

# CHILD WELFARE JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN  
AND FAMILY SERVICES

PERFORMANCE AUDIT SERVICES

**Informational Report**  
**Issued December 1, 2022**

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December 1, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Page Cortez,  
President of the Senate  
The Honorable Clay Schexnayder,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Senator Cortez and Representative Schexnayder:

This informational report provides the results of our job satisfaction survey of Child Welfare employees in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This report is intended to provide timely information related to an area of interest to the legislature or based on a legislative request. I hope this information will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

We would like to express our appreciation to DCFS for its assistance during this review.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA  
Legislative Auditor

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DCFS CW JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY





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# Louisiana Legislative Auditor

Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA



## Child Welfare Job Satisfaction Survey Department of Children and Family Services

December 2022

Audit Control # 40220023

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## Introduction

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This report provides the results of our job satisfaction survey of child welfare (CW) staff within the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and information on agency initiatives to improve employee morale and job satisfaction. Recent events related to the handling of cases by CW staff and the subsequent testimonies during legislative committee meetings resulted in a legislative request to survey the job satisfaction of CW staff.

To assess job satisfaction, identify barriers to job performance, and evaluate employee perspectives on leadership and accountability, we conducted a survey of CW staff in October 2022.<sup>1</sup> We sent surveys to 1,433 DCFS staff who work in CW areas including Adoption, Centralized Intake, Child Protective Services, Family Services, Foster Care, Extended Foster Care, and Home Development. We received 816 responses for an overall response rate of 56.9%. Some questions on the survey were based on a survey we conducted in May 2013 as part of an April 2014 performance audit on child welfare<sup>2</sup> to determine whether morale and job satisfaction has improved.

To provide information on DCFS activities and initiatives to improve job satisfaction, job performance, and leadership we reviewed documentation provided by DCFS to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare. Issues related to job satisfaction, morale, and job performance were also identified in our 2014 performance audit and by Governor John Bel Edwards' 2016 Transition Committee on Children and Family Services,<sup>3</sup> which identified issues and made recommendations for changes by the new DCFS administration.

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<sup>1</sup> We developed the survey questions using previous job satisfaction surveys sent to agencies by the LLA, and a previous survey of CW employees sent in May 2013. DCFS staff reviewed the survey questions and we incorporated their feedback prior to sending the survey.

<sup>2</sup> The April 2014 report can be found here:

[https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/ccf81373b5cee48186257cb5007189f2/\\$file/00038f27.pdf?openelement&.7773098](https://app.lla.state.la.us/publicreports.nsf/0/ccf81373b5cee48186257cb5007189f2/$file/00038f27.pdf?openelement&.7773098)

<sup>3</sup> The report of the 2016 transition committee can be found here:

[https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/TransitionTeam/DCFS\\_Transition\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/TransitionTeam/DCFS_Transition_Final_Report.pdf)

The objective of this report was:

**To provide the results of our job satisfaction survey of child welfare employees at the Department of Children and Family Services, and to provide information on agency initiatives to improve job satisfaction and employee morale.**

Our results are summarized on the next page and discussed in detail throughout the remainder of the report. Appendix A contains DCFS' response to this report and Appendix B summarizes results from our October 2022 survey of CW employees on job satisfaction.

**Informational reports are intended to provide more timely information than standards-based performance audits. While these informational reports do not follow *Government Auditing Standards*, we conduct quality assurance activities to ensure the information presented is accurate. We met with DCFS and incorporated its feedback throughout this informational report.**

## Objective: To provide the results of our job satisfaction survey of child welfare employees at the Department of Children and Family Services, and to provide information on agency initiatives to improve job satisfaction and employee morale.

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Child welfare (CW) employees who responded to our survey expressed concerns about job satisfaction, barriers that prevent them from performing their jobs, and CW leadership and accountability. To address these issues, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has proposed and is working on a range of initiatives, such as hosting hiring fairs and streamlining the hiring process; adjusting pay structures and work schedules; and implementing a Leadership Professional Development Program. Specifically, we found the following:

- **Survey respondents indicated that the most important issues that need to be addressed at DCFS include pay, caseload and unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support and respect from supervisors and managers.**
- **Survey results show that 88.8% of respondents are passionate about the work they do, but only 54.1% are satisfied with their job. Respondents in some regions – such as Lake Charles and Lafayette – and some work areas – such as Home Development, Adoption, and Family Services – are more satisfied than others. In addition, survey respondents are generally more satisfied with the way they are treated by their immediate supervisor than by managers and supervisors in general or CW leadership.**
- **According to our survey, respondents are concerned that high caseloads and limited resources prevent them from providing quality services to children and families. Other barriers that affect respondents' ability to do their job include lack of support from supervisors and managers and a lack of transportation.**
- **Generally, half of respondents agree that individuals in CW leadership positions model qualities such as accountability, respect, and empathy. Examples of concerns with leadership positions include promotions that are not based on achievement and performance, CW employees not being held accountable when they behave inappropriately, and the belief that issues will not be addressed.**

- **DCFS has proposed and already begun work on a range of initiatives to address issues with job satisfaction, job performance, and leadership. Examples of initiatives include establishing a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Unit and Council to ensure employees have a direct line to and voice with agency leadership; developing a 24/7 coverage model to allow more work/life balance; hosting hiring fairs; streamlining the hiring process; adjusting pay structures; creating a Leadership Professional Development Program; and contracting for an Employee Assistance Program to help mitigate the level of stress, anxiety, and secondary traumatic stress that CW staff experience.**

This information is discussed in more detail on the pages that follow.

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**Survey respondents indicated that the most important issues that need to be addressed at DCFS include pay, caseload and unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support and respect from supervisors and managers.**

When asked what is the most important issue that needs to be addressed at DCFS, survey respondents mentioned pay, caseload and unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support and respect from supervisors and managers. Examples of responses related to these issues include:<sup>4</sup>

**Pay**

- *Being overworked without the pay to match the amount of work we are actually having to do.*
- *DCFS pay scales are not competitive enough to attract and retain qualified workers.*
- *Not receiving monetary compensation for obtaining my master's degree and not receiving premium pay has been a slap in the face to my contributions to this field.*

*"The most important issue that needs to be addressed at DCFS is how we communicate with one another. Using the appropriate words are important when talking to others along with tone, volume, and body language. Another issue with communication is that people in positions of authority should not talk to their employees as if they are inferior or less than because they are not on the same level, job title-wise. It is important to remember that we are all human beings with feelings, with our own families and problems, yet we come to work daily to help other families."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the report, responses have been modified as needed for clarification and to ensure anonymity.



### **Caseload/Unrealistic Expectations**

- *The sad reality about DCFS is that this work has only gotten harder over the years, and with the increased complexity of these cases there have been a lot of unrealistic expectations set on workers and supervisors.*
- *The most important issue at DCFS is the added workload that comes along with working with the parents. Sometimes the parents require more attention than the children. If there's four different kids with four different dads, the caseworker has to work with five parents and four kids. Parents should count towards the caseload.*
- *I feel some work from home would be very beneficial, especially to those who have children. I find it surprising that we are to report the next day after night call duty. Court paperwork is understandable, but otherwise we should be able to rest.*
- *The most important issue that needs to be addressed is the amount of workload for one position. You are a secretary, legal aid, counselor, checking in on providers and updates, etc., and if you do not document everything, it did not happen. On top of this, making sure you visit your clients. The more cases, the less time you have.*

### **Lack of Support and Respect**

- *There does not seem to be much teamwork. The few workers who are still here are stressed, burned out, and overworked. Staff have changed since others quit. New workers are not being trained properly. Since new staff came aboard, professionalism is gone. No professionalism whatsoever.*
- *The most important issue is the lack of involvement and the lack of empathy from supervisors, managers, and upper management to staff members. Also, understanding the importance of tone and diction when speaking to staff. I am not a child; talk to me, not at me. Some supervisors have this drill sergeant approach, and then when given the same back then it is an issue. I was always taught to get respect you must first show it.*
- *DCFS does not seem to care about its staff and the mental and emotional stress that this job brings.*

**Survey results show that 88.8% of respondents are passionate about the work they do, but only 54.1% are satisfied with their job. Respondents in some regions – such as Lake Charles and Lafayette – and some work areas – such as Home Development, Adoption, and Family Services – are more satisfied than others. In addition, survey respondents are generally more satisfied with the way they are treated by their immediate supervisor than by managers and supervisors in general or CW leadership.**

While 696 (88.8%) of 784 survey respondents agree<sup>5</sup> that they are passionate about the work they do, only 424 (54.1%) agree that they are satisfied with their job.<sup>6</sup> This is an increase from May 2013 survey results, when 165 (33.9%) of 487 CW caseworkers agreed that they were satisfied with their job. A common reason that respondents were not satisfied was because of compensation and benefits, as 192 (24.5%) of respondents agree that they are satisfied with their total compensation and benefits package. Exhibit 1 shows CW employee responses to various job satisfaction questions.

