

# The Need for Workforce CQI Processes

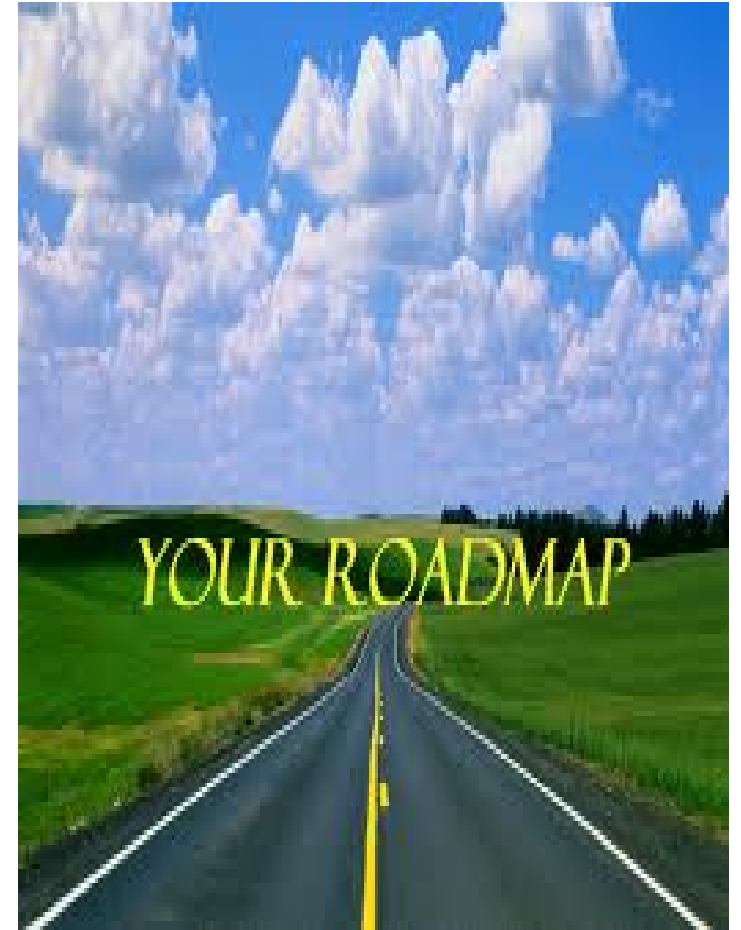
Anita P. Barbee, Ph.D., MSSW

Professor and Distinguished University Scholar

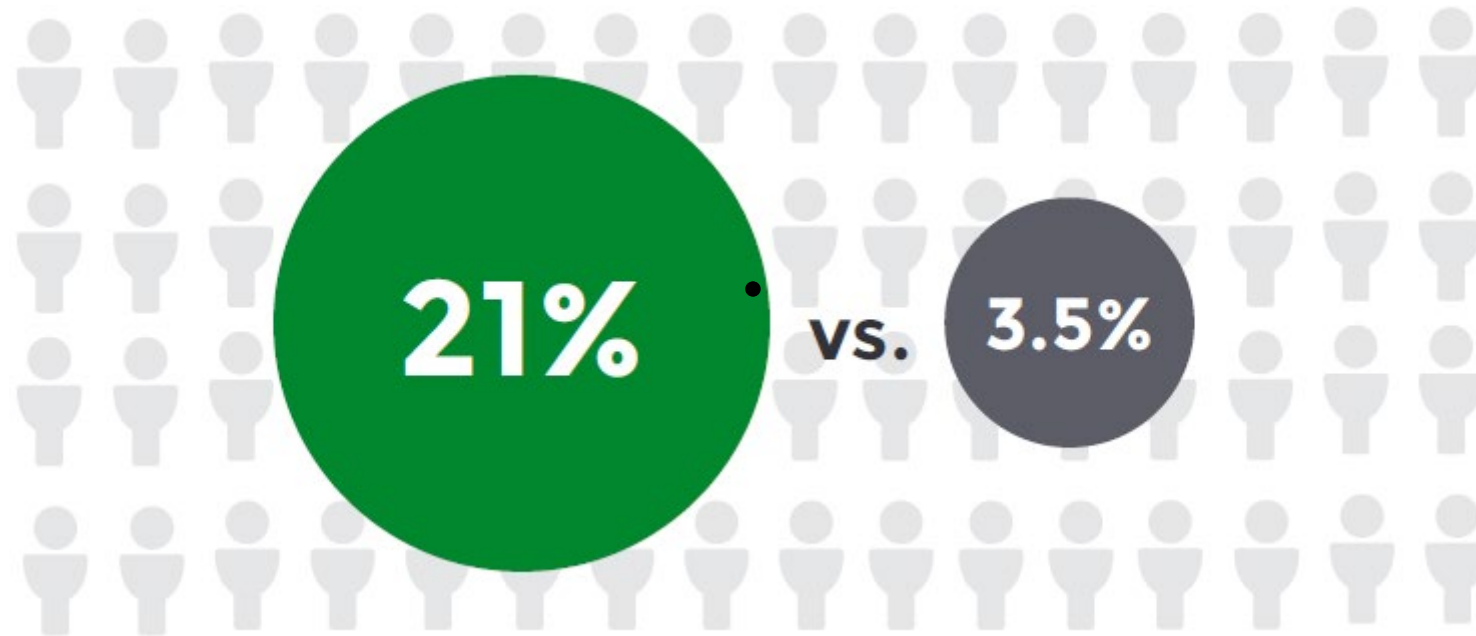


# Goals of the Presentation

- Scope of child welfare turnover
- Causes of workforce turnover
- Impact of high turnover
- QIC-WD observations regarding:
  - The state of workforce data in child welfare systems
  - Calculation of turnover
  - State of workforce processes in child welfare systems
  - Difficulty linking turnover and outcomes
  - Approach to solving the turnover problem in child welfare
- A call for reform
  - Let's follow a similar CQI approach to workforce issues across jurisdictions just as we do with child welfare practice to enhance understanding, accountability and child safety, permanency and well-being in California and nationally.



