

Employee Survey

May 2018 | Report 11.244

2017

From the Photographer:

Metaphor for clients who feel alone and in the dark until DSHS, like the Milky Way, illuminates them, gives them a sense of belonging to something bigger and better connected in beautiful ways. And they are transformed.

– Robert Salisbury

“Milky Way Over Lone Juniper Tree” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Robert Salisbury, with permission

 Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

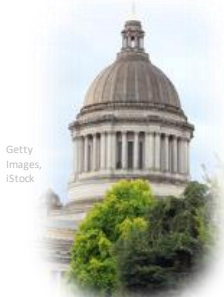
DSHS

WASHINGTON STATE

Department of Social and Health Services

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Title: 2017 DSHS Employee Survey

Abstract: The 2017 survey found widespread increases in employee engagement at DSHS since the last major survey in 2015. Positive responses increased for nearly all survey questions, and again DSHS exceeded the statewide target for the Executive Branch's "Employer of Choice" measure. Of the 20 standard questions asked in 2015 and 2017, 18 had the highest percentage of positive responses since the current version of the survey began in 2006. The response rate in 2017 was 85%, the highest level of participation since the survey began in 2002. The survey results also show opportunities for positive change, and in some cases, important challenges. Implementation of the Governor Inslee's "Building a Modern Work Environment" initiative and survey questions about that initiative have sparked much interest and discussion. Many of the opportunities and challenges are specific to Administrations and major units, and are the subject of action planning at every level of the organization.

The Employee Survey is an important component of Governor Inslee's Results Washington initiative for performance management and continuous improvement. Employee Survey results are used as the primary outcome measure for the goal to "Increase Washington as an employer of choice" under Goal 5: Effective, efficient and accountable government.

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“A Sister’s Bond Can Never be Broken” • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest
Category: DSHS Clients
By Jessica Graham, with permission

From the photographer:
Our story is unique. My husband and I had both been married before. I brought two of these beautiful girls into our blended family. We decided to adopt one of our daughters through DSHS, and then we became pregnant with another little girl. When you look at this picture, it shows the love these four sisters share for one another and their special bond.



“Honeybee” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest
Category: DSHS Clients
By Johnmark Jenny, with permission

From the photographer:
This bee is a worker bee. All worker honey bees are female.





“Rock Climbing at Washington Pass” • First Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By John Plotz, with permission

2017

DSHS Employee Survey



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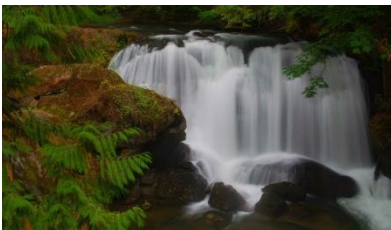
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<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/rda/research-reports>

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"Ruffles" • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Stephanie Brand, with permission



“Miner’s Landing” • Photographers Choice
DSHS Photo Contest
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

From the photographer:

Seattle waterfront, Miner's Landing. Was visiting Seattle area for our ESA Leadership Conference.

Executive Summary

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CONTINUES TO INCREASE AT DSHS. The survey results record some remarkable improvements in employee engagement, particularly in areas that have presented challenges in the past. This progress reflects dedicated effort throughout the agency. The survey also highlights continuing and new challenges reported by employees who would like to see positive change in their workplaces.

The 2017 DSHS Employee Survey is a snapshot of an evolving agency. As the survey took place between October 4 and November 15, 2017, change was in the air. Secretary Cheryl Strange had assumed agency leadership on September 18, plans were being made to move several major parts of the Department to other state agencies, and workplaces were changing in response to the state’s workplace strategy initiative, “Building a Modern Work Environment,” as directed by Governor Jay Inslee’s Executive Order 16-07. The 15,559 DSHS employees who participated in the survey provided their insights about these changes and many other important issues. The response rate in 2017 was 85%, the highest level of participation to date.

The Employee Survey is the principal method for DSHS to gather comprehensive feedback from all staff. The goal of the survey is to reach out to each of the more than 19,000 employees at DSHS, obtain candid feedback about their workplace experiences, and provide actionable results at every level of the organization. The Employee Survey is used extensively for strategic planning and performance improvement on behalf of all Washington state employees, all DSHS employees, each DSHS Administration, Division and institution, and hundreds of workgroups.

Encouraging Trends and Bright Spots

The 2017 survey found widespread increases in employee engagement at DSHS since our last major survey in 2015. Positive responses increased for nearly all survey questions, and again DSHS exceeded the statewide target for the Executive Branch's "Employer of Choice" measure. Of the 20 standard questions asked in 2015 and 2017, 18 had the highest percentage of positive responses since the current version of the survey began in 2006.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS UP AT DSHS. We saw:

- Statistically significant increases for 17 of the 20 survey questions that were also asked in 2015.
- No negative trends from 2015 to 2017 for any of the standard questions.
- An increase of 3 percentage points from 2016 on 13 "Employer of Choice" questions. This exceeded the statewide target of 2 percentage points.

POSITIVE RESPONSES INCREASED FOR HISTORICALLY LOW-SCORING QUESTIONS. Survey results show improvement in communication at all levels (input from employees and customers, and information from management), as well as better recognition and support for healthy living.

- More employees said they use customer feedback to improve work processes (44%, up from 41% in 2015).
- More said they receive clear information about changes being made within the agency (50%, up from 45%).
- More said they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things (52%, up from 50%).
- More said they have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting their work (57%, up from 55%).
- More said they receive recognition for a job well done (57%, up from 55%).
- More said the agency supports them in living a healthier life (58%, up from 55%).

AMONG THE 17 QUESTIONS WITH MORE POSITIVE RESPONSES IN 2017, THREE STAND OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR RELATIVELY LARGE GAINS AND RELEVANCE TO EMPLOYEES. These improvements show that more employees feel that that they are able to use and develop their talents, in an environment that is supportive and fair.

- More employees said their agency uses their time and talents well (64%, up from 57%).
- More said they have opportunities at work to learn and grow (64%, up from 60%).
- More said that in they are treated fairly in their workgroups, without discrimination (76%, up from 72%).

EMPLOYEES' WRITTEN COMMENTS SHOWED HIGH SATISFACTION IN SOME AREAS, AND ALSO REVEALED ENCOURAGING TRENDS. Employees appreciate many aspects of their jobs.

- 3,592 employees explained that helping and working with clients and the community is a key component of job satisfaction. They take pride in transforming lives.
- 4,941 volunteered positive comments about other aspects of their job.
- 3,020 praised co-workers.
- 19% more made positive comments about management, while 17% fewer made complaints or suggestions for improvement.
- 26% fewer complained about personnel issues.
- 32% more made positive comments and 25% fewer made negative comments about pay and benefits.
- 24% fewer made complaints about low staffing levels.

Continuing Opportunities for Improvement

The survey results show opportunities for further improvement, and, in some cases, important challenges. Work environment was a major issue in the 2017 survey. DSHS is part of a nationwide trend away from the traditional environment where employees spend 8 hours a day in an individual cubicle. Implementation of the “Building a Modern Work Environment” initiative and survey questions about that initiative have sparked much interest and discussion about these issues. Additional opportunities for change are also found in low-scoring questions and written suggestions for change.

MOST EMPLOYEES WANT THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE FLEXIBILITY IN WORK HOURS AND LOCATIONS. Those who already enjoy flexibility, appreciate it. Others want more.

- 2,358 respondents specifically mentioned work hours or telecommuting. The majority of these made comments requesting more flexible schedules or telecommuting opportunities, a 93% increase from 2015. However, more than one-third expressed gratitude for current flexibility, a 49% increase from 2015.
- 65% reported satisfaction when asked about workplace flexibility (the ability to adjust scheduled hours as needed).
- Only 39% reported satisfaction with mobility (the ability to work remotely from a variety of locations, such as home or alternate work site).

THE MODERN WORKPLACE RECONFIGURATIONS ARE OFTEN PERCEIVED AS NOT MEETING BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEE NEEDS. DSHS is starting to institute new workplace configurations as directed by the State Office of Financial Management. These changes prompted an increase in comments related to physical space.

- Only 51% of respondents reported satisfaction with physical space.
- 1,256 expressed dissatisfaction with the physical work environment in their written comments, a 157% increase from 2015. Many of these comments addressed changes related to the “Building a Modern Work Environment” initiative.

BUSINESS PRACTICES AND INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE PRACTICES STILL PRESENT MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES. Despite upward trends, positive responses are still low for some questions. Survey respondents also provided many suggestions for improvement in policies and procedures.

- Only 44% agreed that we always or usually use customer feedback to improve work process.
- Only 50% agreed that they always or usually receive clear information about changes within the agency.
- 3,272 employees made suggestions for changes in work processes and policies.

Additionally, individual administrations, divisions, and workgroups have unique issues and concerns. Workshops and comprehensive custom reports have been offered across the agency, to help units identify the needs of their workgroups and plan effective responses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Survey Was:

- Available to all employees from October 4 to November 15, 2017.
- Administered in conjunction with a survey of all state employees, sponsored by Governor Inslee.
- Standardized across the Department, with the option to add questions to meet specific needs of individual programs.
- Completed by 15,559 Department employees — an 85% response rate (based on FTE totals).
- Analyzed thoroughly. 575 detailed custom reports were prepared for workgroups throughout the Department.
- Distributed widely. In addition to this comprehensive report and the many workgroup reports, the survey findings have been made available through more than 15 presentations, two workshops, and countless individual consultations.
- A push for future improvements. As of this report’s publication date, workgroups at statewide, department, and division levels are reviewing results, gathering further information around key issues, and formulating plans to address employee concerns and capitalize on opportunities.
- An important component of Governor Inslee’s Results Washington data-driven performance management and continuous improvement system. Survey results are used as the primary outcome measure for the goal to “Increase Washington as an employer of choice” under Results Washington Goal 5: Effective, efficient and accountable government. Action plans developed by the Department’s Assistant Secretaries guide the next two-year cycle of performance improvement.

“Hottest Chili Winner . . . in the Bin” • Second Place

DSHS Photo Contest
Category: DSHS in Action
By Alan Sapalaran, with permission

From the photographer:
The winner of “Hottest Chili” at our 4th annual DDA Chili Cook-off contest. We also had a Food Drive and fundraiser through the Combined Fund Drive to benefit Direct Relief in response to all the recent natural disasters. He is pictured here with his award in the bin, which will eventually be filled with canned donations.



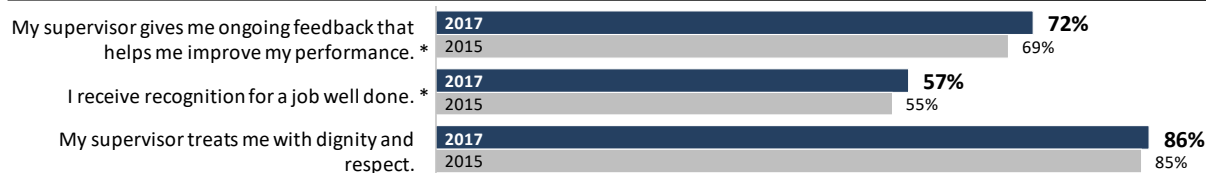
Changes from 2015 to 2017

Percent of employees answering “Always or Almost Always” or “Usually”

COMMUNICATION



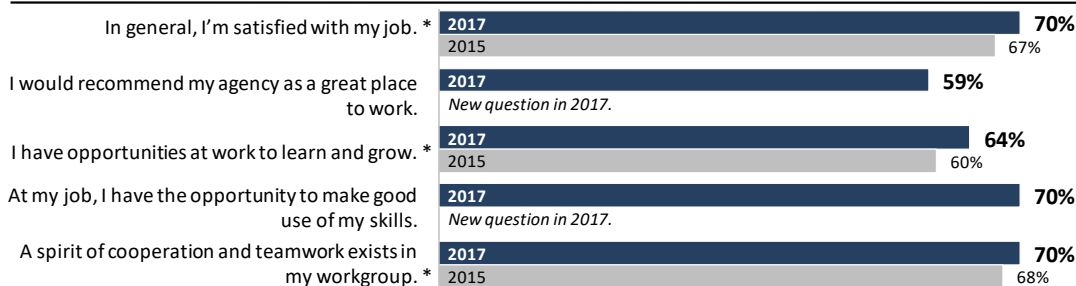
SUPERVISOR/MANAGER SUPPORT



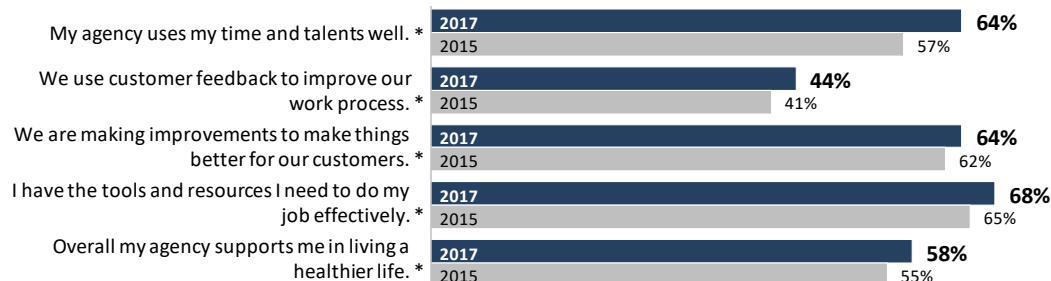
FAIRNESS/DIVERSITY



THE DAILY JOB



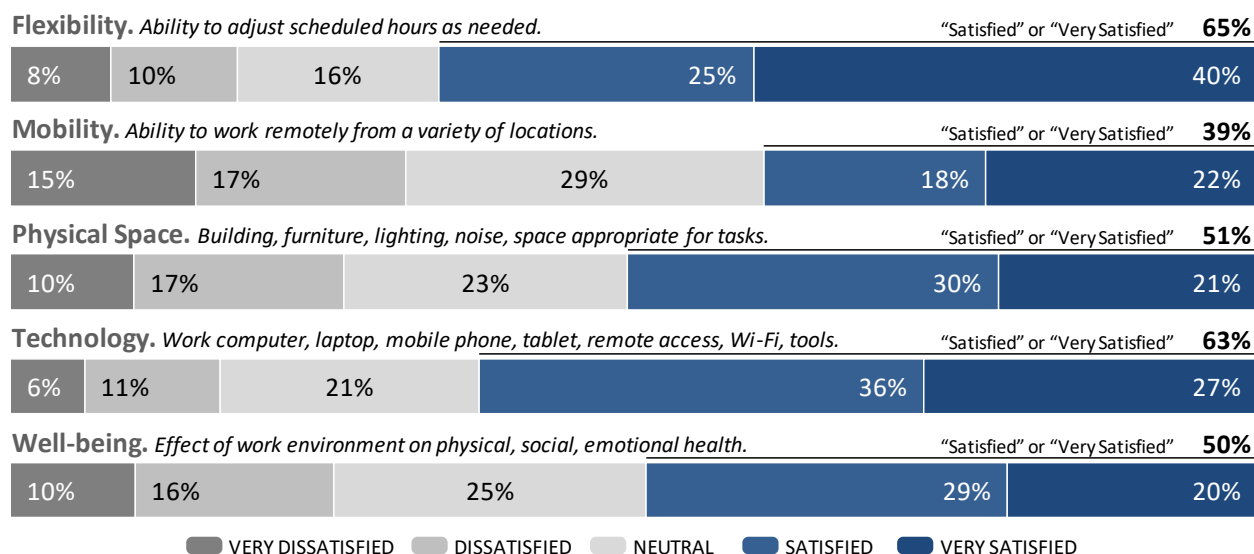
BUSINESS PRACTICES



*Change is significant at the .01 level. See Appendix B, Table F2 for long-term trends.

New Question: How satisfied are you with your current work environment?

Satisfaction by area

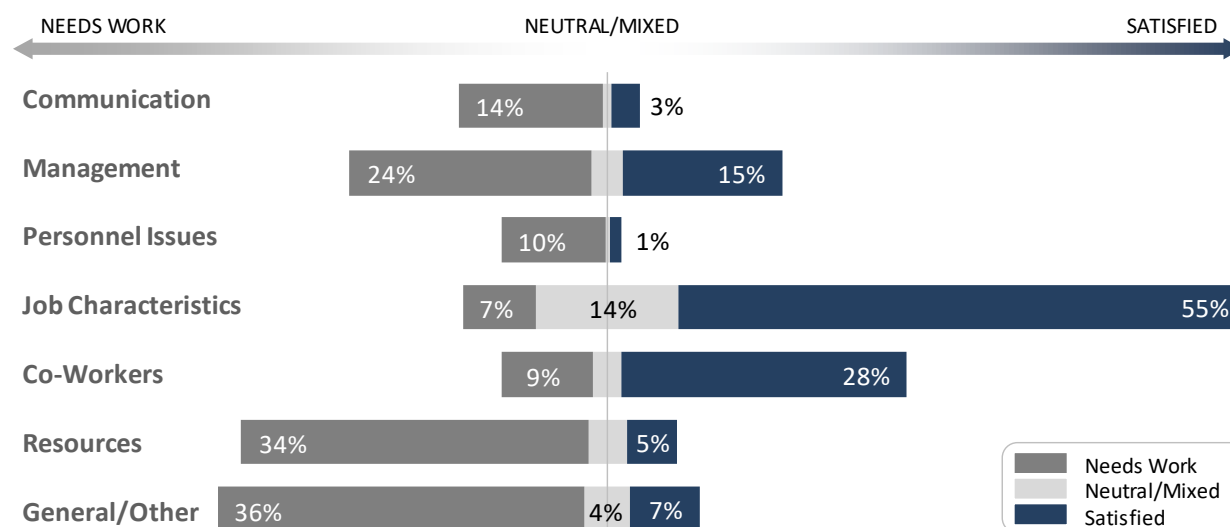


Major Comment Themes

Percent of respondents who made comments in 2017

COMMENTS WERE MADE IN RESPONSE TO THESE TWO QUESTIONS:

1. What do you like best about your current job?
2. What changes would you like to see in your workplace?



NOTE: Percentages show respondents who commented on this theme as a percentage of the total number of respondents who made narrative comments. Themes are discussed at a more detailed level in each chapter of the report. A summary of all themes including sub-categories of these major themes can be found in Appendix B, Table J.

High Points in the 2017 DSHS Employee Survey

	Higher than State				
	Highest Ever for this Measure			✓	✓
	Statistically Significant (p < .01)				
	Change from 2015 to 2017	2017 Percent Positive			
How We Measure Success/Communication					
3. I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency.	83%	1%		✓	✓
12. I know how my agency measures its success.	60%	2%	✓	✓	✓
14. I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency.	50%	5%	✓		
Expectations					
4. I know what is expected of me at work.	88%	<1%		✓	✓
8. My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance.	72%	3%	✓	✓	✓
Ideas Considered/Improvements					
5. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.	64%	4%	✓	✓	✓
15. I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.	52%	2%	✓	✓	
16. We use customer feedback to improve our work processes.	44%	3%	✓		
Purpose					
21. My agency uses my time and talents well.	64%	7%	✓	✓	NA
Fairness/Support					
7. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.	86%	1%		✓	
22. In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.	76%	4%	✓	✓	NA



“DPI Family Tree” • Honorable Mention
 DSHS Photo Contest
 Category: DSHS in Action
 By Kodi Gaddis, with permission

From the photographer:
 This photo is each fingerprint of DPI from our All Staff in 2016 –
 Great representation of the DPI Family and unity that we have!



“In Box” • Third Place (tie)

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Logan MacGregor, with permission

From the photographer:
In Box on CV2 4th Floor.

“Distracted” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action
By Ruth E. Delgado, with permission

From the photographer:
I was distracted by the great view at my unit meeting.





“Rise” • First Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees

By Alli Smith, with permission

From the photographer:

Attended the Rise Lantern Festival – So cool!

CHAPTER 1

Communication

EMPLOYEES REPORTED INCREASED SATISFACTION ON ALL COMMUNICATION MEASURES. There were statistically significant increases in positive responses (“Always or almost always” or “Usually”) for five of the seven questions included in this chapter. Compared to the 2015 survey, significantly more employees reported they have opportunities to provide input, are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things, receive the information they need to do their jobs, receive clear information about workplace changes, and know how their agency measures success. Much room for improvement remains: Although the proportion of employees who agree that they have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting their work is at an all-time high, 43% say that happens no more often than occasionally. 1,534 respondents (14% of those who made survey comments) registered complaints about communication, a 22% decrease in negative comments from 2015.

STAFF INPUT. Although both questions about staff input showed positive gains, the base rate of positive responses is still low. While satisfaction continues to rise, many comments demonstrate a need for continued effort.

- **More opportunities for input.** 57% of employees (up from 55% in 2015) agreed that they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting their work.
- **More encouragement to innovate.** 52% of employees (up from 50% in 2015) said they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.
- **Comments reflecting challenges.** 663 employees (6% of those who made comments) criticized managers’ attention to staff input. Respondents consistently report that they want to have a say in workplace decisions, and that they want some indication that their ideas are seriously considered. Managers who treat staff suggestions with respect are highly regarded.

INFORMATION FROM MANAGEMENT. The percent of staff who indicate that they receive sufficient information from management has been steadily increasing since 2011. However, critical comments on this topic provide insight into situations where this remains a problem.

- **Improved information about changes.** 50% of employees (up from 45% in 2015) agreed that they receive clear information about changes within the agency.
- **High awareness of job expectations.** 88% of employees agreed that they know what is expected of them at work.
- **Moderately high satisfaction with job-specific information.** 71% of employees (up from 69% in 2015) agreed that they receive enough information to do their job effectively.
- **Comments about information sharing by management and supervisors.** 606 employees (6% of those who made comments) indicated dissatisfaction or made a suggestion for improvement about information sharing, a 33% decrease in negative comments from 2015.

GOALS, GUIDELINES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES. Steady gains continued in the percent of employees who agree that they know how their agency measures success, and most say that they know how their work contributes to the goals of their agency.

- **Increased understanding of how the agency measures success.** 60% of employees (up from 58% in 2015) said they know how their agency measures success.
- **Consistent knowledge of how employees' own work contributes to agency goals.** 83% of employees agreed that they know how their work contributes to the goals of their agency.



“Snowy Crossing” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Lorria McCauley, with permission

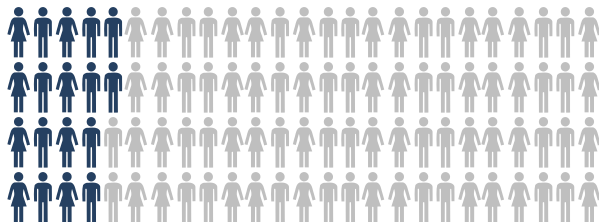
From the photographer:

I cross over these railroad tracks daily. But this day, with the snow and the colorful sky, it actually made me look twice.

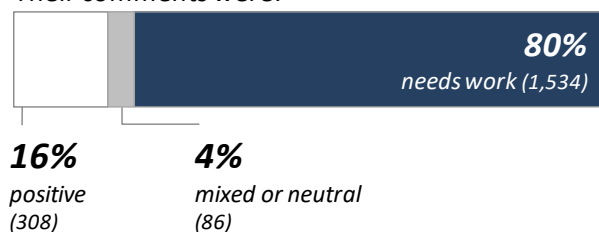
THEME. General communication

1,928 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned communication.

18% commented on this theme (1,928)



Their comments were:



Employees expressed a strong desire for clear and effective communication at all levels of the department. Eight out of ten (80%) of those commenting on communication were critical or suggested improvements. Of the 1,928* who mentioned communication:

- 904 addressed whether staff has input into workplace changes (pages 12-14)
- 672 discussed the information that staff receives from management (pages 15-18)
- 167 described communication about agency direction and performance (pages 19-21)
- 550 mentioned other communication issues, which appear in the quotes throughout this chapter

► What DSHS employees said ...

Reliable messages about program and policy changes make a difference to employees.

- “I appreciate the increase in transparency from our state office about changes occurring within our Division.”
- “I think communication could be better between management and us, lower down the chain. It's frustrating when you are told one thing, and then when you do that, it's been changed and no one has informed us.”
- “I definitely appreciate the overall high-level newsletters and memos; but there is a dearth of consistent, inclusive, meaningful communication at a project team level. Siloing is a common occurrence; and often one doesn't get to be part of the planning or decision-making. Managers and others continually lead impromptu discussions that aren't available to the entire team, and that leads to confusion and inefficiency, not to mention a sense of exclusion from the team itself.”
- “I appreciate that updates, changes, and other information is communicated clearly and efficiently.”
- “Changes are not communicated to us until after they have already happened. It has created an environment of fear and distrust of management within our unit.”
- “[I would like to see] more consistency among the supervisors in how they train staff on new policies (or policy changes).”

Employees want expectations to be communicated clearly.

- “I've been working this position for six months and still haven't received a job description even though I've asked countless times.”
- “My supervisor is amazing; she communicates constantly about expectations and gives instant positive and negative feedback.”
- “I would like to see more transparency in regards to non-nursing staff on the wards. Who are all of these people? What is their function? How are they helping us transform lives? Why was this position created? Are we trying to model ourselves after a medical hospital or corrections? What 'national standards' are we trying to meet, and to whom are we comparing ourselves?”
- “While I'm not in agreement with focus on the numbers, our objectives are clear.”

Some managers shine when it comes to communicating.

