

FLASH SURVEY #2

CPS Worker Intent to Leave (ITL)

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In June 2016, DCF administered a flash survey to the state's child welfare workforce to explore the issue of worker turnover. The survey was administered electronically by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC), and sent to all workers (excluding supervisors) who have child welfare cases in eWiSACWIS.

This survey was a point-in-time snapshot of workers' views on their intent to leave (ITL) their jobs. Questions to gauge ITL included whether workers had considered looking for another job in the past six months, whether they had searched for a job in that time frame, and if so, whether they had sent out any résumés to potential employers. These job search behaviors capture different degrees of ITL. In addition, the survey included a series of questions about a number of factors known to be associated with worker turnover in child welfare systems. Appendix A shows the list of question items included in the survey. They can be categorized in the following manner:

- Burnout: The degree to which workers feel emotionally drained by the nature of their work.
- Career commitment: Whether workers intend for child welfare to be their long-term profession.
- Supervisor and coworker support: The extent to which workers feel that their team members are resources and sources of support in managing their workload.
- Organizational inclusion: The extent to which workers feel they are treated as professionals within their agencies.
- Stressors: A series of common child welfare worker stressors (adapted from the Kansas Workforce Initiative¹).
- Demographics: Worker age, gender, job tenure, parent status, marital status, education level, and social work training.

For most question items, workers were asked to respond to a five-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” with “neither agree nor disagree” as the midpoint. For the Stressors scale, workers responded to a four-point scale, from “never” to “almost always.” Demographic questions were “yes/no” or categorical in nature.

First, we offer results describing ITL and job search behaviors across all respondents. Then, we discuss findings on a subset of respondents who were exposed to a question on whether they intended to remain in child welfare upon leaving, leave child welfare altogether, or consider both child welfare and non-child welfare job options. We next show responses to ITL and job search behaviors by degrees of burnout and career commitment. Finally, scores for several scales and for specific items related to burnout, stress, and shocks (i.e., professional and personal life events that can lead a worker to consider quitting) are presented by region.

¹ More information about the Kansas Workforce Initiative and the Stress Inventory can be found at <http://www.kwi.ku.edu/programs/WorkerStress.shtml>.

ABOUT THE SAMPLE

In total, 957 of 1,945 staff members completed the survey, for a response rate of 50%. The State’s training system divides child welfare workers into 6 regions: Northern, Northeast, Southern, Southeast, Western, and Milwaukee County. The distribution of survey respondents across regions was reasonably similar to the distribution of the full population of workers across regions, although a larger proportion of workers from small and medium counties and a smaller proportion of workers from extra-large counties responded to the survey. Finally, a handful of workers (about 75) are not associated with a particular county or region, and are excluded from analyses that break out findings by region and population size.

RESULTS

ITL AND JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS BY JOB, EDUCATION, AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS.

Across the entire sample of respondents, 61% of the sample, or 580 workers, responded that they had considered searching for another job in the past six months. Table 1 shows that ITL does not statistically differ by education level, social work degree, lead worker status, social work licensure, gender, partner cohabitation, or presence of household children. There are statistically significant differences with respect to age, job tenure and participation in the IV-E training program; the oldest and longest-tenured workers both have markedly lower rates of ITL than younger workers. Regarding job search behaviors, only job tenure showed statistically significant differences, with those holding their jobs from 1-4 years and 5-10 years having higher rates of résumé sending than those with the shortest and longest job tenures. Similarly, significant differences in sending out 3 or more résumés was limited to age, following a similar pattern as ITL: those aged 25-34 had the highest rate (8.75%) of sending résumés.

