Safety – Apprenticeships are afforded worker protections while receiving rigorous training to equip them with the skills they need to succeed and the proper training and supervision they need to be safe.
- Credentials – Apprenticeships earn a portable, nationally recognized credential within their industry.<sup>21</sup>

### **Casework Teaming**

PCG identified that some child welfare agencies are exploring and implementing team approaches to assist with decision making, retention and safety of casework staff. Teaming is an innovative approach to child welfare casework, one in which individual casework is replaced by team casework. This restructured approach challenges and changes the traditional paradigm of how casework services are provided to families, how caseworkers are supervised, how casework is distributed, and how activities are conducted in the agency office. Teaming reassigns responsibility for case outcomes and progress from the individual caseworker to the entire casework team. The restructuring involves assigning responsibility for accomplishing case tasks to both a primary and a secondary caseworker, who are provided with the input and assistance of other team members when needed.

Supervision is transformed into a facilitated group process with all members of the group providing input into the decision-making process. Group supervision is used to make case decisions, assess, and address child and family needs. Casework teaming is designed to reduce caseworker isolation and workload, strengthen staff retention and improve casework decision-making and service delivery to children and families. Child welfare units that successfully have used the casework teaming model report they are able to better meet the needs of the children and families they serve. Since a member of the team is always available to respond to or address the needs of a family if the primary caseworker is unavailable, families are more consistently supported.<sup>22</sup>

While we understand staffing challenges make this difficult, benefits of teaming approaches to case management include strengthening worker comfort levels and physical safety during home visits as well as worker retention and engagement (e.g., the Gallup organization has identified “having a friend at work” as one of the top 12 reasons why workers stay at and commit to organizations that employ them). Worker teaming can also free up supervisor time and focus, as a subset of questions and consultation that

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<sup>21</sup>

What is a Registered Apprenticeship Program. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/registered-apprenticeship-program>

<sup>22</sup>

Teaming in Child Welfare. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Teaming\\_in\\_Child\\_Welfare\\_A\\_Guidebook.pdf](https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Teaming_in_Child_Welfare_A_Guidebook.pdf)

otherwise would fall to supervisors (often in ad hoc ways that take supervisors out of the “flow” of their work) would be addressed by peers.

## Supervision

Westbrook & Crolley-Simic argue “the quality of supervision is the most significant predictor of job satisfaction for case managers” and supervisory support plays a key role in staff retention.<sup>23</sup> A U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report supports the argument that supervisors drive staff retention when they tied a lack of supervisory support and actual time allotted to supervise to retention challenges as early as 2003.<sup>24</sup>

Frontline supervisors play a key role in the retention, job satisfaction, and performance of the people they supervise, and investing in development and support of supervisory staff is therefore a major ‘lever to pull’ when seeking to maximize effectiveness and consistency of frontline practice. Supervisors perform better when they themselves have the education, training, and experience needed to provide adequate support.

Given the legal and regulated nature of child welfare work, case managers benefit when their supervisor is able to provide support and guidance grounded both in the practice model as well as the supervisor’s own experience as an expert practitioner. Supervisory support can be formal, through scheduled and structured supervision, as well as informal, through drop in visits, phone calls, or a messaging platform. Supervisory support can be clinical or technical in nature, focusing on “doing the job right,” and can also take the form of more general encouragement and emotional support. Furthermore, supervisory support can be hands on where a supervisor demonstrates effective practice in action or goes on a family visit with a worker, or more focused on empowerment, where the supervisor provides space for staff to take action and make decisions independently while “having their back.”

Supervision spans beyond disciplinary strategy to facilitating people-centered growth conversations that make staff feel like individuals, rather than “a cog in the machine.” Sometimes support may be as simple as reaffirming a decision or providing a space for the worker to ask a question without feeling intimidated. For new workers or workers struggling with caseloads, more intensive support, such as helping work a case alongside a worker, may be necessary to encourage forward movement and promote a sense of teamwork and unity in helping serve the children and families in the agency’s care. Often, a feeling of validation from a supervisor can be the difference between an employee persevering and them walking out the door.<sup>25</sup>

Specific components include:

1. Supervisors have education, experience, or a combination of both.
2. Supervisors are available to staff both formally and informally.
3. Supervisors utilize group supervision as a method to build case manager knowledge and establish a sense of teamwork.
4. Senior management and supervisors provide regular recognition of supervisors’ and frontline workers’ accomplishments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AT OCFS

### Retention, Engagement, and Culture Recommendations

PCG recommendations for retention, engagement, and culture improvements are described in the table below, along with considerations related to prioritization, feasibility, and sequencing for each recommendation.

Rating Color Key:

<sup>23</sup> Westbrook, T. M. & Crolley-Simic, J. (2012). [Perceptions of Administrative and Supervisory Support in Public Child Welfare](#).

<sup>24</sup> US Government Accountability Office. (2003). [Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff](#). GAO-03-357.

<sup>25</sup> Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (n/d). [The Importance of Supporting Supervisors](#).

■ = high ■ = medium ■ = low

Rating		Recommendation
Priority	Complexity	
High	Medium	Provide more secondary trauma training for district leaders to better support staff.
High	Medium	Develop a structured shadowing program in all district offices.
High	Medium	Extend salary increases to include support staff.
High	Medium	Work with Human Resources to explore the ability to make overtime pay available to all staff who work beyond regular hours and are eligible for overtime pay.
High	High	Formalize a transparent decision-making process with a feedback loop to front line staff and provide an opportunity for discussion, explaining decisions made about their cases.
High	Medium	Assign responsibility of addressing work-life balance to the newly recommended role of Manager, Child Welfare Practice to regularly review workload and staff hours – discussing workload issues and reorganizing to achieve greater equity among staff.
High	Low	Utilize Training Supervisor/Lead as an on-the-job trainer and observer – to accompany new caseworkers at meetings / visits and observe key practices (family team meeting, court hearings, kinship study, PPO action).
Medium	Low	Host regularly scheduled strategy events for caseworkers to share trends they are seeing in their district and concerns about child safety. Use these Caseworker Strategy events as opportunities for leadership to provide new information about progress on previous issues or discussion topics, or to reinforce standard case practice.
Medium	Low	Formalize district level staff recognition across all offices.
Medium	Medium	Enhance recruitment and hiring of child welfare staff through innovative approaches, such as apprenticeships and education programs.
Medium	Medium	Develop standard guidance and written processes for CES – including roles and responsibilities of CES staff and district staff
Low	Medium	Evaluate Team Decision Making processes across offices; Consider Casework Teaming and determine an approach that will improve the success of decision-making statewide.
Medium	High	Create opportunities for quick hit training on new/evolving trends in the work as they are discovered, statewide (e.g., adapting to staff shortages, hoteling).
Medium	Medium	Engage the Policy and Training Unit in analyzing performance reports, such as Program Improvement Plans (PIP) and the CFPSR, and proposing training-related solutions to addressing the root cause of areas of deficiency

**Metrics of Success for OCFS to Track**

Impact Area	Metric of Success	Reporting Frequency
Preparation / Onboarding	Increased ability of Supervisors / leadership to offer secondary trauma support. Positive feedback is received from staff that they feel supported after being involved in difficult cases.	Survey following supervisor academy  Annual engagement survey
Hiring / Pay	Increase in the number of support staff hired (exact number <i>to be determined by workload study</i> )	Monitored monthly
Transparency	Positive staff feedback in employee engagement survey on the following metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership holds Caseworker Strategy meetings, with structured agenda.</li> </ul>	Annual engagement survey

Impact Area	Metric of Success	Reporting Frequency
Preparation / Onboarding	New caseworkers are assigned a shadowing partner upon completion of Foundations training, as part of a Shadowing Program implemented.	Monthly
Recognition and Appreciation	Staff Recognition events are held in each district office.	Quarterly
Work-Life Boundaries	District leaders and supervisors are provided with a Workload Analytic Tool to guide the assignment of staff to better manage workload.	Quarterly
Consistency / Reliability	Staff indicate increased understanding of CES unit guidance in a training exit survey and the annual engagement survey.	Training exit survey and Annual engagement survey

## Feedback on Technology

In initial project scoping conversations with DHHS and OCFS, PCG agreed to explore the below question.