- “My supervisor takes the time to learn each person's style and incorporates that into how she gives instructions.”
- “My new supervisor thinks outside the box, asks for our input, gives lots of praise and recognition, and shares information with us.”
- “I love the communication that we receive from Mr. Lamb. I like his candidness and that he tells us what is going on good or bad. Personally, that type of leadership has been rare to find and very refreshing.”
- “The director of my agency communicates well and on my level.”
- “I also think that our district manager and our CSPM do a great job of communicating what is going on within our office and any changes that may be occurring. It makes you feel like you are a part of a larger effort no matter what your position is within the organization.”

*Issues listed below total more than 1,928, as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to communication.

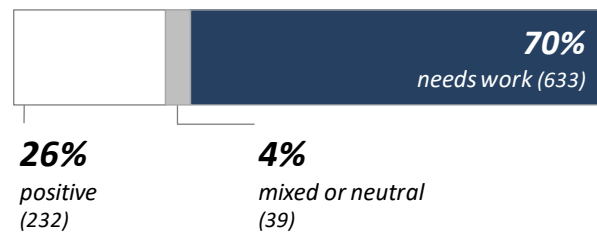
THEME. Listening to input from staff

904 of the 10,869 respondents who commented addressed the issue of managers listening to staff.

8% commented on this theme (904)



Their comments were:



904 respondents offered comments about staff input. Of these, about one quarter (26%) said that managers or supervisors listen to them and encourage feedback. Seven out of ten respondents (70%) who made comments about staff input feel improvements are needed. Many gave examples from their experience. Recurring issues included:

- A sense that, while they are encouraged to voice opinions, in the end, these opinions are not taken into consideration
- Appreciation for opportunities to talk over questions and problems without negative consequences

► What DSHS employees said ...

Respondents pointed out the difference between being verbally encouraged to speak up and perceiving that their ideas are seriously considered.

- “We are encouraged to provide input, but our input holds no value. Decisions are made and we are told what to do.”
- “Employees here are encouraged to speak up and identify problems in our hospital, but when you do, you are harassed, retaliated against and punished.”
- “If I have an idea, I am usually able to pursue it. Management takes my opinion into account with decisions, and also supports the decisions that I make independently.”
- “The ability to express to management what I feel an individual needs, and management's willingness to work with me.”
- “Most ideas are taken by management and given to somebody you don't know to analyze, only to be shot down for reasons that nobody tells you. And when one of your ideas is used, they forget who came up with it and there is no personal credit given when it's implemented.”
- “We are encouraged to provide suggestions, make improvements in the workplace, start workgroups and pilots to improve our processes. But when government is so slow to change, it can be very discouraging. If we are to continue to Transform Lives in our own workplace, there needs to be a more timely and efficient way to develop and advance pilot projects.”
- “We are asked all the time to identify issues, give input, develop plans, give a proposal; however, when you do this nothing is ever done. Your proposals are just set off to the side, no open discussion. It is as if you are not good enough to count.”
- “My ideas are not only welcomed but they are used.”

Open-door management and supervisors who are available for discussion are appreciated.

- “Having a supervisor that is easy to talk to and lets me process stuff with is very helpful.”
- “Kudos to my supervisor for always being willing to listen and help wherever she can, but also because she cares about what we have to say, relies on us as we do a good job, but we know there is always an open door if needed.”
- “My supervisor is a great leader and she allows me to bounce my ideas openly and provides feedback to me, whether the feedback is favorable or not.”
- “I enjoy being a valued employee and feel that I can address any concerns and questions with my supervisor and management.”

Some employees questioned the effectiveness of surveys in helping them be heard.

- “Does my voice really matter? Do you even read this, or are my concerns falling short yet again?”
- “We are occasionally asked our opinion or asked to take a survey, but very little is done with the results of the discussions.”
- “A prime example is the new modern office. None of the social workers were given any say in the process. Yes, they took a survey, but they had no say in any other aspect.”

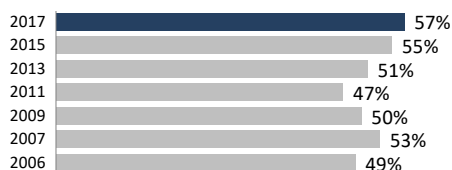
QUESTION. I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work

More than half of employees (57%) said they always or usually have a chance to give input on decisions in their workplace – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS.

Almost one in five respondents (19%) said that they seldom or never have opportunities to give input. Although not all suggestions can or should be implemented, respondents suggested that there is value in:

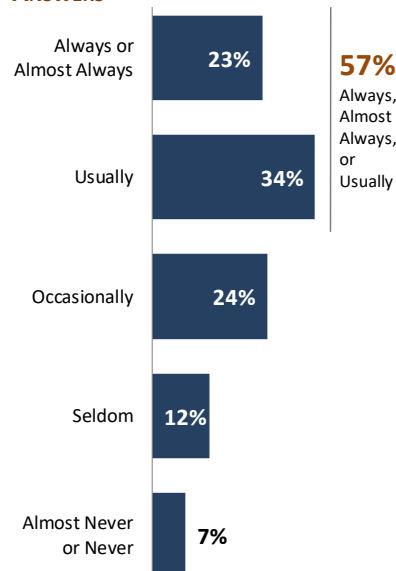
- Giving regular updates on changing processes
- Acknowledging staff input
- Explaining how and why decisions are made

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they have input into decisions affecting their jobs.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees want to improve work processes, but some expressed frustration when their ideas seem to go unheard.

“Right now if a problem is identified, staff are told, ‘mind your own business’ or ‘stay in your lane.’”

“I can see ways of doing things better, but do not have a voice.”

“I hope that each area/unit and how they work will be taken into consideration and actually speaking to the employees who will be affected rather than just making ‘a more modern workplace’ change, just for the sake of change. Please, discuss face to face.”

“In a recent meeting, workers voiced concerns about the HUB and how it will impact their commute time and lengthen their day, and the response to this was basically, ‘well too bad, exceptions will only be made in extreme situations.’”

“I really appreciate our shift charge advocating for us, but also working with us as a peer and not just delegating tasks, participating actively, and listening to our concerns before acting.”

“With a new director, I am hopeful that he will be open to take feedback from field staff and to making the changes we need.”

“Leveling out the caseload size between workers has been discussed for the last year now. Nothing has come of this. I know management has heard us in this area, but for whatever reasons we are heard, but not helped.”

Some perceive a difference between how immediate supervisors handle input, compared to upper management.

“When we can, management turns to staff for input so they know they have a voice. Sometimes when staff know the ‘why’ they can better understand and buy into the change. More often than not there is a decision handed, but the why behind it or follow up is missing. Communication from upper levels have always been an issue.”

“I would like to see better communication across our division. Our immediate supervisor is great at sharing information, but upper management is not.”

“There is a genuine effort to explain and be transparent about why a change has occurred. While a supervisor may make a final decision about a matter, there have not been any unilateral decisions made. Management continues to make unilateral decisions and disseminate incorrect information. Management frowns upon clarifying information even with reference to the guidelines.”

Staff input can improve the processes for everyone involved.

“My immediate supervisor has given me the opportunity to give input or brainstorm ideas to make our workplace safe for the patients and staff alike. He not only values and listens to my ideas and suggestions, but he actually uses them when he thinks it is best for everyone.”

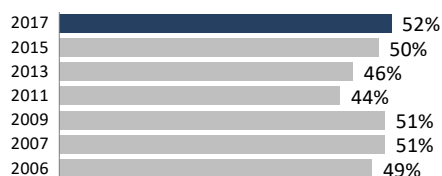
“I love the flexibility of my current position and being able to help other case workers, collaborating to bring services, supports, and information to our clients faster, and more efficiently.”

QUESTION. I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things

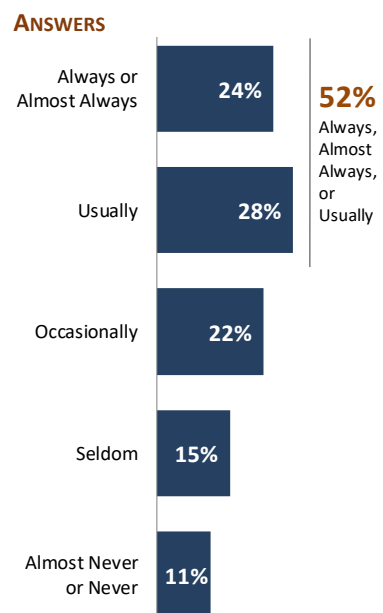
52% of respondents reported they are encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for the agency. More than one in four (26%) indicated they seldom or never receive such encouragement. Respondents are pleased when they:

- Can improve client outcomes through innovation and efficiency
- Feel that the workplace culture supports considering new approaches

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they are encouraged to find better ways of doing things.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Many respondents were enthusiastic about their input being used to improve processes and outcomes.

"I have the ability to try innovative new ways to manage a statewide program."

"An open environment for collaboration has really changed the way we all work together and has invited more innovative thinking, shared problem solving, and fun!"

"I like the fact that I am able to use my skills and past experiences to assist my direct work unit as well as our partners and our customers in resolving issues, implementing new and innovative ideas, and collaborating on system and process enhancements."

"I have worked hard and brought many new ideas to my work environment, resulting in a promotion to utilize my skills and implement my ideas."

It is important to adapt work processes when needed to better serve specific client and customer needs.

"I am allowed the ability and flexibility to think outside of the box to assist our families, clients, and our team."

"I get to have input in what goes on with my patient's treatment plan and can actively participate in her discharge."

"Working with patients is the best part of my job. I get to make changes in programming as needed to meet patient need."

"I believe that I can directly and positively impact the lives of the people that I work with. I enjoy the freedom to employ planning of my own design for my active treatment groups."

"Less micromanaging, seeing if I can meet numbers and more to see if we are actually making a difference with the clients."

Some feel that their workplace culture discourages innovation.

"It seems that DSHS and state government have handed down a culture of saying 'No.' When staff have ideas, or when staff need something, it seems that there are overwhelming layers of people patiently and excitedly waiting to say 'No!' This creates a culture where staff don't even try to think outside of the box, or worse, they are encouraged to hand off issues to someone else."

"More of an ownership/autonomy feel to employment. In financial, we are so driven by numbers (which I understand) that we do not have much of a feel to own our own talents in our position."

"A focus on productivity to the exclusion of improvement should be switched to focus on improvement. Upper management does carve out special projects for improvement, but does not let people compete for those opportunities."

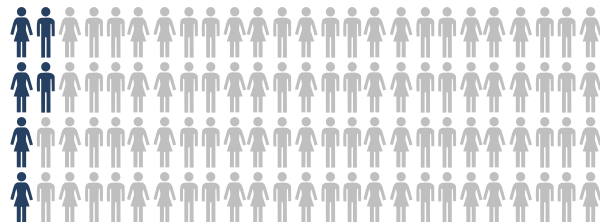
"It's my own work ethic that prods me to come up with better ways of doing things – not encouragement from management."

"Find and embrace value in the newbies. I have many years' experience in customer service and servant leadership/management. Yes, I am new. Yes, I still need to learn the basic job functions. However, my experience from my past career absolutely translates to this industry. My ideas matter and have the possibility to positively impact this industry. Don't be so quick to dismiss the newbie for solely being new."

THEME. Information communicated from management to staff

672 of the 10,869 employees who commented criticized the provision of information by supervisors and managers.

6% commented on this theme (672)

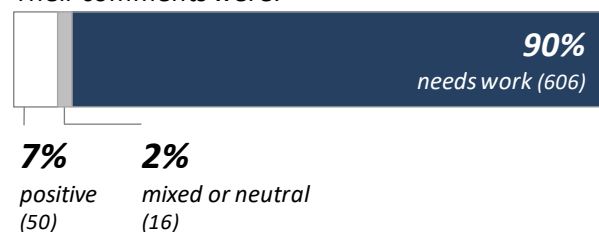


Nine out of ten of the 672 comments about information sharing by management (90%) called for improvements. Some employees (7%) reported satisfaction with the way supervisors and managers provide information.

Employee responses in this theme often suggested specific ways that communication could be improved, including:

- Predictable channels for communicating consistent messages
- Balancing getting information out quickly with providing consistent messages

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees shared advice on how to improve transmittal of information.

“Information received from State office is often repetitive, confusing and/or conflicting. Information regarding transition services is particularly chaotic.”

“Streamline things so they aren't so complicated; too much information is coming at us at all times. Give us a break for a few days without more information being thrown at us. Measurable Barometers (MBs) are great, changes are necessary, but the amount of information is overwhelming.”

“My idea would be to introduce change by first stating why the change is necessary, what will change, instructions on how to make these changes, a start date, how this will be monitored and a training will follow for questions and to see how the changes are working or not working. If every person followed this simple formula when they make changes, it would be less stress, take less time to implement and reduce the mayhem in the flurry of questions.”

Transparency and complete information shared by management is important in times of great change.

“Communication on changes that affect our workload are often incomplete, confusing or sometimes last minute.”

“I'd like to see the feedback, good and bad, that is obtained from this survey, and then have a measuring system later that will show if changes have been made to improve or change. Unfortunately, upper management likes to keep us in the dark.”

“We've heard a number of diatribes about the importance of change, and the impending change to HRD, all year. But, we haven't actually heard anything of substance and/or anything definitive regarding this change. The planning and information flow feels like something Congress would do behind closed doors, or institute while the public is distracted by a tragedy. In addition, I think everyone would appreciate clearer guidance on the future of HR staff that currently support Children's Administration. It's no secret that DCYF begins its operations on July 1, 2018. But, we've heard nothing but rumor and innuendo, in terms of HR staff's future within DSHS and/or DCYF.”

“Management has done a great job with making decisions, explaining decisions, and sticking to those decisions.”

Staff need to be able to rely on information communicated from upper management.

“Better communication from top down. Decisions sometimes seem rushed and not thought out. This results in low morale, anger, and frustrations on many levels. For example, in one day a decision was made to change a procedure without any training or support but just figure this out. At the end of the day this was a mistake and we went back to the old procedure.”

“If upper-level Administration states that something is going to happen, but then there is no further communication or follow through. It builds distrust of leadership.”

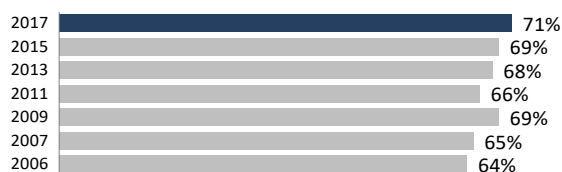
“I would like to have supervisors be careful what they say to their employees if they cannot follow through because of the rules that are put into place.”

QUESTION. I receive the information I need to do my job effectively

More than seven in ten respondents (71%) said that they get the information needed to do their job effectively – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. Only one in ten (10%) reported that they seldom or never have the necessary information.

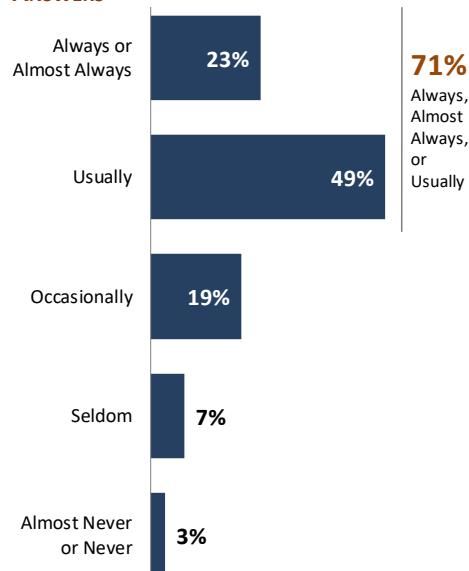
Some responses to open-ended questions reflected this improvement. Others report a lack of information that frustrates their efforts.

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they receive the information they need to do their jobs effectively.



Increase between 2013 and 2015 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Some respondents noted that communication of important information has improved.

“Increased communication bulletins and a platform to refer back to those communications is also helpful to work towards what should be a consistency to work processes within all of HRD.”

“There has been consistent change in working to ensure staff are updated to changes and are prepared before they happen. For example, giving us ample notice they will be testing our HVAC system and there will be disruptions in the office due to this, or keeping us updated on any construction work or new departments using our building.”

“I am excited that we have a new director that has brought about change that makes sense and that gets us moving in the right direction. I like the inclusion and transparency, as well as, the communication to me personally and all DVR staff.”

“Finally know what is going on.”

“Thankful for positive and stable leadership in Region 1. This has made a big difference in the level of communication and support.”

Barriers to receiving the information they need to perform well were sometimes described in great detail.

“Contraband lists are inconsistent. Nobody will take ownership of it. There are different interpretations. There is no ultimate deciding authority.”

“It is in the Dark Ages. There are too many management layers which impedes communication and forward progress. While long term employees are a benefit, their inability to change holds up progress quite frequently. The information we need to access as nurses needs to be locatable, policies clear, and technology used.”

“Communication is terrible. No two workers will process a case the same way, and we are often out of the loop when our handbooks are updated. The handbook and the procedure manual often contradict each other, and when updates are made we are often not aware of them. Our lead workers and supervisors are usually in travel status, in meetings, or busy trying to get audits done, which makes it hard to get timely help with a case, particularly when our resource manuals are not helpful.”

“More formal communication within the unit; written procedures for staff and at least bi-monthly unit meetings so all staff are getting the same messages/instructions.”

“Some of the tools we use are archaic. Accurate, clear and other information databases aren't always that accurate; they contain old information that is unhelpful and SEMS is way too old and needs to be revamped.”

“Sticky notes are not a way to pass on information left on supervisor's desk. That seems the only way we find out what is coming up, as in changes to policies, contracting, daily tasks, etc.”

“If there are changes in policy or procedures, it would be nice to get this information as soon as the change was made instead of finding out through an audit.”

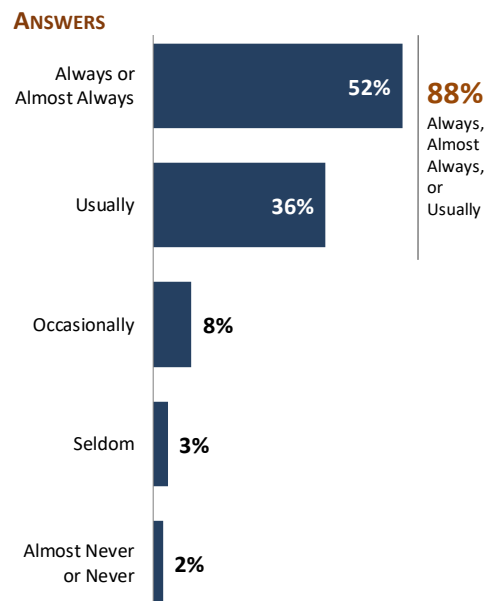
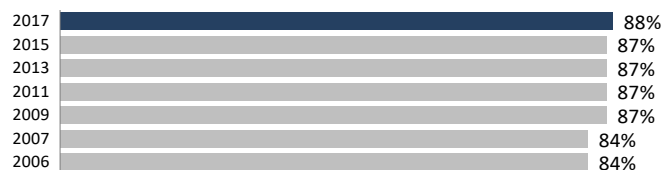
QUESTION. I know what is expected of me at work

Almost nine out of ten employees (88%) indicated that they understand their job expectations at work. Some employees (5%) said that they seldom or never know what is expected of them.

In their comments, many employees expressed appreciation for clear expectations. Some are frustrated by unrealistic or confusing communication from supervisors and managers.

Respondents also addressed shifts in some programs toward using metrics or automated systems to evaluate whether they meet job expectations.

There was no significant change between 2015 and 2017 in employees' knowledge of job expectations.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Staff often want realistic, consistent, and clearly communicated expectations about what success looks like for their job.

“My supervisor is incredibly supportive, her door is always open to us, she keeps us informed of information we need to know and she is always trying to find ways to improve our ability to do our job well.”

“It would be incredibly beneficial to gain additional information about the expectations and then a clear plan on how workers can achieve this. In order to meet the expectations and responsibilities of the job it would take 60 hours a week.”

“My biggest frustration as a new staff starting about eight months ago was seeing a behavior, addressing it, and then asking senior staff how to proceed and what consequences to assign. The overwhelmingly most popular answer I received was some variation of, ‘It’s really up to you.’ That is not an answer a new staff wants to hear.”

“It would be nice if there were a set of ground expectations that auditors are looking for, for us to strive to meet and exceed. Often it feels like we’re chasing a moving target. It’s always based on opinion instead of set rules.”

“I appreciate that my supervisor provides feedback about my performance and is open to new ideas but also recognizes and provides praise and confirmation when we do an excellent job or when we go above and beyond what is required.”

Some respondents described needs for clear overall guidelines, and autonomy within those expectations.

“I really enjoy working for my supervisor. He does not micromanage. He is clear about expectations and due dates, but lets me create my own work life balance to get the job done.”

“How about being more practical, and planning about setting time lines for implementation AFTER getting the bugs worked out and approval from the Feds, instead of pushing forward and hoping for the best and confusing the line staff with new rules or partially thought-out rules and guidelines, and then changing them, so they are constantly confused as to how to actually do the job?”

“We are stymied by management indecision, flip-flopping focus of priorities, and their inability to define clearly, even amongst themselves, exactly what they expect from staff.”

“[I like that] we can follow clearly defined processes and work in a collaborative team to improve how DSHS operates.”

Others pointed out problems with systems that rely on metrics to evaluate worker effectiveness.

“Customer service will suffer when numbers are emphasized. Secondly, the procedure manual leaves a lot up to interpretation.”

“This agency places so much reliance on meeting statistics that most people no longer care about the right job. We perform our work for the purpose of meeting statistics. What other agency evaluates their employees monthly, and then writes them up for ‘not meeting statistics’?”

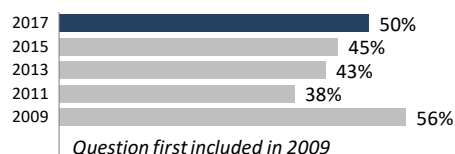
“The WFO program provides data that can be used in conjunction with other statistical information to get a good understanding of staff production; however, it is not meant to be used alone. An employee may take a lot of calls; however, if they are making mistakes, the numbers don’t matter. For the employee that picks up this case, their numbers will be lower.”

QUESTION. I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency

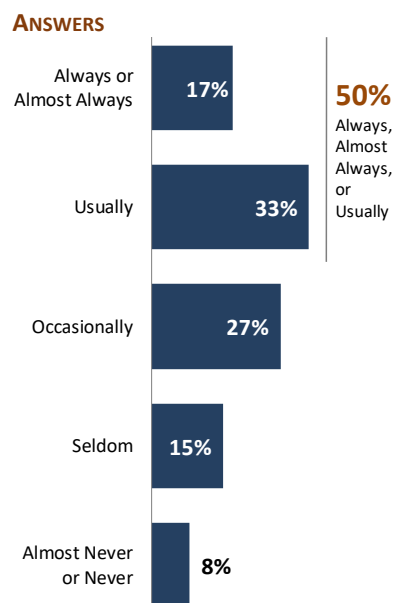
Half of respondents (50%) said they always or usually receive clear information about agency changes – a statistically significant increase. About one quarter (24%) said they seldom or never receive information about changes.

Although electronic modes of communication have multiplied, they do not guarantee that employees are receiving the information they need when they need it. This seems to be especially true of information about new initiatives such as organizational moves and newly introduced management programs.

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they have clear information about changes being made in the agency.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

In times of change, employees appreciate opportunities to keep up-to-date.

"I like that management is informing staff of changes, and asking our opinion on how to deal with the change."

"I like how I am comfortable communicating with my team. I'm able to get the resources I need to complete my tasks. I'm able to seek advice from my supervisors. I'm comfortable in my working environment, and I learn new things every day. I appreciate everyone's guidance that allows me to improve and grow my skills and work efficiently."

"I enjoy our weekly PPG meetings. We are able to learn about new policies and forms."

"DCS has worked diligently over the last four years to improve communication; the Communications Unit encourages us to use multiple avenues of communication (DCS News, e-mails, team meetings, team huddles, one-on-one meetings with line staff, etc.) to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to know/hear about changes well before they happen."

"I like the fact that we come together and meet as a unit once a month and do presentations and invite guest speakers that benefit our job."

"Changes are always happening, but we are well-informed as they do."

"I like the idea of our mission. I'm passionate about it, but seldom do I see us talking in terms of that connection."

"My direct supervisor is knowledgeable and supportive and does her best to keep us updated on changes within the organization if/when she is notified."

Planned transitions and new processes have created a greater need for information about upcoming changes.

"I am uncomfortable about the upcoming move to HCA and the lack of information provided about what my job will look like when I get there. I feel that there is value in the work culture and emphasis on collaboration that we have in DBHR, and I feel that our work culture is being valued less in this transition to the work culture of HCA. I worry that we will not be able to continue to work for the health of our clients in the same way."

"The e-mails about the 'new agency': The message has all been about education. How our children and families need exposure to ECAP and learning opportunities, I sincerely hope Children's Administration is going to remain focused on child safety. We have heard little about how this transition is going to help us with the main focus of accessing child safety. Please provide us with actual tangible information of how this is going to impact our work."

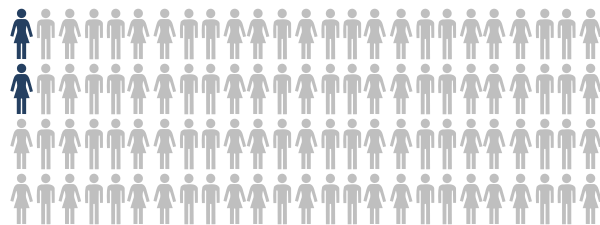
"These audit trends and changes in processes are not being covered in team meetings. We need to include continued education. Here comes quality monitoring. Workers feel like quality monitoring has been rolled out as a Trojan horse. On the outside, management is making it look like a polishing tool to help workers and customer service. What's waiting for us on the inside of that Trojan horse? When is the next shoe going to drop?"

