



QUARTERLY DCYF SOCIAL SERVICE SPECIALISTS

Report to the Legislature



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES





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Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with ESHB 1109 Sec. (1) (g), which requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) – beginning Oct. 15, 2019, and each calendar quarter thereafter – to provide a tracking report for social service specialists and corresponding social services support staff to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature. The report includes the following information identified separately for social service specialists doing case management work, supervisory work and administrative support staff, and identified separately by job duty or program, including but not limited to intake, child protective services investigations, child protective services family assessment response and child and family welfare services:

- (i) Total full-time-equivalent employee authority, allotments and expenditures by region, office, classification and band, and job duty or program
- (ii) Vacancy rates by region, office and classification and band
- (iii) Average length of employment with the department and, when applicable, the date of exit for staff exiting employment with the department by region, office, classification and band and job duty or program

Introduction

Data covers the time period from July through September 2020. Job classifications included are Social Service Specialist (SSS) 2, 3 and 5, Social Service Support Specialist, Secretary Senior, Lead and Supervisor, Social and Health Program Consultant 1, 2, 3 and 4. DCYF does not have any permanent Social Service Specialist 1 positions. This classification is used as a training level within higher-level SSS positions. SSS3s are typically considered the case-carrying level, SSS4s are leads and SSS5s are supervisors. DCYF has not created/established any SSS4 positions as yet. Position descriptions have not been finalized for this new level. Further description of these job classifications are located in the Appendix.

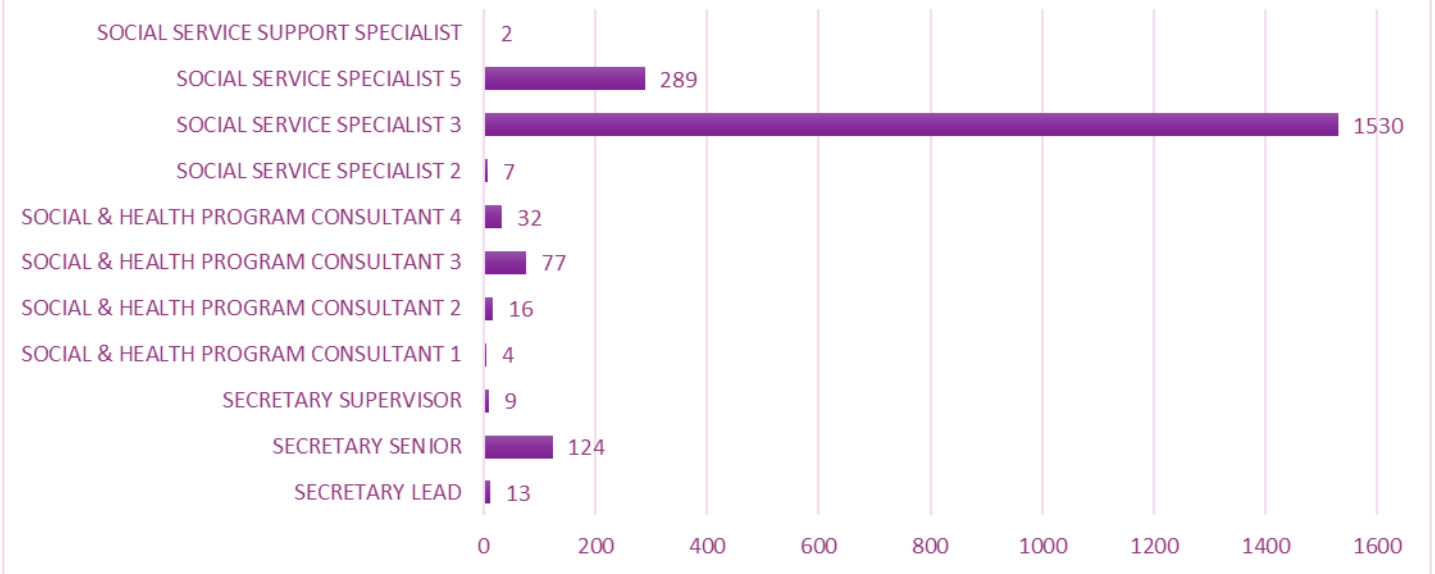
Expenses charts indicate the changes expected due to COVID-19 restrictions affecting citizens. Case Carrying Social Service Specialists were not required to conduct the mandatory furloughs. Non case carrying employees conducted the mandatory furlough days and the resulting reduction in overall expenses is noticed. Other measures were not as affected. Separations remained somewhat constant, however vacancy rates decreased slightly overall.