Table 1: ITL and job search behaviors, by worker job, education, and demographic attributes

Demographic	Considered Leaving	Sent at least one résumé	Sent > 2 résumés	N
Job Tenure				
< 1 year	<i>48.95%</i>	<i>20.98%</i>	9.09%	143
1-4 years	<i>62.32%</i>	<i>26.30%</i>	9.48%	422
5-10 years	<i>71.25%</i>	<i>26.88%</i>	6.88%	160
> 10 years	<i>57.39%</i>	<i>16.96%</i>	3.91%	230
Lead Worker				
No	61.26%	23.85%	8.11%	826
Yes	57.48%	20.47%	4.72%	127
Education Level				
< Bachelor	47.06%	17.65%	2.94%	34
Bachelor	60.23%	21.42%	7.25%	621
≥ Master	62.91%	27.81%	8.94%	302
Social Work Degree				
BSW	58.35%	21.38%	7.13%	437
MSW	64.26%	28.09%	8.51%	235
Neither	61.21%	22.26%	7.77%	281
Has Social Work License				
No	62.46%	27.04%	<i>11.73%</i>	309
Yes	59.60%	21.45%	<i>5.71%</i>	646
Participated in a IV-E Trainee Program				
No	<i>59.30%</i>	23.04%	7.72%	828
Yes	<i>71.19%</i>	27.35%	7.69%	118
Age				
< 25	59.09%	26.15%	<i>13.85%</i>	66
25-34	65.16%	24.67%	<i>8.75%</i>	376
35-44	63.74%	25.48%	<i>6.46%</i>	262
45-54	53.55%	19.35%	<i>7.74%</i>	155
55+	45.83%	15.63%	<i>1.04%</i>	96
Gender				
Male	58.56%	27.27%	10.00%	111
Female	60.87%	22.79%	7.32%	846
Lives with Partner				
No	64.06%	27.06%	<i>10.98%</i>	256
Yes	59.29%	21.97%	<i>6.42%</i>	700
Household Children Present				
No	57.72%	22.24%	7.96%	492
Yes	63.71%	24.52%	7.31%	463
Total Sample				
	60.61%	23.30%	7.63%	957

Red italics indicate statistically significant differences, p<.05

JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS BY AGENCY FACTORS

Table 2 shows rates of ITL and job search behavior by agency attributes (i.e., job role, agency type, county population size, and state region). Differences were more pronounced in this area than with personal demographic factors. Workers in initial assessment were more likely to report ITL (69%) than those in other roles³. Workers in Milwaukee county and those in counties with relatively small populations indicated similarly high (about 69%) rates of ITL, compared to mid-size counties. State regions did not exhibit statistically significant differences in ITL. Regarding sending out résumés, responses followed a similar pattern. Most notably, 30% of workers for the state agency and private agencies reported sending out at least one résumé; in comparison, only about 20% of workers from county human services agencies did so. This pattern repeats itself among those who submitted three or more résumés, with the exception of agency type where the responses from those in state jobs and those in private agencies diverge.

Demographic	Considered Leaving Job	Searching: only to leave CW	Searching: Either job type	Searching: other CW job	Sent at least one résumé	Sent > 2 résumés	N
Agency Type							
County HS	57.35%	17.35%	35.00%	5.00%	20.94%	5.01%	340
Private	59.76%	18.29%	37.80%	3.66%	32.93%	12.20%	82
State	69.05%	9.52%	52.38%	7.14%	29.27%	14.63%	42
County Population Size							
Small	59.52%	11.90%	35.71%	11.90%	19.05%	4.76%	42
Medium	58.00%	16.00%	38.00%	4.00%	21.00%	5.00%	100
Large	55.56%	24.44%	25.56%	5.56%	18.89%	2.22%	90
Extra Large	57.94%	14.02%	40.19%	3.74%	23.58%	7.55%	107
Milwaukee	73.12%	19.35%	48.39%	5.38%	35.87%	13.04%	93
Region of State²							
Northern	61.76%	14.71%	35.29%	11.76%	23.53%	2.94%	34
Northeast	52.63%	12.28%	35.09%	5.26%	18.58%	6.19%	114
Southern	60.00%	10.91%	43.64%	5.45%	29.09%	12.73%	55
Southeast	60.71%	25.00%	33.93%	1.79%	23.21%	0.00%	56
Western	58.75%	23.75%	30.00%	5.00%	16.25%	2.50%	80
Milwaukee	73.12%	19.35%	48.39%	5.38%	35.87%	13.04%	93
Primary Job Role							
Access	48.28%	24.14%	22.41%	1.72%	20.69%	3.45%	58
IA	72.92%	18.75%	50.00%	4.17%	28.13%	9.38%	96
Ongoing	57.53%	14.73%	36.64%	6.16%	23.45%	7.59%	292
Other	38.89%	16.67%	22.22%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%	18
Total reduced sample							
	58.84%	16.81%	53.88%	4.96%	23.81%	7.14%	464
Red italics indicate statistically significant differences, $p < .05$							

² The percentages presented for the sections related to county population size and region of the state omit 65 workers whose counties of CPS practice were unknown.