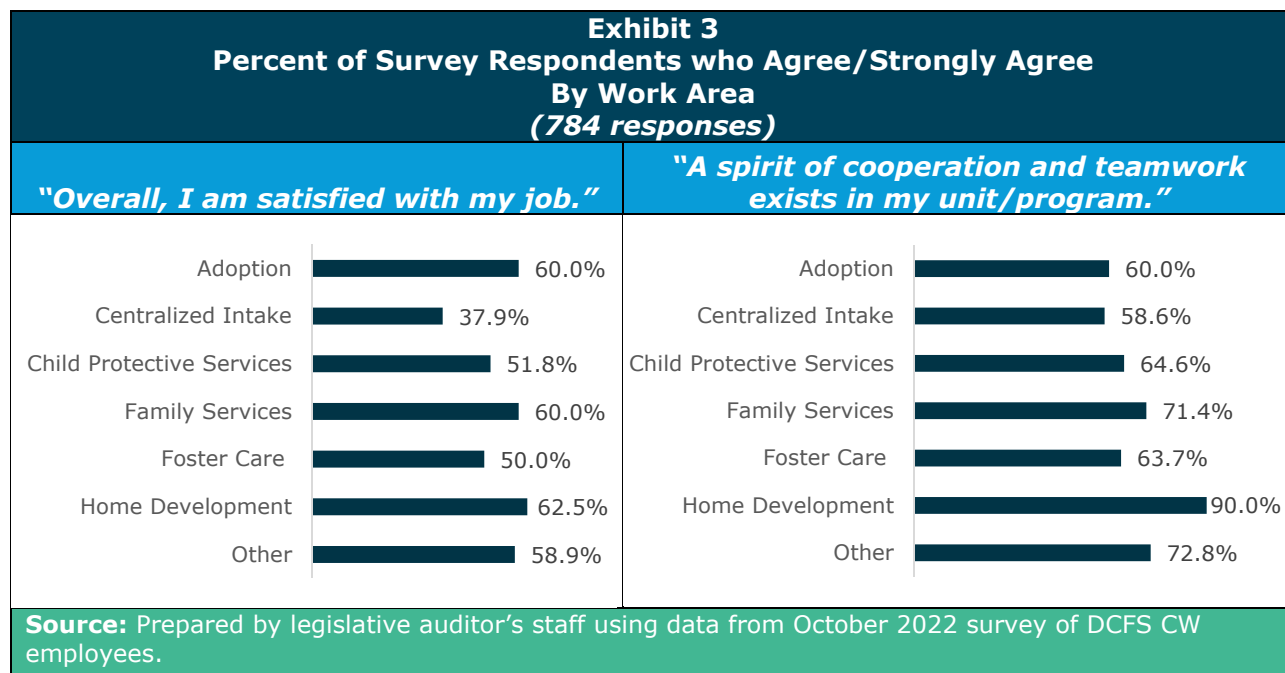
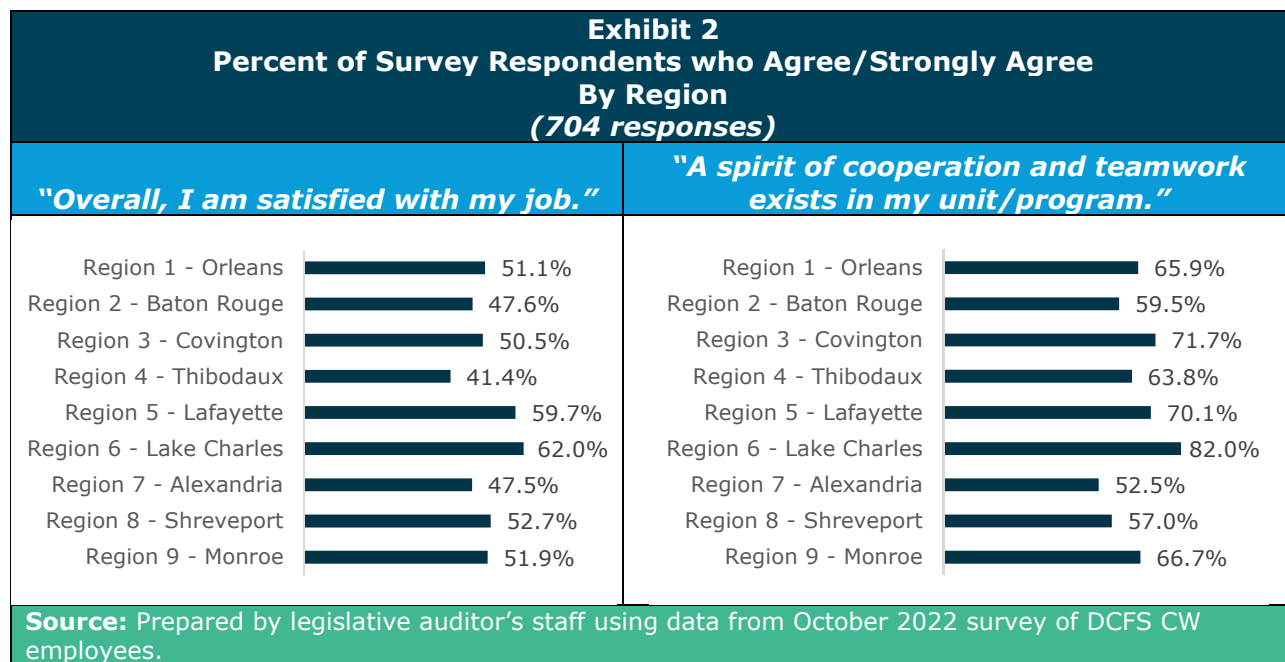
<b>Exhibit 1 Job Satisfaction Responses (784 responses)</b>				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Agree or Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I feel passionate about the work I do.	88.8%	6.9%	4.3%	<b>100%</b>
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	54.1%	22.3%	23.6%	<b>100%</b>
A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my unit/program.	67.6%	13.9%	18.5%	<b>100%</b>
I am satisfied with my total compensation package (pay, benefits, vacation, etc.).	24.5%	17.9%	57.6%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.				

**Respondents in some regions – such as Lake Charles and Lafayette – and some work areas – such as Home Development, Adoption, and Family Services – are more satisfied than other regions and work areas.** As shown in Exhibits 2 and 3, 31 (62.0%) of 50 survey respondents from the Lake Charles region agree that, overall, they are satisfied with their job, while 24 (41.4%) of 58 from the Thibodaux region agree with that statement. When asked if a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exist in their section/unit, responses ranged from a high

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the report, "agree" combines both the "agree" and "strongly agree" survey responses.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for results from our October 2022 survey of CW employees on job satisfaction.

of 36 (90.0%) of 40 respondents that agree who work in Home Development to a low of 17 (58.6%) of 29 who agree that work in Centralized Intake. Exhibits 2 and 3 show a breakdown of responses by region and by work area.