### Central Questions Addressed in this Section:

1. How can Katahdin changes better reflect front-line worker feedback?

During the course of our staff interviews and survey, PCG collected minimal data about staff feedback on Katahdin. While Katahdin was explicitly mentioned during the interviews, time was limited, and staff focused their comments on the management structure, professional development, communication, and engagement of OCFS' Child Welfare services. Additional data collection and more time would be needed to comprehensively understand staff feedback. See below for a summary of the feedback collected from staff and leadership regarding Katahdin and other technology needs.

### Front-Line Worker Feedback on Technology

**OCFS leadership reported in interviews that staff are not satisfied with Katahdin and struggle to adhere to updated policies and procedures related to the system.** Prior staff feedback on the previous system, MACWIS, focused on wanting a more simplified, streamlined structure; yet now, staff feedback centers around wanting more opportunities to "tell the story" of a case through lengthy narrative. Staff have access to many training guides and visual charts on the intranet, and they are contacted by Training Leads if issues are spotted with their Katahdin usage. Despite these supports, staff feel discontent with Katahdin. Considering the sheer volume of new staff who started since the implementation of Katahdin, the majority of staff missed initial communications around the value-add of Katahdin and would benefit from earlier communications shared during implementation. The role of supervisors in supporting and encouraging their staff's use of Katahdin and adhering to system policies and procedures is unclear. There is a missed opportunity for supervisors to reinforce staff accountability to adhere to updated protocols.

In addition, staff noted other technology-related challenges, particularly in rural areas. Given the driving time required to conduct family visits and, in some cases, attend in-office meetings, staff reported that it would be valuable to have a dictation to text capability through their phones that interfaces with Katahdin so that drivers could dictate notes from their visits in-between driving from their home or office to their client's home.

## APPENDIX

### CONTENTS:

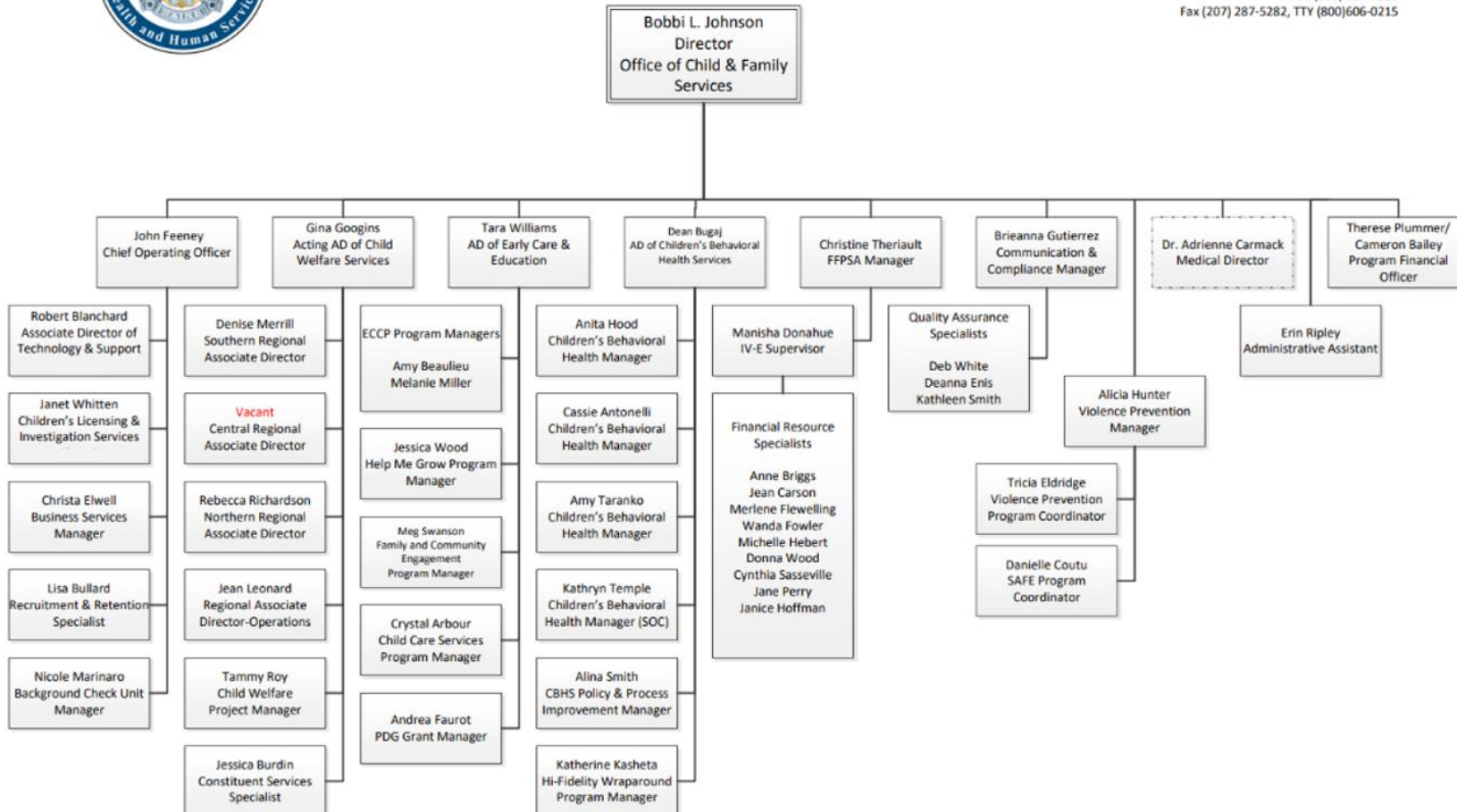
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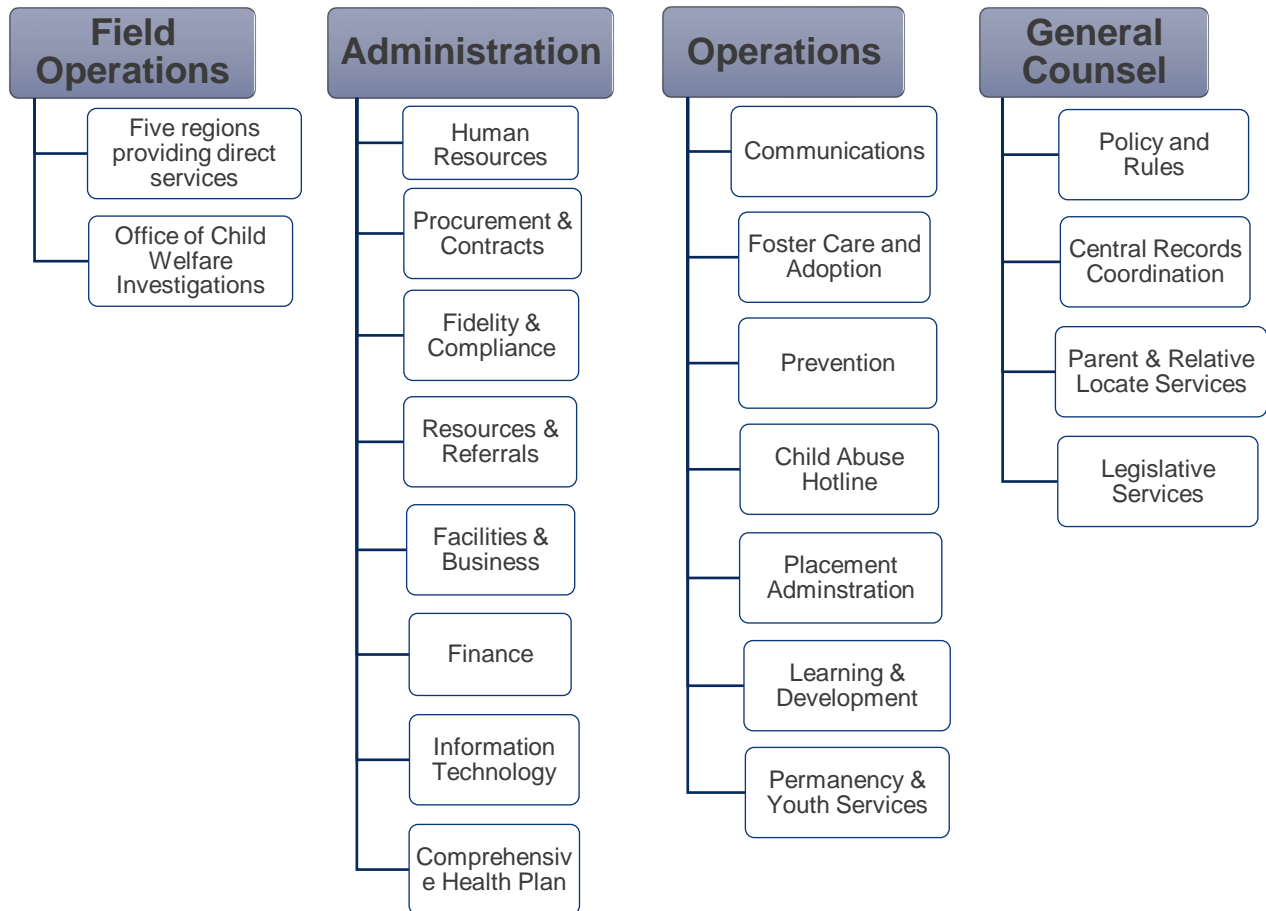
MAINE OFFICE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES CENTRAL OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY – OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