Total FTE Counts

Full-Time Equivalent Employee Authority.

The number of available positions appears to be remaining more consistent. Positions must be approved through the Position Control Board to be established. FTE counts are stabilizing.

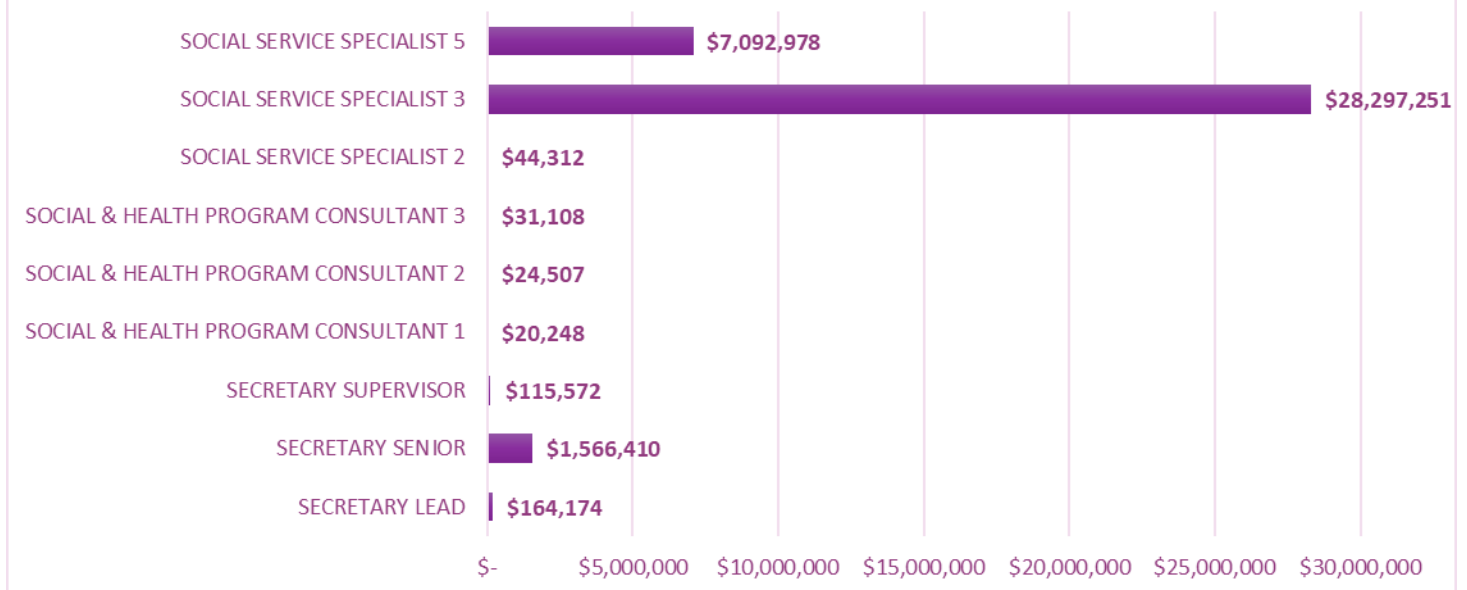
Number of Positions by Job Class



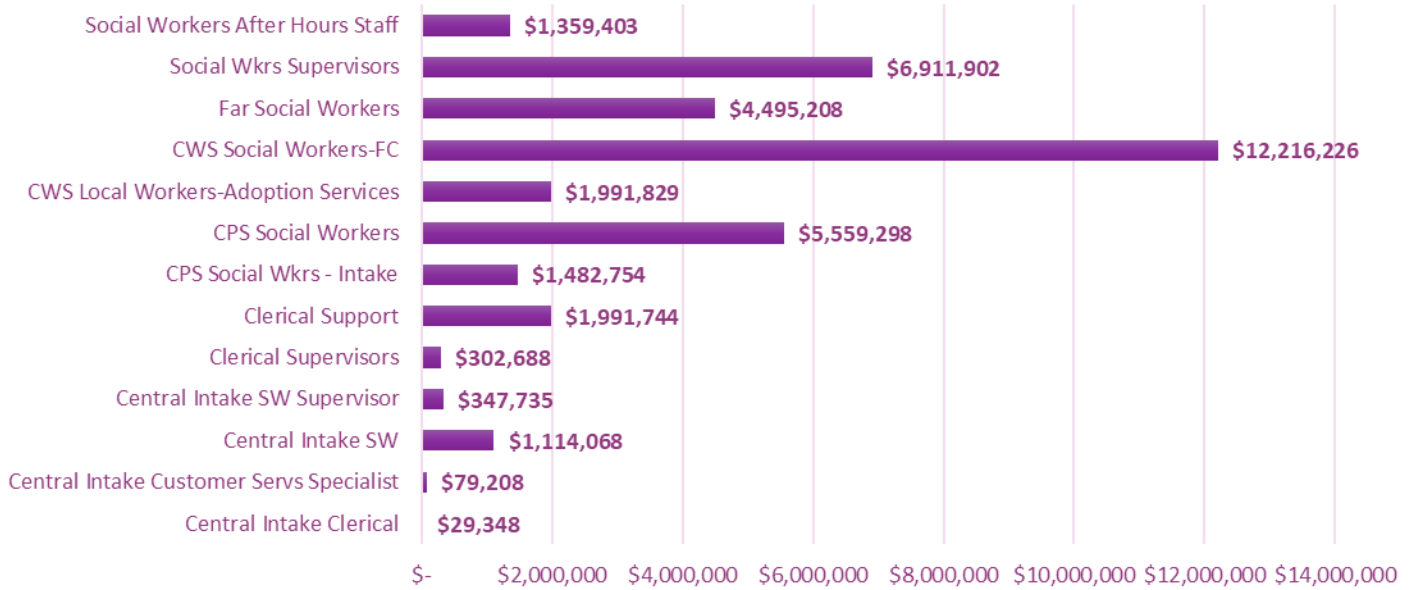
Expenditures

The charts below display allotments and expenditures by region, office, classification and band and job duty or program. The quarterly expenses by job class chart depicts employer expenses for July through Sept 2020. Other budgetary expenses such as office supplies or equipment are not included. Many employees experienced mandatory furloughs during this quarter. Furloughs in July were one day each week, August and September were one day each month. Most case carrying employees were exempt from furloughs, however, non case carrying were not exempt and were required to furlough. Compared to last quarter expenses, a reduction of nearly \$1 million resulted from furloughs.