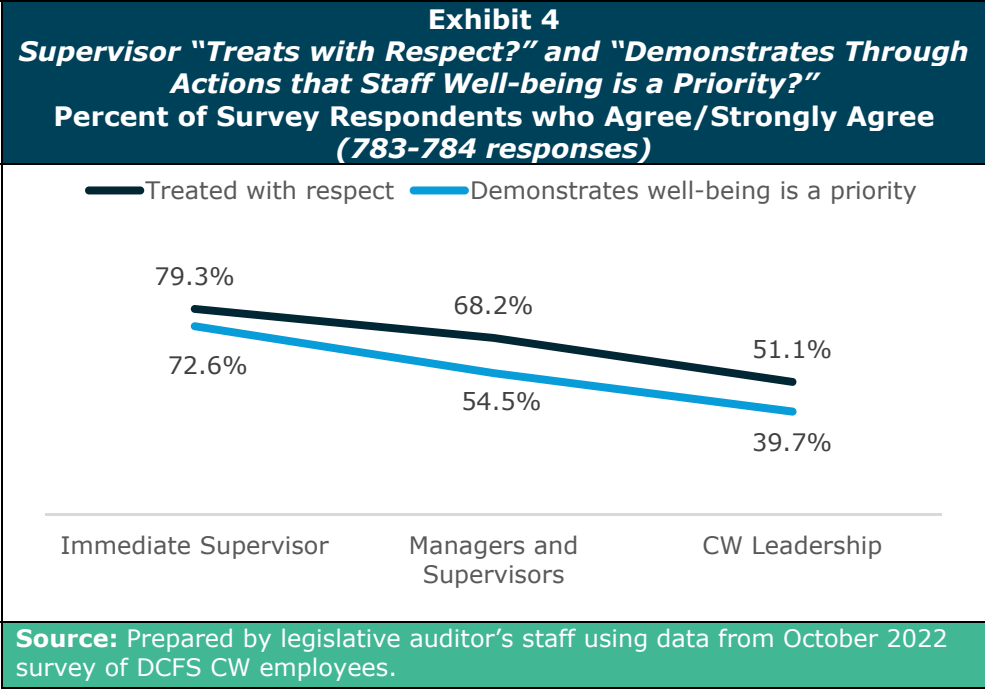


**Survey respondents are generally more satisfied with the way they are treated by their immediate supervisor than by managers and supervisors in general or CW Leadership.**

**As shown in Exhibit 4, respondents generally agree that their immediate supervisor treats them with respect more so than CW leadership. CW leadership includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors. Similarly, respondents generally agree that their immediate supervisor demonstrates through their actions that staff well-being is a priority more so than CW leadership. Exhibit 4 shows responses related to questions about respect and well-being.**

*"It is disheartening to go to people in leadership positions with concerns only to be told "that is the way it is" and "people can just find other jobs if they don't like it". This type of reaction makes people feel that they are not supported, and have no voice. This makes it hard for me to want to come to work at times, and I have even looked for other jobs when issues like this come up. The only thing that keeps me from leaving is the relationships I have built with the children and families that we serve."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees



**When asked what could be done to improve job satisfaction, respondents mentioned improving aspects such as pay, staff support/respect, staffing levels to decrease caseloads, and supervisor skills/training.** Examples of responses related to these issues include:

**Higher Pay**

- *Incentive or higher pay should be offered to employees who obtain master's degrees in social work while working for DCFS. We are not given any recognition for higher levels of education.*

- *There should be more compensation for mileage since there are not enough state vehicles at the office. Car rental offices often do not have cars available for staff, which leads to staff having to use their own vehicles to travel for work.*

### **Improve Staff Support/Respect**

- *Maybe it would be helpful if workers well-being could be put as a priority, because a lot of workers do not take care of their health because they do not have time. There are too many obligations from work. New workers come, and no one stays because they get overwhelmed very fast with the work and cases, and when they leave, it brings on more work for those that are still there. Then, the workers that have years of experience leave because they are burned out. Physical health becomes an issue and the workers don't stay because of too much stress.*
- *The way staff are treated by management needs to be addressed. We need proper and department-specific training and education to do the job. The agency needs to address the issues of ensuring staff have the right resources to perform their job effectively.*

*"In order to improve my job satisfaction, we need to start holding all employees to the title that they were hired to do. When picking leaders, we need to pick people based off of their work ethics and not social life/friendship. By picking wrong leaders, it is causing a continued problem on the field worker, supervisors, and managers as well. We are putting people in positions that they are either not ready for and/or qualified for. It causes everyone to suffer, including our children and families more so."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees

### **Increase Staffing Levels to Decrease Caseloads**

- *The caseload standards and job expectations are unrealistic – workers are set up for failure from the start with the amount of work there is and the requirements. More staff are needed in the field so caseload standards can be dropped so that workers can do what they need to.*
- *More caseworkers are needed to lower caseloads in order to provide the necessary time and attention needed to address our children. The caseloads are too high. We need more caseworkers and less consultants and other higher positions, in my opinion.*

### **Improve Supervisor Skills/Training**

- *My job satisfaction can be improved when supervisors, managers, area directors, and regional administrators receive annual training on how to interact and communicate with their staff and employees.*
- *I feel that when I started in my current position there was no type of training to prepare you for the job. I was basically thrown out there to learn on my own with the expected help of my supervisor. The*

*supervisor had their own style of supervision that did not aid in me learning my work duties accurately. Training should be done for all positions within this agency.*

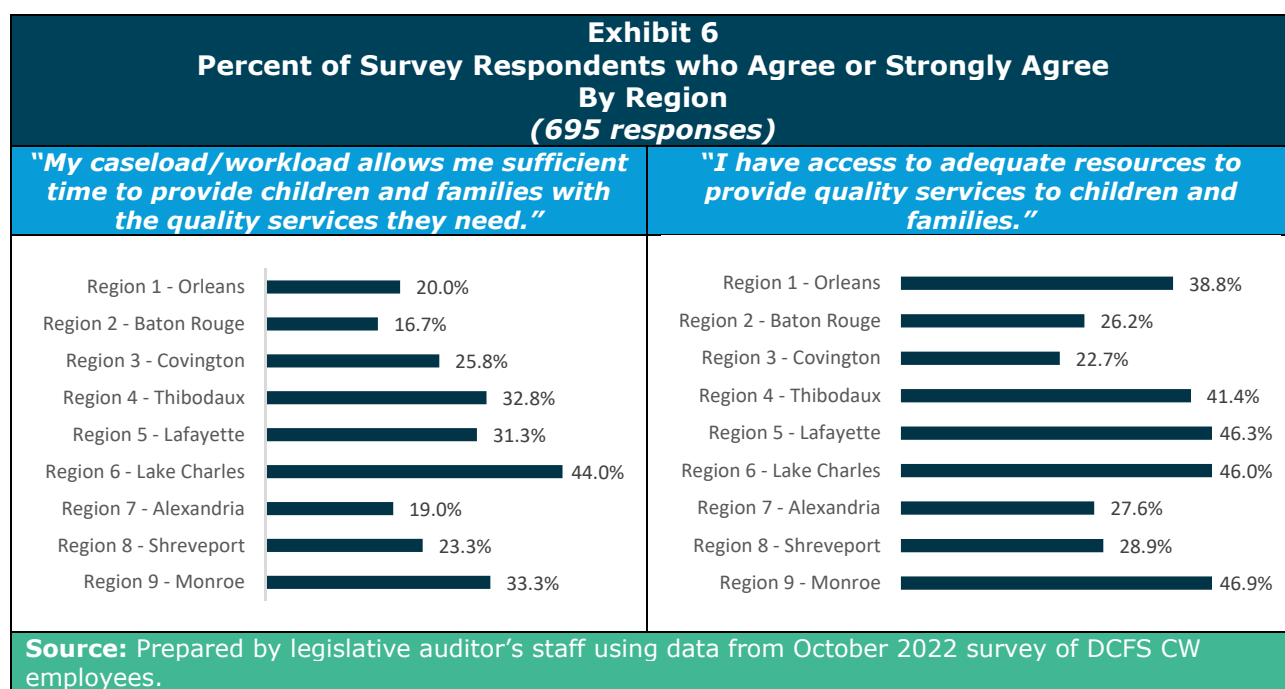
- *Need better technology. Staff need to be able to type information on a tablet while they are in the field so they don't have to double work themselves. People who have been hired and are not qualified for the job slows down productivity and efficiency.*