# The Problem: Child Welfare has a huge turnover issue



Bureau of Labor Statistics (nd). Job openings and labor turnover survey, 2015 separations. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/jlt/data.htm>.

American Public Human Services Association (2005). Report from the 2004 child welfare workforce survey: State agency findings. Washington, DC: author.

# Four Major Reasons for Staff Turnover

- Poor fit between staff and the job
- Job challenges and stressors
- Poor quality of supervision
- Problematic organizational culture and climate



# Poor Fit between staff aspirations, values, abilities, and preparation for the job

- Clues this is the cause of turnover
  - Early exits
  - Can't pass out of probation
  - Exit interview data clues
  - Conduct stay interviews
- Issues with recruitment
  - Is pipeline large enough?
  - Title IV-E Stipend grads?
  - Committed?
  - Service orientation?
  - Values, traits, skills, abilities?
  - Received realistic job preview?
- Issues with hiring
  - Behavioral interviews
  - In-basket tasks
  - Testing
- Post-hiring process
  - Training and reinforcement
  - Certification
  - Graduated caseloads

# Stress, Burnout, Secondary Trauma, High Workloads

- Job challenges (Griffiths, et al., 2017, 2019)
- Stressors of the job such as overload, high workloads and caseload sizes (Bott, 2019)
- Indirect or Secondary trauma from exposure to traumatized clients (Barbee, et al., 2018; Middleton & Potter, 2015)
- Staff inability to cope with stressors of the job
- Any or all of these factors overwhelm the person until:
  - they begin looking for a way out and eventually find a less stressful job and leave or
  - at some point they have had enough and quit (the stress builds over time and then something breaks the camel's back and leads to an abrupt exit)
- **Burnout** is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment.
- While it is also work-related, burnout develops as a result of general occupational stress due to job challenges, overload due to bureaucracy with numerous policies, procedures and oversight, high workload, high caseload sizes, pressures due to high scrutiny.
- **Assessing burnout**
  - There are measures to assess level of burnout
  - Examine fluctuations in numbers of calls to the hotline- is maltreatment on the rise? Are more cases moving to investigations rather than family assessments?
  - Examine the workflow- where does work get clogged in the system?
  - Is employee frustration high regarding policies, how changes are communicated and enacted, lack of input into decision-making, lack of choice about new initiatives?
  - Where are the pressures by management being targeted? Not meeting timelines? Movement to permanency?

(Groto, Hyland, Caputo & Semedo, 2017)

# Indirect Trauma

## Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other as well as stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person (Figley, 1995, p. 10)
- Mimics symptoms of PTSD including intrusion, avoidance, & arousal (Bride, 2007)

## Vicarious Traumatization

- Defined by changes in cognitive schema and systems of meaning that may occur as a result of exposure to traumatized persons (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)
- Disruptions occur within five cognitive schemas: safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, & control

## Compassion Fatigue

- Can result from caring for individuals with any type of disability or emotional need (Baum, Rahav, & Sharon, 2014)
- Result of the individual's own empathy towards a traumatized client in addition to secondary experience of traumatic material (Figley, 1999).
- Resulting in "Empathetic exhaustion"

# Secondary Trauma in Social Work

- Bride (2007) examined STS in 282 social workers using STSS and found:
  - 70.2% experienced at least one symptom in last week
  - 55% met diagnostic criteria for at least 1 core symptom cluster,
  - **15.2%** met diagnostic criteria for all 3 and PTSD
- Bride et al. (2009) went on to examine STSS specific to Substance Abuse Counselors using the STSS  $M = 31.2$  ( $SD\ 12.3$ ):
  - 75% of counselors experienced at least one symptom in the previous week
  - 56% met the criteria for at least one of the core symptom clusters
  - **19%** met the core criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD
- Others have utilized STSS to examine STS in other populations:
  - Ben-Porat & Itzhaky (2009) studied SW working with family violence: Staff had moderate levels of STS- STSS  $M = 39.44$  ( $SD = 8.33$ )
  - Choi (2011) studied SW working with family violence or sexual assault survivors: Staff had mild levels of STS- STSS  $M = 32.07$  ( $SD = 10.39$ ,  $N = 154$ )