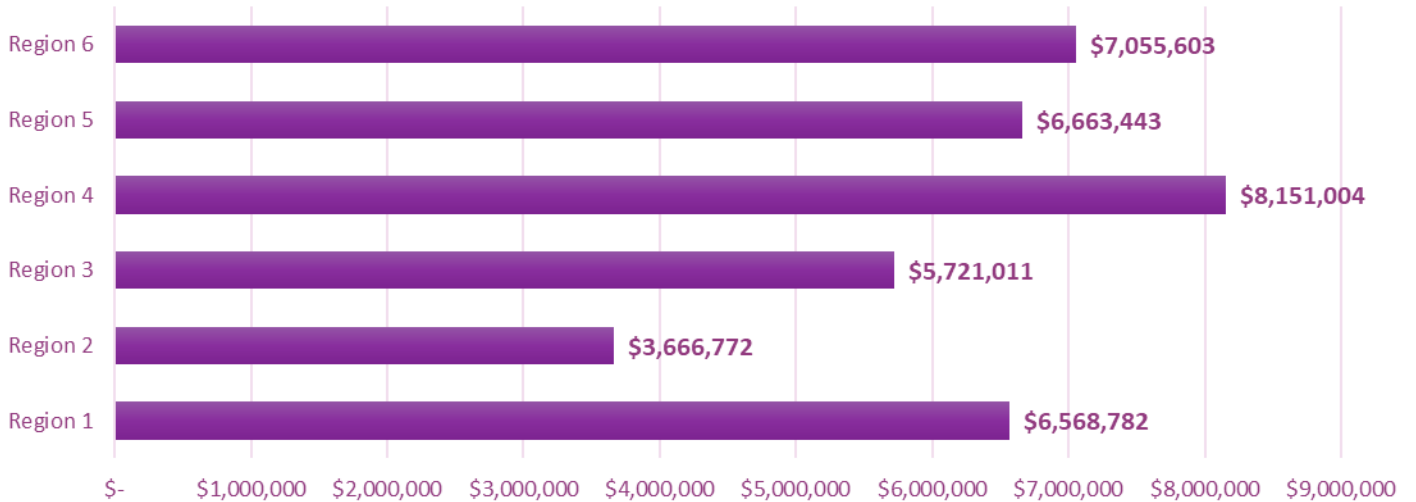
Quarterly Expense by Job Class



Quarterly Expense by Program Area



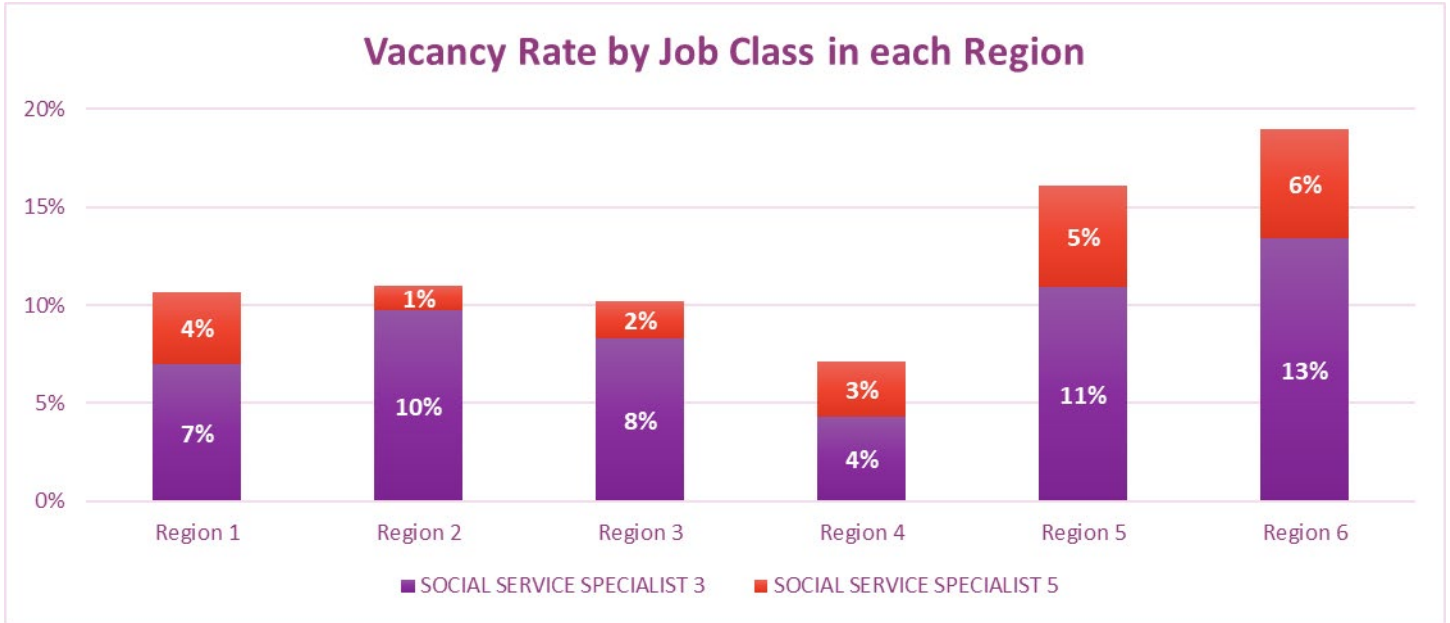
Quarterly Expense by Region



Vacancy Rates

Overall vacancy rates are showing small declines. The vacancy rate for Child Welfare Field Operations between July 2020 and Sept 2020 remained at 9%. Job classes in the overall rate include Area Administrators (WMS), Administrative Assistants, Forms and Records Analysts, Office Assistants, additional support positions, as well as the Social Service Specialist series. The vacancy rate for WMS was 6%, and support staff was a steady 10%.

