

# The Child Welfare Workforce

What Research Does (and  
Doesn't) Tell Us About  
Turnover and Retention

# Education

- Requirements of SW degrees associated with lower agency turnover (Russell, 1987)
- BSW graduates retained at higher rate than MSW's (Lewandowski, 1998)
- Graduates of special CW social work programs likely to remain on the job (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Okamura & Jones, 1998)
- SW degree linked to intent to remain (Ellett, 2000)

# Personal Factors

- Commitment, investment, sense of mission (Harrison, 1995; Bernatovicz, 1997; Reagh, 1994; Rycraft, 1994)
- Self-efficacy (Ellett, et al 1995; Ellett, 2000)
- Human Caring (Ellett, 2002)

# Hiring and Selection Practices

- Understanding of job (Graef & Hill, 2000; Rycraft, 1994)

# Organizational Factors

- **Supervision** (Arkansas DCFS, 2002; Bernatovicz, 1997; Cicero-Reese & Black, 1998; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; GAO, 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Samantrai, 1992; Scannapieco & Connell-Corrick, 2003; Yoo, 2002)
- **Ratings of professional organizational culture significantly related to employee intent to remain in CW** (Ellett, 2000)

# Organizational Factors (cont.)

- Flexibility, autonomy (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Malm, et al., 2001; Rycraft, 2001; Texas PRS, 2001)
- Agency-court relationships (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Ellett, Ellett, & Rugutt, 2003; Malm, et al., 2001)

# Salary and Benefits

- **Low, noncompetitive salaries** (CWLA, 2001; Malm, et al., 2001; Social Work Education Consortium, 2001; CWLA, 2005)
- **Leaving for higher salaries** (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Scannapieco & Connell-Corrick, 2003)

# Caseload/Workload

- Caseload (CWLA, 2001)
- Workload (AFSCME, 1998; CWLA, 2001; GAO, 2003; Malm, et al., 2001)
  - Documentation
  - Limited service provision

# Conclusions

- Supportive Supervision
- Salary
- Workload
- Flexibility
- Personal Characteristics (professional commitment, investment, self-efficacy)
- Education (SW, IVE)

# Questions Remaining

- Uniform definition of variables
- Clearer definitions of competencies
- Linkages between specific competencies and retention
- Clearer understanding of organizational factors
- Interactive effects of variables