# Indirect Trauma in Child Welfare

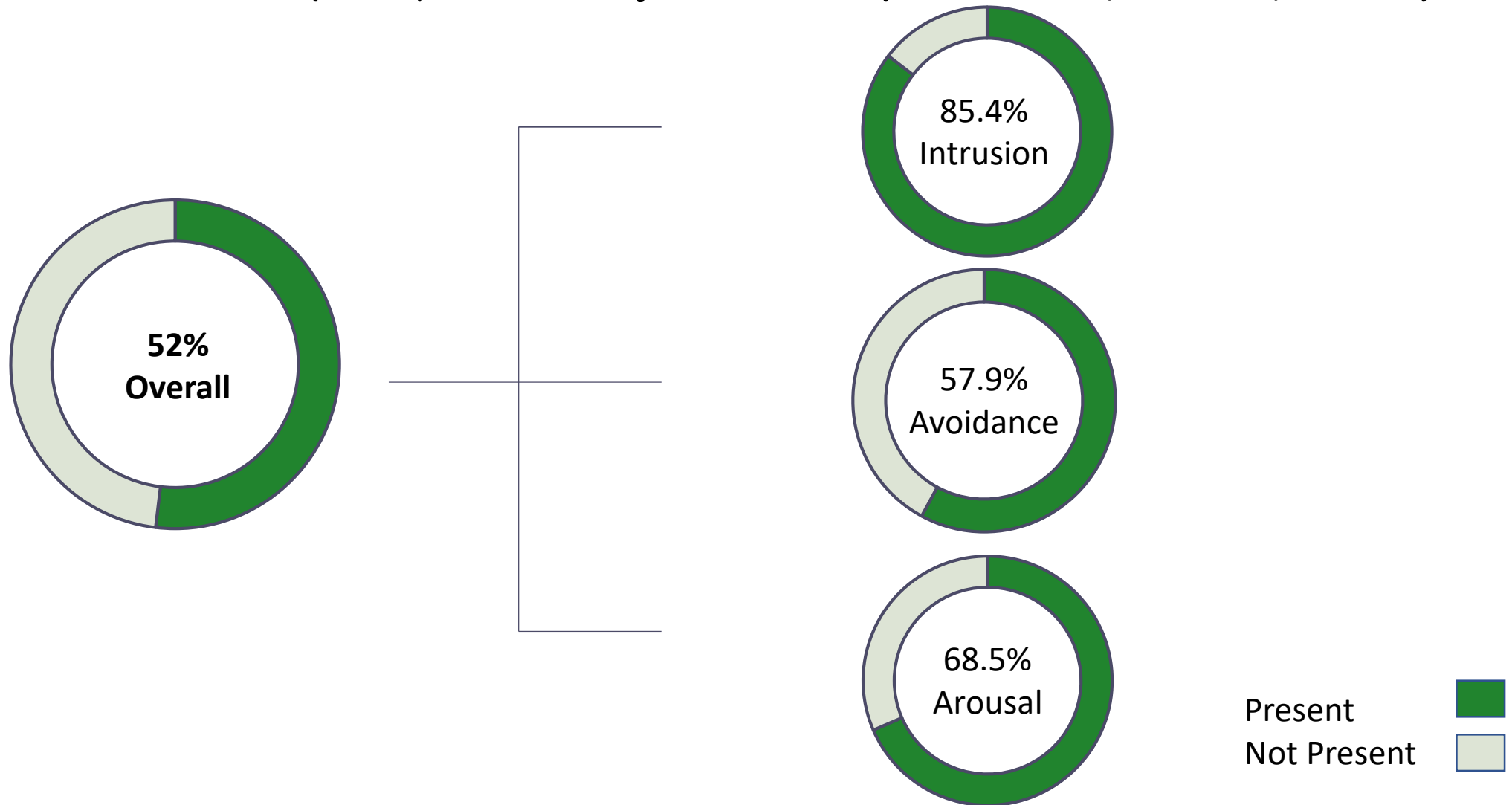
Conrad and Kellar-Guenther (2006) reported that nearly **50%** of CPS workers were at “high” to “very high” risk for compassion fatigue

Cornille and Woodard Meyers (1999) studied a sample of 205 CPS workers and found that **37%** were experiencing “clinical levels of emotional distress” (p. 15).

Baugerud et al. (2018) found that **37%** of CPS workers reported at least moderate symptoms of STS

# Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development Needs Assessment

## Administered the Bride (2007) STSS in 13 jurisdictions (10 counties, 2 states, 1 tribe)



# Poor Supervision

- Poor quality of supervision (Kruzich, et al., 2014)
- Poor relationships between the staff members and their supervisors (Yankeelov, Barbee, Sullivan, & Antle, 2009; Zinn, 2015)
- Staff have a lack of perceived support from their supervisor (Barth, et al., 2008; Boyas, et al., 2015; Lee, et al., 2011; Morazes, et al., 2010; Sorensen & LaLiberte, 2018)
- Staff do not feel included by the supervisor (Kim & Mor Barak, 2015)
- The supervisor has not built a cohesive team (Barbee, et al, 2018)
- Staff do not feel a sense of embeddedness in the organization
- Workplace inequity, bullying, harassment, violence is allowed (Anderson, et al., 2018; Augsberger, et al., 2012; Chenot, et al., 2014; Hwang & Hopkins, 2015; O'Reilly & Garrett, 2019; Whitaker, 2012)

(Groto, Hyland, Caputo & Semedo, 2017)

Category	Percentage
Blue	50%
Gray	50%



- Examinations of quality through case reviews by supervisor team rather than simply across agency
- Trends in lateral moves out of certain teams (critical or neglectful supervisor) and into other certain teams (positive supervisor)
- External turnover rates by supervisor team
- Can also examine trends in lateral moves and external turnover by manager (a level above supervisor because sometimes the problem is at that level)
- Periodically survey staff about quality of supervision, support levels, team cohesion, inclusivity, job embeddedness
- Examine complaints regarding harassment and bullying by office, or supervisor team
- Exit interviews- ask if they are leaving the job or their supervisor

# Problematic Organizational Culture and Climate

(Groto, Hyland, Caputo & Semedo, 2017)

- **Problematic organizational culture and climate** (Bloome & Steib, 2014; Lee, et al., 2011, McBeath, et al., 2014; Tham, 2007; Williams, & Glisson, 2016)
- **Culture**
  - Competency is not valued nor rewarded
  - High organizational rigidity
  - High staff resistance to change, policy, etc.)
- **Climate**
  - Low functioning with role confusion
  - High stress- with role overload and burnout
  - Low staff engagement
- **Low pay, benefits** (Cheung, 2016; Schweitzer, et al., 2013)
- **No career ladder or unfair promotion process** (Healy, Meagher & Cullin, 2009)
- **Contextual issues-** a California study found working in rural counties was more difficult (Fulcher & Smith, 2010) perhaps due to high poverty, fewer resources, fewer community supports for families, lower pay
- **Poor outcomes-** Organizational culture and climate linked to the quality and outcomes of children's services (Glisson & Hemmelgran, 1998; Martin et al., 1998; Glisson & James, 2002; Hemmelgarn et al., 2006)