**Peer State Director Level Positions**

**Arizona DCS has one Director, three Deputy Directors and Two Assistant Directors; the job descriptions for these positions are as follows:**

AZ DCS - Director

Responsible for managing the agency’s multi-million dollar operating budget, the oversight of approximately 3700 positions statewide and the oversight of more than 15,500 children in foster care/alternative placements; responsible for the overall planning, operations, organization and policies of the division to include maintaining and administering all programs; recommending policies and programs to the Governor and Legislature for improving and/or establishing child welfare programs; establishing employment qualifications for Deputy Directors and other Key Personnel representing the department at court hearings or other private or public gatherings; administering programs that support children’s safety through timely and appropriate intervention, family reunification when possible, and engaged community programming.

AZ DCS - Deputy Directors (3)

Directs the agency’s statewide operations and functions. Under broad authority and general direction from the Director of DCS, this position performs high level managerial work of unusual difficulty. This position has the full authority to formulate, address and resolve policies and procedures for the

department.

- Works with the Division Headers to: design long-range strategic plans; design & implement business strategies, plans & procedures; establish & implement organizational policies; analyze & recommend changes in systems, policies & procedures; and oversee implementation.
- Recruits, coaches, and manages through subordinates, operations and functions of the department.
- Develops independently and in coordination with the Director and other senior managers: policy, direction for the operation of the Department, and collaboration with other Executive Branch agencies and community partners.
- Acts and or/acts on behalf of the Director on a variety of special issues with the Governor's Office, Legislature, other Executive Levels of State Government, members of DES Executive Leadership Team, other organizations, vendors, contractors, businesses, and government officials.

#### AZ DCS - Assistant Director

This position serves as a member of the Department's executive leadership team and, directly and through subordinate administrators, is responsible for day to day operations for the Office of Ombudsman; manages the Safety Analysis Review Team (SART) and the Protective Services Review Team (PSRT), and oversees the Office of Policy and Rules.

- Assigns and reviews work; prioritizes tasks and monitors work to ensure assigned deadlines are met.
- Completes annual data reports. Ensures SART is in compliance with public posting requirements on fatality and near-fatality cases and conducts a Systemic Critical Incident Review to learn the influencing factors in selected critical incident cases to learn systematic improvement opportunities.
- Serves as a member of the agency's executive team made up of the Director, Deputy Directors and other Assistant Directors ; approves departmental policy and develops the strategic plan; provides management, oversight, and significant input into implementation of the department's programmatic or strategic activities;
- Confers with the Director, Deputy Director and Assistant Directors on sensitive issues; seeks legal advice from in-house counsel or Attorney General as appropriate to ensure Agency compliance with state and federal confidentiality and public records statutes; and provides recommendation(s).
- Hires, directs, trains and evaluates the heads of the administrations and other employees reporting to this position.

#### AZ DCS - Assistant Director of the Office of Child Welfare Investigations

Responsible for directing/overseeing allegations of criminal conduct in Investigations for DCS by managing the Deputy Chief of Programs, Investigative Managers and Child Welfare Investigative Specialists placed in regional offices throughout the state to assist DCS workers in complex criminal child maltreatment investigations. This position has a very wide latitude for the exercise of independent initiative and judgment.

- Reviews and develops, as necessary, all DCS practices and procedures regarding investigatory practice and help to improve DCS' front line investigatory practice to ensure child safety.
- Provide strong and expert leadership and direction to Investigative Managers and Child Welfare Investigative Specialists staff performing child welfare/protective services work and make decisions on appropriate action to be taken regarding criminal child maltreatment investigations.
- Direct the training and development of staff in child welfare on criminal investigative techniques and ensure that DCS' front line staff are aware of and utilize best practices in child welfare criminal investigations and collaborate with law enforcement officials, city/state agencies and other

important partners to ensure strong child welfare practice of criminal conduct allegations and that all appropriate resources are available to DCS staff.

**Pennsylvania OCYF Bureau of Child and Family Services (BCFS) has one director and four Regional Directors; the job descriptions for these positions are as follows:**

PA OCYF - BCFS Director

Plans, organizes, directs and coordinates statewide licensing operations including monitoring and evaluation of child welfare services provided by the 67 County Children and Youth Agencies and other public and private agencies overseen by the Department of Public Welfare. Work involves directing the development, implementation, interpretation and revision of regulations, policies, and procedures for licensing operations through oversight of the activities of four regional offices. Work includes establishing policies for overseeing the reviews of county children and youth agencies' annual plans and needs-based budgets to ensure federal and state mandates, goals, policy objectives and other priorities are met; directing the licensing and monitoring activities of the regional offices; and assisting with the implementation of new federal or state laws or regulations pertaining to the licensing and oversight of public or private child welfare agencies. An important aspect of this work is overseeing the technical assistance provided to county children and youth administrators, county chief juvenile probation officers, judges, program executives and other local public and private child welfare agencies and promoting the OCYF policies regarding practice standards for quality enhancement of programs and services. The employee also recommends public and private agencies to be audited; resolves program and fiscal audit issues with agencies; and monitors child abuse investigations and Child Death Reviews involving county children and youth agencies. Extensive contact is maintained with program administrators as well as with representatives of other departments, agencies and community groups. Supervision is exercised over a professional and technical staff. Work is performed with a high degree of initiative and independent judgment in ensuring the implementation and review of policies and procedures and attaining coordinated program development and optimum delivery of services. Work is reviewed by the Deputy Secretary for Children, Youth and Families through conferences, reports and program effectiveness.<sup>26</sup>

PA OCYF - BCFS Regional Directors (4)

Plan and manage the administration of OCYF services, licensing, and budget activity within their assigned region of the state; and adapt programs to the unique circumstances created by the size and diversities of the region. Work involves identifying needs for services, overseeing local government officials in the development and implementation of services, evaluating the annual plans and budgets of local government agencies, and addressing budgetary requirements. Work includes overseeing regional office staff who evaluate provider services; partnering with leadership from Community Umbrella Agencies to ensure the effective delivery of services; and providing technical assistance and consultation to local government officials and various organizations on applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. Work also includes investigating child abuse allegations and complaints against DHS licensed or approved programs and overseeing regional reviews of child fatalities and near fatalities. Work is performed under the general direction of an administrative supervisor and is reviewed through conferences, reports, and meetings.

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<sup>26</sup>Commonwealth Careers. Director, Bureau of Children and Family Services. Retrieved from: <https://careers.employment.pa.gov/Home/GetJobNameInfo?jobCode=43537#:~:text=Directs%20regional%20managers%20in%20policy,timely%20implementation%20of%20licensing%20functions.>

## PCG Administered Maine OCFS Organizational Assessment Survey Results Data Pull March 8, 2024

Results of the survey administered to OCFS' Child Welfare services staff are provided below. The "N value" or number of staff who responded to each question is provided for each survey item.