³ Respondents were asked what percentage of their time was spent in CPS roles: Access, initial assessment, and ongoing. Workers who reported more than one role were categorized according to the area where they spent the most time.

Midway through survey administration, a new question was added, asking workers who expressed ITL whether they were considering another job in child welfare, outside of child welfare, or either type of job. A total of 464 workers took the survey while this question was active. Tables 3 and 4 show respondents' answers to what type of job workers were considering in their job searches. Three columns show the percentages for search type, and they are mutually exclusive. Workers could choose that they were considering jobs outside of child welfare, inside child welfare, or either job type. For the analysis on job search type, we limited responses to this group of 464 respondents.

Table 3 shows that for the most part, this group of respondents had very similar responses to the ITL questions for the full respondent group, suggesting these two groups (full survey group vs. late survey group only) are comparable. Regarding search type, Table 3 shows that the most frequent response to the type of job

Table 3: ITL, job search type, and job search behaviors by job, education, and demographic attributes

Demographic	Considered Leaving Job	Searching: only to leave CW	Searching: Either job type	Searching: only other CW job	Sent at least one résumé	Sent > 2 résumés	N
Job Tenure							
< 1 year	<i>45.45%</i>	14.29%	<i>29.87%</i>	1.30%	<i>22.08%</i>	10.39%	77
1-4 years	<i>63.68%</i>	13.43%	<i>43.28%</i>	6.97%	<i>27.64%</i>	8.54%	201
5-10 years	<i>62.86%</i>	17.14%	<i>41.43%</i>	4.29%	<i>30.00%</i>	8.57%	70
> 10 years	<i>57.02%</i>	23.68%	<i>28.95%</i>	4.39%	<i>14.91%</i>	1.75%	114
Lead Worker							
No	59.51%	18.02%	36.54%	4.94%	24.75%	6.93%	405
Yes	56.14%	8.77%	42.11%	5.26%	17.86%	8.93%	57
Education Level							
< Bachelor	50.00%	10.00%	40.00%	0.00%	25.00%	5.00%	20
Bachelor	57.24%	14.81%	37.71%	4.71%	20.95%	5.74%	297
≥ Master	63.27%	21.77%	35.37%	6.12%	29.45%	10.27%	147
Social Work Degree							
BSW	<i>53.52%</i>	13.62%	35.68%	4.23%	<i>19.34%</i>	<i>6.13%</i>	213
MSW	<i>67.57%</i>	19.82%	41.44%	6.31%	<i>32.73%</i>	<i>12.73%</i>	111
Neither	<i>60.14%</i>	19.57%	35.51%	5.07%	<i>23.19%</i>	<i>4.35%</i>	138
Has Social Work License							
No	62.26%	15.09%	42.14%	<i>5.03%</i>	29.94%	10.19%	159
Yes	56.77%	17.16%	34.65%	<i>4.95%</i>	20.46%	5.61%	303
Participated in a IV-E Trainee Program							
No	<i>56.93%</i>	16.58%	36.14%	4.21%	23.08%	6.70%	404
Yes	<i>73.58%</i>	18.87%	45.28%	9.43%	32.69%	11.54%	53
Age							
< 25	<i>65.52%</i>	13.79%	44.83%	6.90%	31.03%	17.24%	29
25-34	<i>64.50%</i>	13.61%	45.56%	5.33%	26.19%	7.74%	169
35-44	<i>62.96%</i>	22.96%	34.07%	5.93%	27.41%	6.67%	135
45-54	<i>47.62%</i>	16.67%	28.57%	2.38%	14.29%	4.76%	84
55+	<i>40.00%</i>	11.11%	24.44%	4.44%	15.56%	2.22%	45
Gender							
Male	46.94%	12.24%	30.61%	4.08%	25.00%	4.17%	49
Female	60.24%	17.35%	37.83%	5.06%	23.67%	7.49%	415
Lives with Partner							
No	64.23%	14.63%	41.46%	8.13%	26.23%	8.20%	123
Yes	56.89%	17.60%	35.48%	3.81%	22.94%	6.76%	341
Household children Present							
No	<i>54.11%</i>	16.02%	33.33%	4.76%	22.61%	7.39%	231
Yes	<i>63.79%</i>	17.67%	40.95%	5.17%	25.11%	6.93%	232
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Red italics indicate statistically significant differences, p<.05