"Due to the current unknown of what agency we will be part of, or when a change may happen, it makes it difficult for those who may remain in the organization after the move."

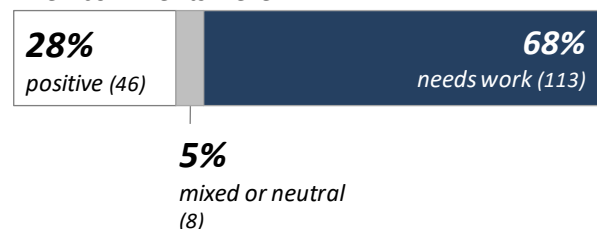
THEME. Clear direction for the agency

167 of the 10,869 employees who commented addressed the presence or absence of a clear direction for the agency, administration, or program.

2% commented on this theme (167)



Their comments were:



167 employees made comments concerning clear direction for DSHS, administrations, and programs.

68% of comments on this topic criticized the information employees receive about agency direction, or provided suggestions for improvement.

The agency's vision of "Transforming Lives" is clearly recognized and appreciated by many employees. Quite a few used the vision statement in their comments. Many are looking for practical applications of this vision through their workgroups' operations and their daily tasks.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Some respondents perceive inconsistency between their work and the agency's direction.

"If the new vision of DCS is more in line with social work than a collection agency, the job descriptions must reflect this along with the salary."

"I would like to hear how what I do on a daily basis fits into the big picture at DDA. We never ever, ever discuss our mission statement!"

"Now I understand the overall goal is to be efficient, but what happens is more and more workers are doing less and less transforming of lives because of the performance evaluations. What I would like to see changed is more encouragement and reward to line staff who take the time to transform a life, and more coaching for the line staff that don't, in the performance evaluations."

Others seek more clarity about future directions.

"What does our service look like in the 10- to 15-year time period? Do we need to wait for a court or the Governor to tell us how to run the agency?"

"I would like to be included in more meetings/information/decisions about the division as a whole. Sometimes I feel like I'm being sheltered or not included. Understanding what's going on in the whole division/administration makes me feel secure in my job and knowing what may be coming."

"We could really use an eye toward the future. We're so busy trying to catch up to now, that we're just going to be behind again by the time we get there. Widely communicated roadmap, strategy, aligned plans, transparency. This is state government, everything is a public record, so why all the cloak and dagger? We should all be here for the same reason; to better humanity. Transform Lives. Make a difference. Help people."

"It seems like our division is heading in a different direction, but none of us seem to know where we're headed."

"More than just keeping the same vision, need to keep concrete steps towards that vision. Better documentation of historical knowledge, so we're not continually re-inventing the wheel through repeated trial-and-errors that have been done before."

Some employees are pleased with their understanding of agency goals.

"Helping clients and staff through policy; being part of a group that strives to reduce poverty by half by 2025 with a concentration on eliminating disparities."

"I enjoy meeting fellow employees at different sites and agencies, knowing that we all are working towards the same goal: to Transform Lives."

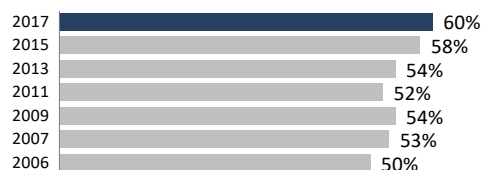
"My supervisor's support and a clearly thought-out mission of what HCS does and why. The constant feedback on how well we as a state are viewed with regards to what we do and who we are doing it for. And then how proud our leadership is with the results and passing on the information to us as the workers."

QUESTION. I know how my agency measures its success

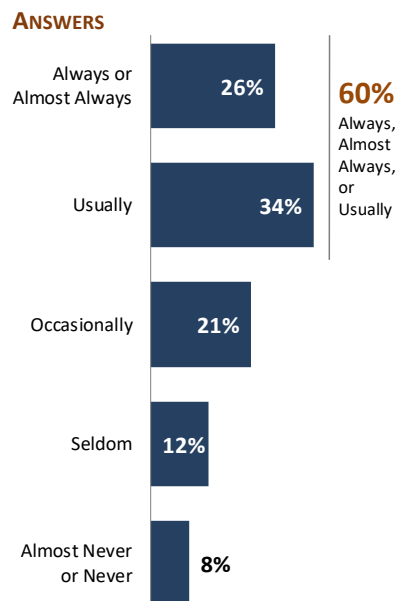
Six out of ten respondents (60%) agreed that they understand how the agency measures success – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. However, two in ten employees (19%) said that they seldom or never know what is used to measure success.

Comments on this topic, however, often focused on whether respondents agreed that performance metrics are meaningful and appropriate to their program’s purpose.

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they know how the agency measures success.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees want measurements of success to be consistent with the stated mission and vision.

“[I like that] my value as a physician is measured by outcomes and not revenue stream.”

“We do know how the agency measures success, but I think how Children's Administration at the headquarters level measures success is problematic. The agency focuses on compliance with performance measures rather than well-rounded knowledge of how to best work with families toward change and assess risk to children.”

“I would like to see a spirit of support with a common goal be more evident: Success and independence for the clients at our facility.”

“[I like] the ability to apply my skills and problem solving abilities in serving a very diverse group of clients. Being part of a mission that has a gold standard of objectives and versatility of services.”

“[I like] flexibility and understanding from management that our work is ever changing and increasingly difficult. Cases are more complex. We're encouraged to think outside the box and beyond the confines of historical practice. Management wants to achieve good, safe results for children. We need to remind ourselves often that this is our ultimate goal as an agency, not just a specific unit.”

“Politics and politically correct messages too often focus attention on issues that are not priority to the mission, vision, and values. Too often these are unfunded mandates which ultimately cause greater stress and challenges to employees in the real world.”

“[I like] understanding the job and how the work I do impacts the whole: keeping children safe and achieving permanency for them.”

In some cases, how management measures success is not consistently communicated to employees.

“Having clear, ongoing communication from executive leadership about ‘where we're going’ and more opportunities to reach out within our community for feedback and outreach could really change the way we do our work. Formal and informal recognition of a job well done from peers and leaders would be great. So much great work is being done behind the scenes that sometimes gets missed.”

“Consistency on how things need or should be done in the upper management level. One says, ‘Quality,’ one says ‘Quantity.’”

“I'd like to see the agency metrics on its success measures be more transparent or at least highly available/communicated.”

“Always getting mixed messages. For example, we are told great customer service is highly valued but at the same time are told that numbers and times are how offices are evaluated.”

“Sometimes the decisions being made by senior leaders appear inconsistent with what they say they value. There is sometimes a lack of transparency that is confusing.”

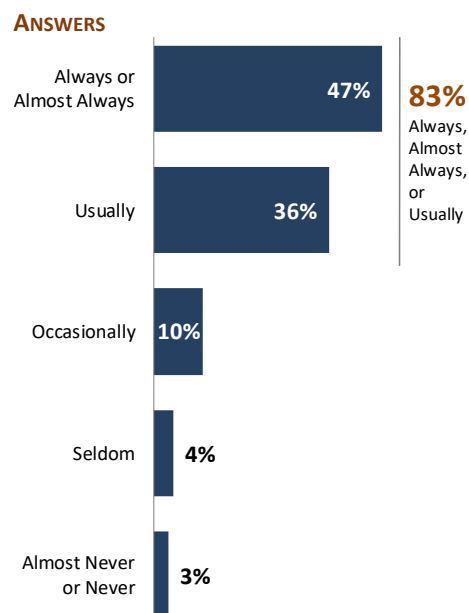
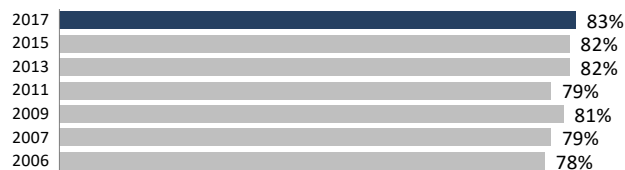
QUESTION. I know how my work contributes to the goals of the agency

More than eight out of ten employees (83%) said they understand how their work contributes to agency goals. Less than one in ten employees (7%) indicated that they rarely understand how their work supports the goals of the agency.

Employees like having:

- Clarity about how their efforts—and those of their workgroup—relate to agency goals
- Adequate time and resources to do work that can meet those goals
- A sense that their work is valuable

There was no significant change between 2015 and 2017 in employee knowledge about how their work contributes to agency goals.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Some respondents clearly connect with the mission and goals of their program and the agency.

"[I like] the opportunity to improve our clients' environment. Freedom and flexibility to accomplish our core mission."

"I love our mission for Transforming Lives. I feel heard and empowered to continue to grow personally. I love that we back our mission and continue to work toward new ways to support our clients."

"I feel that the work I do has a direct impact on the department and its value and mission. I feel connected to the work, and engaged in the work on a daily basis."

"I have a great office atmosphere with people who are willing to learn and work hard to Transform Lives."

Others stressed the importance of management practices that reflect the larger mission.

"I like that we follow the mission and goals in every aspect of our daily business. We are consistent with our message internally and externally as to what the mission is."

"Stronger partnerships with other divisions to streamline our work and provide the best outcome for our communities is something that could really shift Washington into the lead for Transforming Lives."

"Our unit needs a clearer sense of direction and goals. We do not have a clear plan for where we are going, why, and how it supports the mission and work of the agency."

"We have lost sight of the children who we are tasked to get money for. It's all about making non-custodial parents' lives easier. I'm here for the children, no one else."

"With all the personnel changes and organizational re-structuring for DSHS, I would like a better understanding of who we are now. What is still our mission, purpose, and goals as an organization?"

"Level of flexibility to accomplish my duties independently, great teamwork/camaraderie with my immediate work colleagues, the ease of knowing how I fit into the 'big picture' of Transforming Lives."

"When I first started working here it was explained that our primary mission is to Transform Lives. That entailed being thorough and taking the opportunity when presented to connect clients to other resources and information. It feels there has been a shift in direction for the line staff to just get as many cases done in as short amount of time as possible."

"The entire agency needs to be audited and examined by a neutral third party. Every process and everything we do every day should be examined for purposes of logic, efficiency, and how it is working and if each and every thing makes sense and fits with our stated goals."

"I would like to see my immediate supervisor provide clear direction and a roadmap for implementation of the work we are doing. It is very difficult to be able to see where my work fits into the larger mission and vision when my supervisor is unclear on direction."



“Calm Before the Storm” • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Carrie Gonzalez, with permission

From the photographer:
Caught a glimpse of my twins in quiet reflection just before they dove into a mud puddle.

“Brothers” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Dala Rice, with permission

From the photographer:
I love the innocent faces of these two brothers. This was on a train ride and they decided to cover up together as it was a bit cold.





“Park Bench Fall Leaves” • First Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

From the photographer:
Fall shot at Spokane's Manito Park.

CHAPTER 2

Supervisor/Manager Support

EMPLOYEES’ POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF SUPERVISOR AND MANAGER SUPPORT ROSE AGAIN. There were statistically significant increases in positive responses for two of the three questions concerning support from supervisors and managers. More employees than ever agreed that they receive ongoing feedback that helps improve their performance and that they receive recognition for a job well done. A high percentage of respondents continued to say that they are treated with dignity and respect. More than 4,500 employees (45% of all who made comments) discussed treatment that they receive from managers and supervisors. 1,684 made positive comments, a 19% increase; and 2,557 made negative comments, a 17% decrease.

MENTORING, AVAILABILITY, AND FEEDBACK FROM SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS. Employees value feedback, and most report that they get feedback from their management team.

- **More supervisor feedback.** 72% of employees (up from 69% in 2013) agreed that their supervisor always or usually gives them feedback that helps them to improve their performance.
- **Comments about support, availability, and feedback.** 901 respondents (8% of all commenting) praised the availability and willingness of supervisors and managers to provide support in the form of mentoring, coaching, guidance, and constructive input. 843 (also 8% of commenters) made more critical comments on these subjects. Negative comments decreased by 26%.

RECOGNITION FOR A JOB WELL DONE. A gradually increasing majority of employees say that they receive frequent recognition, but there is room for improvement in this area.

- **Increased recognition.** 57% of employees (up from 55% in 2015) said they always or usually receive recognition for a job well done.
- **A variety of experiences.** 694 employees (6% of those making comments) addressed recognition by managers – describing a wide variety of managers’ approaches and employees’ preferences for how this is done.

RESPECTFUL TREATMENT. A large majority of employees say their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect, but those who do not feel respected are often deeply dissatisfied.

- **High rates of respect.** 86% of employees said their supervisor always or usually treats them with dignity and respect.
- **Comments describing less positive situations.** Although most employees indicated that they are treated respectfully, 529 (5% of those commenting) wrote negative comments or suggestions for change in this area. Some described troubling situations such as gossip, threatening behavior, and insults on the part of managers.



“The View from the Top of El Capitan” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By John Plotz, with permission

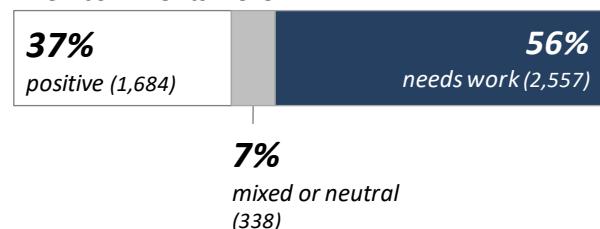
THEME. General treatment by supervisors and managers

4,579 of the 10,869 employees who made comments addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support or other aspects of supervisor/manager behavior.

42% commented on this theme (4,579)



Their comments were:



Nearly four in ten employees who mentioned supervisors and managers (37%) made positive comments. More than half (56%) suggested that employee treatment could be improved.

Of the 4,579* who mentioned supervisor and manager treatment of employees:

- 1,821 addressed support, mentoring, and feedback (pages 26-27)
- 694 discussed staff recognition (pages 28-29)
- 715 focused on courtesy and respect (pages 30-31)
- 866 wrote about manager fairness (Chapter 3, pages 35-36)
- 2,670 described other issues concerning supervisors and managers (these issues are addressed throughout this report)

► What DSHS employees said ...

Comments described a range of experiences with supervisors and managers, from simple courteous behavior to requested changes in more complex work practices.

“Managers need to say good morning, not walk in and find something wrong with staff, fix it, then talk to the staff about it. We are a team; let's work together as one. The only time you see a top manager is when the unit has potlucks.”

“If you support your workers, giving them what they need to do their jobs, without hesitation, you get more work from them and less calling in.”

“Our supervisor has done a magnificent job of building a healthy and positive work culture.”

“Management to care about the number of staff exiting. They should care more and walk around to say good morning to staff. They have too many meetings and don't show staff how important they are to RCS.”

“More positive collaboration between discipline directors/supervisors to help overcome barriers to good working relationships on interdisciplinary treatment teams. Many treatment team members have bad working relationships with each other and directors exercise little influence over this problem.”

Employees who praised supervisors often remarked on management style and personal attitudes.

“My supervisor is easy to work for and has compassion and a big heart. She makes sure we are all well trained and up to date on all the latest changes.”

“I have a calm, rational, experienced, motivated supervisor who leads by example, allows employee autonomy, and has an open door policy for subordinates.”

“I trust and respect my supervisor as I have confidence she values confidentiality as well as she reinforces the importance of balancing family and work.”

Some comments called for more managers and supervisors who have had hands-on experience, or are willing to learn about the challenges their employees face.

“It needs to begin with my supervisor, who claims to know our group's work and area of responsibility; but the reality is, he had no education or hands-on experience.”

“Managers in my office have field experience. They know which efforts put true value and meaning into the work we do to optimize quality for people that live and work in the settings we regulate.”

“Nowadays, it's not that common or thought all that essential for managers to have had much front line experience.”

“A big plus is that we have a hands-on and experienced supervisor.”

*Issues listed total to more than 4,579 as some employees mentioned more than one issue related to management.

THEME. Support and mentoring by managers and supervisors

1,821 of the 10,869 respondents commenting addressed the issue of supervisor/manager support and mentoring, including availability, helpfulness, and feedback.

17% commented on this theme (1,821)

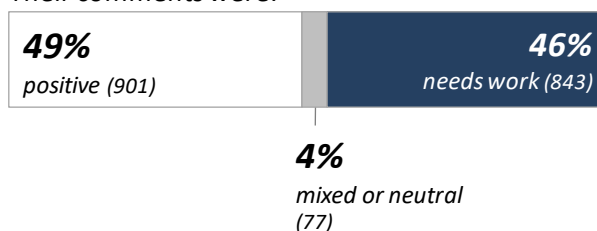


Of the 1,821 respondents who wrote about supervisor and manager support or mentoring, nearly half (49%) expressed satisfaction, while 46% saw a need for improvement.

Respondents' comments noted a variety of ways that managers and supervisors demonstrate (or fail to demonstrate) support:

- Being available to clarify instructions and expectations, and give feedback
- Giving staff enough guidance to let them succeed, without micromanaging
- Modeling the professional behavior that will help employees move ahead in their careers
- Providing hands-on mentoring

Their comments were:



► What DSHS employees said ...

Respondents expressed the desire for more formal and informal mentorship opportunities.

"I've never had a one on one with my manager ever since I've been here. Would it be asking too much if I dreamed of talking with my manager about my career goals and getting some advice on how to get there?"

"The ratio of leads to workers is not great. It would be helpful to have a job coach, lead, or supervisor available to help everyone, answer questions, give support and feedback on a daily basis."

"I would like to see the implementation of the staff mentorship program (matching a new staff with a more experienced one) so new staff have a set person (who works the floor) that they can process with, ask questions, etc."

Employees have widely varying experiences of management support.

"My boss and team and ability to do my work effectively and be able to ask questions/clarification. Room to grow and do other activities outside my regular day-to-day. I know that my boss understands the complexities of my work and is very supportive!"

"We need to do a better job of supporting front line social workers. Our policies are set up in a way that anything that goes wrong or isn't done is the fault of the line social worker. There is not a supportive distribution of responsibilities among other supportive, non-case-carrying positions."

"I feel supported in developing solutions to challenges and problems."

"Less meetings for management and more time available to spend with line staff."

"Senior management who are responsive, attentive, and who come into meetings prepared to make decisions in a timely fashion so employees are able to do their jobs. Our office chief has to stop blaming other office chiefs and show some engagement, ownership and maturity with their leadership. We deserve that."

"My supervisor is a great mentor and really pushes us to do better and be better. She always wants us to be happy in our job as she knows it will improve productivity."

Management support can have far-reaching effects.

"I love working for AL TSA and feel incredibly fortunate to work with a team of skilled, dedicated, generous, and kind people with leadership that provides supportive mentoring and coaching. I feel encouraged by my leaders which has given me confidence to stretch my skills, deepened my commitment to the organization, helped me better understand what I have to offer the organization, and inspired a desire to be part of the next generation of leadership within AL TSA."

"My supervisor and manager are actually concerned with my health, my well-being, and me. They know how much this job means to me; how it gives me purpose. They work to combine my disability with my work environment to help me do my best and help me survive."

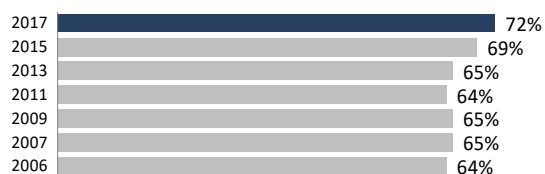
QUESTION. My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my job performance

Nearly three out of four employees (72%) said their supervisor provides regular feedback – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. However, 13% still report that they seldom or never receive feedback from their supervisors.

Employees appreciate feedback that:

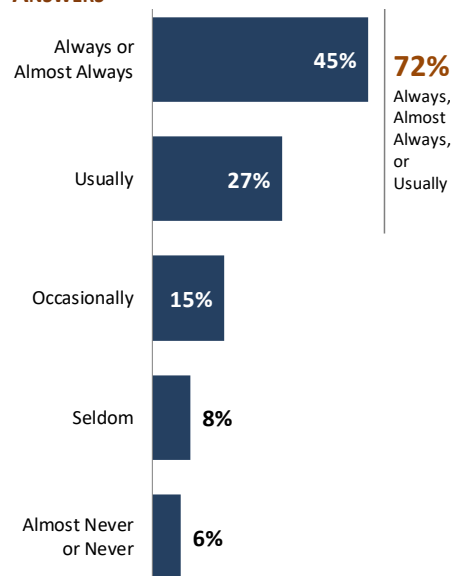
- Is specific and clearly related to their responsibilities
- Comes with support for making improvements
- Balances constructive criticism with understanding, assistance, and well-deserved praise
- Goes beyond reliance on “the numbers”
- Takes recent changes into account
- Relates to the purpose of their position

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they receive ongoing feedback.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Some employees prefer more frequent, intermittent, or informal feedback.

“I would like for employees to have the opportunity to correct performance issues before receiving corrective action.”

“I get constant support, kudos, and encouragement to manage my responsibilities.”

“More structured individual counseling and team coaching. Annual review only forces us to concentrate on development of the individual in a deliberate and thoughtful manner once a year. How do you expect to see growth and honest communication this way? Verbal feedback and small notes are great and should be reinforced by a semi-annual or quarterly counseling session. Encourage supervisors to schedule the time for counseling development and execution as well.”

“Less criticism about people's work after the fact. Impossible to go back in time and know what was going on during the case, why something got missed. Look at things more of a learning for the future, not to critique.”

Inconsistent expectations can interfere with employees' success.

“It seems that nobody ever has the same understanding of what is expected at any given moment. I can be praised and used as an example by one boss, while told I am doing it wrong by another. It is discouraging and leads to employees feeling that no matter how hard they try, they cannot get it right.”

“Inconsistent (sometimes contradictory) messages between the administration and evaluators.”

“More clarity about what's expected at certain work stations.”

The right approach to feedback can enrich employees' work experience.

“I understand what my supervisor expects of me and she makes me want to go the extra mile.”

“My supervisor is always available to assist me. He gives me constructive feedback in order to help me grow and improve my performance.”

“I'm given feedback on my performance and encouraged to make decisions even if my supervisor doesn't necessarily agree. I'm then encouraged to learn from my decision without feeling belittled or judged.”

“Support and encouragement from my supervisor/administrator (as well as my management team) for all aspects of my position and in being able to successfully complete my duties and assignments. This to include the opposite side of the coin, when I need redirection or guidance, it is always provided in a productive and respectful manner.”

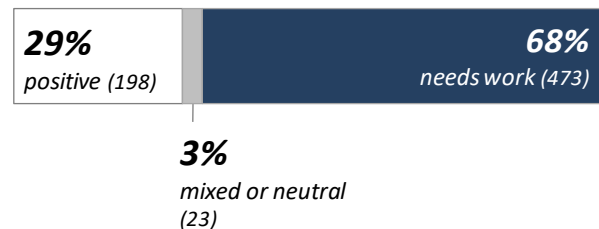
THEME. Management recognition

694 of the 10,869 employees who made comments addressed the importance of supervisors and managers recognizing and praising the good work of employees.

6% commented on this theme (694)



Their comments were:



Of the 694 employees who commented about employee recognition, less than one third (29%) are satisfied with the recognition they receive.

Comments included observations that:

- Receiving both informal and formal recognition is important
- Getting heartfelt appreciation for their work can be very motivating
- Being acknowledged through both actions and words is appreciated
- Having managers acknowledge that they understand an employee’s job can be a valuable way of being recognized

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees described a variety of ways that managers can recognize good work.

- “Incentive/retention/recognition funds used to give substantive awards for individual accomplishments.”
- “I would like to see more visibility from our office chiefs, directors, and even the assistant secretary, (e.g. e-mails, a quick trip down the aisle way or bullpen to see what's up, even a pause in the corridor or common area to give someone a hand shake or pat on the back).”
- “I really appreciate receiving the cost of living raises and the addition of another pay scale step. It was nice to be acknowledged.”
- “I like the newsletter that gives credit to employees for a job well done.”
- “I think we need a full-time staff person dedicated to employee recognition and a committee of staff who inform events, special weeks/months to celebrate each discipline. The employee BBQ is nice, but we need to have ongoing activities to brighten spirits and show staff they are loved and appreciated.”
- “My supervisor doesn't fail to remind me how good I am with my job.”
- “I would like to see the secretary and assistant secretaries show greater appreciation for staff in each divisions work (e.g., awards, honors).”
- “Administration should be quick to give commendation, awards and other form of motivation/encouragement to boost employees’ morale.”
- “I like the weekly updates from directors in the blog, and it is exciting to see their perspectives on issues or subjects; but that made me want to have more positive messages.”
- “I would like AL TSA/HCS to acknowledge that HCS Financial workers are as essential as having Social Workers.”
- “Maybe a quarterly off-site date, family get-togethers, or simple surprise employee appreciations.”
- “The focus should be on recognition of employees through a formal recognition program not just focused on tenure. Each agency should form formal recognition teams to develop categories and non-financial rewards for a job well-done.”

Some appreciate it when managers give praise for specific accomplishments rather than generic encouragement.