### STAFF PARTICIPATION

#### Staff Participation by District

District	Number	Percentage
District 1	41	10%
District 2	54	13%
District 3	49	12%
District 4	32	8%
District 5	68	17%
District 6	55	13%
District 7	26	6%
District 8	30	7%
District 9 (includes Central Office)	53	13%
Total	408	100%

#### Staff Participation by Position

Position / Role	Number	Percentage
Caseworker	213	52%
Casework Supervisor	67	16%
Case Aide/ Clerk	22	5%
Clerical	18	4%
Community Care Worker	17	4%
PA/ APA / Manager	17	4%
Other Supervisor	10	2%
Quality Assurance Staff	9	2%
Finance / Administrative	4	1%
IT / Data Analysis	3	1%
Nurse / Health Care Worker	2	0%
Other	27	7%
Total	409	100%

#### Staff Participation by Length of Service to OCFS

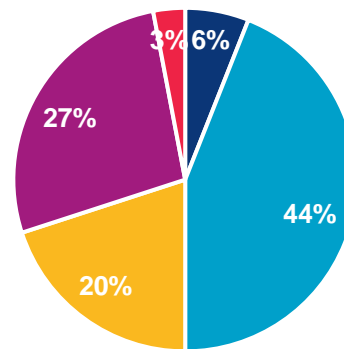
Length of Time	Worked for OCFS		Held Current Position	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Less than 6 months	26	6%	33	9%
6 months to 1 year	30	7%	50	13%
1 – 3 years	93	23%	129	34%
3 – 5 years	52	13%	72	19%
5 – 10 years	67	16%	52	14%
10 – 15 years	45	11%	44	12%
15 – 20 years	40	10%		
20+ years	56	14%		
Total	409	100%	380	100%

**Staff Participation by Educational Background**

District	Number	Percentage
Doctorate	2	0%
Master's in Social Work	20	5%
Master's in Another Field	38	9%
Bachelor's in Social Work / Human Services	151	37%
Bachelor's in Another Field	148	36%
Associate's Degree	18	4%
High School Diploma	32	8%
Total	409	100%

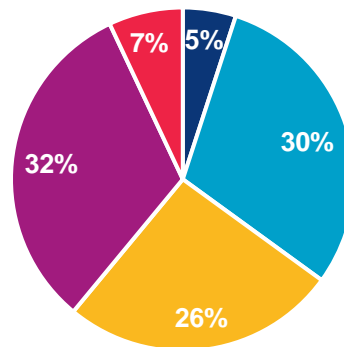
**LEADERSHIP & PRACTICE**

Changes in policies, procedures and other organizational matters that directly affect my position are clearly communicated. (N = 404)



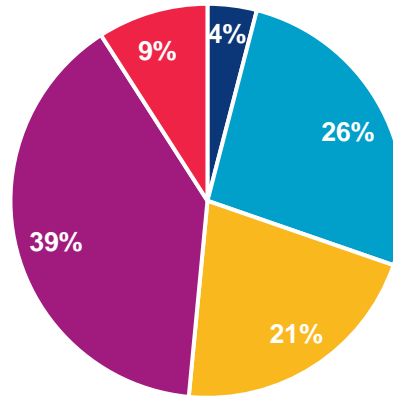
- Strongly Agree    ■ Agree    ■ Undecided
- Disagree    ■ Strongly Disagree

I am given an opportunity to review and provide input as policy and practice decisions are made. (N = 403)



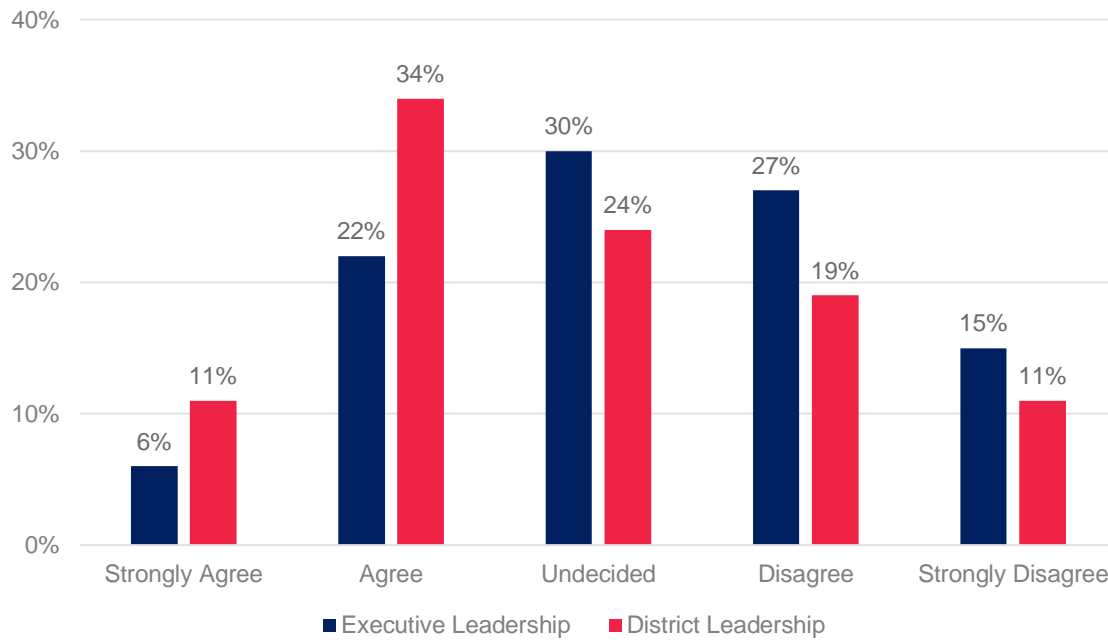
- Strongly Agree    ■ Agree    ■ Undecided
- Disagree    ■ Strongly Disagree

**Timely guidance and support are provided to implement desired practices and achieve agency or program goals. (N = 403)**



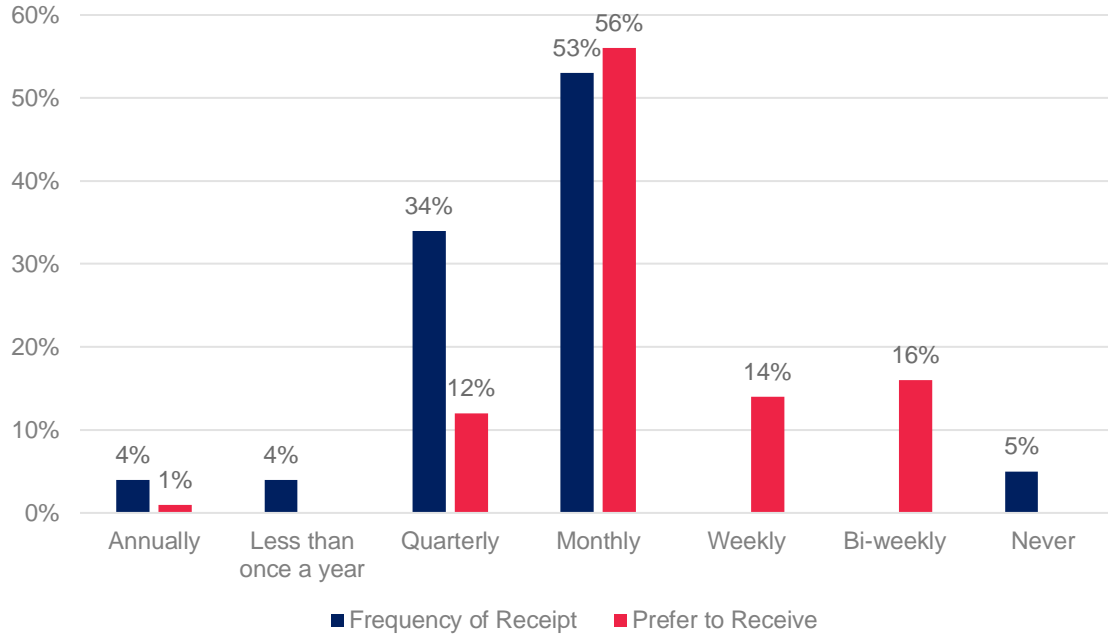
■ Strongly Agree   
 ■ Agree   
 ■ Undecided  
■ Disagree   
 ■ Strongly Disagree

**Leadership wants to hear from the workforce and listens to their input and feedback on strategies to reach the agency's mission. (Executive N = 403, District N = 404)**



**RECEIPT OF COMMUNICATION**

How often do you (or would like) to receive communication from OCFS leadership (people above your direct supervisor) about policy, practice and other changes that impact your job? (Receive N = 399, Would Like N = 281)



How would you prefer to receive communication about policy, practice, and other changes that impact your job?