# Impact of the Retention Problem in Child Welfare

- **Costly** (some estimates up to \$59,000 per lost employee)
- Can increase the workload for remaining staff
- Can negatively impact relationship between agencies and families
- May impact outcomes for children
- All three CFSRs find turnover is a strong contributor to inability to meet federal performance standards

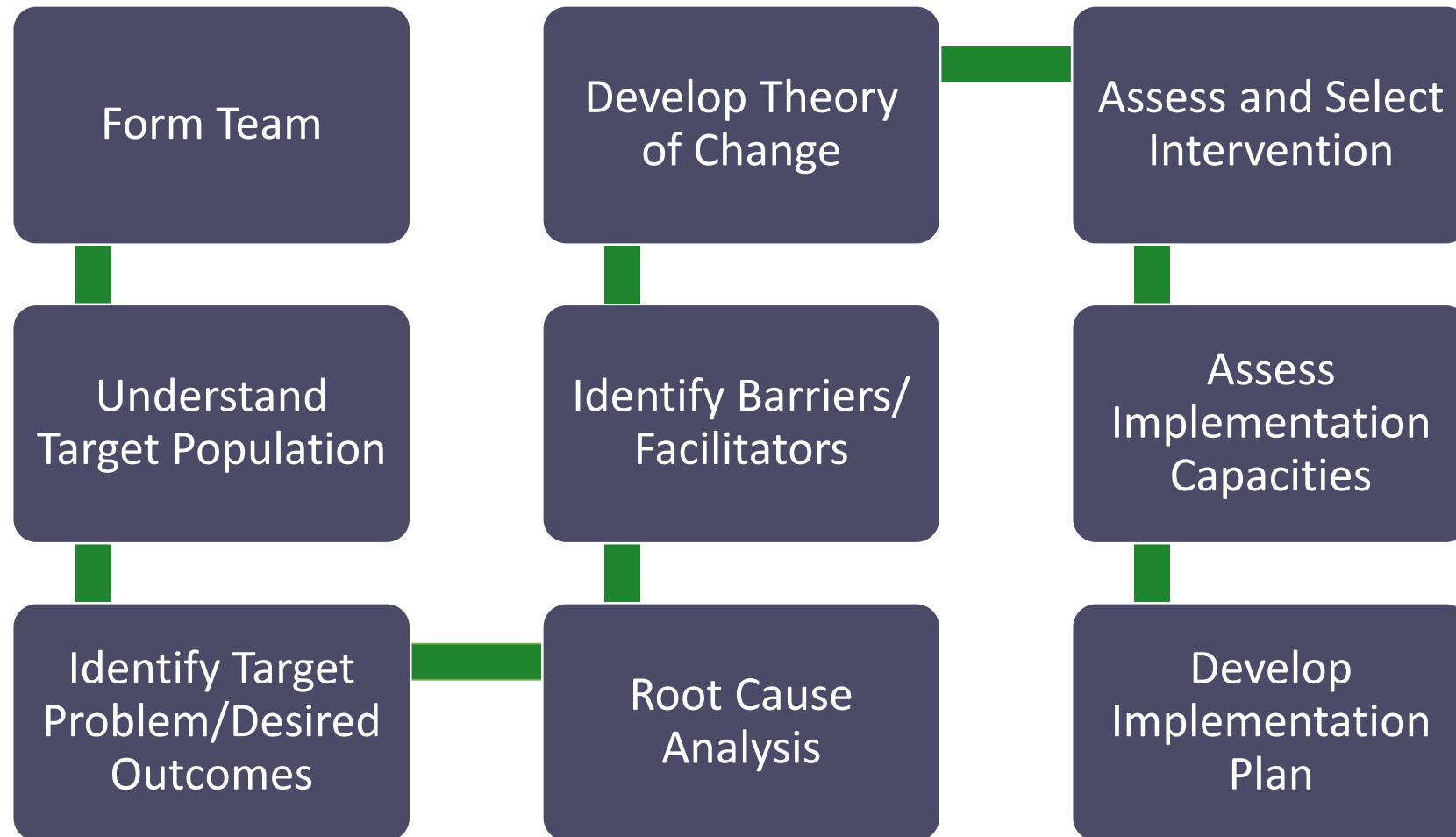


Graef & Hill (2000); Dorch, McCarthy & Denofrio (2008); Flower, McDonald & Sumski (2005); Tripp, et al. (2015)

# QIC-WD Workforce Needs Assessment, Implementation and CQI Process

Observations from the field

# QIC-WD Exploration and Assessment Process





# Workforce Needs Assessment Process



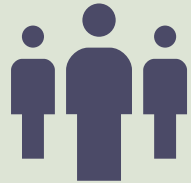
## Exploration

- 1. Understand the population and the job and identifying the population we intend to target**
  - Describe target job(s), how they fit within organizational structure, what it takes to do them
  - Understand the number of approved and filled positions
  - Explore worker demographic characteristics
  - Understand the various work arrangements for the population

### Examples

- potential applicants (labor pool) and applicant demographics
- how long child welfare workers employed <3 yrs
- where does turnover occur- investigations, ongoing, from certain neighborhoods, regions?