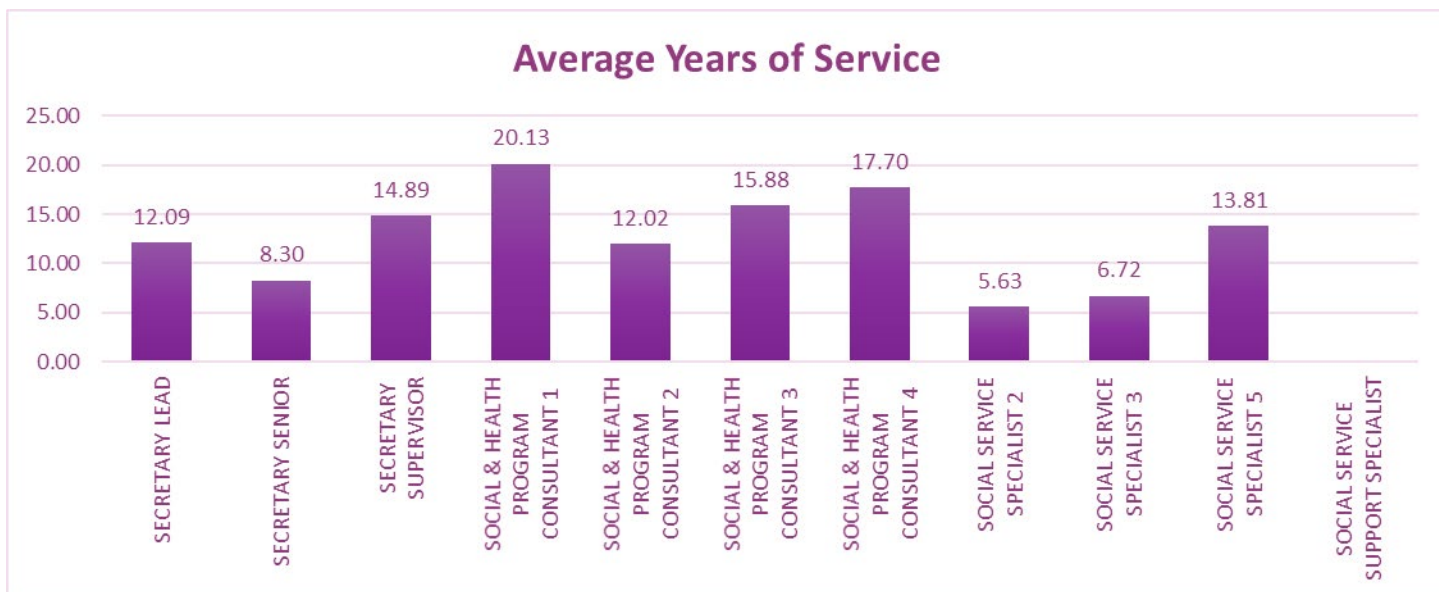
In further detail, for the case carrying Social Service Specialist 3 job class, the agency-wide vacancy rate was 9% for this quarter. Supervisory SSS5s experienced a reduction in vacancies from 5% during the same period. The chart below displays vacancy rates per SSS3 and SSS5 job classes by region. DCYF does not have any permanent positions in the SSS1 classification. In the SSS2 classification, DCYF has 11 positions, 6 of which are filled.