Method	Number	Percentage
At agency meetings from my supervisor	251	62%
At district meetings / calls	198	49%
One-on-one from my supervisor	143	35%
An electronic newsletter	95	23%
At Town Halls	73	18%
At statewide supervisor meetings (if applicable)	53	13%
Via video message from the OCFS Director	48	12%
At District Management Team meetings (if applicable)	43	11%
Via the intranet	26	6%
Other	30	7%



## STAFF TURNOVER AND RETENTION

### Select top 5 factors that contribute to staff turnover at OCFS.

Factor	Number	Percentage
High caseload size	338	83%
Secondary traumatic stress / burnout	314	77%
Lack of work-life balance	296	73%
Salary / benefits don't match work expectations	243	60%
Low support from supervisors or low-quality supervision	156	38%
Negative work environment	112	28%
Lack of effective, engaging leadership	78	19%
Lack of agency transparency (from Executive leadership)	68	17%
Lack of engagement by leadership / opportunities to provide input	59	15%
Lack of trust	59	15%
Lack of agency transparency (from District leadership)	34	8%
Lack of professional development or promotional opportunities	31	8%
Personal goals and expectations not met through OCFS employment	29	7%
Lack of relationships with leaders or colleagues	15	4%
Retirement or change in career	13	3%
Other	66	16%

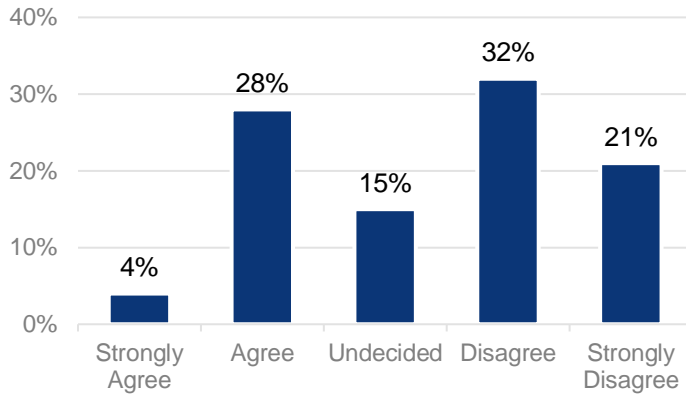
### Select top 5 factors that contribute to staff staying at OCFS

Factor	Number	Percentage
Relationship with leaders or coworkers	311	77%
Salaries / benefits	250	62%
Client-focused philosophy or belief in the mission	168	41%
Quality supervision	155	38%
Professional development opportunities	114	28%
District leadership depth of engagement & relationship with force	80	20%
Healthy, resilient work culture and climate	74	18%
Healthy work-life balance	74	18%
Trauma informed system – physical, psychological & workforce well-being	49	12%
Transparency in communication	49	12%
Executive leadership depth of engagement & workforce relationship	31	8%
Other	54	13%

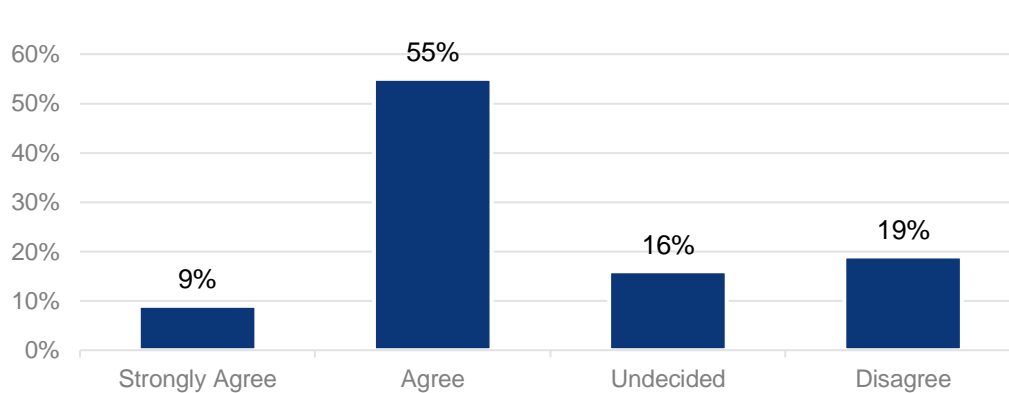
## SUPERVISORS

Ninety-nine or 24% of the staff respondents answered Yes to the question, *Do you directly supervise OCFS staff.*

**I received training / onboarding guidance upon beginning my position as a supervisor / manager that prepared me for this role. (N = 98)**

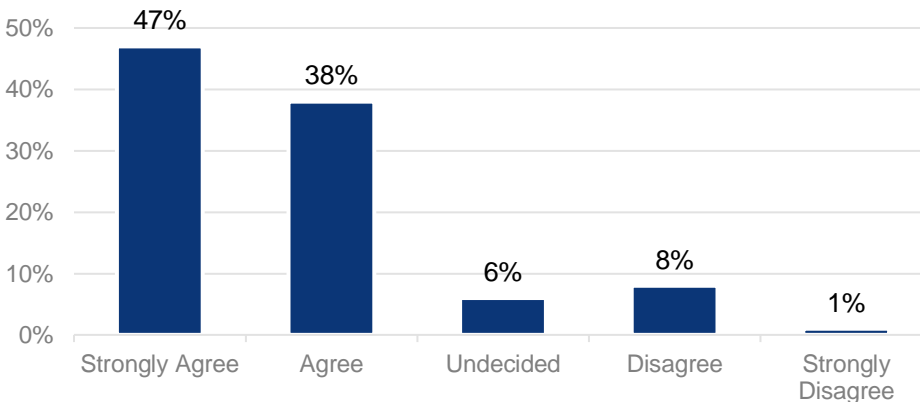


**I feel well-prepared to provide guidance to support all members of my staff on their performance and professional development. (N = 98)**

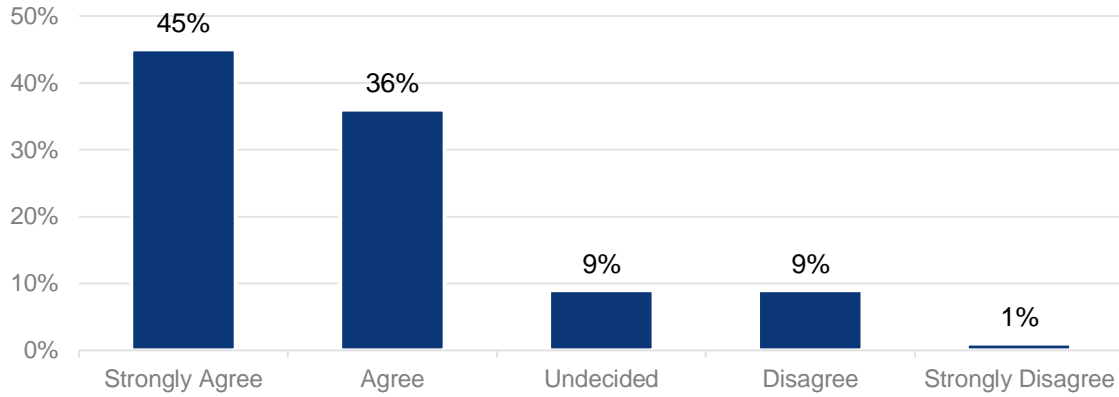


No respondents "strongly disagreed" with this statement.

