



Department of
Youth Services

Message from DYS Director Harvey Reed
Improving Staff Retention and Job Satisfaction
December 4, 2014

Dear Staff:

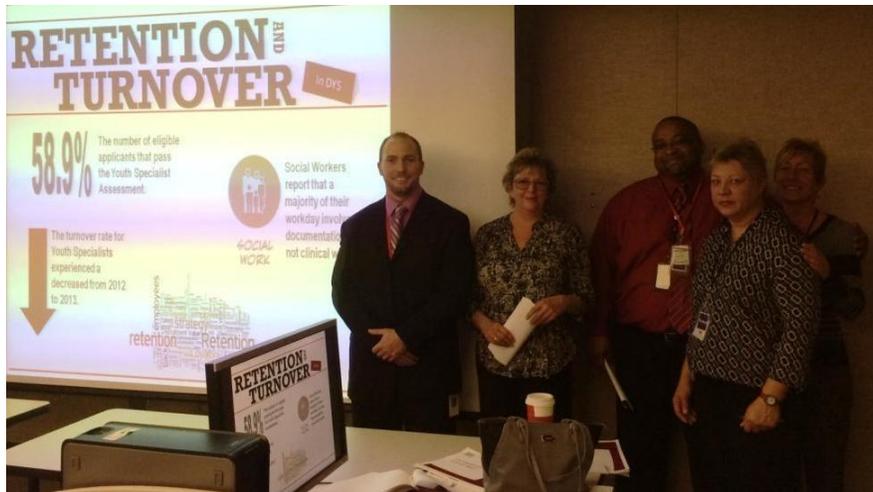
I've said it before, and I'll say it again: staff are our most important resource. But when it comes to selecting and preparing new staff, we can do better to invest in the individuals new to DYS to help bring them along in the unique work that we do.

Over the last several months, a committee of 20 DYS staff from throughout the state worked hard to address a critical challenge within our agency: increasing the retention rate for Youth Specialists and Social Workers. Employee retention refers to the length of time employees stay with DYS, as opposed to employee turnover, which is the percentage of employees who leave the agency.

The group took a hard look at why we have lost so many staff, especially in these two positions, and came up with recommendations that we are already in the process of implementing. By making improvements to employee selection, onboarding (equipping new staff with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful), and coaching, we will build a healthier organization and retain quality staff. Highlights of the group's recommendations follow:

- Eliminate the 21-page mandatory competency questionnaire (this has already been eliminated)
- Provide regionalized testing sites
- Revise the Youth Specialist Assessment to reflect current job duties
- Maintain contact with applicants throughout the job application process
- Provide meaningful questions during interviews
- Set aside time to provide applicants with site tours
- Provide trainings convenient for those who live in the northern part of the state
- Develop a cohort program for each pre-service class so that participants can gain a sense of belonging
- Conduct "stay" interviews to address a new employee's needs during the probationary months
- Provide coaching so that new employees receive additional guidance and support and can become more comfortable in their job duties

You can review the entire report on the Portal by clicking [HERE](#).



Subcommittee chairs present the committee's work to executive staff

Pictured from left to right: Bryan Weimerskirch, Juvenile Parole Officer, Toledo Region; Darlene Schmidt, Senior Human Capital Manager, Cuyahoga Hills JCF; Sean Tuggle, Operations Manager Administrator, Cuyahoga Hills JCF; Maria Kawentel, Senior Juvenile Parole Officer, Cleveland Region; and Jill Ames, Senior Juvenile Parole Officer, Akron Region.

I would like to thank every single individual involved in this important work. The group's ideas for improving recruitment, selection, onboarding, and coaching are being acted on to not only improve retention and job satisfaction for new staff, but also to ultimately make DYS a better work environment for everyone.

Get Involved in 2015!

The Retention Committee offered participating staff a chance to have their voices heard and make our agency better. In 2015, there will be more opportunities for you to get involved.

Committee work provides a chance to network with colleagues, gain valuable and timely information about ongoing and recently completed initiatives, learn new technologies, and better understand current practices. Committee participants are able to establish professional relationships with individuals from other geographic areas and disciplines, broadening their knowledge and perspectives. These relationships often are maintained for years, providing opportunities to informally share experiences, discuss mutual challenges, and obtain guidance.

I would like to personally encourage you to join the hard working men and women who give of their work time to participate in committee work to improve our agency. Feel free to contact the Office of Quality Assurance and Improvement by emailing Wendi Faulkner, Bureau Chief, at Wendi.Faulkner@dys.ohio.gov to share your interests and ideas for future projects.