search is searching for a job both inside and outside of child welfare. One interesting finding is that although respondents who reported receiving IV-E program support for their social work education reported ITL and job search behaviors at a higher rate than those who did not, over twice as many IV-E program recipients compared to non-recipients of IV-E training were considering leaving only to a job within child welfare. Also notable is that a larger percentage of lead workers indicated interest in staying in child welfare than non-lead workers.

Table 4 shows a similar pattern to Table 3. The largest proportion of workers who indicate ITL report that they would look for either type of job (i.e., child welfare or non-child welfare). Interestingly, those with state positions, and those with positions in Milwaukee (which are groups with a great deal of overlap), have the highest proportion of workers indicating that they would accept either job type. Overall, between approximately 10% and 25% of workers indicated they would only look for a job outside of child welfare.

Table 2F shows that workers across the spectrum of education level are interested in training regarding mental illness/mental health issues, substance abuse, cognitive impairments and learning disabilities, and parenting strengths and challenges. In addition, those with a master’s degree or higher were interested in neglect, those with a bachelor’s degree were interested in sexual abuse training, and those with a degree lower than a bachelor were interested in domestic violence training.

Table 4: ITL, job search type, and job leaving behaviors by agency attributes							
Demographic	Considered Leaving Job	Searching: only to leave CW	Searching: Either job type	Searching: other CW job	Sent at least one résumé	Sent > 2 résumés	N
Agency Type							
County HS	57.35%	17.35%	35.00%	5.00%	20.94%	5.01%	340
Private	59.76%	18.29%	37.80%	3.66%	32.93%	12.20%	82
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County Population Size							
Small	59.52%	11.90%	35.71%	11.90%	19.05%	4.76%	42
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Large	55.56%	24.44%	25.56%	5.56%	18.89%	2.22%	90
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Milwaukee	73.12%	19.35%	48.39%	5.38%	35.87%	13.04%	93
Region of State							
Northern	<i>61.76%</i>	14.71%	35.29%	11.76%	<i>23.53%</i>	<i>2.94%</i>	34
Northeast	<i>52.63%</i>	12.28%	35.09%	5.26%	<i>18.58%</i>	<i>6.19%</i>	114
Southern	<i>60.00%</i>	10.91%	43.64%	5.45%	<i>29.09%</i>	<i>12.73%</i>	55
Southeast	<i>60.71%</i>	25.00%	33.93%	1.79%	<i>23.21%</i>	<i>0.00%</i>	56
Western	<i>58.75%</i>	23.75%	30.00%	5.00%	<i>16.25%</i>	<i>2.50%</i>	80
Milwaukee	<i>73.12%</i>	19.35%	48.39%	5.38%	<i>35.87%</i>	<i>13.04%</i>	93
Primary Job Role							
Access	<i>48.28%</i>	24.14%	22.41%	1.72%	20.69%	3.45%	58
IA	<i>72.92%</i>	18.75%	50.00%	4.17%	28.13%	9.38%	96
Ongoing	<i>57.53%</i>	14.73%	36.64%	6.16%	23.45%	7.59%	292
Other	<i>38.89%</i>	16.67%	22.22%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%	18
Total reduced sample							
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Red italics indicate statistically significant differences, p<.05							

ITL AND JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS BY PREDICTORS OF WORKER TURNOVER.