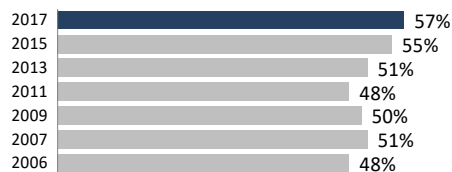
- “Acknowledgment of my efforts in providing excellent customer service to our clients showing that I'm helping make a difference by helping others.”
- “Everyday workers rarely get anything, but a generic ‘we thank you for your wonderful and selfless work that you do every day.’ I feel a sense of pride when my supervisor or Area Administrator comments on some specific work that I did.”
- “My boss provides me with verbal and written acknowledgment that I am performing my duties in a timely manner.”

QUESTION. I receive recognition for a job well done

More than half of respondents (57%) reported that they always or usually receive recognition for excellent work, a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. Nearly one quarter (22%) said they seldom or never receive recognition for good work they accomplish. Employees noted that:

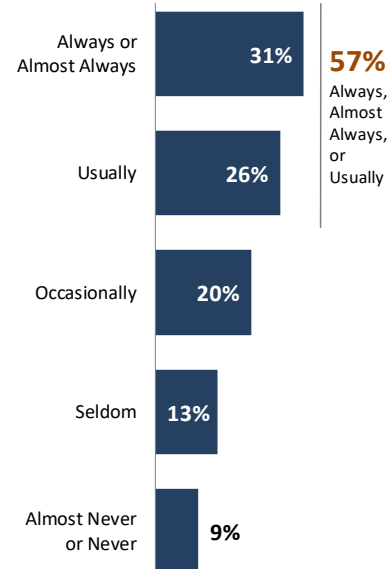
- Personal preferences for the type of recognition desired vary greatly
- Staff morale suffers if good work is not acknowledged and appreciated
- Praise that recognizes specific contributions or accomplishments is usually preferred over generic messages

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they received recognition for a job well done.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Some responses described different types of recognition that are meaningful to them.

"The only thing I would change would be to have potlucks/ice cream days to celebrate our stats/quota that we meet each month."

"[I] would like to see the state be able to give raises to those who deserve them."

"I would like to see more ward-specific appreciations from supervisors."

"I am told by my co-workers and supervisors that my work is top notch."

"If there was some type of recognition program that highlights what the workers do on a consistent basis, it would make the workers feel more valued, thus reducing the high turnover."

"Even though DSHS management says how much they appreciate the work we do and respect us, action speaks louder than words so maybe a little 'back off' is warranted!"

"My hard work is recognized and public appreciation occurs regularly."

"I also appreciate the support from management whenever we are tasked to do something extra, and for the recognition after."

"I get daily praises from clients and co-workers for going above and beyond."

Employees report that there are some work units where praise and recognition is rarely given.

"We all work harder here than I have ever witnessed at any job and don't feel like we are praised or rewarded very often."

"The manager walks on unit and does not say good morning to staff, just finds things wrong and never says what a good job staff are doing."

"Never do we hear a good word or a thank you."

"Positive feedback is something that is needed in this agency. Workers want to hear that they are doing a good job every now and then. We aren't doing this job for the accolades, but it would be nice to hear management tell us the good things we are doing as opposed to focusing only on the negatives; cases over 90 days, IFFs that were missed, etc."

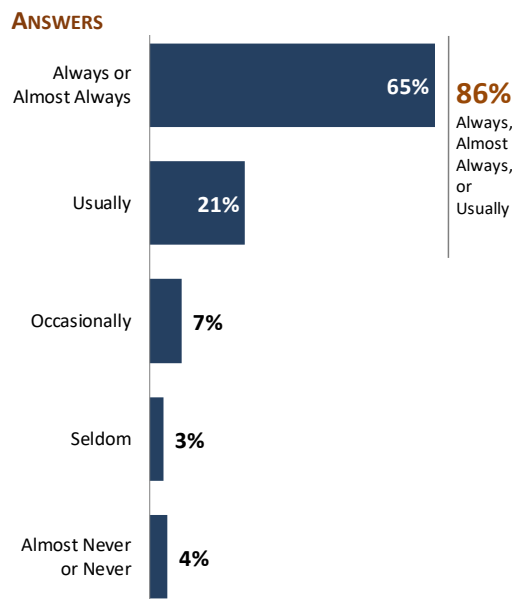
Some employees described situations where recognition and performance seem to be out of step.

"I would like to see recognition for my work. I can be a non-productive employee and there is no difference in praise. At times the non-productive workers appear to be treated better than the productive employee."

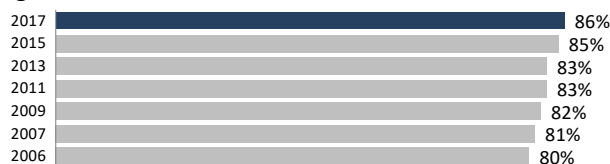
"Doing a good job or working faster than others is its own punishment. If you don't fit in with the average, then your bosses assume that you are not doing your job correctly and search for reasons to support that conclusion."

QUESTION. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect

More than eight out of ten employees (86%) agreed that their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect, the highest ever for DSHS. Although less than one out of ten employees (7%) reported their supervisor seldom or never treats them respectfully, some described supervisors whose attitude or actions communicate a lack of respect for the employee’s dignity. A selection of comments about respectful treatment of employees can be found below.



The slight increase in staff who said their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect from 2015 was not statistically significant.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees appreciate general friendliness, courtesy, and management practices that demonstrate respect.

“I have an amazing supervisor and a supportive, drama-free permanent team. This person is kind, respectful, and appreciates the work-life balance necessary to maintain a healthy work environment.”

“My position is respected and I feel that my input is important and I am frequently asked for my opinion.”

“The best part about my current job is working with my administrator. She is a role-model for RESPECT and values and implements the Rules of Engagement. She values staff in our office and shows this by supporting and promoting opportunities for growth, training, and team building.”

“The team has become great because my supervisor leads through her knowledge and not through dictating. My supervisor supports any suggestions that benefit my group and improves job outcomes.”

Supervisors who demonstrate trust and give staff appropriate autonomy communicate respect.

“The culture of my department, flexibility in scheduling, working remotely, independence and respect I receive from my supervisor.”

“I can work independently or as a team. The choice is mine. I also like that I am trusted to use my time correctly and I don't feel like someone is always ‘over my shoulder.’”

“The recognition of staff as professionals and the ability to do our jobs in a way that best suits our own style.”

“I also really appreciate that my position suits my skills well and my manager trusts my decision-making.”

“I am treated like the professional adult I am and not micromanaged. I am given the authority and resources needed to achieve the best outcome.”

“I am not micromanaged. It makes me feel respected in my decisions.”

“My supervisor respects my abilities and gives me the freedom to do my work and supports me being able to work remotely, when needed.”

Some gave specific examples of practices that communicate disrespect.

“There is a lot of workplace bullying that happens from the management team.”

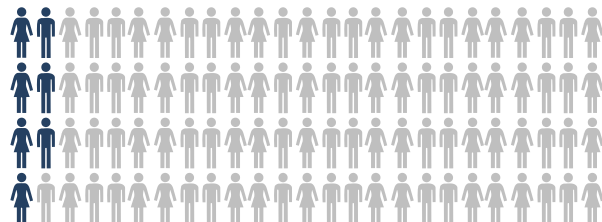
“Management does not ask for feedback when making changes. If there was better communication about this process it is likely that rehab staff would feel more respected.”

“I would like to be treated with dignity and respect, and not to be criticized by upper management for having a soft-spoken personality which I feel is an asset to the company. I feel that my quiet demeanor is treated as a weakness rather than the strength it provides to the department.”

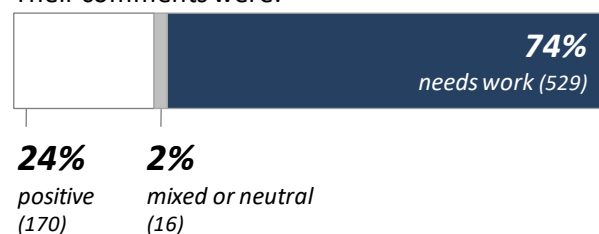
THEME. Courtesy and respect from supervisors/managers

715 of the 10,869 respondents who commented addressed this aspect of supervisor and manager behavior.

7% commented on this theme (715)



Their comments were:



Of the 715 respondents who wrote comments about courtesy and respect, 24% shared positive experiences, while 74% see a need for improvement in this area.

Positive comments about courtesy and respect tended to be shorter than those who describe—sometimes in great detail—negative examples. Respondents provided their perspectives on:

- Workplace cultures that can either encourage or undermine employees’ sense of being respected
- Negative practices such as gossip and bullying persist in some workplaces
- Work policies and procedures can communicate disrespect

► What DSHS employees said ...

Respondents described various aspects of their work that make them feel respected.

- “I am called on to answer questions and share my expertise with others, which in turn makes me feel that my efforts are needed and appreciated.”
- “I like that I am encouraged to grow, both personally and professionally. I am encouraged to take on new opportunities and am provided with various challenges that keep me interested in my work.”
- “I am treated like an adult and allowed to schedule my tasks without supervision.”
- “I feel respected and that people care enough to teach me new skills and learn more about our book of business. I get many opportunities to provide input and I feel like my voice is heard.”
- “[I like the] ability to be flexible and contribute in a variety of ways, lots of respect and autonomy.”
- “Not afraid to speak ideas, thoughts. The level of respect is well above average.”
- “I feel respected and trusted. When I have ideas I feel like I’m being listened to and my boss backs me up on decisions I make.”

Some employees described managers and senior staff who demonstrate or tolerate disrespectful practices.

- “Take action on workplace bullying, especially nursing staff who are rude to new staff and not welcoming.”
- “The manager is rude and offensive, and makes a lot of derogatory comments about others.”
- “There is a certain amount of subtle and not-so-subtle bullying that is tolerated and drives some of the decision-making.”
- “Supervisor makes racist comments and talks behind employees backs using insulting language and curse words. We need better leaders in the workplace.”
- “I am tired of our manager gossiping, talking about managers to other managers or about staff to other staff. She is disrespectful, a bully, and very retaliatory if she doesn’t like something others do.”
- “Stop the bad-mouthing by one chief to her staff about other staff and managers.”
- “There are some ward administrators that are very rude. It is painful to work with the one on my ward. He yells at people and is aggressive and threatening.”

Staff sometimes see certain work tools and procedures as disrespectful.

- “Management doesn’t practice what they preach with RESPECT and agency goals and values. I don’t like being hovered over by my supervisor constantly with WFO [Workforce Optimization] wanting to know the reason I have any idle time or any time out of adherence. It’s like being punished and treated like a child every day.”
- “Support in the courts, rather than leaving untrained workers on their own (physically and emotionally) to deal with defense attorneys set on targeting over-worked, underpaid and under-trained social workers doing the best they can with the limited resources they have.”



“Off the Grid” • Third Place (tie)

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By David Shannon, with permission

From the photographer:

The Information Age helps us stay connected to each other through e-mail, cell phones and social media; however, getting off the grid reminds us to stay connected to our immediate environment, friends and family. This image was taken as a friend and I were on a hike with our families. Our kids had all run off to the beach but we lingered behind, enjoying the calm and savoring the magic of the moment.

“Seattle Pier” • Second Place

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Mike Midkiff, with permission

From the photographer:

At the waterfront in Seattle.





“Tulips” • First Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
By Nathan Moreland, with permission

From the photographer:
Beauty is all around us in Washington State.

CHAPTER 3

Fairness and Diversity

SURVEY RESULTS SHOWED SOME GAINS IN THE AREA OF FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY. Positive responses to questions about fairness, discrimination, and agency support for a diverse workforce increased significantly from 2015 levels, achieving the highest scores in the history of this survey. A new question addressed fairness in a more general manner. The majority of comments about manager fairness and diversity issues were critical, much the same as in previous years.

GENERAL FAIRNESS. The 2017 statewide employee survey added a new question about employees’ perceptions of fairness: “People are treated fairly in my workgroup.” Over time, trends in answers to this new question will add to the ongoing analysis of comments about management fairness.

- **Reports about fair treatment.** 67% of employees reported that people are always or usually treated fairly in their workgroup. 17% said people are seldom or never treated fairly.
- **Comments about manager and supervisor fairness.** 797 (7% of employees making comments) criticized manager fairness. They wrote about inequity in a number of areas including rule enforcement, promotions, hiring, and distribution of tasks and privileges.

FAIRNESS RELATED TO DISCRIMINATION AND SUPPORT FOR A DIVERSE WORKFORCE. The survey includes two questions that reflect employee perceptions of discrimination – one relating to fair treatment in the workplace, and one relating to agency support for a diverse workforce. Both showed positive gains from 2015. Survey staff also identified comments about discrimination against protected groups, and other diversity issues. While some employees praised diversity in DSHS, most comments around this theme were complaints or suggestions for change. Although such comments are relatively few, they pertain to issues of great concern to the Department and its staff, and so were analyzed in detail.

- **More reports of fair treatment, without discrimination.** 76% of employees agreed, “In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination.” This is the highest recorded score on this question, up from 72% in 2015.
- **Support for diverse workforce.** 70% of respondents agreed, “My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce.” This is an increase from the previous high of 68% in 2015, and continues an upward trend.
- **Comments about diversity.** 216 of the 10,869 employees who commented (2%) made negative comments about treatment of protected groups, while 79 made positive comments. Another 96 made other negative comments related to perceptions of discrimination, but not to protected groups. These other comments address concerns about nepotism, “good old boy” practices, sexual harassment, and reverse discrimination.



“Happy Birthday America!”

• **First Place (tie)**

DSHS Photo Contest

Category: DSHS Family

By Miranda Koutecky, with permission

From the photographer:

This is my two-year-old daughter enjoying fireworks on the 4th of July. The picture shows her love of the outdoors and her excitement that night. Her love of nature and being with family is evident by the smile on her face.

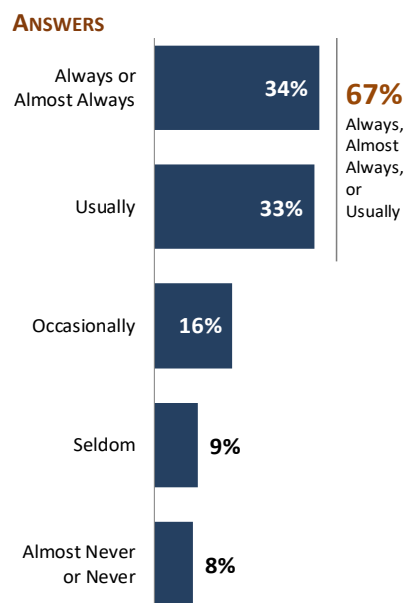
QUESTION. People are treated fairly in my work group

67% of employees agreed that people are always or usually treated fairly in their workgroup. 17% reported that such support occurs only seldom or never.

Comments that described unfair treatment often go into much greater detail than those who simply mentioned that their supervisor is “fair.” This is reflected in the quotes on this page and the following one.

This new question, added in 2017, is similar to the fairness/discrimination question historically asked by DSHS (see page 40), but focuses less directly on diversity issues; and results in a different response pattern.

2017 is the first year this question has been included in the Employee Survey.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Many comments about fair treatment by supervisors also describe other positive attributes.

“[I like] working for someone who is consistent with expectations, processes, and communications; someone who doesn't have different standards for different subordinates.”

“My direct manager understands my work and is fair.”

“I love my supervisor. She is fair and kind, creative and supportive.”

“I like that our current supervisor is supportive of every employee on our team. They are interested not in making themselves look good through our success, but in helping our team to succeed by serving our customers well. They are reasonable, fair, and focused on equitable outcomes.”

“I enjoy working for my supervisor who is very intelligent, very supportive, extremely thorough and fair.”

Some employee comments described situations where the boss is perceived as having favorites among their staff.

“[I would like to see] accountability with staff, and the good old boys or favorites treated like the rest of us.”

“I have been with DSHS for seven years and have never been chosen to be on a specialized workgroup. However, there are several co-workers in my department who have been working for less time than I have, and they get chosen all the time. It's clear that supervisors have ‘favorites.’”

“I would like to see equality of rule enforcement for staff. If a supervisor enforces a rule for one staff member, that supervisor should enforce the same rule for all staff. Staff should all be held to the same standard.”

“Make sure all the rules and policies are applied equally to all employees.”

“Certain staff are still denied certain things and told it's not approved, but then other staff ask for the same thing and it gets okayed. When it is brought to management's attention they don't like it and make it even worse for the staff that brought it up.”

“They push people out so that they can open space for their friends. They enable and encourage spying on peers, spreading rumors so they have grounds to investigate people and show extreme favoritism. The amount of nepotism that happens here is horrific. There is nothing fair or just about this place.”

Fair treatment of employees can extend to fair treatment of clients or customers.

“My immediate supervisor encourages me to do my very best for my patients/customers and co-workers alike. A family atmosphere is welcome and practiced here. Everyone is equal, from patients, to customers, to workers alike.”

“The agency is well organized and authorities in the office have a warm welcome attitude to staff regardless of who you are.”

“A great team with true egalitarian treatment of all.”

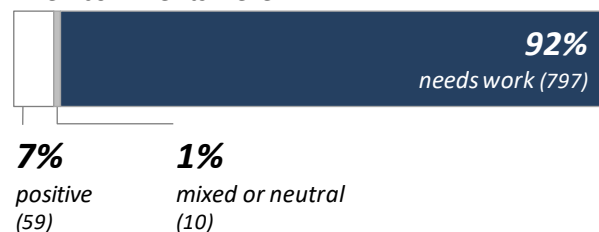
THEME. Manager fairness

866 of the 10,869 respondents who made comments addressed management fairness.

8% commented on this theme (866)



Their comments were:



Of the 866 employees who wrote about manager fairness, 92% said there was room for improvement. 8% made positive or mixed/neutral comments.

A variety of unfair practices and situations were mentioned, including:

- Unevenly enforcing personnel policies
- Distributing work tasks and opportunities in ways that do not seem impartial
- Hiring or promoting friends and family members in preference to other qualified staff (also discussed on pages 39 and 70-71)

► What DSHS employees said ...

Some respondents discussed workload and task assignments in their comments about fairness.

“There are colleagues that feel they are not receiving fair treatment and that is not my experience. I would like for us all to feel our workload and experience is evenly distributed and we are all being treated professionally.”

“Work tasks are evenly distributed.”

“Treat everyone the same, provide everyone with the same opportunities. Don't be afraid to hold people accountable for their duties/behavior.”

“I know you have committees and workgroups that engage employees and these are all good, but we need to have more employees' contributions and suggestions taken into consideration, not just lead workers or supervisors or managers.”

Other comments about fairness expressed a desire for flexible schedules and teleworking policies or practices.

“We work hard. Having a flex schedule, a three-day weekend should not be hard to get, or given to one, but denied another.”

“I would like to see more flexibility in work schedules. If we ask to deviate, we need to complete a schedule shift change. It is not a friendly system. Upper management works from their home 2-3 days a week. Yet we are not allowed.”

“The ability to have more flexibility in working from home would be nice as well. Other divisions within my administration offer it, so why isn't it offered administration-wide? Consistency in this area would help staff morale.”

“I do not experience flexibility with my work schedule. I use my evening and weekend hours to travel and exchange time is rarely granted. As a result when I need a little time off I submit leave for vacation or sick, even for as little as a half an hour. I have observed that a colleague in my work unit is not held to the same standard, and comes and goes as he pleases without always submitting leave when he is out of the office.”

“We have a small team that are very close; however, some get special treatment while others are ‘important’ and cannot get such treatment (i.e. flex schedule, work from home).”

“I used to like my flex schedule, but now they are taking it away from me for no apparent reason.”

Managers and supervisors who create an atmosphere of impartiality are appreciated.

“The office I work in has shown equal support to each of the members of the staff.”

“There is not any display of employee preference between the employees and the supervisors.”

“My manager strives for establishing standards that are statewide and apply to all those who work the same position.”

“Management is very accommodating, fair, and encouraging in my team.”

“I feel like management is fair and equitable here to make great hiring decisions based on the best candidates, not just placing friends or family, or seniority.”

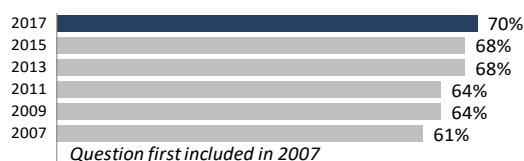
QUESTION. My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce

70% of employees agreed that the agency always or usually shows support for a diverse workforce.* 13% reported that such support seldom or never occurs.

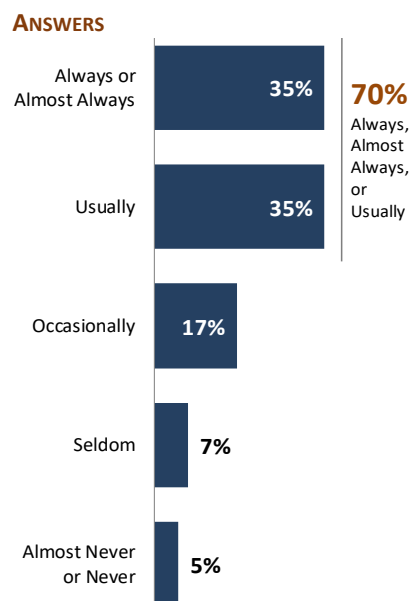
Employee comments show that many appreciate the diversity of the DSHS workforce. Others, however, would like to see better representation of diverse groups in staff and management.

*Interpretation of this question can be difficult, because not all respondents may focus on diversity issues. Some respondents answering “seldom” or “never” to this question may indeed focus on the phrase “diverse workforce.” They may feel their agency does not adequately support diversity, recruit a diverse workforce, support staff from protected groups, or teach cultural competency. However, some respondents may have instead focused on the word “support,” and answered negatively because they feel their agency fails to support the overall workforce, their complaints focusing on management support rather than diversity.

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 agreed that their agency shows support for a diverse workforce.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Many employees praise the richness and diversity of the DSHS workforce.

“The diverse workplace is very welcoming; no matter where you come from you are welcomed with open arms (by most).”

“I have great co-workers who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences that help bring perspective to situations or assist in resolving problems in new or unusual ways.”

“The workgroup I work in is very diverse. Every person in the workgroup approaches the job in different ways, but all for the same goal of assisting our clients.”

“Our workforce is extremely diverse, presenting employees with far more opportunities to offend or discomfort others from various countries, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc. However, I have been amazed to find that the vast majority of people who work here are mindful, kind, and considerate in the face of extreme workplace stresses.”

Some feel that the agency lacks diversity in both management and staff.

“I would like to see more racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, as well as diversity of thought. We see the same people (look and think alike) in positions of authority, and we wonder why we are unable to make impacts in the work that we do.”

“Diverse work force. Instead of just talking about diversity and inclusion I would like to see the principle put in practice especially in management positions.”

“They hire friends or relatives, or friends of their friends, or whoever they like personally while qualified staff who have seniority or experience get purposely overlooked. AND minorities and people of color have an even tougher time promoting or getting hired on top of that. That’s why management isn’t very diverse to begin with.”

“I would like to see the leadership team have more diversity within the leadership group itself, in terms of group age and background and race, so that the ideas of inclusiveness can be supported proactively and through leading by example.”

Others would like to see the DSHS workforce better reflect the diversity of agency clients and communities.

“I would like to see a more diverse work force which is supported by more diverse leadership. Our management is truly the best I know, but we don’t accurately represent our consumers.”

“The workforce in my office is not diverse and does not represent the community’s demographics well at all. The supervisors are all similar, and the workers hired reflect the supervisors’ demographics.”

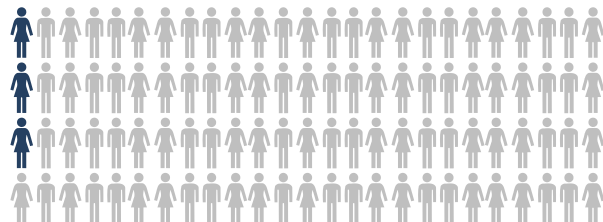
“I don’t feel that our agency tries to attract more diverse people in outlying areas. My office is within the scope of two local tribes, yet we have no Native Americans among our staff. How are we ever going to collaborate and help one another if we continue to have these barriers?”

“Hire more social workers that are African-American, Latino, Asian, and Russian.”

THEME. Favoritism or discrimination involving diversity issues

300 of the 10,869 who made comments addressed diversity and discrimination related to protected groups.

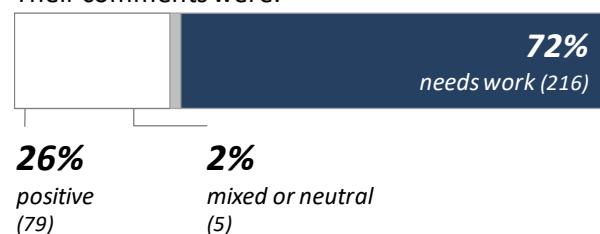
3% commented on this theme (300)



79 of the 300 respondents who commented on this subject are satisfied with agency diversity. Five made mixed or neutral comments. Most (216*) addressed discrimination against protected groups:

- 109 commented in general terms on the need to improve diversity and lessen discrimination
- 65 criticized unequal treatment due to race, ethnicity, culture, or language
- 32 referred to unfair or disrespectful treatment based on gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Comments about sexual harassment can be found on page 39, and are not included in this total)
- 26 expressed concerns about age discrimination
- 16 made comments about treatment of employees with disabilities

Their comments were:



*Individual areas of concern will add to more than 216, as some employees mentioned more than one protected group. This count does not include groups discussed on page 39.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Many concerns about race/ethnicity focus on advancement and hiring, but some address respectful, equitable treatment.