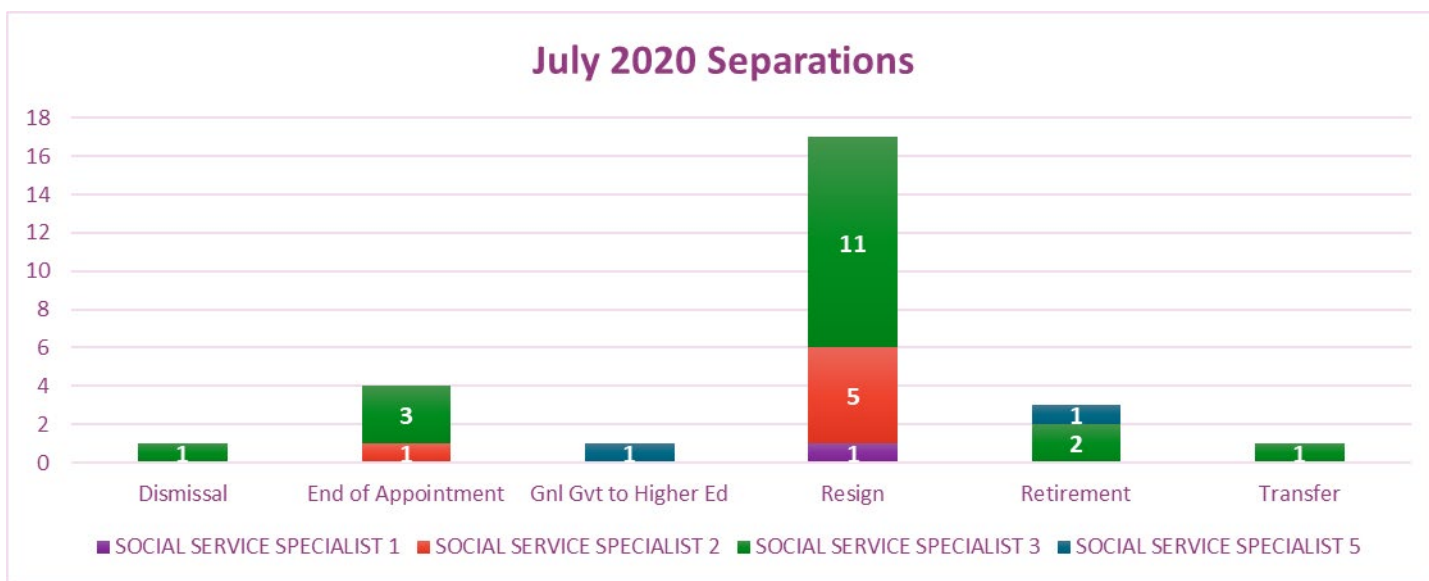
Average Length of Employment

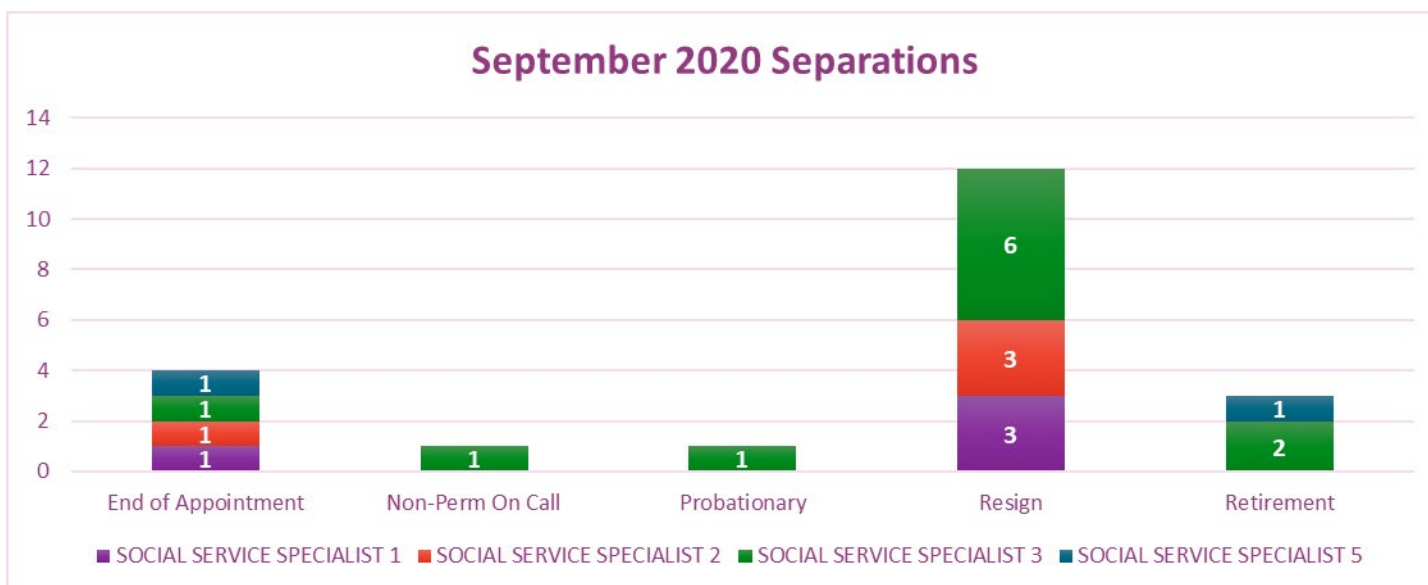
The Average Years of Service chart displays the average length of employment with Washington State by each job class.