# Workforce Needs Assessment Process



## Exploration

### **2. Problem exploration and identification- Identify the problem we want to solve and what outcome(s) we want to target**

- Examples
  - does the job need to be redesigned
  - recruitment (attracting applicants to apply for positions, creating a large applicant pool including those qualified for the job to give a choice)
  - selection (identifying and hiring most qualified applicants who are a good fit)
  - turnover (committed employees)
  - performance (competent employees)
  - organizational culture and climate
  - workload
  - employee attitudes and well-being

# Needs Assessment Data Points and Sources

## Structures

- Job requirements
- Number/type positions
- Pay and benefits (e.g. flex)
- Recruitment processes and pool demographics
- Hiring processes
- Selection processes
- Workforce initiatives
- Unionization/privatization
- Supervision
- Practice supports
- Change management
- Performance management
- Career ladder and promotion process
- Caseload/workload
- Leadership and infrastructure supports

## Mining HR, Training Data

- Monthly turnover rates
- Annual turnover rates
- Current vacancy rates
- Cohort turnover rates
- When and where does turnover occur?
- Availability of HR databases & software
- Capacity to produce & share CPS data
- How the agency has responded to child deaths
- How the community has responded to deaths
- Training & professional development requirements and rates

## Voice from the Field for RCA

- Surveys
  - Worker demographics
  - Organizational Social Context (OSC)/Morale
  - Evaluation Readiness and Readiness for Change Questionnaire
- Bride Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale
- Focus Groups with Admin
  - Workforce strategies tried
  - Results
- Focus Groups with Field
  - Perception of need
  - Why people leave
  - View of past efforts

# QIC-WD Process

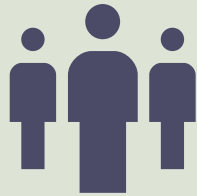


## **3. Conduct root cause analysis to identify potential causes of the turnover problem.**

### Examples

- What are candidates' perceptions regarding agency recruiting strategies?
- What are the internal perceptions regarding the hiring process (among hiring managers, supervisors, etc.)?
- What are perceptions of the onboarding process as well as initial and ongoing training and professional development?
- What is the perception of supervision, workload, evaluation of performance?
- Who is promoted when and how? Perceptions of that process.

# QIC-WD Process



**Exploration**

## **4. Identify barriers and facilitators to address the problem**

Examples

- Barriers: funding or resource limitations, infrastructure problems, agency hiring freeze, limited applicant pool, significant competition for applicants
- Facilitators: local partnerships to supplement agency resources, leadership prioritizing workforce issues, legislation focused on improving staffing, strong partnerships in service array

# Develop a Theory of Change

## 5. Develop a theory of change

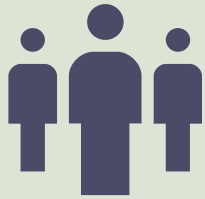
Example:

Implement selection intervention →

Enhance employee-job fit →

Increase retention →

Decrease time to permanency



**Exploration**

# Select a Workforce Intervention

## 6. Select a Workforce Intervention

Examples:

- Job Redesign
- Recruitment
- Selection (hiring)
- Placement (improving employee-job fit) or Onboarding
- Structured mentoring or coaching
- Supportive supervision
- Practice expectations and supports
- Managing practice changes
- Performance management/Accountability
- Career Ladders and Promotion
- Organizational culture and climate
- Trauma focused and resilience-building initiatives
- Flexible work hours, telework, job sharing
- Technology supports, Data system, Other Infrastructure
- Physical work environment

Exploration



# QIC-WD Process

## 7. Assess implementation supports

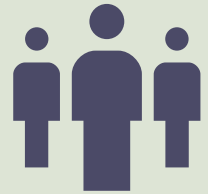


### Examples

- Readiness
- Selection of staff who will implement
- Training
- Performance assessment
- Data to inform decision making,
- Policies/procedures
- Leadership



# QIC-WD Process



**Exploration**

## **8. Develop an implementation plan**

- Critical steps for rolling out and scaling up the intervention
- Serves as a roadmap and monitoring tool

### Examples

- Activities
- Timeframes
- Responsible parties
- Communication strategies

# CQI Process

1. Develop or adapt intervention
2. Develop or adapt supports
3. Initial implementation and testing
4. Monitor and assess intervention
5. Plan for sustaining intervention



**Installation**



**Initial  
Implementation**



**Full  
Implementation**

# Problems Tracking Employees

- Few agencies have an in-house Human Resources (HR) Department-often another agency runs HR.
- Relationships between CW and HR departments are often nonexistent.
- Because of this lack of communication and because many governmental HR departments do not hire HR professionals
  - Calculations of turnover seldom follow industry standards
    - Seldom include both exits and hires within turnover calculations
    - Seldom examine turnover by cohorts (longitudinally)
  - Routine data on entry level education, educational changes across time, gender, race, ethnicity, geographical origins is not tracked or is missing

Recruiting Source	Total
Agency website	62%
Social media	15%
IV-E stipend program	7%
State employee	5%
Job fairs	5%
Employee referral	3%
CareerLink	1%
Monster	1%
Radio	0.5%
Newspaper	0.5%