“Regarding recognition, for Caucasians it is positive and encouraging, however for African Americans it is demeaning and negative. If an African American suggests a process improvement it is ignored, then later the same idea is good when coming from a Caucasian.”

“This region is in need of a lot of changes, from a minority, i.e. Native American, Hispanic or other minority group holding a Regional management position to a support position with a title to match. I believe this won't happen anytime soon.”

“Hiring of people from a culturally diverse group (Asians, Latinos, Pacific Islanders, etc.). They exist.”

“Minorities are not treated fairly; they are targeted and advancement is not an option.”

“I would like to see the racist behaviors within the office stop and be addressed by the administrator.”

Some staff feel that there is discriminatory treatment based on gender or sexual orientation.

“The discrimination and inappropriate comments about gender, sexual orientation and lack of common courtesies is appalling. When I voiced my concerns I was told to get used to it, learn to deal with them.”

“I have noticed that men do not get promoted as often as women, if at all. It seems that some of the women in high-up hate men in general?”

“There is more discrimination within the workplace and I am not entirely sure why it seems to be increasing. The anti-LGBTQ conversations that I've heard in the office are really sickening and makes me sad as an employee to come to work.”

“There are clear staff favorites by our management, women are treated differently than men (they get bullied more).”

“My immediate manager discriminates against his female employees.”

Other staff report lack of support and respect for employees as they age or experience disability.

“I would like to see injured workers treated with dignity and respect. Older staff who have been injured are often not provided opportunities to work in a safer environment. Young staff are chosen over established, dedicated staff.”

“I would like to see people over 50 hired as supervisors or as program leads. There isn't a lot of age diversity in the supervisory level.”

“I would like staff to be accommodated, such as automatic doors on all bathrooms and also more disabled parking spaces offered to staff. It is difficult to find street parking close to the building, and there is only one disabled parking spot.”

“More effort to accommodate and KEEP workers as they age; a few very minor accommodations would encourage older workers with minor health changes to continue to work. And these employees are knowledgeable and valuable.”

THEME. Unfair treatment based on issues other than discrimination against protected groups

Some employees expressed concerns about diversity and equal opportunity within the agency, but did not focus on discrimination against protected groups.

► What DSHS employees said ...

30 employees expressed concerns that family members of other employees receive preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, or privileges.

“Since hiring has been allowed to be done in-office, it has destroyed the Washington State workforce. Full of discrimination, offices with more relatives than family reunions. Wasted middle management positions are created specifically for family members and friends.”

“Everyone at this company is either family or is having relations with someone else, and that seems to be how you get promoted. I would like to see people getting hired without having family ties.”

“I would like to see people with the proper skills getting promoted, not just people with family or friends out here.”

“I would like to see promotions based on merit, not who you are related to.”

“Can't we PLEASE stop hiring relatives? Or, at least have the relatives WORK IN DIFFERENT SECTIONS. It is impossible to be open and honest about work habits/problems when you would be discussing them in front of a relative.”

27 employees complained about “nepotism,” and 8 criticized “good old boy/girl” practices, without explaining the connection to protected groups. (These comments are counted separately from the family member and gender comments, because many use the words “nepotism” and “good old boy/girl” to mean cronyism.)

“Stop writing and acting as if the agency wants diversity, inclusion, and transparency. When literally, there is nepotism and favoritism occurring regularly.”

“Way too much nepotism. Managers ability to promote incompetents never ceases to amaze me.”

“Get rid of the ‘good ol’ boy’ network.”

“There is a lot of favoritism from management and a lot of the ‘good ol’ boys’ way of thinking.”

15 made comments related to religious and political beliefs and affiliations.

“[I would like] supervisors that do not express their personal beliefs as truths in the office, specifically religious and political ideals. This is not okay for anyone, but for a supervisor to say these things to their team, it is incredibly uncomfortable.”

“More respect and tolerance around religious beliefs. I hear derisive comments weekly from co-workers characterizing clients/families who mention religious affiliation as automatically being right wing conservatives or superstitious fools. I would NEVER admit to anyone in the office that I attend church from time to time.”

“The agency says they embrace diversity yet there are numerous instances where dates of events/trainings etc. are on major religious holidays; so it appears to be no real respect for diversity.”

“You have the inability to promote if you don’t have a relationship with the group that goes to this church.”

13 employees protested sexual harassment.

“[I would like] more women in management and treated seriously on their units. A serious crackdown on sexual harassment and good training on what is sexual harassment in the workplace that is geared to people from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures.”

“I would like to see the sexual harassment, discrimination, and misogyny end.”

“I have been sexually harassed at work, and the investigation was not taken seriously.”

“There are men in this office that scare women. Management needs to listen and take effective action.”

11 employees described reverse discrimination in the workplace and in training.

“Stop ‘reverse discrimination’ of Caucasian, Christian, heterosexual, etc. employees. Make the work environment bully-free against ALL bullying based on racism/political opinions/religions/skin color etc. as in State laws and policies.”

“Disproportionate Minority Contact/Diversity training was an absolute horror, and I can honestly say one of the worst, most degrading experiences of my life. Reverse discrimination was in full effect.”

“Prior diversity training included reverse discrimination, open racism toward white employees, an intolerant leftist political bent, and intimidation and humiliation used against those who might hold a divergent point of view. These trainings clearly split class against class, race against race, sex against sex.”

“Racism is rampant (since people of color have been oppressed for so long). I guess it's their turn to oppress and bully others - and because you know if you say anything the race card will be pulled.”

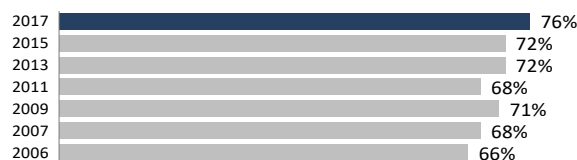
QUESTION. In my workgroup, people are treated fairly, without discrimination

76% of employees said they are treated fairly, without discrimination. 12% reported unfairness or discrimination in their workplace. As in previous years, fewer staff in residential facilities feel they are treated fairly (68%) compared to other staff (80%).

This question has been asked in the DSHS Employee since 2006. Although OFM added a similar question in 2017 (see page 35), this question has been retained in its current form, as it more clearly addresses diversity issues, is used in historical trends, and shows a different response pattern than the new question which does not include the words “without discrimination.”

Comments below include some of the 39 comments made about diversity and cultural competency training.

More employees in 2017 than in 2015 said they were treated fairly, without discrimination.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Opinions about fairness and discrimination vary widely.

“We need to push the envelope a little further on the concepts of RESPECT, equity, diversity and equality because it works! We can see how different our team has been from three years ago.”

“There is no discrimination here for age, race, or ethnicity. We are judged totally on the quality of the work that we do.”

“I would like to see fewer bigots in management. People who have the ability to judge and mentor other people no matter what their religion, their gender identity, their sex, or the color of their skin.”

“I like the general treatment of staff. There is no discrimination and everyone has equal opportunities in my workplace.”

“STOP the discrimination, nepotism, racism, and unfair treatment of employees.”

“I believe strongly in equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion, and I see that at work every day.”

“I like to see people treated fairly and with respect, regardless of their personal association and heritage.”

“Within the hospital it does not matter what your race or sex, or your religious beliefs. You are supported.”

“We yack, yack, yack about diversity, and I'm not seeing it where the rubber meets the road.”

“The best thing I like in my work area is there is no discrimination and there is opportunity to learn and improve.”

Some suggest that diversity-related training would lead to better treatment of staff and clients.

“Culture of RESPECT and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training should be offered to all staff. It has been proven successful across other divisions and should be available to all state employees. It is hard to practice something without the knowledge.”

“Our agency talks and talks about diversity, but currently there is no training at a local level in that regard. Management says they will have training regarding diversity and gender issues but it never happens. All talk and no do.”

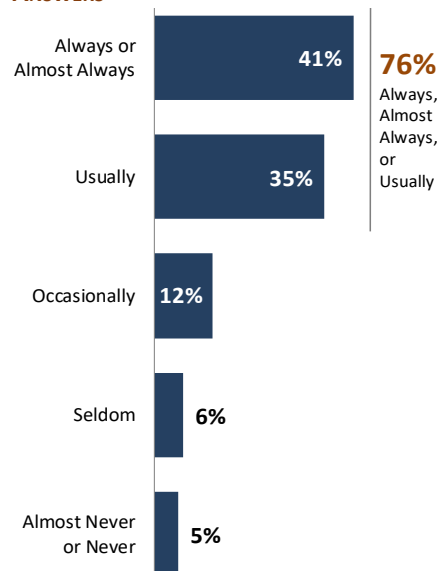
“FAIR HIRING PRACTICES, less discrimination, less biases, Recruitment, Engagement, Diversity, and Inclusion being taught and mandated for all administration and supervisors.”

“Create a culture that educates and mandates cultural responsiveness, engages in anti-racism and anti-oppression, and encourages dialogues about how race, oppression, and ableism exist in our work.”

“Continue the effort to educate workers and management to dismantle institutional racism and subtle discrimination and biases that serve as invisible barriers for minorities to succeed in their jobs.”

“More investment/training for mid-level management and frontline staff on equity, diversity, and inclusion.”

ANSWERS



“Summer Fun” • Second Place
DSHS Photo Contest
Category: DSHS Employees
By Seth Groth, with permission



“Point Ruston, Tacoma” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Bruce Pearson, with permission



“Old Walla Walla” • Third Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Technical
By Seth Groth, with permission



“Wisdom” • Secretary’s Choice
DSHS Photo Contest
By Stephanie Brand, with permission

CHAPTER 4

The Daily Job

STAFF SATISFACTION WITH MANY ASPECTS OF THEIR JOBS INCREASED. There were significant increases in positive responses to three questions described in this chapter. Employees listed many sources of workplace satisfaction, including interactions with clients, helpful and supportive co-workers, and opportunities to learn and grow. Answers to a new question about work environment were mixed.

OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION. More employees reported general satisfaction with their jobs in 2017 compared to 2015, and fewer employees made negative comments about workplace morale and atmosphere in 2017.

- **Increase in overall job satisfaction.** 70% of employees said they are satisfied with their job. This is a statistically significant increase from 2015 (67%) and the highest ever for DSHS.
- **Fewer negative comments about workplace satisfaction.** 737 employees (7% of those who commented) made negative observations about workplace atmosphere or overall satisfaction/morale, a 23% decrease from 2015. 625 (6% of those commenting) made positive comments.
- **Recommending the agency.** 59% said that they would recommend their agency as a great place to work. This was a new question in 2017.

JOB CHARACTERISTICS. As in previous surveys, employees say they enjoy being able to help clients, and they appreciate the support of their co-workers and having opportunities to learn and grow at work. However, there was a large increase in staff voicing a desire for more flexible schedules and telecommuting options.

- **Interacting with clients as a source of job satisfaction.** 3,604 employees commented about helping and working with clients. These comments indicated that helping clients can be the most gratifying part of their job.
- **More interest in flexible schedules and telecommuting options.** Both positive and negative comments about schedules and telecommuting increased greatly from 2015 to 2017. 2,358 employees (22% of those commenting) mentioned these topics, a 78% increase from 2015. The majority of these comments (1,314) requested more flexibility in their schedule or work location. Several mentioned the Governor’s “Building a Modern Work Environment” initiative, and their desire to see it implemented in their workplace. Another 823 expressed gratitude for flexibility in their work hours and location.
- **Increased satisfaction with autonomy and growth in the workplace.** The majority of employees (64%, up from 60% in 2015) said they have opportunities at work to learn and grow – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. 997 respondents (9% of those making comments) said they feel their workplace offers them independence and a chance to learn and grow.
- **Fewer complaints about heavy workloads.** 491 employees (5% of those who commented) said that they and/or their co-workers are burdened by excessive workloads. This represents a 29% decrease in complaints about workload between 2015 and 2017.
- **Good use of skills.** 70% of respondents agreed that they have opportunities at work to make good use of their skills. This was a new question in 2017.
- **Positive feedback about co-workers.** 3,020 employees (28% of those who commented) made positive mention of their co-workers, many addressing the spirit of teamwork. In answer to a specific question, 70% agreed that a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in their workgroup (up from 68% in 2015) – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS.

WORK ENVIRONMENT. A new set of questions was added in 2017 in support of the “Building a Modern Environment” initiative. Five focus areas were targeted: Flexibility, Mobility, Physical Space, Technology, and Well-being.

- **Flexibility and Technology.** Employees expressed the greatest satisfaction for Flexibility in scheduled hours (65%) and Technology (63%).
- **Physical Space and Well-being.** Roughly half of the respondents were satisfied in two of the other target areas, with 51% satisfied with Physical Space and 49% satisfied with Well-being.
- **Mobility.** The lowest satisfaction rate of these new questions concerned Mobility at 39%; reflecting the interest expressed by many employees in having greater options for telecommuting.



“Cousins Are Precious” • Honorable Mention
 DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Family
 By Rena Perez, with permission

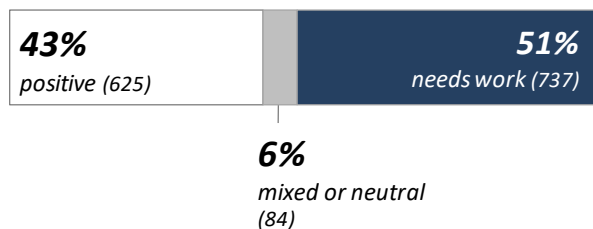
THEME. General satisfaction

Most employee comments mention specific things that they are pleased about or that they think should be improved. However, 1,446 employees (13%) made general comments about workplace atmosphere, worker morale, and their overall level of satisfaction.

13% commented on this theme (1,446)



Their comments were:



Most of the comments in the “general satisfaction” category are remarks about the overall atmosphere of the workplace. They also tend to be comments about how that atmosphere affects employee morale.

Comments from staff in this category are split fairly evenly, with 51% indicating there is room for improvement and 43% saying things are satisfactory.

It is not unusual for these types of comments to be one-word responses. For example:

- What do you like best about your current job? *“Nothing.”* (A negative answer)
- What changes would you like to see in your workplace? *“None.”* (A positive answer)

► What DSHS employees said ...

Most of the comments in this category refer to the atmosphere or environment in the workplace.

“I like the atmosphere, as it is very welcoming to employees and clients.”

“I would like to see and achieve my work in a quiet, tension-free, and fair environment so I can concentrate only on my job with full attention.”

“It’s a very friendly-family, happy atmosphere and somewhat pet-friendly.”

“The work environment has degraded in the last year. I love AL TSA, but I do not love my work environment.”

“The amount of laughter in our building. Always a happy place to work.”

“Promote a more positive atmosphere. When people are happy they are generally more productive.”

Staff often say that what happens at their work location affects morale.

“There currently is no morale/team building.”

“We are like family and try to boost morale around the office with fun activities.”

“The burnout is high and the work exhausting – especially when dealing with the challenges daily.”

“The morale is very good at this facility.”

“For the most part, the vibe and morale is good in our office.”

“Because of the nature of work, most co-workers and clients have a very negative outlook and pessimism is quite high.”

Some employees stressed the importance of worker satisfaction.

“There are aspects that I like, but I think overall I am dissatisfied with the current culture in this agency.”

“As of right now, I am very satisfied with my workplace.”

“More focus on employee satisfaction. There is a lot of push for customer satisfaction, but you can’t make people happy if you – the employee – aren’t happy yourself.”

“Overall I am satisfied and I don’t need any changes.”

“We are part of a long, dissatisfied, punitive, mind-numbing assembly line that leaves us stressed out and feeling unappreciated. I know it can be different.”

“I am very satisfied with the work environment and look forward to many years of employment with this organization.”

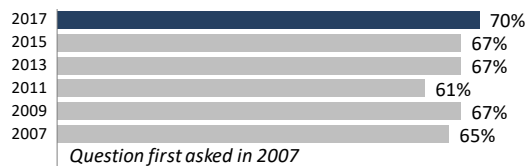
QUESTION. In general, I'm satisfied with my job

Seven out of ten employees (70%) agreed that they are generally satisfied with their job – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. However, 13% expressed some level of disappointment with their work situation.

Staff get satisfaction from their job when they have:

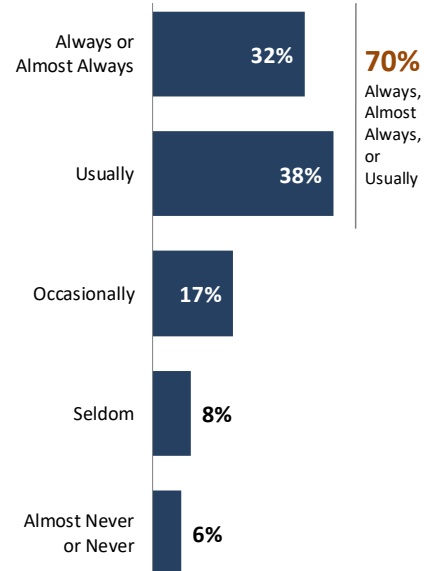
- Meaningful work that focuses on helping clients
- Tasks that match their skills and education
- Flexibility in their work location and schedule
- A voice in work-related matters
- Support and encouragement from team members
- A positive and low-stress work environment

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said they are satisfied with their jobs.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Most staff say that they are satisfied with their current circumstances at work.

- “I enjoy my job thoroughly. To me, my ‘job’ is not just a job, it’s incredibly fulfilling.”
- “Actually, please don’t change anything; I rather enjoy working here, who I work for, and the administration.”
- “I am very happy here and my work environment is wonderful and supportive. Would not go anywhere else!”
- “I love helping people. I enjoy assisting the most vulnerable people in our state. I enjoy my team and my supervisor. I feel very satisfied when it comes to this.”
- “I work in a ‘good’ office, so overall, I am satisfied with my day to day work.”
- “I love my job and it is hard to pick one thing. I am picking two. I like making a difference in the lives of clients. I also think my team is awesome and I am very happy with the work environment.”
- “I honestly feel this is the best place to work. I am very happy.”
- “I currently enjoy the fact that my current position involves some desk work and customer service work.”
- “It’s challenging but in a fun way and it always keeps me on my toes. I don’t go home unhappy or upset with my work.”
- “I am motivated and passionate about making a difference in families’ lives. I find this part of my job very fulfilling.”
- “I am very satisfied with my workplace. It is hard to think of anything I would want to change.”
- “I’m happy with my workplace. I am very truly happy here. I feel so very blessed.”

Some provided reasons for dissatisfaction in their workplace.

- “We need to focus on retention and employee satisfaction; yet as an office we are so busy putting out fires, so to speak, that we end up burning out the current good employees.”
- “People have skills that they aren’t being asked about and would like to use, and that would result in a more satisfied workforce.”
- “It has been nothing but stressful. Everyone seems dissatisfied with their positions.”
- “Employee satisfaction would increase if supervisors and managers held the belief that those doing the work are in a good position to understand what changes, if any, are needed in order to better serve our clients.”
- “Workers are pushed for times, quantities, and accuracy measurements without apparent regard for the human beings they deal with. This is a very dissatisfying feeling.”

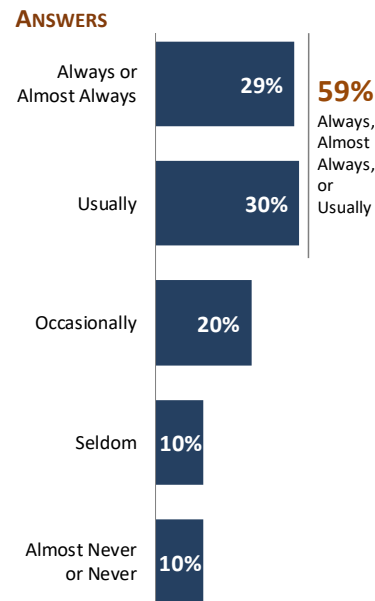
QUESTION. I would recommend my agency as a great place to work

More than half of DSHS staff (59%) agreed they would recommend their agency as a great place to work. One in five said that they would seldom or never recommend their agency as a possible work place for others.

Staff are more likely to recommend their agency as a great place to work when they:

- Have a good relationship with their co-workers
- Feel fairly compensated for the work they do
- Are supported and valued by their supervisor
- Have the resources they need to do their job

2017 is the first year this question has been included in the Employee Survey.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees often mentioned that they consider their agency a great place to work.

- “Overall, a very rewarding and great place to be employed.”
- “Great place to make a difference in people's lives.”
- “I really enjoy the work that I do. I have a fantastic supervisor and great colleagues. This is a great place to work!”
- “The fact that we are trusted to do our jobs makes working in this office a great place to work with a great group of people, manager included.”
- “Nice people to work with and the supervisors here go out of their way to make this a great place to work.”
- “This is a great place to work with wonderful support and appreciation for what social workers do.”
- “It's a great place to work!”
- “My workplace is a great place to be. We have a wonderful staff team that I look forward to seeing each day.”
- “It is overall a great place to work.”
- “I like that so many individuals can come together and create such a great place to work.”

A few had mixed feelings about making recommendations to work at their agency.

- “Although I like the work I do and can recommend working for DSHS for that part, I can't recommend it for good pay for the scope of work we do.”
- “I love my job, I love what I do, but unless you fly under the radar this isn't always a great place to work.”

Several gave reasons why they would not recommend that others work at their organization.

- “Watching management accept guidance/decisions from DSHS Headquarters staff that appear to be in direct contravention with RCWs/WACs/DSHS policy and training makes me question any recommendation I might make to someone who was considering working for DSHS.”
- “Pay, pay, pay. I don't recommend my place as a great place to work because of the terrible pay.”
- “An agency which states they are adamant on treating its employees with dignity and respect, and then allows supervisors to bully and demean their employees, is not an agency I would ever recommend to someone to work for.”
- “Thus far, the state has ineptly handled the DCYF situation. This could be a reason why some folks wouldn't recommend working for DSHS or the state, if the department and state can't even support its own staff.”
- “I love my job, but would never recommend working for the state because they have treated me with such little value (despite how much harder I work than many of my significantly higher paid teammates).”

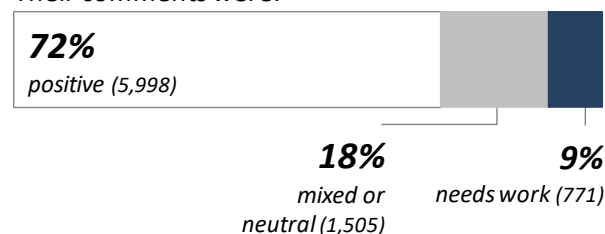
THEME. Job characteristics – an overview

8,274 of the 10,869 employees who made comments addressed job characteristics, such as helping clients, work schedules, telecommuting, workload, autonomy, growth opportunities, and use of skills and talents.

76% commented on this theme (8,274)



Their comments were:



Almost three out of four (72%) of the 8,274 employees who made comments about job characteristics described their job in positive terms. Less than one in ten (9%) said there was room for improvement.

Employees express satisfaction when their jobs include:

- Connecting with and helping clients
- Flexible hours that provide work/life balance
- Telecommuting options
- Manageable workloads
- Control over managing their own work
- Chances to learn and grow
- Opportunities to utilize their skills and training

Job characteristics are discussed in more detail on pages 49-55.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Most employees find great satisfaction in being able to interact with and help clients.

“My attitude can brighten my clients’ days. I am here for them and they are what keeps me here.”

“I like serving the people, Transforming Lives, and teaching and helping clients to navigate our programs. Letting our clients know we’re a one-stop shop, providing steps to transition into something stable and safe and possibly life-changing.”

“What I like best about my current job is seeing the residents succeed.”

“My favorite part about my job is the impact I have on people’s lives. I do my best with each interaction. I have to provide all services possible. That way, at the end of each interview, I know I gave that person or family all the assistance I could to lead them to self-sufficiency in the future.”

“The opportunity to help people make a difference in their lives, and improve their skills and abilities to make their lives richer and more meaningful.”

“I love taking care of the community I serve. Even the challenging people.”

Many job-related comments mention staff desire to have telecommute options and flexible schedules.

“Telecommuting should be available to all at least once a week to start. Flexibility in work schedules should be offered since CSO lobby times have been adjusted. Management is way too rigid in this aspect.”

“We are in the client business. Many clients have families and having extended hours would increase employee satisfaction and make it easier for families to be involved.”

“Our type of job would allow us to telecommute because 95% of our job is in front of our computer. A few of us in our unit have tried to rally for telecommuting and are met with a deaf ear.”

“To be able to work with my schedule. Flexibility never happens. I try to use my personal holiday or personal leave day, but it gets denied every time. So I just call in. But now they are cracking down on calling in sick. It’s a no win situation.”

References to micromanagement and autonomy are also seen in remarks about job characteristics.

“Less micromanaging. With every change in the last few years I continue to feel like a number. We are dealing with people here, we’re not selling products. Let us do our job without following a script and being badgered.”

“I’m not micromanaged. I’m trusted to do my job and as such I strive to do the best job I can.”

“We don’t need to be micromanaged, especially not to the point of decreased productivity. A person cannot adjust to a constantly changing lunch, especially if they are required to take medication at a specific time or with food.”

“We have autonomy over our day-to-day tasks, allowing us to work in the manner that best fits our work styles.”

THEME. Helping and interacting with clients

3,604 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned working with and helping clients

33% commented on this theme (3,604)



Their comments were:

99.7%

positive (3,592)

0.3%

mixed or neutral (10), or
needs work (2)

Almost all of the 3,604 staff (more than 99%) who commented on working with clients said that getting to connect with and help clients and communities is an important and gratifying part of their job.

