

## WORKFORCE



## The Influence of Job Satisfaction on Child Welfare Worker's Desire to Stay: An Examination of the Interaction Effect of Self-Efficacy and Supportive Supervision

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### Issue

Due to significant staff turnover, the child welfare workforce may be comprised of new and inexperienced workers. Training, enhanced supervision, and professional incentives are all strategies used to improve worker satisfaction and retention. Finding effective solutions for staff retention is paramount as turnover can lead to disruption of the continuity and quality of care for children and increased costs for agencies for recruitment and training. Although improving job satisfaction is adopted by many agencies as a solution to encourage workers to stay, little is known whether its effect remains under the influence of certain psychosocial factors of workers.

### Findings

This article examines the effect of job satisfaction through the exploration of the interaction effect between job satisfaction and two important psychosocial correlates which have been discussed in the literature: workers' work-related self-efficacy and supervisory support. The authors investigated the question of how much and what type of supervision is needed to increase retention among both low and high self-efficacy workers.

Two key findings were made: 1) high self-efficacy workers were most influenced by their perception of job satisfaction; and 2) low self-efficacy workers were most influenced by supervisor support, which can lead to longer employment. The primary finding was that for low self-efficacy workers, job satisfaction alone is not sufficient for them to stay with the agency when they perceive lower support from their supervisors.

In all, the study tried to advance current knowledge of child welfare worker retention with the exploration of the interaction effects among retention relevant factors. Their findings revealed that the interaction effects did exist so that workers of different levels of work-related self-efficacy responded differently to job satisfaction and supervisors' support in terms of their desire to stay. Although improving job satisfaction was found to effectively improve worker's desire to remain in child protective services, it is only true for workers who exhibit high work-related self-efficacy. Workers who are lower in work-related self-efficacy seem to require an environment of supportive supervision to encourage them to stay. In light of the significant turnover issue in child welfare, the characteristics of the majority of child welfare staff members may be that they are new and inexperienced, therefore are more likely to exhibit lower work-related self-efficacy and need more supportive supervision.

| EFFICACY | JOB SATISFACTION | SUPERVISOR SUPPORT | RETENTION INCREASED |
|----------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| High     | X                |                    | X                   |
| Low      |                  | X                  | X                   |

### Implications

These findings have two implications for worker retention. First, it suggests that recruiting workers with appropriate education or encouraging workers to acquire necessary professional skills may enhance workers' work-related self-efficacy, thus improve worker's willingness to stay when agencies already have a satisfying work environment. Second, the findings suggest that supervisory support is an important factor to retain low self-efficacy workers. Compared to experienced workers, new workers have fewer years of professional experiences, hence they may be prone to exhibit lower work-related self-efficacy. Therefore, developing a good relationship between either low or high self-efficacy workers may be a foundational aspect of increasing retention within a given office or unit.

Recommendations:

1. Supervisors should take additional time to process decision-making moments, effective case management processes and to provide additional emotional support for the less experienced and less confident employees.
2. High self-efficacy workers may best be served by having a more collegial relationship with their supervisors who act more as sounding boards.
3. Supervisors should be trained to mentor and support their staff in a meaningful manner in order to increase job satisfaction and retention.