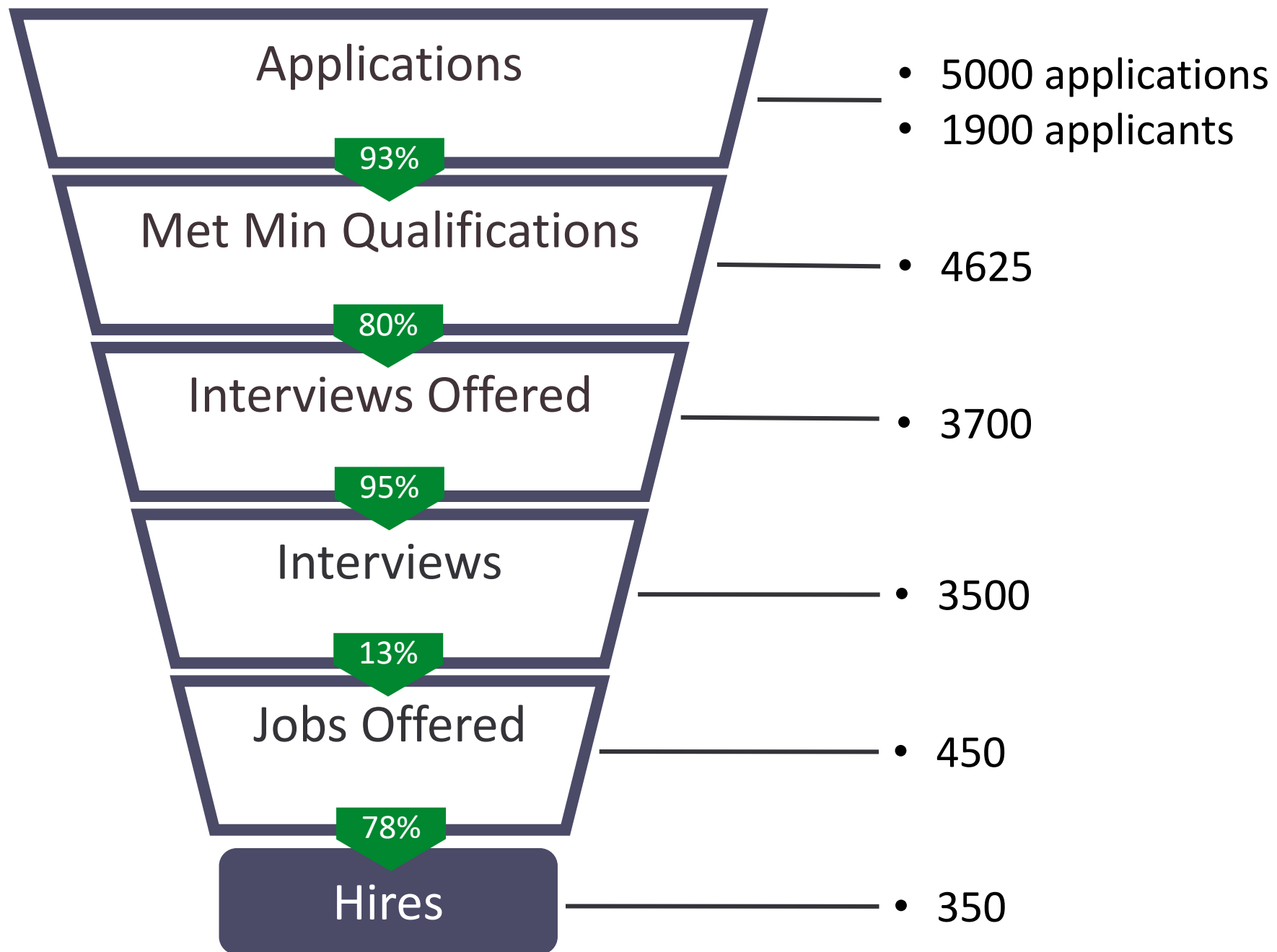
Recruiting Source	Total	Min Qual
Agency website	62%	65%
Social media	15%	85%
IV-E stipend program	7%	100%
State employee	5%	98%
Job fairs	5%	100%
Employee referral	3%	100%
CareerLink	1%	63%
Monster	1%	61%
Radio	0.5%	77%
Newspaper	0.5%	80%

Recruiting Source	Total	Min Qual	Hired
Agency website	62%	65%	62%
Social media	15%	85%	77%
IV-E stipend program	7%	100%	100%
State employee	5%	98%	92%
Job fairs	5%	100%	75%
Employee referral	3%	100%	91%
CareerLink	1%	63%	56%
Monster	1%	61%	52%
Radio	0.5%	77%	62%
Newspaper	0.5%	80%	64%

Recruiting Source	Total	Min Qual	Hired	Stay 1 yr
Agency website	62%	65%	62%	75%
Social media	15%	85%	77%	70%
IV-E stipend program	7%	100%	100%	100%
State employee	5%	98%	92%	98%
Job fairs	5%	100%	75%	89%
Employee referral	3%	100%	91%	95%
CareerLink	1%	63%	56%	74%
Monster	1%	61%	52%	75%
Radio	0.5%	77%	62%	78%
Newspaper	0.5%	80%	64%	79%

Recruiting Source	Total	Min Qual	Hired	Stay 1 yr	High Perf
Agency website	62%	65%	62%	75%	25%
Social media	15%	85%	77%	70%	27%
IV-E stipend program	7%	100%	100%	100%	55%
State employee	5%	98%	92%	98%	40%
Job fairs	5%	100%	75%	89%	28%
Employee referral	3%	100%	91%	95%	39%
CareerLink	1%	63%	56%	74%	20%
Monster	1%	61%	52%	75%	18%
Radio	0.5%	77%	62%	78%	17%
Newspaper	0.5%	80%	64%	79%	15%







# Issues with Workforce Data

- When HR data is examined:
  - The employee code **seldom links to the code used to enter data into SACWIS** so it is difficult to tie turnover and specific workers to client outcomes.
  - The data cannot easily be extracted per employee- to get a longitudinal sense of when people are leaving the agency so as to enact timely turnover prevention strategies.
  - Reports are mostly cross sectional in nature.
  - Some sites expunge data periodically making longitudinal examinations even more difficult.
  - Rarely do these datasets include all relevant demographics, education and other relevant information.