To compare ITL and job search behaviors based on a number of measures associated with worker turnover in the research literature, we summed individual workers' responses to items within each question category (e.g., burnout), reverse coding items as necessary to ensure that higher scores reflect higher levels (e.g., of burnout). We then compare ITL and job search behaviors by looking at the scores from the top and bottom quartiles for each summary score. We refer to these two groups as "high" and "low" with respect to the relevant category. ITL and job search behaviors vary considerably by whether or not workers reported high or low scores on each scale category.

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Figures 1-3 show these comparisons. Figure 1 shows ITL and résumé sending by stress and burnout levels. The first comparison, "All", shows the rates of ITL and résumé sending across the entire survey sample for comparison's sake. Among workers who reported the highest levels of burnout and stress, 80-90% reported ITL and 35-40% reported sending out at least one résumé. Alternatively, the group that reported the lowest levels of burnout and stress indicated much lower ITL rates and rates of job search behaviors.

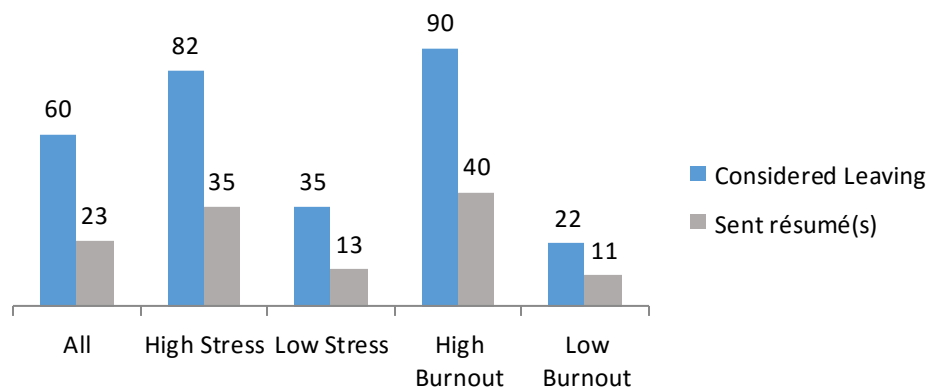


Figure 1: Considered leaving and sent résumé by burnout and stress (%)

JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS BY AGENCY FACTORS

Similarly, in Figure 2, the comparisons of high coworker/supervisor support and organizational inclusion show that those who feel the most positive about their agencies are much less likely to report ITL or sending résumés. Finally, Figure 3 shows that differences between those with high and low career commitment scores follow a similar pattern to other scale categories.

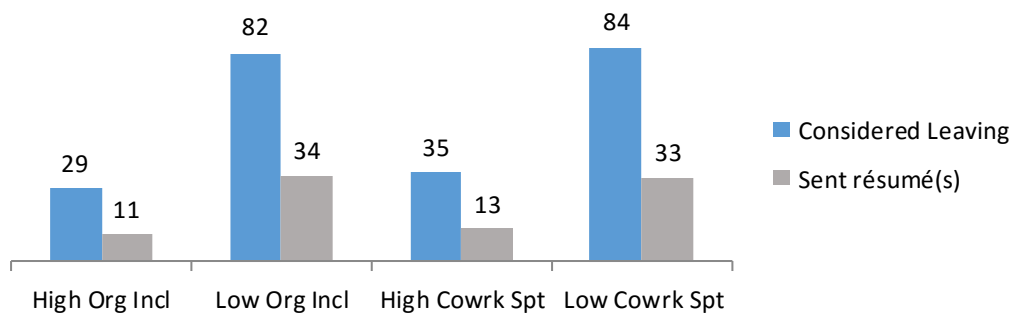


Figure 2: Considered leaving and sent résumé by organizational inclusion and coworker support (%)

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

In the tables below, characteristics related to work and work setting are captured with summative scores for various characteristics of work and work setting for the overall sample and by region.

JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS BY AGENCY FACTORS

Table 5 shows that in general, scores related to burnout, career commitment, coworker support, and organizational inclusion are relatively stable throughout the various regions of the state. The stability in these scales is in significant contrast to ITL and job search behaviors (see Table 4), where the percentage of workers who had considered leaving their jobs varied from about 50% in the Northern region to 73% in Milwaukee. Thus, while ITL and job search behaviors vary significantly by region, levels of burnout and career commitment and perceptions of coworker support and organizational inclusion do not. Of particular note is that workers rate their support from supervisors quite high (see 3 items from the coworker support scale in Appendix A). Out of a maximum 15 points, workers statewide reported an average of 11.3 on this subset of items. The distribution of answers is particularly high as well: nearly 60% of respondents said they “agree” or “strongly agree” to all three supervisor support questions.

A series of questions on stressors were adapted from the Kansas Workforce Initiative, a child welfare training organization⁴. Workers were asked to rate how often they found each of 13 items stressful, on a scale of 1-4.

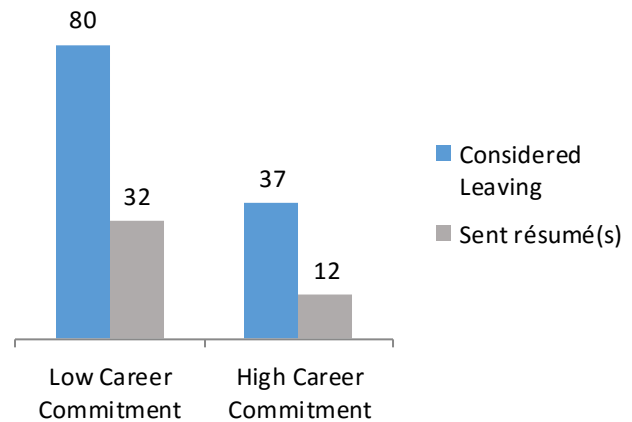


Figure 3: Considered leaving and sent résumé by career commitment (%)

Table 5: Scale outcomes for the full sample and by region

Scale	All	Northern	Northeast	Southern	Southeast	Western	Milwaukee
Burnout	20.79	20.17	20.74	20.73	20.37	20.54	20.64
Career Commitment	9.49	9.35	9.48	9.48	9.25	9.82	9.40
Coworker Support	18.62	17.95	18.71	18.52	18.43	17.40	19.22
Supervisor subscale	11.28	10.82	11.36	11.17	11.15	10.29	11.92
Organizational Inclusion	22.41	22.24	21.99	21.99	21.78	22.64	21.75

Table 6 shows the percentage of workers who reported each of the items were “frequently” or “almost always”

STRESSORS

stressful, presented for all workers and by region. Certain stressors vary depending on geography, while others are more consistent. For example, statewide, about 38% of workers said they found being held accountable for things outside of their control frequently or almost always stressful, while just 27% of workers from the Northern region, and more than half of workers from Milwaukee felt this way. Perceptions of safety varied by region, as well. Just 11% of the sample reported feeling unsafe in the field frequently or almost always, but 22% of respondents from Milwaukee reported this level of concern. Certain stressors were quite common across all regions, such as case documentation, lack of resources for families (particularly among northern counties), and insufficient staff to cover cases. Workers reported relatively less frequent stress from having lack of discretion in doing their jobs.

⁴ More information about the Kansas Workforce Initiative and the Stress Inventory can be found at <http://www.kwi.ku.edu/programs/WorkerStress.shtml>.

Table 6: Stressors- all workers and by region

In the past 6 months, have you found the following frequently or almost always stressful?	All	Northern	Northeast	Southern	Southeast	Western	Milwaukee
Being held accountable for things over which I have no control	37.8%	27.6%	34.2%	41.5%	43.5%	36.3%	50.6%
Being blamed for something that goes wrong	24.9%	24.1%	26.4%	30.1%	17.6%	21.9%	32.4%
Making difficult decisions	33.0%	36.8%	35.9%	35.0%	28.7%	38.4%	28.7%
Stakeholders (e.g., court personnel, therapists, teachers) devaluing my input	28.5%	23.0%	31.1%	34.3%	25.9%	22.8%	34.5%
Case documentation	53.8%	63.2%	54.9%	58.7%	47.2%	65.8%	47.1%
Inadequate information to do my job	19.6%	20.7%	16.2%	16.9%	21.3%	28.1%	21.8%
Lack of discretion in doing my job	13.0%	12.6%	14.0%	13.4%	13.9%	15.2%	13.2%
Fear of making a mistake	33.8%	40.2%	31.9%	36.6%	35.2%	33.1%	35.1%
Lack of resources for families	55.3%	71.3%	51.1%	67.8%	63.0%	61.6%	43.1%
Insufficient staff to cover cases	51.7%	60.9%	53.2%	54.5%	41.7%	60.3%	54.6%
Inadequate training for the job	18.9%	24.1%	19.7%	16.1%	20.4%	30.3%	13.9%
Families getting treated unfairly	19.9%	14.9%	17.9%	26.1%	22.2%	16.7%	21.8%
Feeling unsafe in the field	11.2%	14.9%	7.7%	7.0%	8.3%	12.3%	22.4%