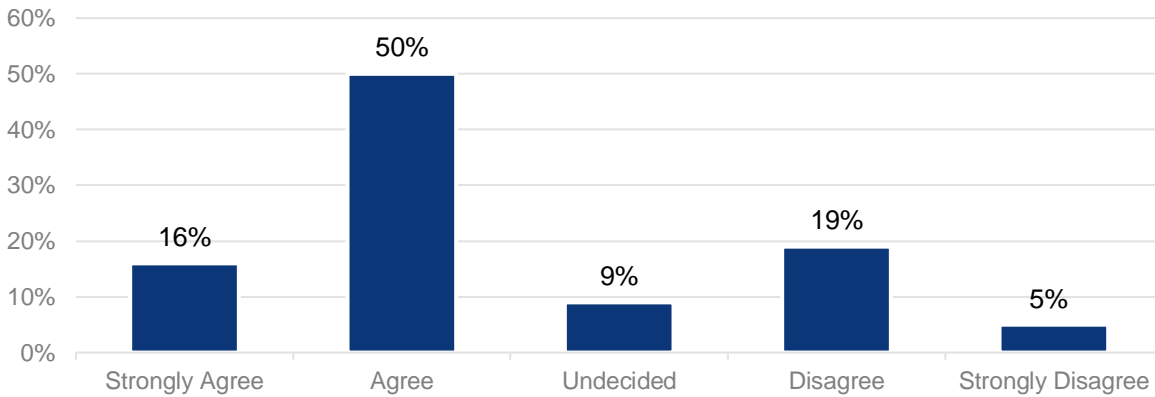
**I feel comfortable asking my manager for support. (N = 98)**



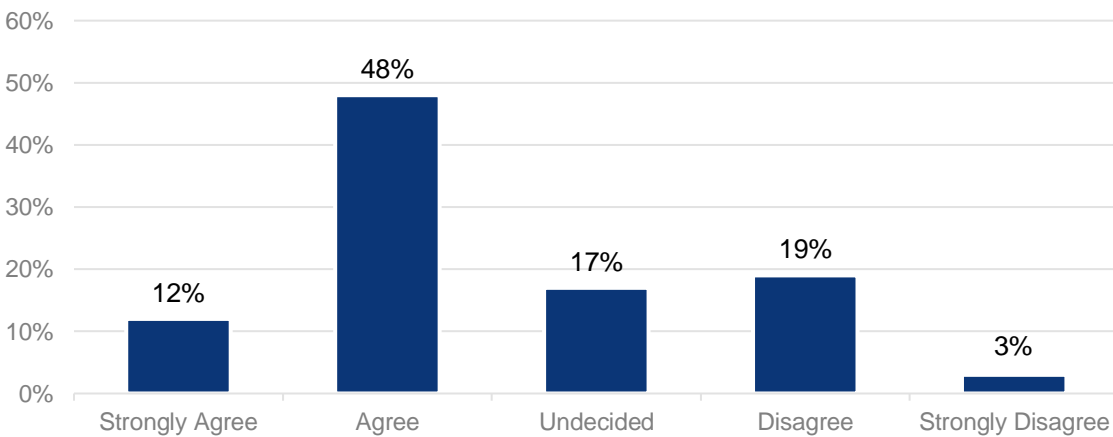
**My manager is accessible to me when I need immediate guidance and/or support. (N = 98)**



**I have the opportunity to attend ongoing professional development training on topics related to my position. (N = 98)**



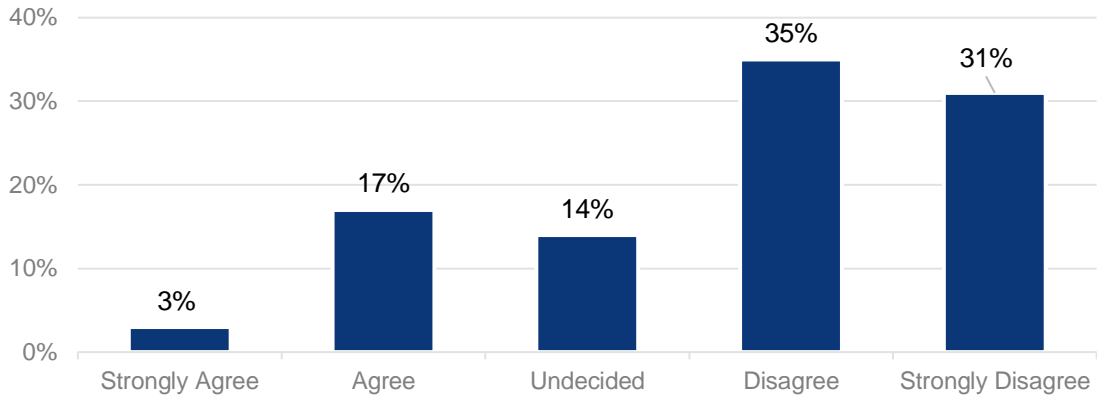
**There is a clear process to follow if I need additional support from my manager or peers. (N = 98)**



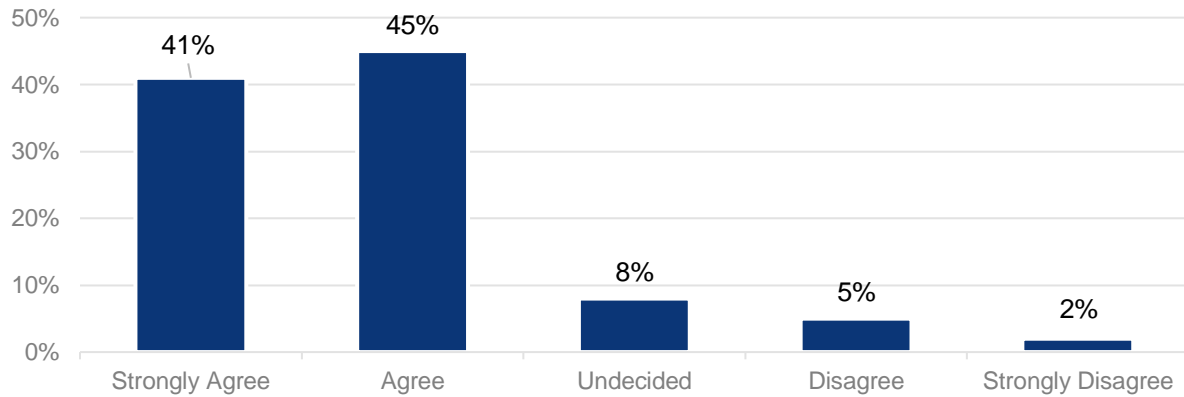
**NON-SUPERVISORS**

A total of 303 (75%) of the staff respondents indicated that they do not directly supervise OCFS staff.

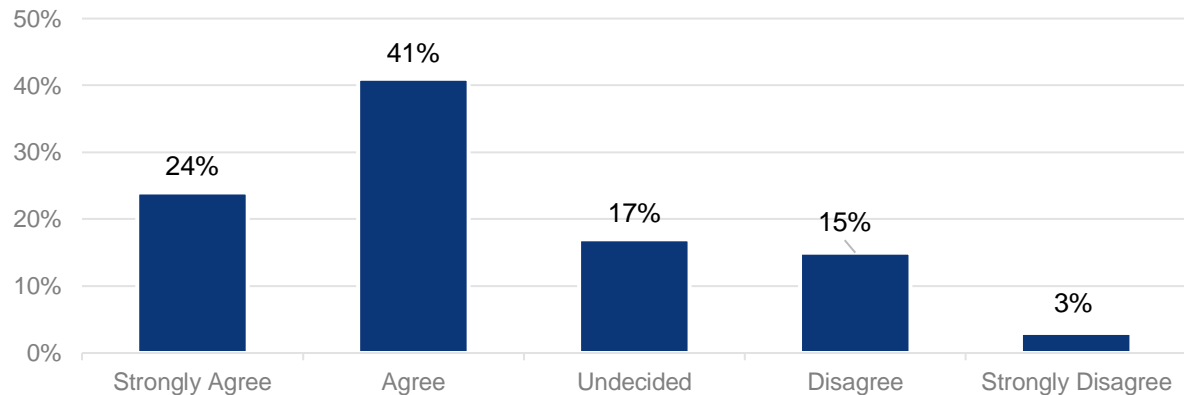
**The training and onboarding I received prepared me for my role. (N = 302)**