As in previous surveys, when employees were asked, “What do you like best about your current job?” they often spoke fondly of their interactions with clients and their families.

Staff say they value:

- Being able to get clients necessary services
- Watching clients make positive life changes
- Being a part of their clients’ successes
- Having time to give clients the attention they deserve

► What DSHS employees said ...

A large number of employees say that helping and interacting with clients is one of the best parts of their job.

“I love my clients. The direct care staff are very caring people who take great care of our clients.”

“I like my actual position in the agency and my role in the lives of children and caregivers. I am often the ‘most helpful’ social worker they have met and that is validating.”

“I love the reaction on the clients' faces when the services you render are accepted. I love helping my clients and seeing them happy.”

“I love to learn more about the clients I work with and learn something from them every day.”

“I do enjoy the interaction with the majority of my clients, seeing the changes within their lives, in their attitudes, the improvements that they make.”

They feel honored to be helping clients transform their lives.

“I like my ability to be able to spend time with the patients and make an impact on their daily life.”

“I love working with individual clients and helping them along the path to self-sufficiency! It's great to have the opportunity to follow clients from beginning to end and see their growth.”

“I like that I get to make a difference in not only my home town but statewide, and knowing how much our programs help low-income families.”

“I love working with families and children and knowing that I really am making a positive difference in people's lives. We do very good work at Children's Administration and I'm proud to work here.”

“I am privileged to serve a very unique population and it is an honor to do this work.”

“I like being able to work at a place that has such great importance for the lives of others. I like being able to help those in need.”

Staff care deeply about clients and want to provide the best assistance possible.

“The patients can see right through and know when someone actually cares about them or not. We have a job because we have patients – and that's the end of that.”

“No likes. It's discouraging not to be able to help clients on first contact.”

“Our clients are fragile and to cause them additional health issues and stress is very sad. I go home at night and have sleepless nights for the work I was not able to get completed and the stress caused to our clients.”

“Helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person. I feel like I am helping at least one person.”

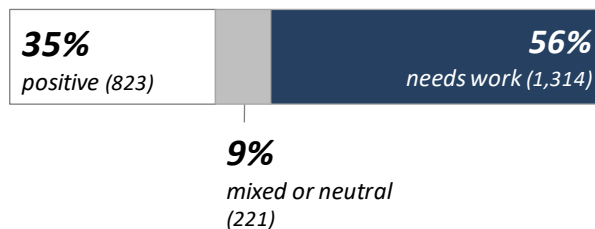
THEME. Flexible schedules and telecommuting

2,358 of the 10,869 employees who made comments addressed flexible work schedules and the ability to work from home or another work location (an overall increase of 78% over 2015).

22% commented on this theme (2,358)



Their comments were:



More than a third (35%) of the 2,358 employees who commented on work schedules or telecommuting said they were pleased with their work schedule and telecommute options. Over half (56%) suggested that more flexibility was desirable.

Many of the complaints this year specifically mentioned staff desire to have the Governor’s mandate on work mobility implemented in their workplace. (See page 61.)

Staff appreciate when they have:

- Some flexibility in their work hours
- Approval to get time off when needed
- Options of working from home or other remote locations
- A schedule that supports a healthy work and home life balance

► What DSHS employees said ...

Staff are grateful when allowed flexibility in schedules and work locations.

“I really do not like an hourly schedule, it limits the flexibility of counselors to interact in community. To me, it reinforces a culture of factory worker/assembly line making widgets for widgets’ sake from 8-5, without knowing why or for what. Lame.”

“The flexible work schedule and ability to telework allow me to be much more efficient with my time.”

“I would make changes as far as working with the employees when they need time off. They should honor their time off requests and not get denied all the time and have to call in. I know the staff at my house work hard as a team and to make sure the clients get all the support needed. So, it would be nice to have a time off request form approved.”

“Helping clients while in the comfort of my own home. Teleworking is a dream.”

Many commented on the need for a balance between their work and home life.

“I would like to see more consistency and organization in the scheduling, so that people are not having to constantly work doubles or be called/texted several times a day to come in.”

“Upper management encourages opportunities to balance home and work, and provide flexibility as needed. I think this is reflected in the positive attitudes in the office and what appears to be a low turnover.”

“Four on, two off schedule so everybody can get a weekend off to spend time with family. I have zero days off with my wife and I miss her. Two to three hours a couple days a week is not enough. Also, allow more than one person per shift to be off. Vacation is worthless if you can’t use it when you need it. I have missed my children’s and grandchildren’s birthdays because I couldn’t get the day off. I had to call in sick to attend my son’s wedding. I am considering a change in employment.”

“I am allowed the flexibility I need to maintain a work/life balance.”

“I would like to have the ability to work 4/10s with one weekday off every week so I could take care of personal business that I am not able to take care of because I work the same time as most other businesses are open. I have been able to do this in a previous position and it improved my quality of life and increased my ability to balance my professional and personal life.”

They want to see changes put into place to meet the Governor’s mandate on work mobility.

“I would like to see more use of telecommuting in line with the governor’s vision to help reduce traffic congestion and improve quality of life.”

“It’s time for the state to join the modern work force and encourage schedules with less than 40 hours.”

“More modern ability for flex schedules, teleworking. Even though it is part of the governor’s executive order, there still is a stigma against it.”

“Follow the governor’s memo around flexing and telework.”

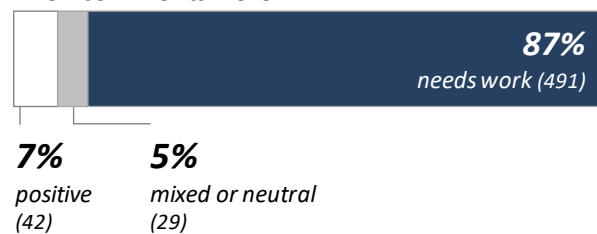
THEME. Workload

562 of the 10,869 employees who commented addressed how workload affects them.

5% commented on this theme (562)



Their comments were:



Most of the 562 staff (87% of them) who commented on their workload say they want it reduced. Very few of them (7%) said they were satisfied with their current workload.

When workloads are too heavy, staff may experience:

- Crisis/safety issues at work
- Problems with health and morale
- Additional stress due to high turnover
- Barriers to providing good customer service

It's better for staff and clients when workloads:

- Are manageable
- Do not burden staff with unrealistic expectations
- Allow staff the time to make good decisions

► What DSHS employees said ...

Unreasonable workloads cause staff turnover, which in turn makes workloads increase even more for remaining staff.

"We really need to reduce the workload. The high workload is the number one reason people leave."

"The staff are also forced to not only do their own tasks, but then have to do all the tasks of the positions that were not filled for that shift, and sometimes that can equal three different positions and the numerous tasks that are assigned, on top of helping patients with their needs. Staff are burned out."

"The workload issue results in high turnover, and in some places it is at a crisis point."

"The amount of work is absolutely unrealistic for one person to do. The high turnover of social workers is creating an unbearable caseload which is creating a high turnover. It is a never ending negative cycle."

Heavy workloads can be dangerous and unhealthy for staff.

"The workload is too demanding and it simply is unreasonable to expect people to do the job well under such high pressure."

"I have had to go out and see clients when I was ill and even vomited in their home to avoid missing my timeframe."

"I am given so many tasks with such little time to complete that I cannot do everything effectively. If I am not ever able to finish, I fear I will be talked to in the abusive manner that I have witnessed others receive. I am in constant stress."

"I am so overwhelmed by work that I literally don't know what to do first. I feel like a broken-down machine."

"I would like to see more support for social workers who face staggering caseloads they cannot possibly manage well, no matter how educated and experienced they are. This is dangerous!"

"Taking a day off is miserable because we come back to more work than we can possibly hope to do."

They want workloads that allow them to do their best work while providing quality service.

"It's impossible to do a good job for our patients at this workload!"

"Current staff struggle to keep up, many times failing to meet timeline goals, and diminishing the quality of services for our clients."

"We are all maxed out and this causes increased stress, resulting in us having to rush to complete things instead of taking the time and care with our clients that is needed."

"We all want to do a good job and do our very best, but it's next to impossible to stay on top of everything we are required to do."

"Every time I turn around, I have some equally urgent issue arising, and more than half of the time it involves technical issues or immediate changes in process/protocol/paperwork that have to be addressed, not direct customer service."

"Smaller caseloads would increase quality of service and availability for customers."

THEME. Autonomy and growth opportunities

1,298 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned opportunities for autonomy and growth in their workplace.

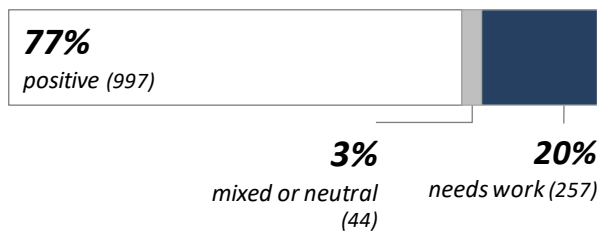
12% commented on this theme (1,298)



More than three quarters (77%) of the 1,298 employees who commented on autonomy and growth enjoy these aspects of their job. However, 20% said improvement is needed.

Over two-thirds of the requests for change (172, up from 134 in 2015) expressed concerns about the “Workforce Optimization” (WFO) system at the Economic Services Administration.

Their comments were:



Staff who commented prefer to be:

- Responsible for their own task management
- Able to offer suggestions to improve work processes
- Allowed to expand their skills
- Left alone to do their job without micromanagement

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees like being allowed to be creative and make improvements in their workplace.

“There are lots of opportunities for learning and growth, and to use my unique skills to improve services to clients. Honestly, I feel I am making a positive difference in the world through my work here.”

“I have the freedom to explore other ideas for improving quality practice.”

“In the unit I work in, we are encouraged to think out of the box to come up with new ideas for serving our patients.”

“I have a lot of flexibility in what I do and when, therefore I am more able to own the result, whether positive or reflecting a need to improve.”

“I appreciate being encouraged to come up with solutions to problems in my workplace and being allowed to implement changes.”

They often mention that they like the challenge that comes with expanding their skills.

“I like the professional growth potential. There are different doors to explore and gain exposure to different job experiences.”

“I enjoy the fact that I am not put in a box or limited in my potential.”

“The position I am in has a lot of responsibility and a constant learning environment. I like working here.”

“I feel challenged every day at work in working with the patients, in growing my own leadership and interpersonal skills, etc.”

“My manager allows me growth and development at every turn.”

Concerns were frequently linked to unwanted micromanagement and Workforce Optimization (WFO).

“My work environment has mid-level managers who engage in many of the worst practice activities such as micromanaging, diminishing my skills and abilities, making commands rather than requests or asking for input. This level of command and control of employees is toxic for me and is causing me to look for other work or leave state service early.”

“Micromanaging is not managing, and it creates a hostile work environment.”

“WFO and QM suck! Some of us perform better without so much scrutiny and monitoring. We're being told exactly what to say, how to say it, in what order to say it, and in how many minutes to say it.”

“A manager that is not a micromanager. It's very frustrating to have her tell me how to do my job when she has no idea what I do.”

“Better environment for employees to be able to work as professional adults, not be micromanaged and questioned for every action made in order to do a good job for our clients.”

“WFO is a huge issue, and I am tired of seeing my co-workers looking for other employment to get away from WFO and/or supervisor micromanagement and harassment. I am tired of the set up of our numbers. They don't show the work we do.”

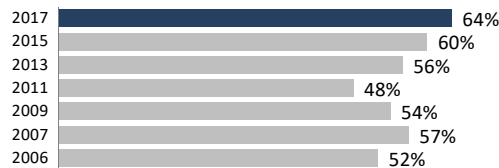
QUESTION. I have opportunities at work to learn and grow

More than six out of ten employees (64%) agreed they have opportunities at work to learn and grow – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. Only 16% said such opportunities are rare or unavailable.

Staff like having opportunities to:

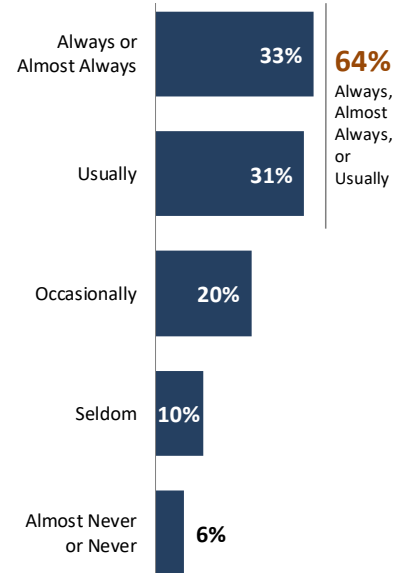
- Learn new skills
- Acquire abilities that further their careers
- Improve the way they do their work
- Utilize and enhance their talents
- Think outside the box and be creative
- Be included in special projects

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said there are opportunities to learn and grow.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Most employees say they like the challenges that come with learning new skills.

“I like the opportunity to learn and grow and to be challenged.”

“Every day is something different, whether it is the people I work with, the new and improved technology to make my job easier, or learning something new about my job. It is fast paced, and keeps me on my toes, I love it!”

“I stay constantly busy without being overwhelmed by the volume of work, and there is always a lot to learn.”

“I enjoy the challenges this job brings. I feel like I'm learning something new every day that I get to share with those around me and help make customer service better.”

They appreciate growth opportunities that help them improve processes in the workplace and advance their career.

“I enjoy the challenges of my every day work, and the opportunities to identify and implement system improvements.”

“The professional growth through tackling new challenges and learning new things. The potential to take on more responsibilities/promote.”

“I love that I have access to training and growth opportunities to improve myself and my work.”

“I have had ample opportunities to learn, grow, and improve my skills. I take these opportunities very seriously and put my best effort into all assignments my division gives me, paying close attention to the details and day-to-day operations.”

Some expressed disappointment in the lack of potential for growth and learning at their jobs.

“The office I work in does not support new learning, thinking outside the box, or being flexible. The agency is so focused on numbers and looking good to Olympia, they have turned social workers into robots.”

“Invest equally in those people who have demonstrated that they want to step up and do more. Undo the stinking pervasive attitude of ‘why should I bother to improve since it won't be noticed/rewarded/valued anyway.’ Reward and incentivize growth. Invest ‘downstream.’”

“I would like to grow and learn more different skills towards my job.”

“Career growth and learning opportunities are mostly focused on the staff who are selected for those improvement opportunities.”

“More opportunity to learn and grow at an earlier point in your career with the state.”

“I know my job well, but at the same time that can be a double-edged sword, as I feel that I am in a rut and not learning more.”

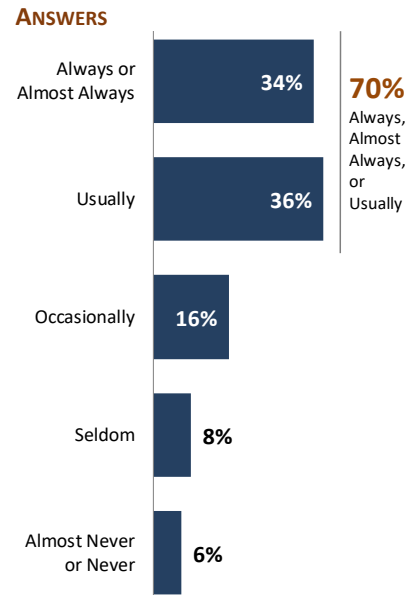
QUESTION. At my job, I have the opportunity to make good use of my skills

Seven out of ten employees (70%) agreed they have opportunities at work to make good use of their skills. Many fewer (14%) reported that they seldom or never have those opportunities in their workplace.

Staff say they value opportunities to:

- Put existing skills to good use
- Improve their skill set
- Use their skills to improve lives
- Utilize their training, licenses, and certifications
- Work at their full potential

2017 is the first year this question has been included in the Employee Survey.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Using their skills and talents at work helps staff to feel valuable.

- “I like that I get to work hands-on with clients and am able to use my skill set to best serve them.”
- “I have opportunities to use my skills to help others and get to see my assistance applied in a positive way.”
- “My work reflects my values of community support and my passion for helping others. My job is a great mix of technical skills and abilities combined with helping others help and support their loved ones and community members.”
- “I enjoy learning new things and interacting with people. This job really allows me to use my skills of communicating with people to improve their lives.”
- “I have the ability to use my skills that I have obtained over time and put them to good use.”
- “It is an important job that requires me to use my skills and critical thinking.”

They appreciate opportunities to improve professionally by developing their skills.

- “My supervisor gives me the ability to use my skills and perform my job to the best of my ability and coaches me when help is needed.”
- “I am able to use my skills and now there are more challenges and ways to grow.”
- “It helps me develop my technical and analytical skills in governmental accounting to benefit my future career goals.”
- “It is stimulating work that keeps me learning and developing new skills.”
- “It offers me the opportunity to use my skills and abilities while at the same time gives me the opportunity to learn new skills and challenge myself.”
- “I have the ability to use my skills that I have obtained over time and put them to good use.”

Others want to be given more chances to use and develop their skills and talents while at work.

- “I would be happier in a different position within the agency that allows me to use my skills.”
- “If given an opportunity to grow, move up, and use my skills to the fullest, all aspects of my work can be rewarding; however, that chance is seldom given.”
- “I wish there were greater opportunities for advancement and a greater utilization of my personal skills.”
- “I’m a quick learner and anxious to learn more skills and gain more responsibilities, but either nobody is willing to teach me or give me more responsibilities.”
- “I want to grow quickly to a higher level and fully use my skills.”
- “I would like to see support from management for opportunities to develop, learn, and grow in the profession. I want to see a career development pathway and support for training and development.”

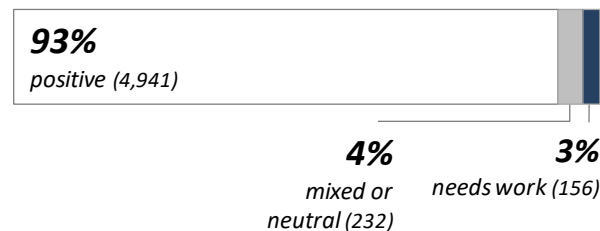
THEME. Other important aspects of the job

5,329 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned other aspects of their jobs, such as the variety, flexibility, and stressful nature of tasks.

49% commented on this theme (5,329)



Their comments were:



More than nine out of ten (93%) of the 5,329 employees who mentioned other important aspects of their jobs made positive comments. 3% want to see improvements.

Staff made positive comments about characteristics of the job they like. They most often said they enjoy:

- Job duties that are varied and flexible
- Tasks that challenge them to learn and grow
- Feeling like their job is a good fit for their skills
- Being part of *Transforming Lives* and helping to support the mission of DSHS
- Knowing what to expect at work

► What DSHS employees said ...

Most say that they like their job and take great pride in the work that they do.

- “I like the actual work I do - it's enjoyable and a good match for my skill set.”
- “It is a great privilege to serve the community in the way that we do, and I find that aspect of my job very rewarding.”
- “Flexibility, mobility, and the value of the work. The work I do daily will help our agency achieve its goal and DSHS's mission.”
- “It is the perfect job for me. I love the program I work with.”
- “I feel honored to work on programs that are vital to the citizens of Washington State, especially because this is my home and I love our state. I am proud to be a state employee and to work with others who share this dedication and commitment.”
- “Being able to make a difference in someone's life every day even if it is just one person...Makes everything worth it.”
- “I feel that this division supports me in my effort to be highly professional, productive and challenges me to simply be the best.”
- “The chance for me to learn something new and apply it to different parts of my life in some way or another that benefits me as a person. I think it could also help me do better in other parts of my life outside of work. And that is a good benefit for me.”
- “I love the variety of tasks on any given day. It's like opening a Christmas present that you didn't find and shake or accidentally unwrap before Christmas.”
- “I enjoy the fact that I am allowed to use my talents to the best of my ability.”
- “Advocating for what is right is my passion and I feel like I am utilizing all of my talents in this position. I leave work every day feeling rewarded by being the light and bringing joy to my clients' lives.”

Complaints are made when the job is complicated, stressful, or doesn't match staff expectations.

- “I feel like we don't get utilized to our full potential and get told to just sit and stay out of the way.”
- “The agency needs to recognize that staff cannot meet face to face all day, with people with such challenging needs (e.g., personality disorders, other forms of mental illness) and then come back to their computers and find yet another fiscal audit or ‘ding’ for not doing something right administratively ... We need to allow them to do what they came here to do originally: Serve customers in an empathetic and creative way.”
- “Being on the phones eight hours per day, five days per week is sucking my will to live.”
- “I really can't think of anything I like about my job, which is sad, because I used to really enjoy this job at one time. I am struggling to come to work each and every day, honestly I feel like we don't have the support needed and I constantly feel overwhelmed and I don't know how much longer I can keep doing this to myself. Yet, I feel this unyielding dedication to my co-workers that prevents me from leaving, but there is only so much I can take. I keep telling myself that this will pass, that we will get through this, but it always feels like there is no end in sight.”

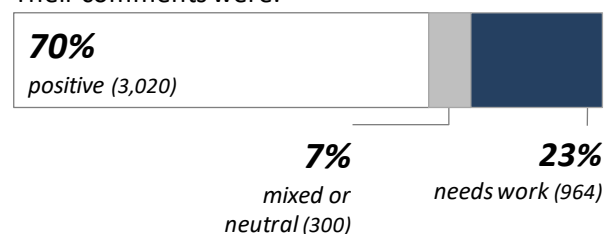
THEME. Co-workers – an overview

4,284 of the 10,869 employees who commented mentioned their co-workers.

39% commented on this theme (4,284)



Their comments were:



Seven out of ten (70%) of the 4,284 employees who made comments about co-workers had something positive to say. 964 of them (23%) said they think their co-workers could improve their attitude or work habits.

Staff want their co-workers to be:

- Professional and caring with clients
- Willing to share their knowledge with peers
- Dedicated and doing their share
- Respectful to others in their unit

They criticize co-workers who they see as:

- Lazy and unmotivated
- Poor team players
- Negative in the workplace

Co-worker comments are discussed in more detail on pages 57-60.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees often say their co-workers are a major reason why they come to work every day.

“My immediate team and manager are amazing and are why I stay here at DSHS. I am given responsibility and freedom, as well as feel very supported by the people I work directly with.”

“How much my co-workers truly care about our clients and what they are doing. It's not just a job to them. It's why I wanted to work at DVR.”

“To tell the truth, the job is pretty stressful. It is exhausting and I don't know if I could have stayed this long, without such a good team and supervisor.”

“My immediate peers are supportive, knowledgeable and always professional. The depth of knowledge and experience of my work cohorts is amazing.”

They praise co-workers for their contributions to the team.

“We have amazingly talented people throughout our division who give a lot of themselves to meet deadlines and goals. I enjoy many of my co-workers and love the work we do every day.”

“The team of people at this office sometimes has a great chemistry that makes work better, contributes to happy employees and really great customer service.”

“I work with wonderful people who care about doing things in better ways.”

“The people I work with. Everyone is friendly, hard working and we all contribute as a team.”

“Our team has many talents and we recognize them and use them well to benefit us all. This is a small but great unit to work in.”

“The team that I work for is a group of hard working and dedicated individuals that work very well together. I am grateful that I get to work with them and learn from them daily.”

Complaints are made when they think co-workers aren't doing their share or are causing friction.

“Stop hiring lazy people who don't want to come to work and do their job.”

“They think this is a place to socialize and NOT take their job seriously. They act very inappropriate, loud, and unprofessional. I am seeing more and more of this. This is very embarrassing to watch them act like this.”

“Better staff that actually care and work. Not these lazy slime buckets, who are attached to their social media page. Like, oh my God no wonder this place is a joke.”

“I would like to see the seasoned employees treat new employees better. They make new employees seem unwelcome.”

“More staff working together instead of bringing others down.”

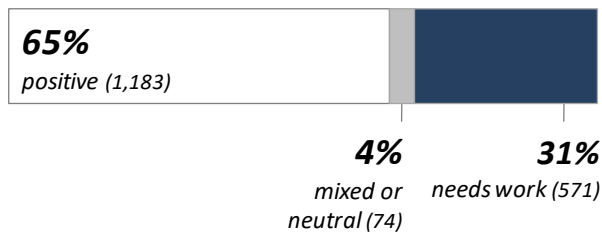
THEME. Teamwork and support

1,828 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned teamwork and support from co-workers.

17% commented on this theme (1,828)



Their comments were:



More than six out of ten (65%) of the 1,828 staff who commented about teams spoke positively about their co-workers' ability to function as a team and provide each other support. Almost one-third (31%) indicated that they felt their team could work together better.

Employees like their teams when:

- Co-workers are willing to help
- Everybody works together
- The team is strong
- They trust that teammates have their back

Teams are a source of stress when:

- Co-worker actions result in increased workloads for others
- There is hostility or negativity among staff
- Other staff are not team players

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees appreciate when their co-workers create a supportive and helpful environment in the office.

"The people I work with are very supportive and helpful. We work together to tackle issues, problem solve, and develop solutions."

"I like the people I work with; we work together as a team and support each other at all times."

"I also really enjoy working with my immediate unit. We are a great team. We work well with each other and cover each other when there are needs."

"I like the teamwork environment. Everyone is working together."

"All team members are very supportive and helpful."

They resent co-workers who don't do their share or aren't team players.

"More work done by the current staff on their shift, instead of pushing their responsibilities to the next shift."