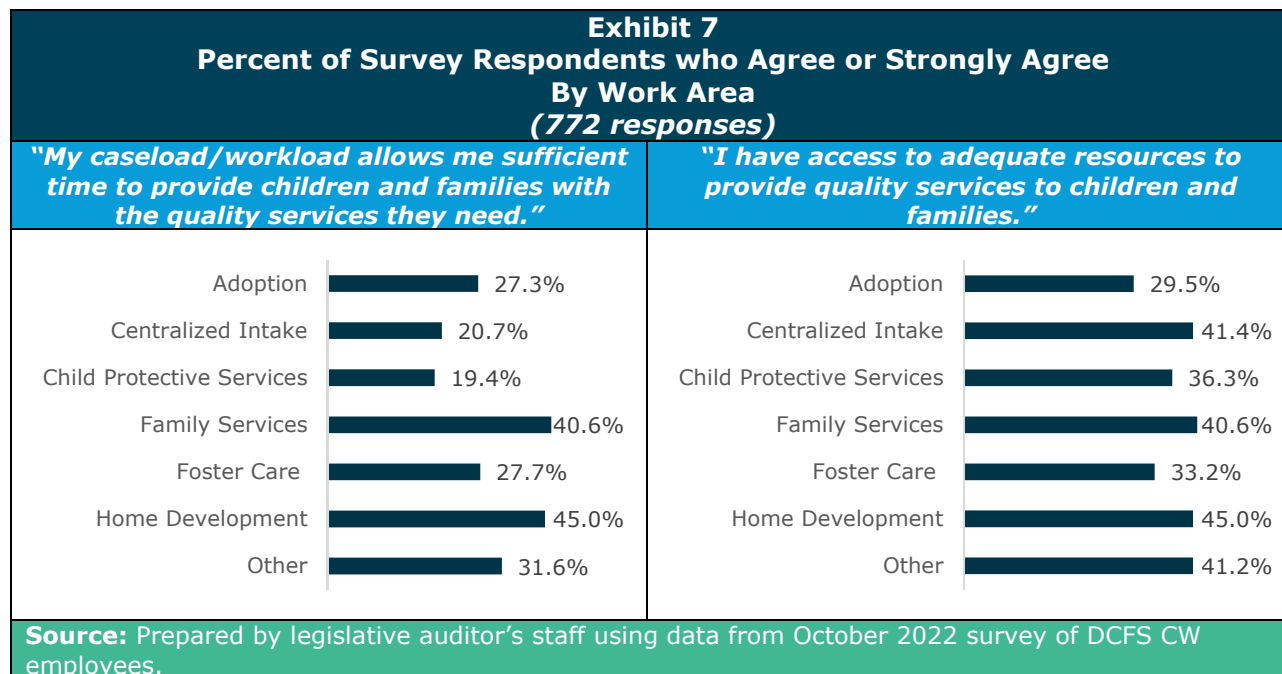
**According to our survey, respondents are concerned that high caseloads and limited resources prevent them from providing quality services to children and families. Other barriers that affect respondents' ability to do their job include lack of support from supervisors and managers and a lack of transportation.**

**According to our survey, 446 (57.8%) of 771 survey respondents agree that DCFS fosters and encourages an agency culture that promotes the welfare of children.** As shown in Exhibit 5, 221 (28.6%) of 772 respondents agree that their caseload allows them sufficient time to provide children and families with the quality services they need, and 286 (37.0%) agree they have access to adequate resources to provide quality services to children and families. Exhibit 5 shows CW employee responses to various job performance questions.

<b>Exhibit 5 Job Performance and Barriers Responses (771-772 responses)</b>				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Agree or Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
DCFS fosters and encourages an agency culture that promotes the welfare of children.	57.8%	25.7%	16.5%	<b>100%</b>
My supervisor gives me meaningful supervision and mentoring.	65.4%	18.5%	16.1%	<b>100%</b>
I receive relevant training that helps me increase my ability to do my job well.	58.4%	21.4%	20.2%	<b>100%</b>
My caseload/workload allows me sufficient time to provide children and families with the quality services they need.	28.6%	32.5%	38.9%	<b>100%</b>
I have access to adequate resources to provide quality services to children and families.	37.0%	28.5%	34.5%	<b>100%</b>
DCFS gives me technological support that allows me to balance my documentation responsibilities with time spent serving children and families.	40.2%	31.6%	28.2%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.				

**Respondents in some regions – such as Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Monroe – agree their caseloads allow sufficient time and they have access to adequate resources more than other regions. In addition, respondents in some work areas – such as Home Development and Family Services – agree with these statements more than other work areas.** As shown in Exhibits 6 and 7, 22 (44.0%) of 50 respondents from the Lake Charles region agree that their caseload allows them sufficient time to provide quality services, while 7 (16.7%) of 42 from the Baton Rouge region agree with that statement. When asked if CW workers have access to adequate resources to provide quality services to children and families, responses ranged from a high of 18 (45.0%) of 40 respondents that agree who work in Home Development to a low of 13 (29.5%) of 44 who work in Adoption. Exhibits 6 and 7 show a breakdown of responses by region and by work area.





**According to the survey, 185 (24.0%) of 772 respondents disagree or strongly disagree that they feel safe while performing their job duties.** The issue of safety was most prevalent for workers in Child Protective Services and Foster Care units, and in the Covington and Shreveport regions. Examples of respondents’ concerns include:

- It would be easier to visit children and families in the daytime, as opposed to late in the evenings; however, some children are in school and get home late in the evenings, which causes workers to have to go out late. Safety concerns is the biggest barrier that affects my ability to do my job due to the risk of being robbed or physically attacked.*
- Child welfare has become increasingly dangerous. I have personally had clients make contact with my child to ensure I knew they knew how to find me. When safety concerns are presented, my immediate supervisor and manager do put an action plan in place. When I mentioned the concerns of a trafficker potentially following me home after picking up a victim, an area director advised me it was the nature of my job.*
- Employees aren’t even allowed to have mace on their person for protection while entering homes of heavy substance abusers as well as violent criminals.*

**When asked what barriers affect their ability to do their job, or do it as well as they would like, survey respondents often mentioned being overwhelmed by their workload, the lack of resources and services for children and families, that lack of support from supervisor and managers, and a lack of transportation.** Examples of respondents’ concerns include:



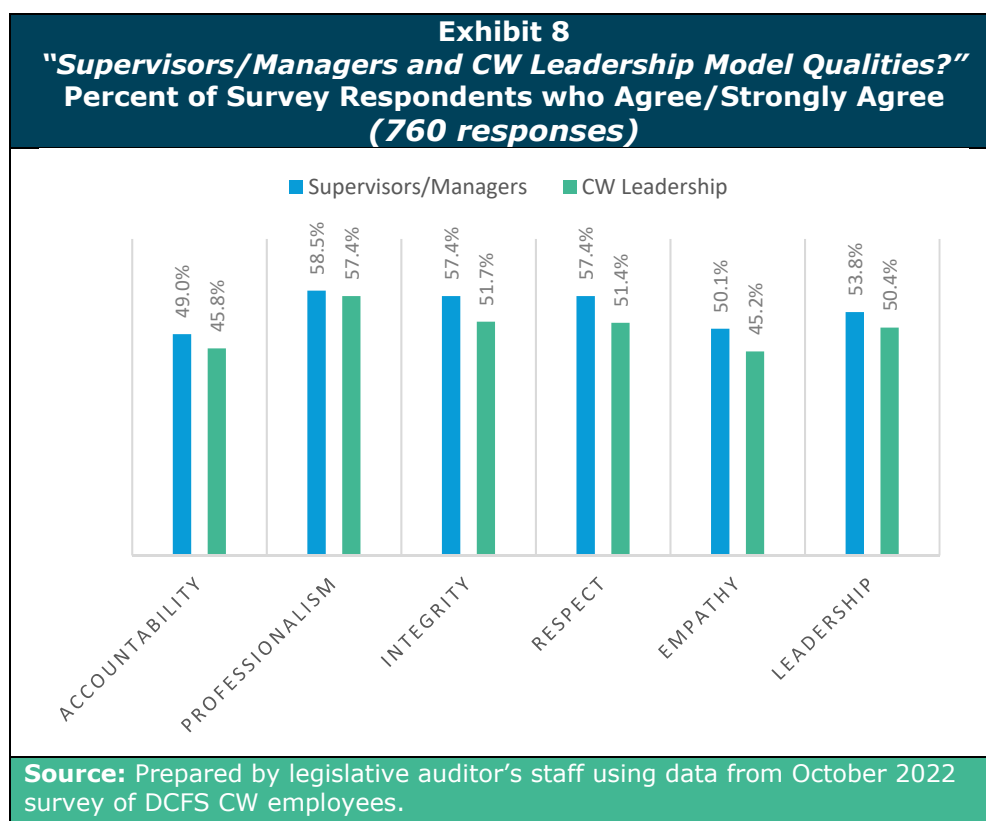
- *Workload – staff are unable to complete all that needs to be done. The expectations are unrealistic even if fully staffed. We need a reduction in caseloads and more field positions. We are top heavy with consultants, which leads to taking our experience out of the field to fill these positions.*

*"They keep piling more work on us to make it look like they're doing "something," but none of those new policies actually address the issue leadership had a knee jerk reaction to. People leave DCFS because leadership constantly makes our jobs even harder to do without ever listening to us. Certain offices have notoriously high turnover because no one is ever willing to address when a person is a bad supervisor or manager either."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees
- *There are not enough viable resources in the area such as therapy that accepts Medicaid insurance, drug screening facilities, etc. We need more vehicles to use for work purposes and to transport clients who do not have access to reliable transportation.*
- *Proper resources, too many steps in getting simple tasks or approval completed, high caseloads, lack of foster homes, lack of decentralization in decision making. I would like to see more flexibility in work hours and working from home or field, especially upper management, a night shift to work on call and possibly deal with emergencies, more support staff to assist – possibly a support staff for each unit as well as more clerical in general.*
- *Lack of staff, lack of resources and providers for clients, lack of support from law enforcement at times and the court systems, difficult attorneys, burnout, anxiety, no one to talk with to debrief and process hard cases.*
- *No support from manager, inconsistent directives, manager does not recognize efforts or give credit for a job well done, manager does not communicate only sends emails, manager does not know what to do and will give recommendations that are not within the guidelines of policy.*

**Generally, half of respondents agree that individuals in leadership positions in CW model qualities such as accountability, respect, and empathy. Examples of concerns with leadership positions include promotions that are not based on achievement and performance, CW employees not being held accountable when they behave inappropriately, and the belief that issues will not be addressed.**

According to our survey, 409 (53.8%) of 760 respondents agree that supervisors/managers model leadership qualities, and 383 (50.4%) agree that CW leadership positions model leadership qualities. CW leadership includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors. Exhibit 8 shows the percent of survey respondents who agree that supervisors/managers and CW leadership model certain qualities.



**Survey respondents noted concerns with hiring employees who have the necessary experience and skills, and with promoting individuals based on achievement and performance.** Specifically, 280 (36.3%) of 772 respondents agree that DCFS hires employees who have the necessary experience and skills. The concern with hiring was most prevalent for workers in Adoption and Centralized Intake, as well as the Lake Charles and Monroe regions. According to DCFS, it is piloting revised minimum qualifications in hopes of expanding the pool of potential employees. While many respondents noted the desperate need for additional workers, some respondents were concerned about this change (see text box at right).

*"The lowering of qualifications for employees to a high school degree with experience is an awful decision for child welfare. Our work requires critical thinking and a level of skills and knowledge gained through higher education."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees

In addition, 206 (26.7%) of 771 respondents agree that promotions are based on achievement and performance. Examples of respondents' concerns include:

- *Staff should be promoted based on their experience, knowledge, and ability to build and maintain relationships. DCFS staff are being promoted based on who they are affiliated with, being sorority sisters, or because no one else applied.*
- *When promoting staff, their character and professionalism should be taken into account as well. A leader should be someone who can actually lead staff and not just be a boss. Get to know your staff as a person, their weaknesses and strong points when it comes to work, and offer to help if they see someone is struggling. A leader is more than someone with a degree and additional letters behind their name.*
- *Changes that can be made to improve leadership within DCFS should start with promoting or hiring people who are qualified and are able to demonstrate the ability to get the job done effectively, not just to fill a position. Changes need to happen with the staff at the top who are making horrible decisions that impact the people who are actually in the field doing the work.*
- *I think DCFS hires people who are qualified for the job, but because there is no accountability, workers have no motivation for maintaining good work ethic especially when caseloads are high and the job is especially stressful. Promotions hinder the good workers. The good workers who are providing quality services often get stuck in their position and blocked from transfers or promotions because management doesn't want to lose a good worker in the field. So the worker just gets burned out and quits and then the agency loses a good worker anyway.*

**Survey respondents reported they experienced unprofessional behavior more frequently than retaliatory behavior or pressure to do things against policy.** When asked how often in the past year, if at all, CW employees had experienced negative behaviors, 503 (65.4%) of 769 respondents stated they had never experienced retaliatory behavior and 587 (76.3%) stated they had never experienced pressure to do something against policy. However, only 396 (51.5%) of respondents stated they had never experienced unprofessional behavior in the past year. Survey results showed that unprofessional behavior was experienced most frequently by CW employees working in Centralized Intake and in the Baton Rouge region. Exhibit 9 shows responses related to unprofessional behavior, retaliatory behavior, and pressure to do something against policy.

<b>Exhibit 9</b> <b>"Unprofessional behavior, retaliatory behavior, or pressure to do something against policy?"</b> <b>(769 responses)</b>				
Behavior	Never	At Least Once this past Year	Daily, Weekly, or Monthly	Total
Unprofessional	51.5%	27.3%	21.2%	<b>100%</b>
Retaliatory	65.4%	20.7%	13.9%	<b>100%</b>
Pressure	76.3%	13.7%	10.0%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.				

Examples of survey respondents' concerns related to unprofessional behavior, retaliatory behavior, and pressure to do something against policy include:

- I have been spoken to in a demeaning manor and have witnessed coworkers being yelled at and spoken to in an inappropriate manner.*
- Mostly people yelling at each other, sometimes other workers making snide comments, and other workers speaking inappropriately about clients and other staff.*
- My supervisor is regularly not available when called. My supervisor sometimes gives a different answer when asked about a topic again (entirely understandable, as we're all human), but then gets aggressive and blames others/me. Speaking with my supervisor is like walking on eggshells, you don't know if they'll be in a good mood or angry and offer no assistance.*
- I enjoy my actual work position but I am exhausted from dealing with a toxic environment. There needs to be correct managers in place that are willing to work for us and our families. There are several great*