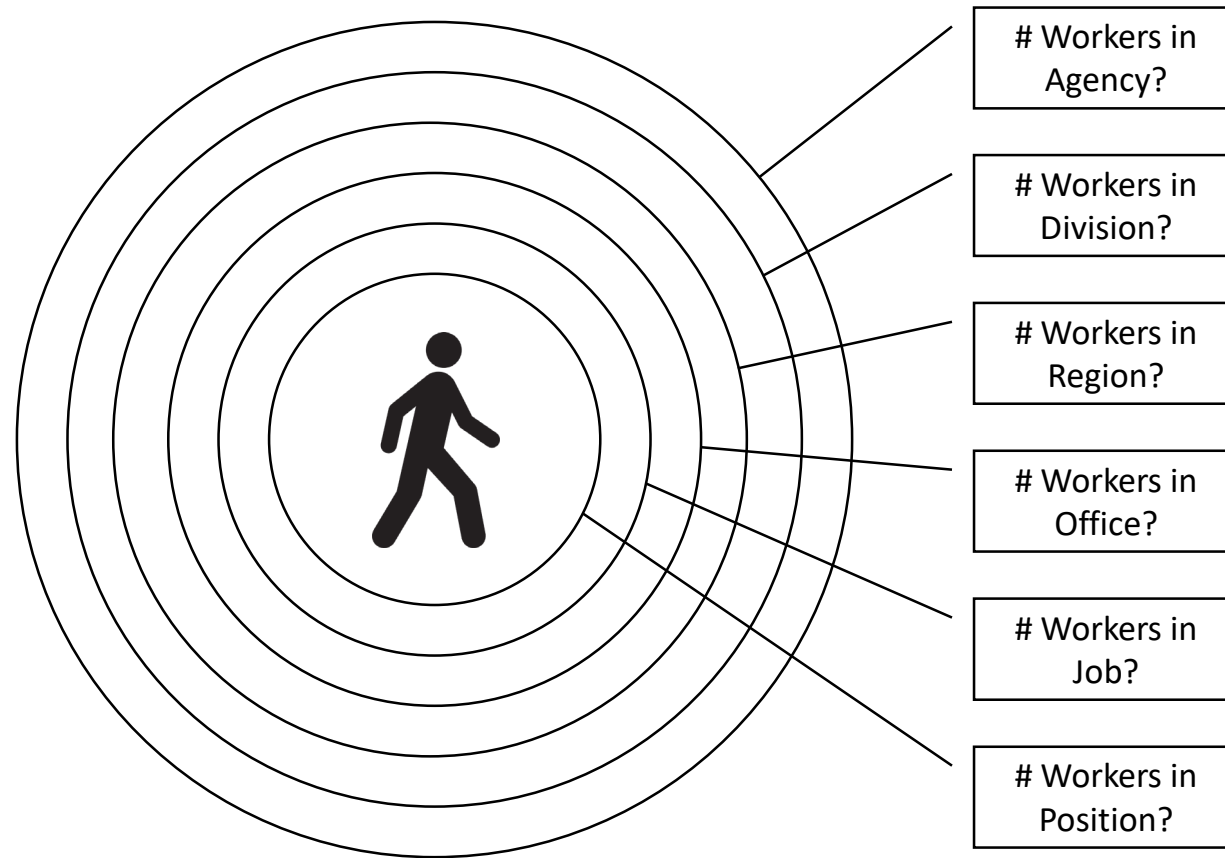
# The Case for Longitudinal Data Collection and Special Analyses

- Tracking new employees over time can be particularly helpful in understanding ***when*** turnover happens and can give clues as to ***why*** turnover happens.
- There are several data analytic techniques that can help interpret the findings such as survival analysis and growth curve analysis.

# Calculating Turnover

$$\text{Turnover} = \frac{\text{Number of Employees Who Left} \times 100}{\text{Number of Employees (Starting Head Count)}}$$