LIFE EVENTS

Workers were also asked a series of questions regarding life events (both personal and work-related) which are theorized to influence job leaving behaviors. We included these questions to assess whether some of these factors, unrelated to the well-known challenges of child welfare work, may be related to workers’ TTL and job search behaviors. The inventory of 14 events and the percentage of workers from the entire state and by region who experienced each event in the past six months is shown in Table 7. Workers from Milwaukee reported much higher rates of experiencing an unsafe situation in the field than workers from other regions. However, compared to other parts of the state, workers from Milwaukee reported fewer disagreements with supervisors and coworkers. The percentage of workers from Milwaukee reporting applying to, entering, or finishing a degree program was nearly twice as high as in other regions. Also notable is that while it is consistent across the regions, nearly two-thirds of workers reported having a case or family that was particularly troubling.

Table 7: Life events experienced by all workers and by region

In the past 6 months, have you...	All	Northern	Northeast	Southern	Southeast	Western	Milwaukee
Experienced a case or a family that was particularly troubling?	64.60%	65.50%	62.40%	67.80%	68.50%	67.10%	66.10%
Experienced the death of a close friend or family member?	20.60%	18.60%	20.40%	20.30%	18.50%	24.80%	21.40%
Had a major disagreement with a supervisor or coworker?	28.90%	29.90%	33.20%	31.50%	33.30%	32.20%	20.20%
Exited a marriage or stopped living with a partner?	4.59%	8.05%	5.53%	3.50%	7.41%	1.37%	3.47%
Applied to or enrolled in an academic/degree program?	10.10%	6.90%	9.79%	8.39%	8.33%	7.53%	19.00%
Finished or graduated from an academic/degree program?	5.43%	5.81%	3.40%	6.29%	5.56%	4.79%	9.83%
Had a household family member who experienced a major illness?	20.20%	20.70%	22.10%	16.80%	15.70%	20.50%	23.60%
Entered a marriage or started living with a partner?	7.30%	4.60%	8.09%	11.90%	3.70%	8.90%	6.90%
Become a parent of your first child?	3.65%	2.30%	5.53%	1.41%	3.70%	4.11%	2.87%
Become a parent of an additional child?	3.97%	4.60%	6.41%	2.80%	4.63%	2.74%	3.45%
Been passed over for a promotion?	8.24%	3.45%	7.66%	6.99%	15.70%	7.53%	9.77%
Felt that you were encouraged to resign?	4.59%	6.90%	4.26%	2.80%	1.85%	6.16%	6.32%
Had a spouse/partner receive a job offer in a different region?	4.17%	5.75%	2.55%	4.90%	5.56%	4.11%	5.17%
Had an experience in the field that made you feel very unsafe?	29.70%	26.40%	29.40%	32.20%	21.30%	34.20%	37.40%

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

At the end of the survey, workers were asked two open-ended questions regarding their most and least favorite aspects of their jobs. Approximately 780 of the 960 respondents provided answers to one or both of these questions. The most common response about favorite job aspects was working directly with children and families – more than 300 workers provided an answer in this vein. Similarly, the second most common response (150) was having an opportunity to help people, or to make a difference in the lives of families. Workers also cited observing families and children make progress towards goals as a favorite aspect (120), as well as keeping children safe (49). Workers mentioned having supportive coworkers (87) and professional flexibility and autonomy (59) as favorite aspects of their work. Consistent with responses from the scale items regarding supervisors and coworkers, 28 respondents noted that good supervision was one of their favorite aspects of their jobs. Respondents also discussed the varied nature of child welfare work (59), noting that each day is different and often unpredictable.