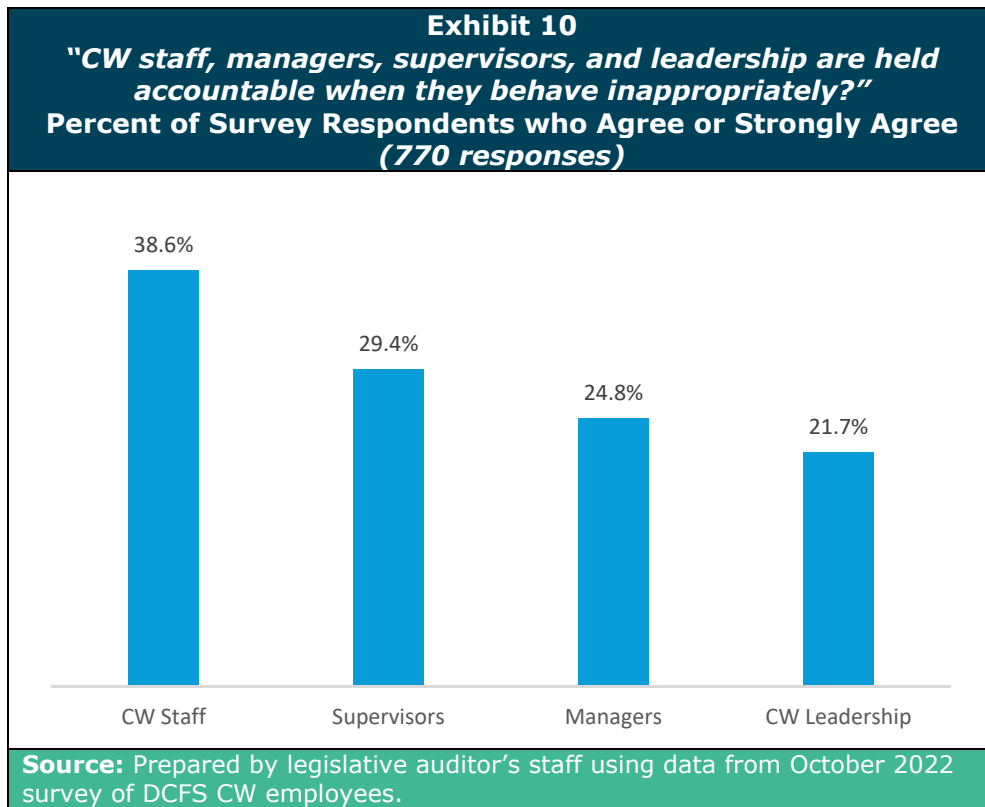
*"The fact remains that if someone does not approve of what you say or do you face the potential to be retaliated against in a number of ways like giving you cases that are going to be a challenge or not being available to assist you in your time of need as it relates to case related work."*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees

*supervisors that are willing to do anything for us but overwhelmed by the pressure of managers.*

- *Pressure to change documents so that a child could be placed, instead of searching for a more appropriate placement.*

**Survey respondents expressed concerns with a lack of accountability when CW employees behave inappropriately.** When CW employees behave inappropriately, 297 (38.6%) of 770 respondents agree that CW staff are held accountable, 226 (29.4%) that supervisors are held accountable, 191 (24.8%) that managers are held accountable, and 167 (21.7%) that CW leadership are held accountable. CW Leadership includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors. Exhibit 10 shows responses related to accountability by position.



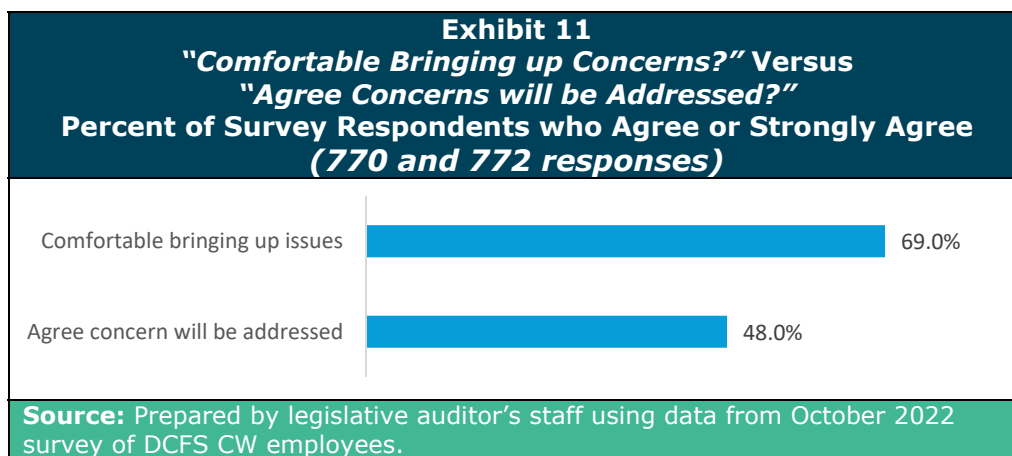
Examples of survey respondents’ concerns related to accountability include:

- *It is hard to see what is being done to hold staff accountable for their actions and inactions because it continues to cycle and is happening statewide. If accountability were happening, I would imagine the undesirable behaviors and lack of work ethic would be weeded out. Unfortunately, the same staff are mentioned as the issue over and over again.*
- *Sometimes staff are held accountable, and other times they are not. Sometimes the behavior is excused because that person is fulfilling a role that is required and that position needs to be filled.*

*“DCFS doesn’t foster a culture that promotes the welfare of children because of accountability. People know it’s impossible to get fired so they get away with things that wouldn’t be tolerated at other jobs. If DCFS really cared about what was happening to the children instead of checking off boxes, then they would hold workers accountable for their work up to and including termination if necessary.”*

**Source:** October 2022 LLA survey of DCFS CW employees

**Survey respondents generally feel comfortable bringing up concerns to their immediate supervisor but do not agree that their concerns will be addressed.** As shown in Exhibit 11, while 533 (69.0%) of 772 respondents agree that they feel comfortable bringing up concerns to their immediate supervisors, 370 (48.0%) of 770 agree that if they bring up a concern it will be addressed. Exhibit 11 shows responses to questions about bringing up concerns and if concerns will be addressed.



**When asked what changes could be made to improve leadership within DCFS, survey respondents often mentioned training for individuals in leadership positions, improving accountability, promoting individuals based on qualifications, and listening to employees.** Examples of respondents’ concerns include:

- *Hold people accountable when they do not perform well or behave poorly. Provide more training and support to grow the leaders and*

*future leaders. We provide a lot of training to staff but little to no training to those leading the staff.*

- *Stop putting people you want in leadership positions and put people who are qualified.*
- *Leadership often needs to remember the reality of fieldwork and the changes that have come along since they were a field worker.*
- *Leadership needs to lead by example. Someone needs to let leadership know that it is OK to help sometimes. Do a home visit, supervise a family visit...no matter what caseworkers have to do, how high of a caseload we have, how many home visits and family visits we have to complete, leadership is going to go home on time, while we're forced away from our own families.*

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**DCFS has proposed and already begun work on a range of initiatives to address issues with job satisfaction, job performance, and leadership. Examples of initiatives include establishing a DEIB Unit and Council, developing a 24/7 coverage model, hosting hiring fairs, streamlining the hiring process, adjusting pay structures, creating a Leadership Professional Development Program, and contracting for an Employee Assistance Program to help mitigate the level of stress, anxiety, and secondary traumatic stress that CW staff experience.**

According to DCFS, the three biggest challenges facing the department are staff shortages, staff frustration with working conditions, and the increasing number and complexity of cases. Similar issues have been identified in the past including in our 2014 Performance Audit and the 2016 report of the Governor's Transition Committee on Children and Family Services, which identified issues related to high caseloads, lack of resources, and low job satisfaction. To address these concerns, DCFS has developed a range of strategies and initiatives which are described below.

**According to DCFS, to improve recruitment and hiring it has planned a public awareness campaign to attract mission-oriented individuals to work for DCFS, hiring fairs, a new program to recruit college students, and has streamlined the hiring process which allows new hires to start working more quickly.** For example:

- **Recruitment** activities include developing short- and long-term statewide staff recruitment strategies, ensure every region has a

recruitment strategy that includes hiring fairs and other events, and to hold hiring fairs in all regions. DCFS has already held hiring events in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and New Orleans. According to DCFS, the number of vacancies in child welfare is 178 as of October 14, 2022.