# Calculating Turnover: What is the Denominator?

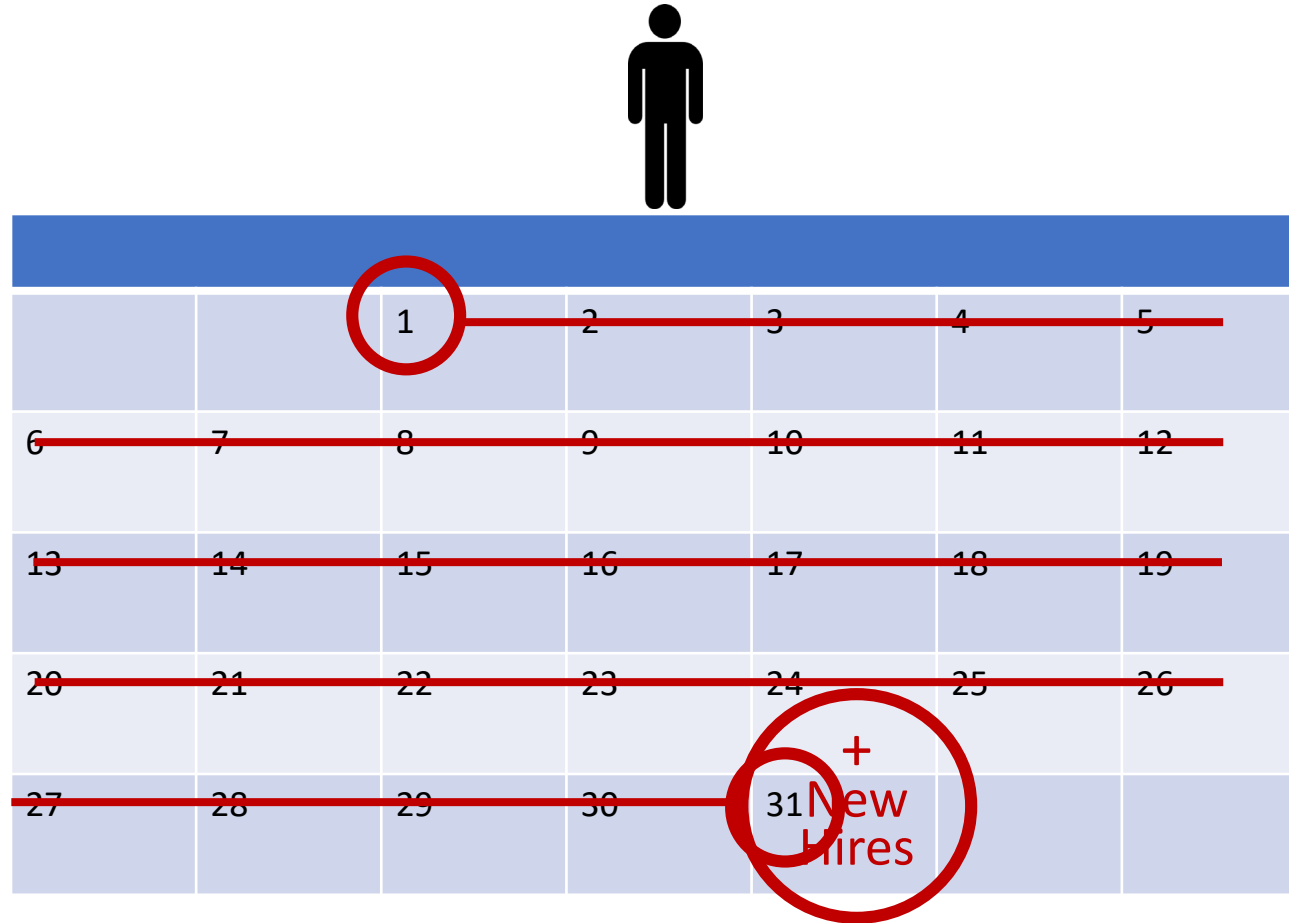


# Calculating Turnover: Types



- Voluntary vs Involuntary
- Avoidable vs Unavoidable
- Functional vs Dysfunctional

# Calculating Turnover: What About New Hires?



# Calculating Turnover

The image displays a 3x4 grid of monthly hiring calendars for 2023. The months are arranged in three rows: January, February, March, April; May, June, July, August; and September, October, November, December. Each month is represented by a 4x4 grid of dates. A red circle highlights the top-left corner of the January calendar. A red circle in the bottom right corner contains the text "+ New Hires".



# Calculating Turnover: Including New Hires

$$\text{Turnover} = \frac{\text{Number of Employees Who Left} \img alt="Icon of a person walking away" data-bbox="680 380 720 490}}{\text{Number of Employees (Ending Head Count by including hires)} \img alt="Icon of two people standing" data-bbox="650 500 710 620}}} \times 100$$

# Turnover

Turnover in CW Job	Turnover Count	Average Headcount	Turnover Rate
Total	665	1659	40%

# Turnover

Turnover in CW Job	Turnover Count	Average Headcount	Turnover Rate
Total	665	1659	40%
Internal	232	1659	14%
External	433	1659	26%

# Turnover

Reason for Turnover	Total Turnover
Abandonment of Position	1
Death	2
Disability	4
Dismissal	95
Promotion	54
Reassignment	46
Resignation	276
Retirement	32
Transfer	155

# Turnover

Reason for Turnover	Total Turnover	Internal Turnover	External Turnover
Abandonment of Position	1	-	1
Death	2	-	2
Disability	4	-	4
Dismissal	95	-	95
Promotion	54	54	-
Reassignment	46	46	-
Resignation	276	-	276
Retirement	32	-	32
Transfer	155	155	-

# Turnover

District	Count External Turnover	% External Turnover
1	86	20%
2	225	52%
3	112	26%
Central Intake	10	2%

# Turnover

District	Count External Turnover	% External Turnover	% in Workforce
1	86	20%	29%
2	225	52%	31%
3	112	26%	31%
Central Intake	10	2%	9%

# State of workforce processes in child welfare systems

- Recruitment – seldom use targeted recruitment to ensure good pool
- Hiring – seldom use in-basket tasks or tests
- Onboarding- seldom include information about populations we serve and the historical trauma they have endured
- Probationary practices- seldom rigorously evaluate new employees during probation, seldom protect the hearts of new workers, seldom protect the time of new employees (e.g., graduated caseloads)
- Supervisory practices- seldom ensure new workers get most nurturing and supportive supervisors. If so many people leave terrible supervisors- why do we continue to promote terrible ones or not try to help them change or hold them to account?
- Exit and stay interviews rarely conducted+



# A Call to Action



- Let's follow a similar CQI approach to workforce issues across jurisdictions just as we do with child welfare practice
- Let's enhance understanding, accountability for achieving child safety, permanency and well-being by:
  - Creating best practices in child welfare workforce structures, processes, data collection, data analysis and outcomes
  - Bridge the divide with HR
  - Enhance all processes from recruitment to hiring to selection to onboarding to training to coaching to supervision to promotion to creating healthy organizational cultures and climates
  - Collect data that will help us understand root causes of turnover in our jurisdictions
  - Create a linking identifier to link all HR datasets, Training datasets and Child Welfare datasets so as to link workforce characteristics, training and practice with child and family outcomes
  - Set a requirement to send workforce data along with child welfare data to the Children's Bureau annually
  - Add to the CFSP a requirement to analyze the workforce data, conduct a workforce needs assessment including a root cause analysis and theory of change model to identify appropriate strategies for addressing workforce issues then use CQI process to check.

# Questions/Comments



# Contact Information

Anita P. Barbee, Ph.D., MSSW  
Professor and Distinguished University Scholar  
Center for Family and Community Well-Being  
Kent School of Social Work  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292  
[anita.barbee@louisville.edu](mailto:anita.barbee@louisville.edu)  
(502) 852-0416