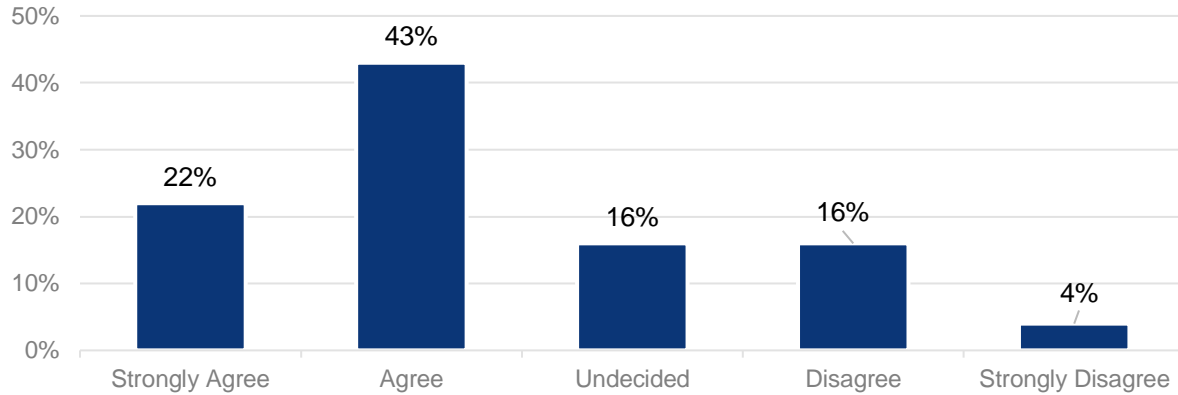
**I feel comfortable asking a supervisor for guidance and/or support when making decisions or facing uncertainty. (N = 303)**



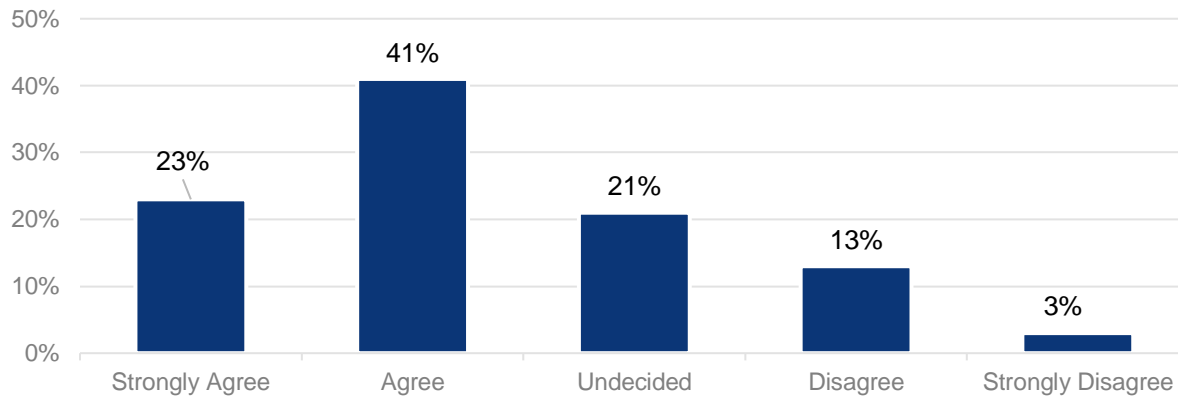
**There is a clear process to follow if I find I need immediate support from my supervisor. (N = 303)**



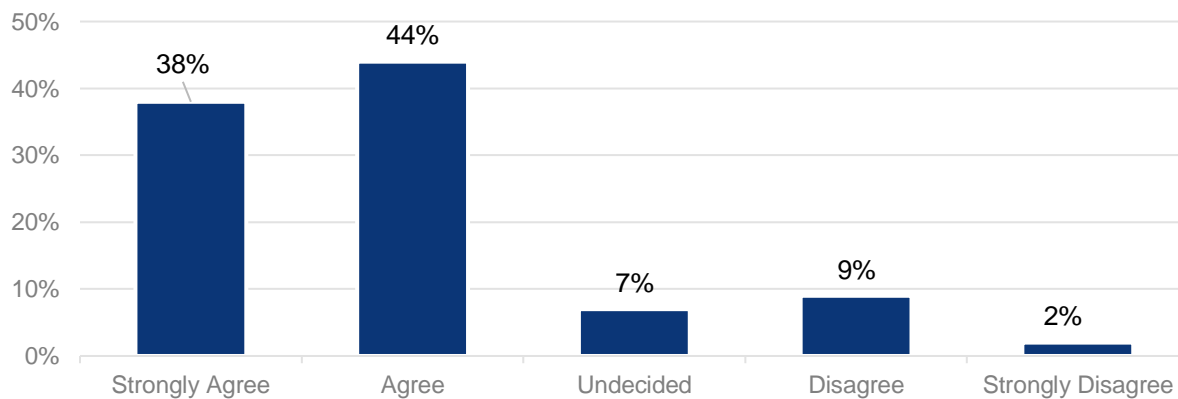
**Supervisors are available to provide guidance and support with work-related challenges, such as day-to-day decision-making. (N = 303)**



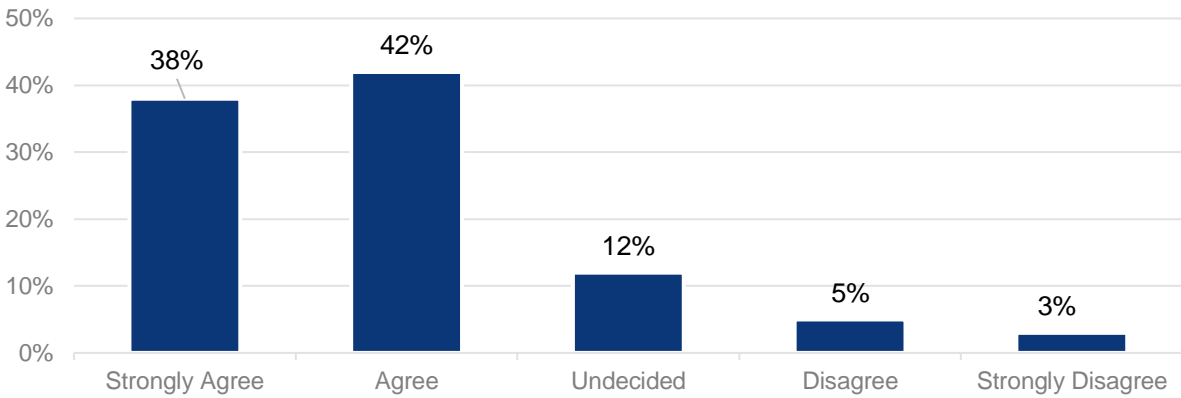
**Supervisors listen and take any concerns I bring to them seriously. (N = 301)**



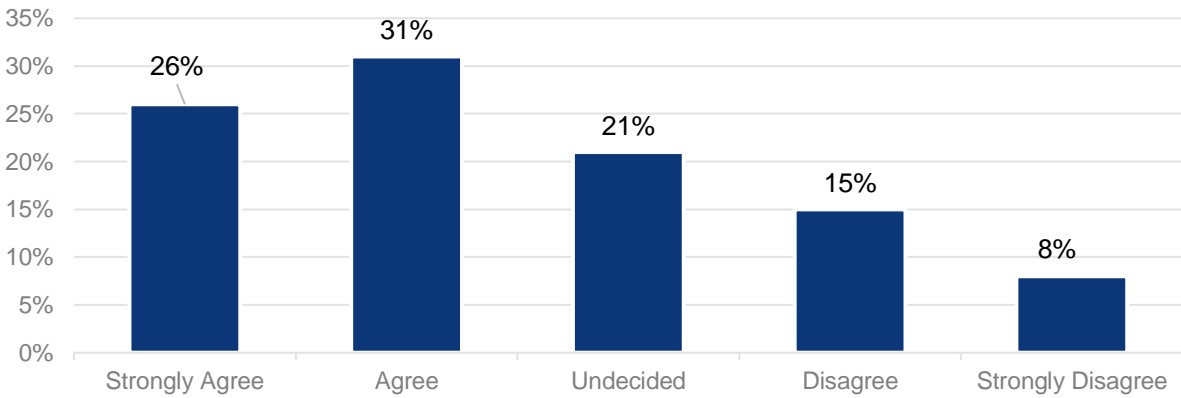
**My supervisor has the knowledge and ability to successfully provide supervision and guidance to support my position. (N = 301)**