- **Public outreach and advertising** activities include designing recruitment campaign materials, a targeted social media outreach for recruitment events, and a media campaign in advance of statewide hiring events; soliciting for communications services for staff recruitment; contracting with a communications firm; and conducting a communications campaign.
- To expand and deepen the hiring pool, DCFS is piloting **revised minimum qualifications** and will evaluate the impact, evaluating the structure of frontline positions/decision-making, and conducting a full review of the CW job series.
- **University outreach** includes a Student-to-Permanent Position Talent Acquisition and Recruiting Program (STAR), in which DCFS will hire college students in their last semester as part-time employees. During that time, the employees will complete the six-month training process so that when they graduate they are ready carry a caseload. This program is being piloted in one region, and the first STAR employee was recently hired.
- DCFS is **contacting staff who left or declined offers** to determine what could be done for them to reconsider.
- DCFS is working with the Department of State Civil Service (Civil Service) and internal DCFS teams to **modify and streamline the hiring process** that allows new hires to start working more quickly, and plans to hire teams for streamlined regional screening/selection.

**According to DCFS, to address concerns about pay it has implemented temporary changes to pay and plans to evaluate the overall pay structure for all CW staff.** Specifically, DCFS:

- **Raised the minimum salary of caseworkers**, raised special entrance rates, and instituted retention/premium pay for certain critical and high turnover positions including positions in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. DCFS also authorized paid overtime as necessary. While these tools are temporary, DCFS will work with Civil Service to evaluate the benefit and potential to extend these pay changes.
- Is in the process of **evaluating the pay structure for all CW employees** to ensure salaries are competitive in the market.



**According to DCFS, it will consider the voice of employees to a greater degree through outreach efforts to ensure it addresses the needs of employees beyond pay.** For example:

- To allow more work/life balance, DCFS will develop a model of 24/7 coverage and is in the process of contracting with three companies that will provide supplemental social worker staff coverage during the evenings and on the weekends. DCFS plans to pilot the program in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. This will **relieve staff so that they are not consistently needed to work on nights and weekends**, which should help address work/life balance concerns and overworked employees.
- To help **mitigate the level of stress, anxiety, and secondary traumatic stress that CW staff experience**, DCFS will contract for an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and recruit and train new members for the existing internal Critical Incident Stress Management team. The EAP is currently being piloted and offers an avenue to prioritize employee well-being.
- In 2021, DCFS created the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Unit within the Executive staff. The Secretary hired a director to lead a full-time team of five staff and created an internal DEIB Council to offer an avenue for staff to express concerns and connect to DCFS leadership. DCFS will continue to **explore obstacles to inclusion and belonging at DCFS**, define employee-led priorities and action steps, and monitor and track employee engagement/change.
- DCFS will also incentivize numerous **training and professional development opportunities for staff** in partnership with the LA Child Welfare Training Academy and University Alliance. DCFS is proposing expansion from currently paying for advanced social work degrees to include the bachelor's degree level, as well as providing educational leave, internship opportunities for staff, and supervision toward licensure.

**According to DCFS, it has developed a range of initiatives to address concerns with CW employees' ability to do their job.** As described already in this report, DCFS plans to improve recruitment, hiring, and staff retention to increase staff and lower caseloads for current employees. Other initiatives include:

- Contract with the Change and Innovation Agency to guide the implementation of a model to **more effectively and efficiently close certain investigations** by a central consultant team, freeing up more time for investigation, supervision, and monitoring of more serious and complex cases.
- Plan to **validate intake policies, safety models, and training curriculum** in partnership with the Child Welfare League of America.

DCFS will revise policies and practices regarding oversight of decision making within Centralized Intake, Investigations, In-Home Services, and Foster Care.

- Implement and monitor the effectiveness of a **Safety Wraparound Approach** which includes developing safety experts to provide case consultation at key intervals in the life of a case, provide continuous consultation, and to train new staff and supervisors.
- Partner with law enforcement, medical providers, and other specialists to **supplement current training of staff** in all program areas.
- Implement robust review, coaching, and consultation by contracting with a national expert. **Staff will participate in coaching and mentoring**, and DCFS will review pilot findings and apply them statewide as determined by need and capacity.
- Implement a **Policy Academy** which includes applying to participate in the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare 2023 Policy Academy, then revising and implementing policies and protocols according to best practices as capacity allows.
- **Explore the need for additional training** in domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health.

DCFS also has plans to increase resources and services for CW clients, such as increasing the number of foster care families, contracting with Managed Care Organizations to provide services that are not covered by Medicaid, and implementing an evidence-based model of intensive, in-home treatment for high-risk infants and toddlers and their caregivers to prevent maltreatment.

#### **According to DCFS, initiatives to improve leadership include:**

- Provide and pay for an **Advanced Leadership certification** through Grambling State University that will include courses on Social and Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Culture, and Leadership; and explore additional certifications in Administration, Quality Parenting, etc.
- A proposed plan for manager development through a **Leadership Professional Development Program**, including a Manager Support, Capacity Building, and Coaching Series. As part of the 12-month program, each manager would participate in a one-day leadership session each month along with receiving real-time coaching, support, and feedback in their day-to-day practice. Managers would also get the opportunity to participate in monthly community of learning and practice sessions to reflect on and share learnings with other managers.

## **APPENDIX A: MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE**

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John Bel Edwards, Governor  
Terri Porche Ricks, Acting Secretary

November 29, 2022

Mr. Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA  
Legislative Auditor  
P.O. Box 94397  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9397

Dear Mr. Waguespack:

We appreciate your report on the Child Welfare Job Satisfaction Survey. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) affirms its values of "treating all people with dignity, compassion and respect, while providing services with integrity," and extends these values not only to its clients and contacts, but also to its staff as co-workers and colleagues.

Toward that end, DCFS is committed to ensuring that every employee of the agency has an opportunity to feel heard, valued and supported.

This commitment is borne out in many ways – from increases in pay and the establishment of an employee Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Council to creating an Employee Assistance Program and developing a model for 24/7 shift coverage to help employees achieve work-life balance – and continues to inform the Department's strategies and decision-making moving forward.

DCFS is dedicated to the ongoing development of its workforce, offering opportunities for advancement along with training and support. In addition to offering educational leave, reimbursement for licensure fees, supervision for advanced licensure, and other opportunities for obtaining advanced degrees, DCFS also offers the opportunity for leadership training through the Advanced Leadership Certificate Program of Grambling State University (GSU).

The GSU leadership certificate program is a one-year program open to supervisors and managers, with tuition paid by the Department, and includes courses on: Social and Emotional Intelligence, which speaks to managing emotions and understanding their impact on others; Organizational Culture, which discusses diversity, inclusion, and values and behaviors of leadership that help create a positive environment; and Leadership, which identifies and discusses traits and characteristics associated with effective leadership. Each course requires experiential homework activities within the work setting to support content.

In addition, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Unit has established resources and guidance for leaders and hiring managers that can be reached through the Department's intranet. The unit also is working on a series of workshops on topics including Implicit Bias, Effective Allyship, Emotional Intelligence, Generational Barriers in the Workplace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution, and Inclusive Practices in the Workplace.

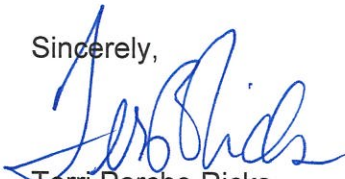


Additionally, DCFS has a proposed plan for manager development through a Leadership Professional Development Program, led by highly experienced child welfare leaders and professionals at the national level. As part of the 12-month program, each manager would participate in a 1-day leadership session each month along with receiving real-time coaching, support, and feedback in their day-to-day practice and the opportunity to participate in monthly community of learning and practice sessions to reflect on and share learnings with other managers.

Assessing and implementing Culture of Belonging approaches, including equipping leaders with Vulnerability, Emotional Literacy, and Empathy-based Accountability skills through Dare to Lead training, beginning with the DEIB council pilot in December 2023 and continuing rollout statewide throughout 2024.