"Chronic absenteeism and substandard work are morale-crushing. Why must the rest of us spend (literally) YEARS playing catch-up and covering their asses."

"Other staff members who are not team players to learn to work with everyone."

"Why don't you get rid of non-performing staff before your hard working staff leave from all the horrible treatment from these co-workers?"

"Some employees get away with not doing much work, then the rest of the unit has to pick up their slack. Some employees know they can get away with anything, so that's what they do: nothing."

Some comments focused on staff relationships and how they treat each other.

"I am part of a compassionate team, and my co-workers are the 'sleeves up, shoulder to shoulder, get-it-done' types who work together, cover for each other, and care about one another as well as for the customers we serve."

"My team is engaged and our work relationships are not strained. We communicate and help each other as needed without dissension."

"I get along with my co-workers and everyone treats each other with respect. I'm fortunate to belong to a great team that appreciates each other's work and works together to get the job done."

"We are very close and supportive of one another. We are able to vent and be honest with each other personally and professionally. We work together as a team and are available to one another, which makes this tough job a little easier."

"I appreciate the humor within my team and the respect that everyone has for one another."

QUESTION. A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup

Seven out of ten employees (70%) agreed their workgroup exhibits a spirit of cooperation and teamwork – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. 15% feel their co-workers could collaborate with each other better.

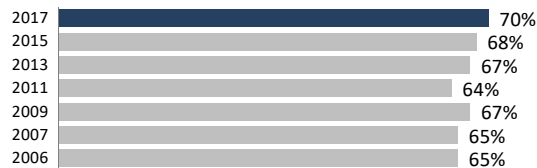
Employees like their workgroups when:

- The team jumps in to help when needed
- Staff and supervisors work well together and get along
- There is a strong sense of camaraderie in the workplace

They dislike their workgroup when:

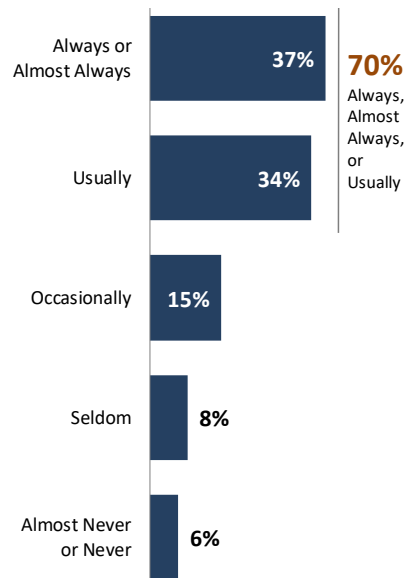
- Co-workers push their work onto others
- Negativity and disrespect create a bad environment
- There are divisions between shifts and units

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said teamwork and cooperation exists in their workgroup.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Most employees speak well of the teamwork and cooperation within their workgroup.

“I like my team and the way we work together and can count on each other.”

“What I like most in my current job is the teamwork. Every single thing, from simple to complicated tasks, is getting done easily with the help of one another.”

“[I] am a part of very cohesive team that always gets the job done no matter what obstacles are tossed at us.”

“My team is well-rounded, and works well together; supporting each other in work processes, and at an appropriate personal level.”

“I appreciate the team collaboration, communication, and supporting each other.”

“We have a strong sense of humor and teaming. Even when things are not going well, we are able to pull together and problem solve on most matters.”

Others would like to see more effort towards encouraging team building and unity among staff.

“More funding for teamwork opportunities to support creating cohesive workgroups. Accountability for those that continuously create a toxic work environment.”

“I have both witnessed and experienced workplace bullying here at work. It’s very discouraging.”

“The staff on my ward don’t always work together. My ward could benefit with more meetings and team building exercises.”

“I would like to see some of the senior staff more willing to help mentor and teach newer employees. They are too content to sit and do very little, and offer no advice or help when asked.”

“Constant undermining and belittling from team members of other team members creates a negative atmosphere.”

Employees say they are happy when they are part of a strong team that supports each other.

“The team I work with is awesome. Even in stressful times, the group comes together and builds each other up.”

“It is great to be a part of a ‘team’ in reality and not just in lip service.”

“I am very satisfied with the team spirit here and cooperation we have with each other on a daily basis. This team rocks!”

“My team is amazing. We have ongoing collaboration and learning happening every day. EVERYONE jumps in and helps without expecting anything back. I have the best team in the agency!”

“We are better than a team, we are family.”

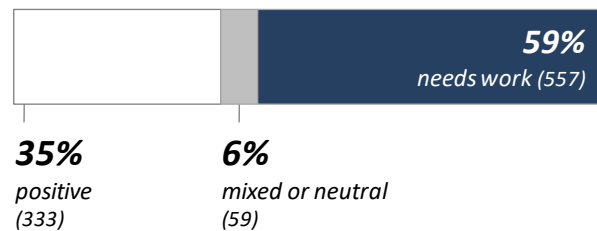
THEME. Co-worker competence

949 of the 10,869 employees who made comments mentioned the competence or incompetence of their co-workers. These comments are often related to co-worker skills, knowledge, and professionalism.

9% commented on this theme (949)



Their comments were:



Almost six out of ten (59%) of the 949 employees who commented on co-worker competence feel their co-workers' work habits could improve. Over one third (35%) made positive comments about their co-workers' competence.

Staff are displeased when co-workers:

- Are rude or impolite to clients
- Misuse leave or waste their time at work
- Are not held accountable for their actions
- Dress or act unprofessionally

They prefer to work with teammates who:

- Maintain a professional and helpful manner
- Are committed to their work and helping clients
- Strive to fulfill their agency's goals

► What DSHS employees said ...

Most of these comments contained criticism of co-workers' behavior.

"My co-workers want to complain but won't come up with ideas or solutions to a problem, so when I do, they criticize and complain, not offering any solutions. But that makes me feel like I am the enemy for trying."

"I would like to see those that have attendance and performance issues move on so we could get others in to provide the extra support for the office."

"I would like to see more appropriate conversations about clients among co-workers. It is unbelievable the way that some people I work with talk about clients. Very disrespectful. If we say these things about our clients, how do we present to them when we are interacting with them face to face?"

"The common theme ... the staff that are present are unprofessional and unpleasant to work with."

They expect other staff to be held accountable for problems they cause.

"More accountability for the employees who chronically don't work a full day's job and are distracting to the people who are trying to work."

"That people who make trouble should be handled better. People that don't meet the requirements of the job should be removed. More accountability of staff."

"There are co-workers who do not contribute, who do not do their jobs as described and waste taxpayers' money. There seems to be no consequences - management is afraid to call them on it and just lets them continue to slide and do sloppy work, which ultimately hurts the families we serve. This causes resentment within teams to see others not pulling their weight and not serving our clientele."

"Weed out the non-productive employees."

Employees appreciate when co-workers are competent and dedicated to doing their best.

"I love the people here. They are passionate, skilled, experienced and great to work with. Everyone I encounter wants only to do their best. It's awesome."

"My team is very competent, and I can rely on them when I need help."

"The people I work with are some of the most dedicated and skilled workers I have had the chance to encounter. I am often impressed with how situations are handled and how people are treated with dignity and respect no matter the circumstances."

"I like my co-workers that I work with every day. I feel energized from everyone's passion and dedication to help others. It's a great feeling every day knowing we impact someone's life by doing our job efficiently and professionally."

THEME. Other comments about co-workers

2,585 of the 10,869 employees who commented mentioned other things about their co-workers that they consider important, such as the general attitude of those co-workers.

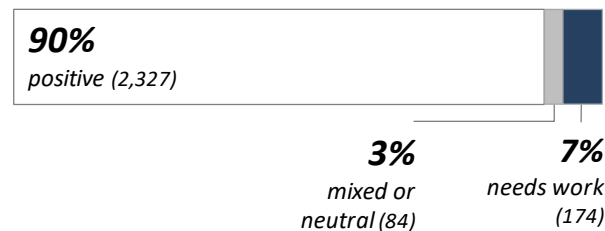
24% commented on this theme (2,585)



Nine out of ten (90%) of the employees who commented on other qualities of their co-workers spoke positively about them. Only 7% said they wish things with their fellow workers were different.

It is typical for comments in this category to be short statements (for example: *“I like my co-workers”*). Comments with added detail usually say that staff appreciate co-workers who:

Their comments were:



- Maintain a positive attitude
- Are reliable and trustworthy
- Care about and want the best for clients
- Keep drama out of the office
- Are considerate of others in the workplace

► What DSHS employees said ...

Comments in this category most often reflect that employees like the people they work with.

- “The people who work in my unit are amazing and I think of my group as a little work family.”
- “I like the people (my team) I work with.”
- “My team that I work with is fun and great.”
- “I love the people I work with and the great teamwork we have.”
- “My new supervisor and workgroup are supportive, encouraging, and are genuinely people I want to be around.”
- “I like the people that I work with. DCS is made up of good people.”
- “Our office is a team and works well together. We support each other and have fun.”
- “I love my co-workers on my shift.”
- “The team's environment is very pleasant. We treat each other equally and with respect.”
- “I have a fantastic unit. Everyone on my team is approachable when I need to staff a case.”
- “I work with good people.”
- “I am part of a very good team. The sense of teamwork that I experience is one of my favorite parts of my job. There is nothing better than a group of people all working for a common goal for our residents.”
- “Love the people! They are nice, fun, light-hearted, and great to work with ALL of them!”
- “I enjoy the people I work with the most. They are the best, most friendly, and supportive people.”
- “There are some really great people I work with. There is great desire to Transform Lives in a positive manner. We don't always agree on the process but the goals are the same.”
- “I like and get along with the people I work with.”

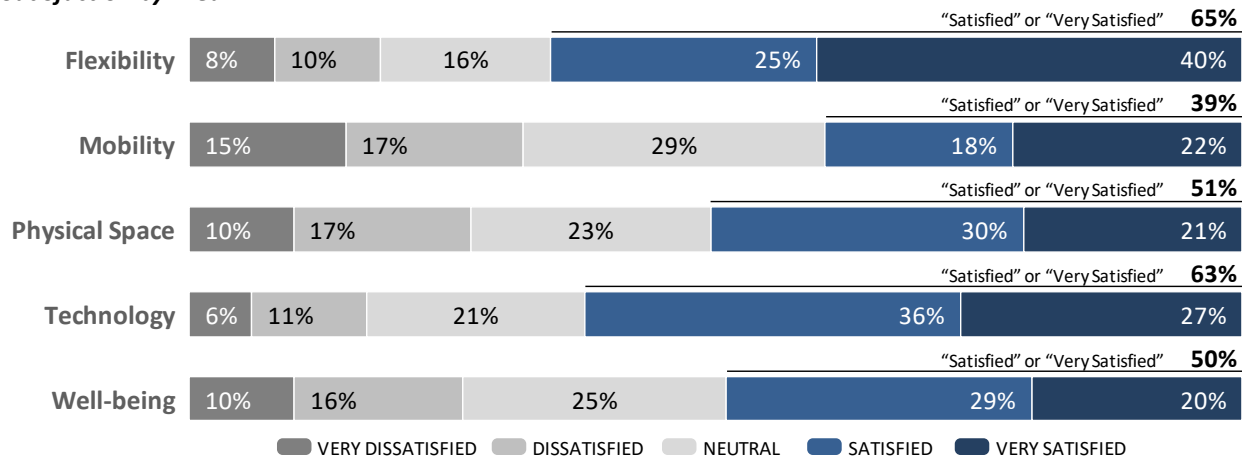
They don't like it when the members of their team are divisive and negative.

- “Negativity, childish actions, complaining. I would love for people to own their actions, be held accountable for their actions and to apply the golden rule to their actions and words.”
- “Employees should be encouraged to speak to one another, not ABOUT one another.”
- “At times, I am unable to conduct professional conversations and have to close doors to do so because the noise level and conversation is inappropriate for the environment.”
- “I would like to see less friction/animosity when it comes to petty rumors and gossip.”

QUESTION. How satisfied are you with your current work environment?

These questions were asked in support of the “Building a Modern Work Environment” initiative, to help agencies identify, experiment with, and adopt innovative ways to modernize the physical environment, providing greater workplace flexibility and enabling a more mobile workforce. 2017 was the first year these questions were included in the Employee Survey.

Satisfaction by Area



► What DSHS employees said ...

Flexibility. *The ability to adjust your scheduled hours as needed* (detailed further on page 50)

“I really appreciate the schedule flexibility, and so does my family.”

“More flexibility and less repercussions for exercising flexibility ... We are chastised for doing so or shamed. There is no encouragement or support to be flexible. It is an environment of shaming if we do so.”

Mobility. *The ability to work remotely from a variety of locations, such as your home or alternate work site* (detailed further on page 50)

“I love having mobility to complete documentation in the field with the technology we have.”

“While the governor sent the memo regarding work mobility, upper-management is communicating to line staff that this was merely a suggestion of the governor and that they can implement it or not implement it at their discretion. Work mobility is desired and supported by the line workers, and it seems that more clarification and direction is needed for upper-management to have them fully support and implement this.”

Physical space. *The building, furniture, lighting, noise, variety of spaces for different work tasks - concentration space, collaboration space* (detailed further on page 77)

“I love the fact that I have my own workspace (cubicle) that I can personalize to my likes and needs. I love the fact that having the cubicles allows for some privacy and noise barrier while working. I love that our cubicles are positioned within our units for easy case and idea staffing with my co-workers.”

“Attention to physical space and equipment as it adds feeling of pride and being valued. It is not a good feeling that I am embarrassed to host meetings here with partners because our space is run down and not a clean and professional presentation. Also, having working teams separated around the floors takes a toll on morale and efficiency of work productivity. While understanding these things cost, might they outweigh the costs of staff transition because people feel disconnected?”

Technology. *Your work computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, remote access, Wifi, collaboration tools* (detailed further on pages 72, 73 & 78)

“I like the fact that we are making changes that move us forward regarding technology and mobility.”

“Technology: My desktop in my workstation does not even work properly. When I asked to fix they simply gave me another, older machine that worked in the way I needed fixed but had several other more significant issues ... it makes my job harder.”

Well-being. *How your work environment affects your physical, social, and emotional health* (detailed further on pages 79-81)

“I think it is awesome that our Administration supported the development of the Wellness Center for Rainier School employees' well-being.”

“I would like a health study on the building I'm in as there seems to be a lot of people getting sick and/or allergies that don't happen as much outside of work.”



“Innocence” • Third Place (tie)
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: Artistic
By Rachael Lawson, with permission



“Whatcom Falls Park” • First Place
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Clients
By Johnmark Jenny, with permission

CHAPTER 5

Business Practices

EMPLOYEE VIEWS OF BUSINESS PRACTICES SHOW IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST SURVEY. Positive responses increased significantly for all five questions described in this chapter, including the largest increase for any question on the survey (“My agency uses my time and talents well”). In the comments portion of the survey, employee concerns over policy, process, and most resource issues were similar to those observed in 2015; including staffing, pay and benefits, safety, and resources for clients. However, many more employees expressed concerns about facilities and the physical work environment, as discussed in Chapter 4.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES. The positive trends reported in the 2015 survey have continued over the most recent survey period. As in the past, there were many suggestions for improving business practices.

- **More satisfaction with work roles.** 64% of employees (up from 57% in 2015) agreed that their agency uses their time and talents well.
- **More improvements for customers.** 64% of employees (up from 62% in 2015) said their workgroup is making improvements to make things better for their customers.
- **Greater use of customer feedback.** 44% of employees (up from 41% in 2015) said customer feedback is being used to improve their work processes.
- **Many suggestions for improvement.** 3,272 employees (30% of those making comments) made suggestions for improvement in work processes or policies. However, 26% fewer requested improvements in personnel-related policies and practices (885 employees, 8% of those who commented).

RESOURCES. In 2017, employees were more likely to say that they have the tools and resources needed to do their job well. Comments showed more concern with facilities and the physical environment, and less concern with staffing, pay, and benefits issues.

- **More satisfaction with tools and resources.** 68% of employees (up from 65% in 2015) said they have the tools and resources to do their job effectively.
- **More concerns about facilities and physical environment.** 1,256 employees (12% of those who made comments) identified problems or opportunities for improvement, a 157% increase from 2015. Many of these comments focused on “modern work environment” innovations, such as open concept seating.
- **Fewer calls for change in staffing, pay, and benefits.**
 - 991 employees (9% of those who made comments) requested improvements in staffing and turnover in their workplace, a 24% decrease from 2015.
 - 679 employees (6% of those who commented) requested improvements in pay and benefits, a 25% decrease from 2015.

HEALTH AND SAFETY. More employees in 2017 said their agency supports them in living a healthier life, but some comments requested additional support for wellness or cited safety concerns.

- **Improved wellness support.** 58% of employees (up from 55% in 2015) said their agency supports them in living a healthy lifestyle. However, 415 employees made comments requesting improvements in wellness resources (4% of those who commented).
- **Staff safety concerns.** 348 employees (3% of those who made comments) noted safety concerns. Staff working in residential facilities contributed the majority of these comments.



“State Harvest” • Third Place (tie)

DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS in Action

By Monica Stanley, with permission

From the photographer:

This garden is on the East Campus of the Capitol in Olympia. It's grown and harvested by community groups/service organizations and given to the Thurston County Food Bank. This bounty is enjoyed by many DSHS clients in the area that frequent the food bank.

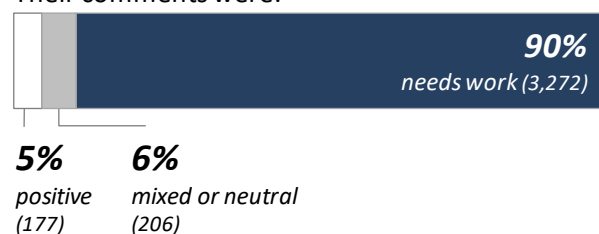
THEME. Work processes and policies

3,655 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed work processes and policies.

34% commented on this theme (3,655)



Their comments were:



Of the 3,655 respondents who wrote comments about work processes and policies, 5% (177) indicated satisfaction.

Most of those making comments (90%) called for change. The 3,272 employees who requested improvements addressed a wide range of topics.

Topics of greatest interest included:

- Continuous improvement
- More efficient use of employees' skills
- Disorganization or inconsistency
- Effective methods of helping clients and Transforming Lives

Comments concerning personnel issues, safety, and wellness are reported separately (pages 70-71, and 79-81).

► What DSHS employees said ...

Many employees commented about the value of process improvement.

"Continue to focus on process improvements. Eliminate duplicate paperwork and documentation as much as possible."

"I have a lot flexibility and autonomy in the way that I do my job. My job allows me to have input in creating positive change and process improvement for our customers."

"Even when we know what change is necessary, we are slow to respond. We seem to always be afraid of someone's reaction to the change."

"Please stop hiring clones of prior leadership. Rock the boat a bit and make the status quo uncomfortable."

Effective use of employees' time and skills is a common concern.

"We really need more case aides, unit clerks or other administrative assistants to take care of the daily routine paperwork, simple tasks and other minor things that we as social workers don't have the time to take care of."

"Afford opportunities for staff to utilize their skill sets."

"We expend a lot of staff time in our unit resolving issues that have nothing to do with our cases."

"Less overtime and pulled staffing as they don't know the ward milieu let alone patients' baseline."

Some described the importance of policies and procedures that are organized and consistent.

"I'm shocked at how disorganized this department is. From Human Resources to management, nobody has been with DSHS long enough to know how to effectively address problems."

"The lack of consistency makes our environment dangerous and unhealthy. Staff who try to follow policy and directives from the treatment team get undermined by nurses and end up being targeted by patients because of it."

"What I like best in this facility is things are very organized. As a new recruit, if you do not know something, there are chains of command to solve problems. Every activity is based on a policy, which is very nice."

"There are so many recent changes this last year that I often am not sure how to proceed on tasks I don't do on a regular basis. Often when I try to look up the information, it is inconsistent or not directly clear how to proceed."

Employees expect processes and policies to benefit clients.

"Interventions will be more effective and more satisfying for patients, their support system, employees and the community if we expected evidence-based practices, had to include diverse specialists in the process, and created an environment where employees weren't focused on a "work-around" and could put their efforts to solutions and active, effective treatment."

"Not to focus on how long it takes to do cases. Instead try to understand the clients we have to deal with. Some clients have mental issues, some have been in prison. We don't work an assembly line, we are dealing with human beings."

THEME. Specific work processes and policies

Many comments refer to practices at individual workplaces or with particular DSHS services.

► *What DSHS employees said ...*

Training is often mentioned as a key ingredient of effective practice.

“Training for line staff away from Green Hill School instead of the supervisors because they may [supervisors] learn the subject but it never gets passed down to the real staff members that work the day-to-day, ins-and-outs with our youth.”

“We are too busy to redo lousy work, so invest in the skills and mindset to make all changes fit into a long-term plan.”

“More cross training. You are to know all of these rules and regulations, but you very seldom have the time to look them up to understand them because your work is based on how many you get done within the day.”

“I came to greatly appreciate the Regulatory Basics course. At first I wondered if it was the best use of likely significant funds. However, I changed my mind because of the effects I observed within myself and within the group during my participation.”

Effective processes and policies can depend on the availability of technology.

“Having e-mail capability for clients to submit documents would be very helpful.”

“We are held accountable by CMS to perform as other acute care settings, however the infrastructure to support collaboration and communication for improved continuity of care is severely lacking and needs to be provided ASAP.”

“Parole counselors are in the field almost all day, and not having a smartphone or tablet or laptop to work away from the office makes completing tasks more difficult, and could be a better use of time.”

“The Community First Choice assistive technology allocation has been life changing for some families that don't qualify for waiver services.”

Employees appreciate Lean principles and expect them to be supported by management.

“The ‘culture of Respect’ needs to go through a Lean practice, then given to Plain Talk.”

“Lean. Lean. Lean. It's like this term is thrown around, but I don't see it in the work I do. Our processes are so cumbersome. Something that should be quick and easy can end up taking an hour.”

“We could implement Lean within our organization but I do not feel that all the managers support that type of change.”

“I like that management (supervisor, superintendent, acting-superintendent) are open to new ideas, especially using Lean tools and methods. DDA headquarters gives support but is not overly prescriptive which sends a message of trust.”

Many mentioned specific processes or systems that affect their work.

“I would like to see a screening of intakes where we can help people with resources and close the case without having to complete an entire investigation.”

“Less stupid changes, like: the two year infant exemption which is going to tank WorkFirst participation; the WFO system which I generally have to log back into just to log out of; and the Respect program which is just running employees down.”

“The nursing and therapy collaboration has become a priority, and it's showing in improved client care and a spirit of ‘we're in this together.’”

“The timing limits set on calls with the clients. Sometimes some clients need more help and it takes longer to help them and answer all their questions. The time limits put a lot of pressure on the FSS and can affect the client in that they are being rushed through the process. Also, the time restraints cause there to be errors made by workers and lack of remarks and full narratives – making it difficult for workers who get the case later.”

“I like that there are no assigned caseloads on the call center, so work doesn't accumulate when I am gone for holidays, vacations, etc. This reduces stress substantially.”

“Improving EASE. When inputting a request, field staff supervisors often call to try to track down the various systems needed for staff to do their job. By inputting an EASE request it should happen by the day new staff arrive or within 48 hours.”

“Unit meetings have been on a more regular basis which really helps us get to know our team members in other offices, builds morale and improves communication.”

“The process of investigations takes too long and you are not doing your job for 6 to 8 months. They put you somewhere and make you a ‘go-for,’ or in the kitchen filling bags of salt, butter, etc. It is really degrading, and everyone on the campus knows you are under investigation. No matter the outcome, when you try to get another position, no one wants to hire you on at another ward, because you are labeled a trouble maker.”

“I would like for other staff (especially float personnel) to be briefed and screened before working on the Ward for their safety and the safety of our own staff due to the violent nature of this workplace.”

“I recommend having new hires spend a month in the CSO so they have an opportunity to complete benefits/HR paperwork; learn the ins/outs of the CSO; build a rapport with co-workers, leads, and supervisors. Don't set new employees up for failure.”

QUESTION. We are making improvements to make things better for our customers

More than six out of ten employees (64%) said their workgroup is making improvements that benefit their customers – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. More than one out of ten (14%) indicated that efforts are seldom or never made to improve the circumstances of their customers. Employees suggested that DSHS should:

- Prioritize client needs
- Improve quality of life for clients at institutions
- Continue efforts to improve customer service
- Upgrade technology to serve clients more efficiently

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 reported improvements to make things better for customers.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees take pride in change that benefits customers.

“We strive to do things better! Our process may be always changing but we are only making better outcomes for our customers.”

“Everyone is working together to produce our system changes. Everyone works hard to do the right thing for the system, for the users, for the clients.”

“I have the scope of authority to bring much needed quality and safety improvements to client care.”

“We are constantly improving and finding ways to make our services better and more catered to customer needs.”

“I like the dedication to person-centered practice in our program and wish it could be adopted statewide.”

Many described specific improvements that are needed, or those that have already been made.

“I am happy that our agency is finally taking a good look at what customer service actually means and our director has taken his Customer Service Roadshow to the Field Offices. I feel things are moving in the right direction to making our Division a more approachable entity.”

“[I like] working with the federal government to improve processes, provide education and resources for accommodations that bring success to the DVR customer.”

“Patients need to have more to do in the evenings in terms of recreation, especially more physical activities. Walks, trips to the library, basketball, volleyball, Java site.”

“I would like to see processes and procedures become Lean to have a positive impact on individuals we serve.”