QUARTERLY DCYF SOCIAL SERVICE SPECIALISTS



The following charts are of employees leaving DCYF during this quarter. Transfer, Probationary, General Government to Higher Ed, and Non-Perm On Call describe employees who remain in state service in an agency other than DCYF. A total of 71 employees left DCYF between July and Sept 2020. Six of them remained state employees at other agencies or higher education institution. Resignations continue to be the predominant reason code for leaving.





Conclusion

The Department has not tracked the specific reasons staff leave the public child welfare system. Anecdotally, social service staff describe high degrees of stress related to job demands and an increase in acuity levels of the clients they serve. This increase in the severity and number of issues faced by both parents and children make workers vulnerable to assault and other stressors. A greater number of youth are entering the child welfare system subsequent to discharge from other systems of care. There are children and youth whose mental illness, substance abuse and exposure to trauma generates such challenging behaviors that they cannot be maintained in a family setting, or even a group residential setting. Yet these youth are being transported by staff or otherwise provided supervision in offices, hotels or the community, and subjecting staff to injury or property destruction. The

Department has lost qualified staff who may work as Social Service Specialists in other public agencies with considerably lower stress levels and the same salary, or can work in hospital or other institutional settings for a much higher salary. Fewer staff enter public child welfare intending to make the Department their career, and the agency has lost staff in the first few weeks of their employment when they cannot cope with job demands.

There has been some impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff. Child welfare is considered an essential function, and staff have been required to continue to report to the office or to the field when needed. Parent-child visitations and in-home health and safety visits were provided virtually for a time, but are now being conducted in-person. Child protection staff have continued to respond in-person to conduct investigations and provide services. The Department has quickly mobilized quarantine centers for COVID-positive children in foster and group care who could not be safely quarantined in their placement. These centers were staffed with existing social service employees who agreed to volunteer to supervise children. Staff have had a great deal of concern of the risk to which they and subsequently their families face by continuing to have face-to-face contact with clients, despite the availability of Personal Protective Equipment. A number of staff are vulnerable to the virus, and have a Reasonable Accommodation, therefore they are unable to respond to the field. This has increased demands on other workers who must conduct essential operations. Staff with caregiving responsibilities for their own children not attending in-person school, may have to be available at a moment's notice to respond to an emergency in the field, which has made it very difficult for a few staff with children to remain employed.

However, other staff have found opportunities in their current teleworking situation, which has caused the Department to rethink former limitations to teleworking. Little research has been conducted on retention of child welfare staff related to teleworking. The Department is involved with a five-year research grant to determine whether opportunities for teleworking may positively impact retention of social service staff. Staff in experimental offices were being allowed to telework up to two days a week as a part of the project prior to the pandemic, to determine if this improved retention. Although the researchers continue to evaluate data, the current COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this project, in that most staff are teleworking full-time, which makes it more difficult to study research effects. The Department hopes to demonstrate that teleworking can have a positive impact on retention, while continuing to support staff through connections to their colleagues and supervisors, which is critical in a high-stress environment.

Appendix

Social Service Specialists Job Classification Definitions per OFM State HR

SSS1 – This is the entry-level, in-training classification for the professional social services series. Performs intakes, assessments, and/or investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, personal exploitation or self-neglect of vulnerable adults or abuse and neglect of children. Clients served are children and/or families in which risk of child abuse or neglect is minimal, or adults with disabilities resulting from varying degrees of incapacity, or vocational, social, cultural or health impairments that hinder economic or residential independence.

SSS2 – This is the journey level of the series. Positions provide professional-level social services to children and/or families in which risk of child abuse or neglect are minimal or investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial/personal exploitation and self-neglect for vulnerable adults resulting from varying degrees of incapacity, or vocational, social, cultural or health impairments that hinder economic or residential independence.

SSS3 – Functions as a lead worker or sole case manager in a remote location. Positions that serve as a lead worker or sole case manager in a remote location are responsible for the full scope of social services provided in that location.