We are committed to make DCFS a workplace where all employees feel satisfied in their jobs and supported by management. We thank you for the information you provided to assist us in meeting that goal.

Sincerely,



Terri Porche Ricks  
Acting Secretary



## APPENDIX B: CHILD WELFARE SURVEY RESULTS OCTOBER 2022

This appendix contains results from the survey we sent to 1,433 DCFS employees who work in child welfare areas as of October 2022. These areas include Adoption, Centralized Intake, Child Protective Services, Family Services, Foster Care, Extended Foster Care, and Home Development. We received 816 responses, achieving an overall response rate of 56.9%. The number of responses varied by question, as indicated in each chart, because not every employee answered every question.

Total Responses by Work Area		
Primary Work Area	Count	Percent
Foster Care/Extended Foster Care	264	32.4%
Child Protective Services	169	20.7%
Family Services	74	9.1%
Adoption	45	5.5%
Home Development	41	5.0%
Centralized Intake	31	3.8%
Other*	192	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>100%</b>
*Includes administrative, support, and other CW employees such as leadership who do not work for a single work area. <b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.		

Total Responses by Region		
Region	Count	Percent
Region 1 - Orleans	91	11.1%
Region 2 - Baton Rouge	45	5.5%
Region 3 - Covington	102	12.5%
Region 4 - Thibodaux	61	7.5%
Region 5 - Lafayette	136	16.7%
Region 6 - Lake Charles	52	6.4%
Region 7 - Alexandria	61	7.5%
Region 8 - Shreveport	95	11.6%
Region 9 - Monroe	85	10.4%
No specific region	88	10.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.		

<b>Total Responses by Experience</b>		
<b>Years Experience</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1 Year or Less	81	9.9%
2-5 Years	183	22.4%
6-10 Years	196	24.0%
11-20 Years	181	22.2%
20 Plus Years	140	17.2%
No Answer	35	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.

<b>Job Satisfaction Results</b>						
<i>784 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I feel passionate about the work I do.	52.6%	36.2%	6.9%	2.9%	1.4%	<b>100%</b>
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	12.3%	41.8%	22.3%	16.2%	7.4%	<b>100%</b>
A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my unit/program.	28.8%	38.8%	13.9%	11.4%	7.1%	<b>100%</b>
I am satisfied with my total compensation package (pay, benefits, vacation, etc.)	5.1%	19.4%	17.9%	31.6%	26.0%	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.



<b>Job Performance and Barriers Results</b> <i>771-772 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
DCFS fosters and encourages an agency culture that promotes the welfare of children.	15.7%	42.1%	25.7%	8.8%	7.7%	<b>100%</b>
My supervisor gives me meaningful supervision and mentoring.	29.1%	36.3%	18.5%	9.5%	6.6%	<b>100%</b>
I receive relevant training that helps me increase my ability to do my job well.	12.8%	45.6%	21.4%	14.6%	5.6%	<b>100%</b>
My caseload/workload allows me sufficient time to provide children and families with the quality services they need.	7.1%	21.5%	32.5%	19.7%	19.2%	<b>100%</b>
Promotions are based on achievement and performance.	5.2%	21.5%	30.6%	22.1%	20.6%	<b>100%</b>
I have access to adequate resources to provide quality services to children and families.	8.4%	28.6%	28.5%	17.6%	16.9%	<b>100%</b>
DCFS gives me technological support that allows me to balance my documentation responsibilities with time spent serving children and families.	8.8%	31.4%	31.6%	15.8%	12.4%	<b>100%</b>
I feel safe while performing my job duties.	15.7%	35.6%	24.7%	15.8%	8.2%	<b>100%</b>
DCFS hires employees that have the necessary experience and skills.	7.1%	29.2%	34.7%	21.2%	7.8%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.						

<b>Treated with Respect and Appreciation Results</b> <i>783-784 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am treated with respect and feel appreciated by my immediate supervisor.	43.5%	35.8%	8.6%	8.0%	4.1%	<b>100%</b>
I am treated with respect and feel appreciated by supervisors and managers.	29.0%	39.2%	14.8%	10.8%	6.2%	<b>100%</b>
I am treated with respect and feel appreciated by leadership in Child Welfare.*	19.4%	31.7%	25.1%	13.8%	10.0%	<b>100%</b>
*Includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors <b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.						

<b>Bringing up Concerns Results</b> <i>770-772 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I feel comfortable bringing up concerns to my immediate supervisor.	31.7%	37.3%	12.5%	9.6%	8.9%	<b>100%</b>
If I were to bring up a concern it would be addressed.	17.5%	30.5%	27.7%	13.8%	10.5%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.						

<b>Demonstration that Staff Well-Being is a Priority Results</b> <i>783-784 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
My immediate supervisor demonstrates through their actions that staff well-being is a priority.	39.2%	33.4%	13.3%	8.9%	5.2%	<b>100%</b>
Supervisors and managers demonstrate through their actions that staff well-being is a priority.	20.4%	34.1%	21.6%	16.4%	7.5%	<b>100%</b>
Leadership in Child Welfare* demonstrate through their actions that staff well-being is a priority.	13.6%	26.1%	28.7%	18.1%	13.5%	<b>100%</b>
*Includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors <b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.						

<b>Accountability When CW Employees Behave Inappropriately Results</b> <i>770 Responses</i>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Child Welfare staff are held accountable when they behave inappropriately.	11.2%	27.4%	26.9%	21.8%	12.7%	<b>100%</b>
Supervisors are held accountable when they behave inappropriately.	9.0%	20.4%	33.9%	20.8%	15.9%	<b>100%</b>
Managers are held accountable when they behave inappropriately.	7.3%	17.5%	37.6%	20.3%	17.3%	<b>100%</b>
Leadership in Child Welfare* are held accountable when they behave inappropriately.	6.2%	15.5%	46.5%	14.9%	16.9%	<b>100%</b>
*Includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors <b>Source:</b> Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.						

<b>"In the past year how often, if at all, have you experienced any of the following from a DCFS Employee?" Results</b> 769 Responses						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>At Least Once this Past Year</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unprofessional behavior such as yelling, demeaning comments, or intimidation.	51.5%	27.3%	9.5%	7.2%	4.5%	<b>100%</b>
Retaliatory behavior.	65.4%	20.7%	5.9%	4.9%	3.1%	<b>100%</b>
Pressure to do something against policy.	76.3%	13.7%	5.2%	2.3%	2.5%	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.

<b>"Supervisors and managers model the following qualities?" Results</b> 760 Responses						
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Accountability	13.6%	35.4%	28.5%	15.1%	7.4%	<b>100%</b>
Professionalism	15.5%	43.0%	23.8%	12.4%	5.3%	<b>100%</b>
Integrity	15.4%	42.0%	26.3%	10.6%	5.7%	<b>100%</b>
Respect	15.8%	41.6%	22.6%	13.9%	6.1%	<b>100%</b>
Empathy	14.6%	35.5%	26.8%	14.0%	9.1%	<b>100%</b>
Leadership	15.5%	38.3%	26.6%	11.6%	8.0%	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.

<b>"Leadership in Child Welfare* model the following qualities?" Results</b> 760 Responses						
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Accountability	11.2%	34.6%	32.8%	12.2%	9.2%	<b>100%</b>
Professionalism	13.3%	44.1%	28.1%	7.4%	7.1%	<b>100%</b>
Integrity	12.4%	39.3%	32.1%	8.3%	7.9%	<b>100%</b>
Respect	12.5%	38.9%	30.5%	9.9%	8.2%	<b>100%</b>
Empathy	12.0%	33.2%	33.4%	12.1%	9.3%	<b>100%</b>
Leadership	12.2%	38.2%	31.2%	9.3%	9.1%	<b>100%</b>

\*Includes Area Directors, Regional Administrators, and State Office Managers and Directors  
**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from October 2022 survey of DCFS CW employees.