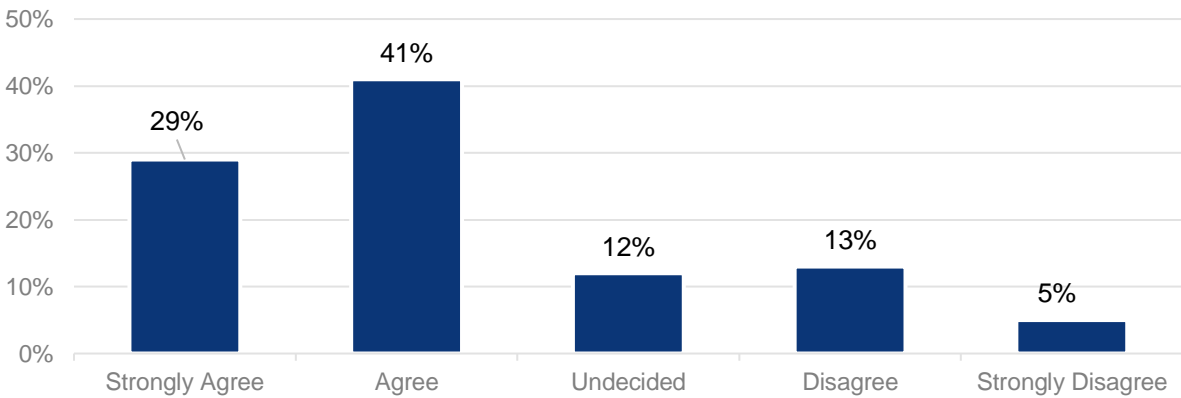
**My supervisor values my opinion in case decision-making. (N = 301)**



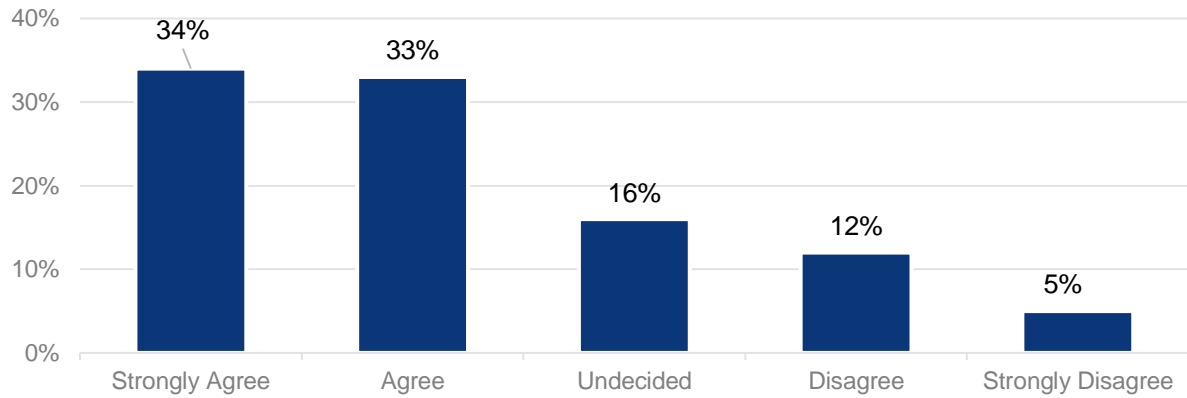
**My supervisor addresses secondary trauma related to the job. (N = 300)**



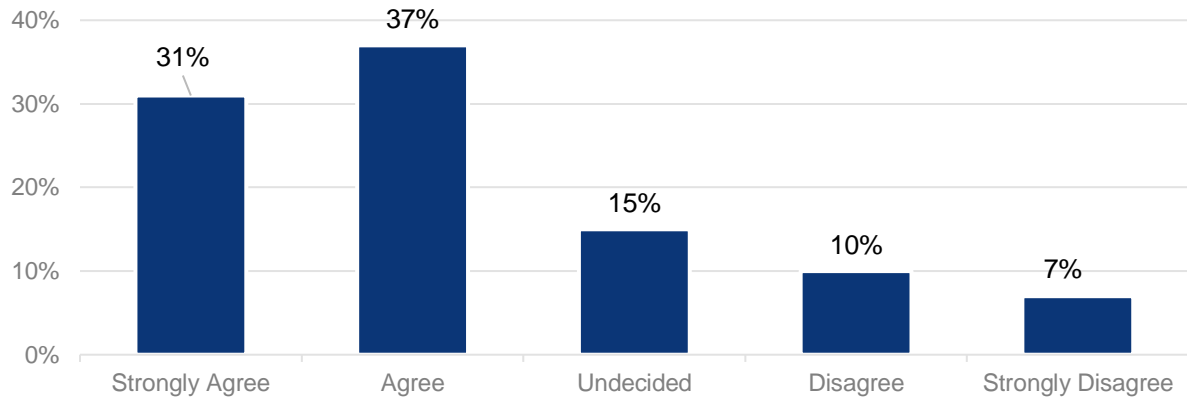
**My supervisor connects with me on a regularly scheduled basis. (N = 302)**



**I am satisfied with the quality of my current supervision. (N = 303)**

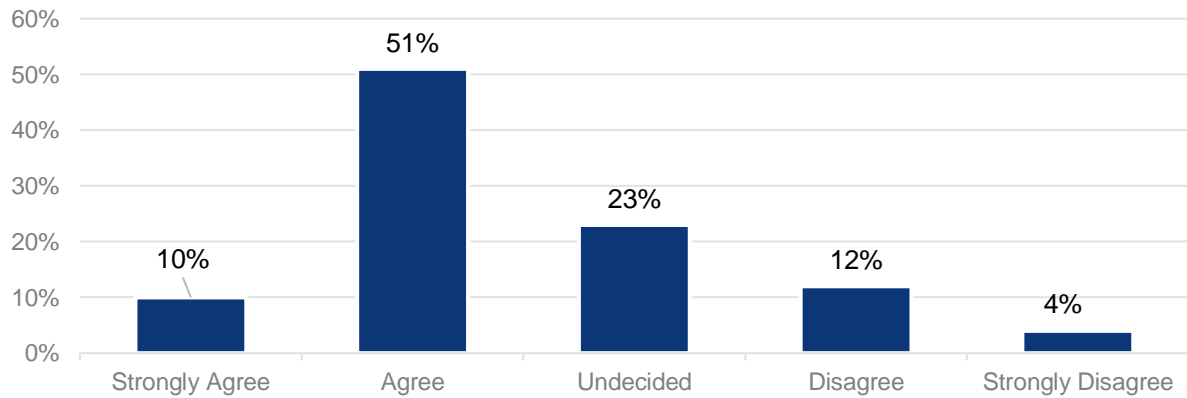


**Supervisors recognize good work. (N = 302)**

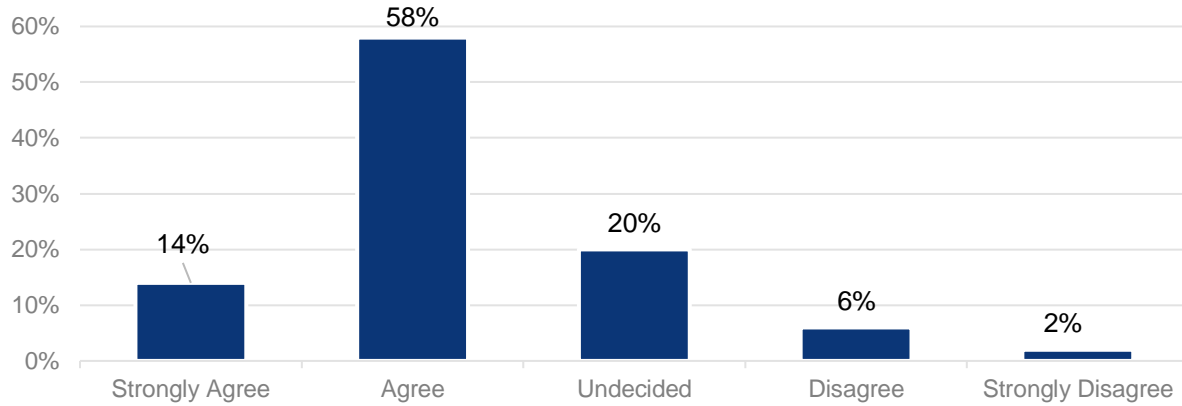


**CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

**OCFS has an inclusive culture where different identities and perspectives are valued and supported. (N = 400)**



**OCFS understands and respects different cultures and their experiences (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability). (N = 399)**



**Leadership invests in building a trauma-informed system that addresses the secondary trauma and safety of the workforce. (N = 399)**