SSS4 – Positions at this level serve as a lead worker and perform advanced-level specialized case management conducting investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, personal exploitation or self-neglect of vulnerable adults and children. (Established July 1, 2019)

SSS5 – Functions as the first-line supervisor of a unit of Social Service Specialists (implemented July 1, 2019).

Social Services Support and Administrative Staff job classification definitions:

Social Service Support Specialist – Assists Social Service Specialists in providing services to children and/or families where there is risk of child abuse or neglect, such as: conducting helath and safety home visits, transporting children to scheduled visitations, and/or supervising chidren/parent visitations.

SHPC 1 – Assist a higher level Program Manager by developing a portion of and/or monitoring, evaluating, or coordinating social, financial or health services programs, projects or the program policies and procedures. May develop and/or conduct training in program policies and procedures to staff or service vendors

SHPC 2 – Independently develop, administer and/or monitor social, financial or health services programs; or the program policies and procedures for use by staff or service vendors; or develop plans for monitoring service delivery; or develop, implement, monitor and provide statewide program consultation and/or technical assistance to staff, community or providers to enhance the delivery of services; or serves as a licensor of daycare centers.

SHPC 3 – Within the social service system, these positions serve as a designated lead worker, directing and monitoring the activities of a team comprised of professional level social service staff, other professional staff, families and the community in providing guidance to families that are at risk of dependency and/or serving

clients with severe and intense social service needs. These positions also develop, administer and/or monitor social, financial or health services programs; or the program policies and procedures used by staff or vendors.

SHPC 4 - (1) Serves as a designated specialist for client eligibility for social services, the training of staff who conduct client eligibility assessments and the monitoring of staff and staff processes in meeting state and federal policies and regulations. Conducts quality assurance audits and review responses to quality assurance audits, as necessitated by legal, statutory or legislative requirements. Reviews and approves corrective action plans.

OR

(2) Oversees the intake and coordination of client cases to include acting as the liaison with internal DCYF entities and external entities such as law enforcement, the courts, attorneys and community-based social service organizations; and monitors these cases through the abuse, neglect or financial exploitation hearings process to ensure the health, safety and well-being of vulnerable children and adults.

Secretary – In support of a supervisor and/or staff members, provides secretarial services and assistance for the purpose of facilitating the supervisor’s and/or staff members’ own work and relieving the supervisor and/or staff members of day-to-day clerical detail. Applies knowledge of supervisor’s and/or staff members’ work commitments including status of projects and nature of contacts. Secretarial duties include making travel arrangements, scheduling meetings, taking notes and transcribing minutes, screening calls and visitors, keeping supervisors and/or staff member's calendar(s) and committing supervisor’s and/or staff members’ time.

Secretary Lead – As the designated lead worker, assigns, instructs and checks the work of lower-level staff and performs the duties of Secretary Senior including complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies, applications and developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping, or filing system(s). Positions establish office procedures, standards, priorities and deadlines, coordinate office operations, initiate action to ensure work unit and/or office goals are met and have frequent contacts with clients, the public, staff members from other departments, students, and faculty.

Secretary Senior – Performs complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies or applications, developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping; or filing system(s), establishing office procedures, standards, priorities, and deadlines, and coordinating office operations. Positions initiate action to ensure work unit and office goals are met and have frequent contacts with clients, the public, staff members from other departments, students and faculty.

Secretary Supervisor – Supervise office support staff, interview and recommends the selection of applicants, conduct training, assign and schedule work, act on leave requests, conduct annual performance evaluations and recommend corrective or disciplinary actions. Positions establish office procedures, standards, priorities and deadlines and have frequent contact with clients, the public, students, faculty, staff members from other

departments and management staff. Positions perform complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work to meet internal and external deadlines, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies and applications, developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping, or filing system(s), coordinating office operations and initiating action to ensure work unit and office goals are met. Positions may perform administrative duties as delegated by the supervisor and/or provide and coordinate administrative support functions for a large unit. Exercise independent judgment to accomplish assignments or solve problems and to develop new work methods, procedures, strategies or modify existing work methods, procedures; and strategies to solve new or unusual problems. Work is subject to review at the completion stage to determine effectiveness in producing expected results.