Workers' least favorite aspects of their jobs were more varied, and tended to be related to policy, workload, and agency characteristics. The most common response was documentation burden and working within eWiSACWIS, with 229 responses of this nature. The second most frequent aspect cited was high caseloads (86), which leads to factors such as not having enough time to get the job done (34), always feeling behind (10), and being unable to do “real social work” (5). Similarly, respondents noted needing to work at odd hours at the expense of their own families (21). Some workers felt that they were not paid adequately for their jobs, have seen pay decline, or that they have had to work extra hours without additional compensation (33). Some workers cited having supervisors that were either absent or insufficiently knowledgeable or experienced (72) as well as non-supportive administrative leadership (64). High turnover, stress, and burnout (38) were cited, as were court appearances that present challenges (37). Some workers also noted that non-supportive agency cultures and “office politics” (65) were the least favorite parts of their jobs. Finally, workers discussed how challenging cases (46), conflicts with clients (34), and difficult decision making (18) were undesirable parts of their jobs.

CONCLUSION

The results of this survey show that workers who are more stressed by their jobs, more burned out, and less supported by their agencies and coworkers are more likely to consider leaving their jobs. The results also show that while there are some systematic differences in ITL by region or agency type, there are fewer differences in ITL by demographic categories, with the exception of worker age. Further, while there is a great deal of consideration for leaving child welfare jobs, the majority of workers who are considering leaving are not opposed to staying in the field of child welfare. This suggests that while workers are dissatisfied with their current positions, they are not necessarily dissatisfied with the field. Finally, there is significant variation across the state's regions regarding issues such as stressors and life events, but little variation in CPS burnout, organizational inclusion, co-worker support, and career commitment.

There are some limitations to keep in mind regarding this survey. Of primary concern is response bias. About 50% of the workforce replied to this survey. While this is an excellent response rate for an electronic survey, it is possible that workers who responded do not adequately represent the statewide child welfare workforce. For example, workers who are considering leaving may have been more (or less) likely to respond to the survey.

The responses to this survey should be considered in a national context, as well. The high rates of ITL and job leaving behaviors found in Wisconsin reflect a larger national problem of high child welfare workforce turnover. While there is generally high consideration to leave, our results show that workers who have low burnout and benefit from supportive work environments report much lower intention to leave and fewer job search behaviors. This survey suggests that resources aimed at developing supervisors and encouraging coworker support may improve worker retention.

APENDIX A

Scales and Question Items

Career Commitment

Before taking this job, I was actively looking for a child welfare position.
If I could get another job outside of child welfare paying the same amount, I would probably take it.
If I could do it all over again, I would choose to work in child welfare.

Supervisor and Coworker Support

My supervisor is available for me when I need input and guidance.
My supervisor is a good resource for me.
I am able to manage my workload effectively.
I feel supported by my supervisor.
I feel supported by my coworkers.

Organizational Inclusion

I have a say in the way I do my job.
The leadership in this agency cares about my well-being.
I feel valued as a staff member.
This agency supports my efforts to maintain a work-personal life balance.
I am treated with respect and professionalism at my agency.
My current salary is appropriate for the work that I do in my job.
I am confident that I could earn a higher salary if I left this job.

Burnout

I am happy in my current position.
I feel connected to others at work.
I feel overwhelmed by my workload.
I feel a strong desire to advocate for my clients
My job motivates me to do my best each day.
My work environment is toxic.

Stressors

Lack of resources for families
Inadequate information to do my job
Stakeholders (e.g., court personnel, therapists, teachers) devaluing my input
Being held accountable for things over which I have no control
Case documentation
Being blamed for something that goes wrong
Feeling unsafe in the field
Insufficient staff to cover cases
Inadequate training for the job
Making difficult decisions
Lack of discretion in doing my job
Fear of making a mistake
Families getting treated unfairly
