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Factors Associated With Employee Satisfaction in Minnesota Community Action Agencies

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ABSTRACT

In 2011, the state of Minnesota faced a difficult budgetary decision. At the time of the budget, the state HHS budget had been vetoed by the Governor and State Employees were preparing for a government shutdown. Disagreement between the Republican majority and the Democratic Governor on how to balance the state budget had serious implications for Community Action Agencies that received, on average, 10% of their annual funding from the State of Minnesota in 2010 (MNCAP, 2010).

Considering the fact that budget cuts would be imminent, and raises and bonuses unlikely, the JSS includes nine subscales related to employee satisfaction. The Job Satisfaction Survey© (JSS) was included in an online survey along with questions related to demographics and distributed via email. The data was collected and analyzed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research regarding employee satisfaction among social service and non-profit agencies has provided a significant amount of information related to the factors that retain or deter workers. In fact, job satisfaction is highly correlated with retention. In her research, Freud found that job satisfaction “was the most meaningful factor influencing withdrawal intention,” (2005, p. 16). While there are several theories offered to explain retention and attrition, they tend to share some common themes. Listed below are reasons regularly cited in the literature for workers and organizations. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION

Support from co-workers and supervisors
Recognition for excellent work
Adequate compensation
Opportunities for advancement

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTRITION

Heavy work load/stress
Poor organizational culture
Problems with management
Lack of opportunities for advancement

METHODOLOGY

Executive Directors from the 29 Minnesota Community Action Agencies were contacted by the researcher through Minnesota Community Action Partnership. The directors were asked to disseminate the survey to their respective staff via email. The Job Satisfaction Survey® (Spector, 1985) was the survey instrument used to collect data on employee satisfaction among the respondents. The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) was designed for use on non-profit, public, and human service organizations. The JSS includes nine subscales related to employee satisfaction including pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. The JSS was included in an online survey along with questions related to demographics and distributed via email through the internet-based survey tool called Survey Monkey.

115 subjects responded to the survey. Results from the survey were collected and analyzed.

REFERENCES

References are available from the author upon request.

DATA/RESULTS

The data suggests that, overall, employees of Community Action Agencies in Minnesota are relatively satisfied with their jobs. If the research on factors related to retention is applied to the results from this survey administrators might feel relatively comfortable with the low potential for turnover at this point in time. The only domain where administrators might look to improve the overall satisfaction among their employees is in the area of opportunities for advancement. A majority of the respondents (54.6%) indicated that they were less satisfied than their colleagues, regarding the possibility for promotion within their agency. On a positive note, an overwhelming majority (95.5%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat–mostly satisfied with their coworkers. Satisfaction with interactions among coworkers is repeatedly associated with overall job satisfaction and retention in the literature. Also, a greater number of respondents indicated that they were more satisfied with contingent rewards (appreciation, recognition and rewards for good work) than their counterparts.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The research presented here should be considered preliminary. Some of the findings correlate with results from previous research conducted on employee satisfaction and factors related to retention or attrition among social services workers. Research specific to employees of Community Action Agencies and their satisfaction with work is largely unknown to exist. For more comprehensive findings, further research is recommended.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it is recommended that agencies look at ways to increase advancement opportunities within their organization in order to alleviate some of the dissatisfaction identified in the research with regard to the possibility for promotion. If the reason for the high rate in responses among those employed for five years or less can be attributed to the fact that workers leave the agency for opportunities elsewhere, adding additional levels of management may help to reduce this trend. The prospect of advancement may prove to be an effective incentive for workers, thus increasing retention. Offering employees the opportunity to utilize their skills in unique ways may be an alternative advancement opportunity resulting in a more cost-effective strategy. Agencies may also look at refiring job duties, job descriptions and/or job titles. While workers reported relative satisfaction with contingent rewards, the gap between those who were more satisfied and less satisfied could be increased. It’s probable that incorporating additional contingent rewards may increase agencies’ chances of retaining quality, trained staff especially during economically uncertain times when raises or bonuses cannot be offered. Thaden, Jacobs-Prieb and Evans (2010) found that organizational culture (including contingent rewards) was significantly related to attrition among social services workers.