“I believe that patients should have more rights to food. I understand that it is indeed a heart healthy diet, but at the same time, is it healthy to be just barely full, to not feel as if you have eaten enough?”

“I like the move DCS is making to be more customer friendly.”

Some say that customer needs should be a higher priority.

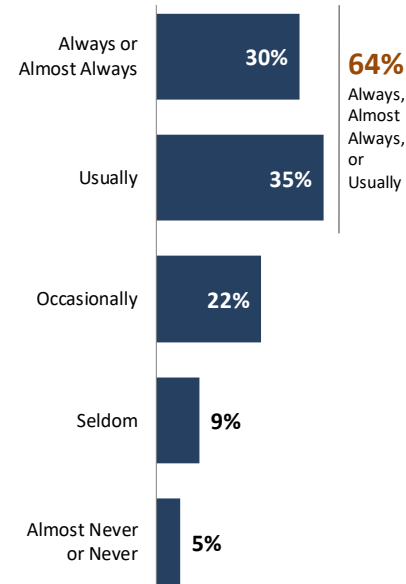
“More value is given to repeating past actions than to what is now called for in terms of customer needs and current best practices.”

“There are so many internal political aspects and games that prevent DSHS from truly serving their customers.”

“I would like to see all of us work harder on working better together in creating a product or service that not only meets but exceeds the expectations of our customers.”

“I would also like a bigger focus to be put on how to improve the services that we offer families and creating less ‘cookie cutter’ services.”

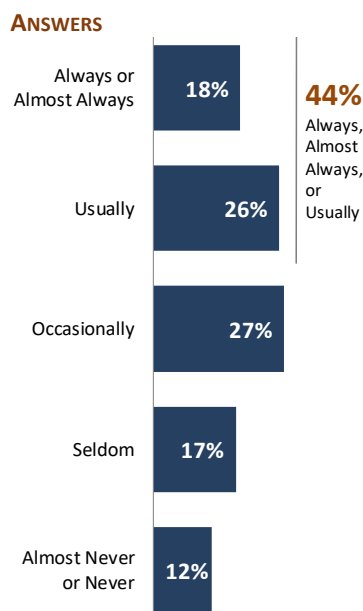
ANSWERS



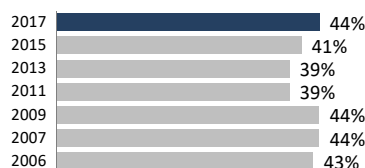
QUESTION. We use customer feedback to improve our processes

More than four in ten respondents (44%) said their workgroup uses customer feedback to improve services – a statistically significant increase. Nearly one third (29%) indicated customer feedback is seldom or never utilized to make improvements. While only a small number of employees made specific comments about the use of customer feedback, many said they want processes to work well for the clients. Employees feel DSHS could improve use of customer feedback by:

- Developing dedicated systems and procedures to obtain feedback
- Placing value on clients’ opinions and concerns
- Integrating customer feedback with action planning



More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said customer feedback is used to improve work processes.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$. Question wording changed by Office of Financial Management in 2011.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Some staff comment generally about the desirability of customer feedback.

- “I think we are on the right track with asking for customer feedback.”
- “I think it is great that there are self advocates that can speak to the legislature and advocate for changes, but we need to also listen to those clients that are not able to go to Olympia or speak to their local representative and say what services would benefit them.”
- “[I like] using customer feedback to improve our work processes.”
- “It might help if case managers were given the chance to gather customer satisfaction data from our participants to get their opinions on what is helping and what is still needed.”
- “Take patient feedback into consideration for improvements.”
- “Establish a management tool to get feedback from our customers in a consistent manner about how we are doing and about their level of satisfaction.”
- “I also would like to see all agencies implement an option for a customer service phone survey or a similar feedback loop so that we can always hear the voice of the customer and ensure the highest level of service delivery.”
- “[I like] the ability to provide support and feedback to others to make improvements in our practice.”
- “Internal customer surveys should be performed to find and address issues.”
- “I wish the headquarters staff would ask our customers for input before making these large-scale decisions that will ultimately impact their business.”

Feedback is only useful if acted on.

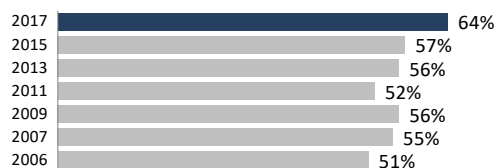
- “I would like my workplace to actually take client feedback and act on it in a more timely manner.”
- “They [administration] ask for customer feedback, but don’t mean it.”
- “More systems in place to have services and supports driven and shaped by customer feedback.”
- “I would like to see a significant increase in the collection of client feedback at the local level. Have that feedback analyzed and strategies developed to address concerns, similar to how this employee survey is used.”
- “[I would like to see] listening to and implementing the feedback of clients and staff.”

QUESTION. My agency uses my time and talents well

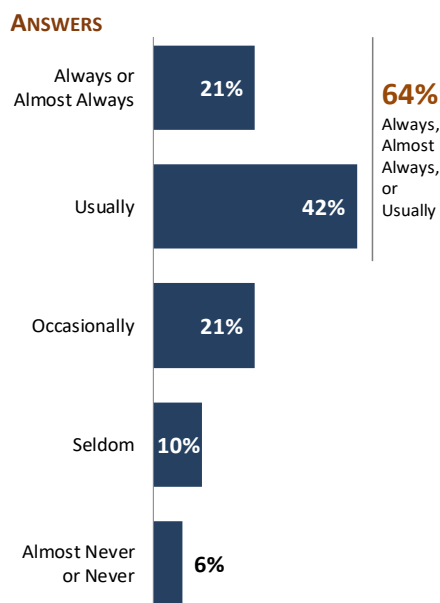
64% of employees said that DSHS always or usually uses their time and talents well – a statistically significant increase and the most ever for DSHS. The increase of 7 percentage points was the largest observed for any question in the 2017 survey. Less than one-fifth (16%) reported that their time and talents are seldom or never used well. Employees would like their leaders to:

- Understand their skills and use them as fully as possible
- Challenge them to test their skills and learn new ones
- Assign tasks that fit employee skills and qualifications
- Listen to workers’ suggestions for improvements

More staff in 2017 than 2015 said their agency uses their time and talents well.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees want their skills to be used effectively.

- “Despite what some might think, what matters most to our workers is the ability to be effective at their jobs.”
- “I like that my skills, knowledge, experience and education are put to use for the benefit of our served population.”
- “My abilities are valued and have been used for the betterment of my agency and of other staff.”
- “This agency does not even know what my talents are, so how could the agency use those talents effectively?”
- “[I like] that every single day my skills and compassion for the mentally ill is utilized for their care.”
- “I am not sure executive management knows how large, how many pieces, how many servers, how many outside stakeholders are necessary. Their directives, I prefer to call them whims or boondoggles, take away a lot of our valuable time from where we can do the most good.”

Many said they enjoy the challenge offered by work that tests their skills.

- “[My job] gives me the opportunity to fully utilize my skills and experience. It challenges me everyday and helps me to grow as a professional.”
- “I like that I get to use my skills effectively and can challenge myself to try new things.”
- “I feel that my talents are being tapped into and that I have the room to grow with support. The expectations are high and the work can be challenging, which is a good combination that creates drive and commitment.”
- “I would like to see more challenging tasks given out.”

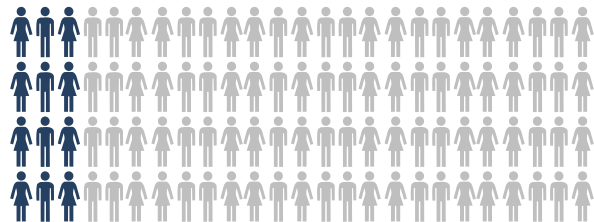
Employees want assignments that are appropriate to their abilities and qualifications.

- “I am a PhD psychologist. I have been asked to run PE groups and board game hours. Would like to see my skills used more appropriately.”
- “The job I am doing is a really good match to my skills and abilities. I really like what I get to do.”
- “I feel my skills aren't being used to their fullest potential. I love to work, and there is just so little for me to do here.”
- “I feel that my current job is a good fit with my talents and skills, which provides a feeling of satisfaction and purpose.”
- “I have zero support from my supervisor when I try to apply my skills and knowledge to specialty teams that help the facility as a whole.”
- “I love being able to use all of my nursing and investigative skills to make life better for our elderly and those in nursing homes.”
- “With my skills, I love my job and always try the best to do my job for taking care of client stuff, keep them nice, safe and not missing.”

THEME. Personnel issues

1,265 of the 10,869 respondents who made comments addressed personnel issues.

12% commented on these themes (1,265)



Their comments were:



10% **4%**
 positive mixed or neutral
 (125) (47)

Most of the 1,265 employees who made comments about personnel issues (86%) suggested that improvement is needed. A few made positive comments (10%) or mixed or neutral comments (4%).

Those who commented would like to see:

- Fairness in hiring processes (also discussed in Chapter 3)
- More opportunities to advance (though some said they are pleased with the options they have)
- Changes to specific policies or procedures
- Consequences for staff who don't do their jobs

See the next page for additional comments related to hiring and promotions, as well as investigations and disciplinary actions.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees value opportunities for advancement.

"Better advancement opportunities through retention caps for homesteaders who have little or no value except filling slots. Less who you know and more what you know."

"Here in my office I've witnessed my co-workers promoting from within. That's fantastic and provides a sense of a common goal and value to the work we do."

"Management needs to create opportunity for other employees for advancement, not just a few 'core' personnel."

"I enjoy the idea of a future with the State of Washington. There are numerous open opportunities to grow and expand your talents/career."

"I like knowing I have the ability to look for other positions within the agency without discrimination."

Some commented on specific Human Resource processes.

"I hear new staff are given higher salaries to increase retention, but the current staff aren't given that same consideration. This process gives the perception that the current staff are not of value."

"We have implemented fingerprinting for staff (which is good). However, that appears to add more time to the hiring process."

"Hiring new staff has become much easier than before."

"I would also like to see human resources provide more valued input on those who are hired based on their skills, education and aptitude that is described in the job postings."

"I would like to see standardization of processes and policies across the regions/state which have clear intent to make things equitable between job classes/functions."

Some requested better onboarding procedures, while a few noted recent improvements.

"I think having a stronger onboarding procedure when a person starts either brand new with the state or even changing divisions would be extremely helpful. I know there are some in the works and I am excited to see how it plays out."

"I think we are headed in the right direction because of the new onboarding program (great idea). I think by continuing to support new employees, we will be able to cut down on attrition/employees leaving OSSD for other career opportunities."

"New employee onboarding process needs to be improved and make Human Resources available for them in getting timely updates on ongoing processes."

"I would like to see the onboarding process and new hire orientation be new-employee-friendly. Give all the information at the time of the new hire orientation along with support in filling out forms. What happens now is you fill them out to the best of your ability and hope that it is done accurately. If it is not done, you are going back and forth with Human Resources with little or no assistance until it is complete."

THEME. Personnel issues (continued)

► *What DSHS employees said ...*

Many commented on the fairness of hiring and promotion decisions.

“Fair hiring practices - we use the two-interview process. The first interview panel are potential co-workers of the candidate and second is management. Almost always the first panel will have a clear number one candidate but someone further down the list will be hired, who happens to be one of the manager's pet projects.”

“Personal situations discussed with management are held against you in promotion and disciplinary situations. Trust and confidentiality is not an option.”

“Less nepotism. When a job becomes available in this office, it is very common to easily be able to figure out who is going to get the job before the interviews have even started or concluded.”

“A supervisor in the local office hired a friend who only had fast food service experience and brought this person on at a higher wage than a person with banking experience. This is wrong.”

“It's difficult to get ahead when people who have no experience, who have never worked for the state, get high positions over those who have been here for years.”

“What I like best about my current job is the ability to move up in position. The more time and effort you put into your work, the more you are noticed and therefore the high chance you have of being able to promote to a high position.”

“Hire properly qualified staff, not just friends of junior administrators who possess no pre-requisites for the position.”

“Allow promotions due to ability, not by seniority or the need to fill a position. The applicant must meet the qualifications for the job, especially in a supervisory position.”

Disciplinary action is always a sensitive topic.

“I appreciated getting rid of the bad apples that made it a hostile environment.”

“Middle management needs support in how to address employee improvement plans, disciplinary actions, and termination processes.”

“Questions should be raised when discipline action comes from out of NOWHERE. For example, “What happened with this worker suddenly when they haven't had ANY problems whatsoever?”

“I want management to back employees that work hard and actually care about structure, safety and security and to discipline those that don't.”

“Supervisors are picked who will not voice an opinion opposite of management, and they are praised for how many non-permanent employees they let go. Instead of helping overwhelmed staff, they look to start a discipline plan on them.”

“There must be accountability for everyone to interact with each other professionally. Unprofessional staff need to be disciplined or morale will continue to plummet.”

“I would like to see people uniformly disciplined for poor performance. I'd like to see staff held accountable for their behavior, lack of completing work and having to have others clean up their messes.”

Investigations can be a significant concern for employees and supervisors.

“By not getting proper support and direction (training) people make mistakes, and when a mistake is made they are ripped from their workspace in front of the entire department and placed on ‘alternate assignment.’ This kind of practice does not appear to be what our agency is supposed to be representing.”

“Our investigation process. The just cause process primarily. We need training on how to do this thoroughly and accurately so that employees who shouldn't be here are progressively disciplined and/or terminated versus the employee filing a grievance and winning because we didn't do the work that was required and/or did sloppy follow-through and investigating.”

“Too many people are under investigation, which demoralizes the offices. Employees see the investigation as a way to punish employees and create a fear based system. Employees are placed in other offices and everyone knows you are under investigation. It is months long and your reputation is tainted.”

“If there is an allegation that requires an investigation I would like the process to be faster. The investigations drag on, and good people that have done nothing wrong are stuck in limbo for far too long, costing the state money that could be spent in better ways than double-filling positions.”

“I feel that any day I could be put on investigation for just about anything. It is sad to see so many good people lose their positions due to differences between them and upper management. People are scared, and we always feel that we are next to get investigated. It is not a good feeling always wondering ‘who's next?’”

“Stop the double standard of being late and writing up, when the supervisors are late themselves.”

“I would like to see an end to the harsh disciplinary culture that has been created in our region, specifically the practice of widespread “reassignment” and investigation when there are concerns about performance.”

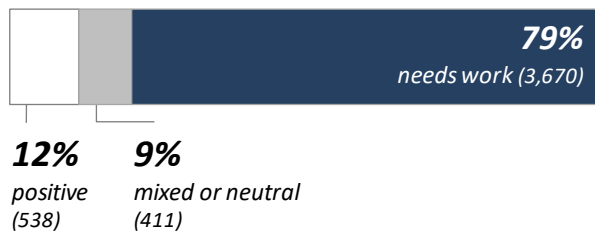
THEME. General resources

4,619 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resource issues.

42% commented on this theme (4,619)



Their comments were:



Nearly eight out of ten (79%) commented about aspects that need improvement. Of the 4,619 respondents who addressed resources:

- 1,016 wrote about staffing (page 74)
- 1,160 mentioned pay and benefits (page 75)
- 993 addressed training (page 76)
- 1,515 talked about facilities and the work environment (page 77)
- 1,028 mentioned resources for DSHS clients, or other resources (page 78)
- 457 wrote about resources for wellness (page 81)

The survey also asked two questions about resources: “I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively” (page 73), and “Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life” (page 79).

► What DSHS employees said ...

Modernization of the workplace is a topic of increasing interest as well as controversy.

“More money spent on equipment/building improvements. Systems are very old and outdated. Improvements have been haphazard.”

“I would like to see facilities to accommodate wellness space in each office and have this part of the space calculations. I would like to see a more fluid process for obtaining space and to be able to have more timely response to modernization of the work environments.”

“I also LOVE that I have an individualized workspace that I can personalize and set up the way that works the best for me.”

“We recently modernized. I would like to see some corrections made to some of the areas. It seems like the basic worker needs were not taken into account for the workspace, with limited to no storage for everyday items, not enough workspace on the desks, too noisy often to concentrate – no noise cancelling headphones provided for an open workspace. We are trying to fix some of this after the fact, but it is expensive and we can't fix it all.”

“Modern workplace including non-invasive lighting, sit/stand desks. Ability to remotely connect to work.”

Facility maintenance is seen as related to job productivity and personal wellness.

“A place to work. The workspaces we have are too small to deal with all the paperwork we have and to have the ability to refer to all the information we need. Better training for the field. Setting us up with people to accompany us on our cases, until we get comfortable to go out on our own.”

“I love that my office was remodeled this past year with beautiful new cubicles and ergonomic desks.”

“Supplies we need always available and not running out of things. The upkeep of the building and the simple things like garbage emptying, the temperature of the building being equal on both sides of the building, our parking spaces are too small, and we have trees in the parking lot that drop their seeds on our cars and ruin the paint.”

“The office is extremely stuffy, dusty, and dirty. The staff are constantly sneezing and coughing. The workspaces are cramped and there is not enough space for the workers assigned to the location.”

Some made more general comments about resources.

“The resources and tools I need are always available for me to use.”

“Better technology, for the love of God. This not having updated tools for our job is ridiculous.”

“The equipment is old here and I would like to see newer equipment to help staff do their job.”

“As work increases, there is a need for more resources to continue the top-notch work performed.”

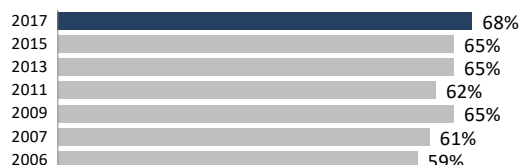
“Better working equipment, less down time with systems used daily to help our customers.”

QUESTION. I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively

68% of employees agreed that they have access to the tools and resources needed for their job. 12% said the tools and resources needed are seldom or never available. Employees expressed appreciation for:

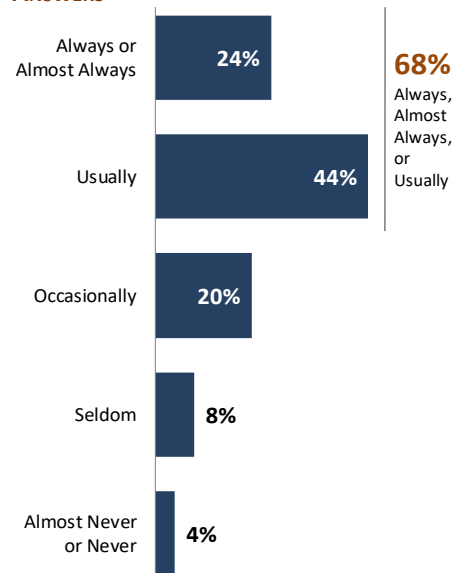
- Mobile technology, such as smartphones and tablets
- Wi-fi in the office
- Updated office equipment and state cars
- Remote and/or virtual access (VPN/Citrix)

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 agreed that they have the tools and resources they need to do their jobs effectively.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.

ANSWERS



► What DSHS employees said ...

Many employees wrote that mobile technology has improved their productivity.

"Improvements made in technology and remote access."

"I am very, very grateful for the technology that allows me to work remotely. This has made a huge positive difference in my work performance and efficiency."

"Mobile technology has decreased some of the workload issues and created better efficiency."

"The change in technology. It appears we are on the 'leading edge of technology' with the use of iPhones and apps, to complete our work."

"It is wonderful having the iPhone and online access when out in the field. This was a wonderful improvement for time efficiency."

Other resources mentioned include transportation, office equipment, and other technology.

"Wi-Fi in the offices allows me to drop in and set up quickly, at whatever location I can find (which is important due to our lack of empty cubicles in each office.)"

"[I like the] availability and accessibility of resources such as copiers, phone, laptop, jet pack, fleet vehicles, ORCA card and the parking spaces on the lid."

"We need uniforms, boots and Tasers to protect us from the residents or the offenders."

"That we have cars available to go work at other offices."

"The technology is great and helps utilize time much better."

"I have a new computer with more resources."

Employees want to see continued technology updates.

"The iPhones are nice, but it is hard for some of my co-workers to hear on these phones and their voices get loud when they are talking. I have had people tell me when I am on the phone that they can't hear me because the person's voice in the background is louder than mine. Mobile headsets would be nice as opposed to the plug-in headsets."

"More options with technology. We just now, these past few months, have added smartphones and VPN when it has been around for years out in the workforce. More access to state vehicles."

"Development group could facilitate working from home more to help members on my team. Providing laptops as default rather than desktops would be a great start at achieving that goal."

"While smart phones have finally been ordered for parole counselors, this should have been done years ago! Having a flip phone was slowing and hindering my work and communication with youth and families. Children's Administration staff received tablets and smart phones around two years ago."

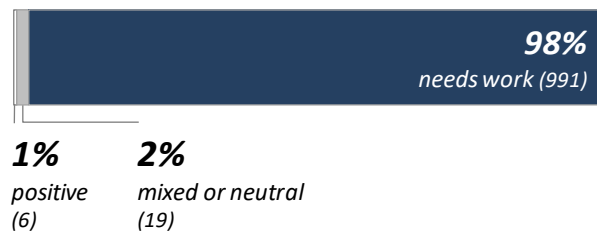
THEME. Staffing

1,016 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed the issue of adequate staffing.

9% commented on this theme (1,016)



Their comments were:



Nearly all (98%) of the 1,016 employees who wrote about staffing resources see a need for more staff. Many said that current staffing levels create instability within their work environment. They described a variety of issues, including:

- Increased/unrealistic workload
- Poor morale and burnout
- Frequent turnover

Employees would like to see:

- More staff in positions with client contact
- Efforts to retain current workers
- Better recruitment

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees often describe staffing challenges as a continuing cycle of turnover and high workload.

“Manageable workload please. This will only be achieved after staff retention issues are addressed. Vacancies create vacancies.”

“Increased personnel – the issues with worker satisfaction, retention and outcomes for the families we serve would be instantly impacted in a positive manner if staffing was substantially greater than it is now. People leave because they are overwhelmed. They are overwhelmed because we never have enough staff to carry the caseloads. There will always be movement to other units and people leaving for other jobs. When all of those things happen, the caseload left behind is dumped on the remaining workers which makes for overwhelmed workers, who then quit, and the domino effect continues.”

“We are back to the mentality of doing more with less, and the demands on workers are getting higher, with fewer resources, and then we wonder why people won’t stay. We need FTEs. We simply do not have enough people to do the work. I am tired of being told I am getting resources and then instead, get cut FTEs. I live in a bait-and-switch work environment.”

“Turnover. Staff are being trained and leaving quickly. Staffing plans in community facilities need to be looked at and resourced. Burnout on recruiting. Increased staffing ratios for Community Facilities. Fingerprint results are taking too long to hire new staff.”

“I would like to see more full-time employees, due to the workload that each social worker has. This is the reason why there’s a lot of turnover.”

Limited staffing levels can affect employees’ ability to interact with clients.

“Getting to and maintaining staffing levels to give us the opportunity to not only accomplish our daily tasks at the basic level, but to go above and beyond to ensure my clients get the best service available.”

“More manpower to better support our clients’ needs and decrease staff burnout.”

“I like when we are fully staffed and are able to program fully and be supported.”

“More staff on the floor (Mental Health Technicians) to enable us to spend more time with the patients to build the beneficial relationships needed.”

Some employees want to see more efforts to attract and retain staff.

“Adequate staffing and having the staff needed on each shift for workflow to go smoothly and be able to take the time off when needed.”

“Stability in the workforce. Pay people enough or in some other way make these jobs enticing so that we stop the revolving door.”

“Recruitment and retention needs to be number one.”

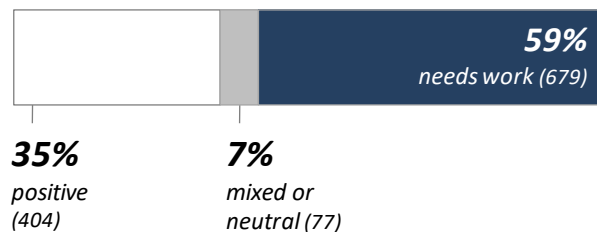
THEME. Pay and benefits

1,160 of the 10,869 respondents who made comments addressed the issues of pay and/or benefits.

11% commented on this theme (1,160)



Their comments were:



Of the 1,160 respondents who mentioned pay and benefits, 35% (404) made positive comments. Job security and benefits were mentioned frequently.

More than half (59%) described the pay and benefits they receive as inadequate, and some linked these concerns to the questions about respect and recognition. The changes they asked for include:

- Pay based on locality
- Competitive wages
- Performance-based compensation
- Evaluating salary discrepancies between closely related job classifications

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees appreciate benefits and job security.

“Overall I enjoy working for the state. While the pay lags behind the private market (at least in my field), the stability and benefits help defray that.”

“[I like being] paid on time. Above average annual leave accrual.”

“Stable employment, pays the bills (although I had to take an extra part-time job).”

“Secure employment, benefits such as medical/dental coverage, and building retirement funds!”

“Having decent benefits and adequate sick days to use said benefits.”

“I feel secure in my employment and that I have a steady paycheck and health insurance.”

Many voiced concerns about current salary levels and the cost of living, especially in King County.

“The rate of pay is not adequate for not only a living wage in Washington, but for the expectation of skills needed for this job. Our job is to help those struggling to make ends meet, when many of us are struggling ourselves.”

“We need locality pay! It's not a desire, it's not something I would like to see, it is 100% necessary.”

“I'd say the pay, but even that has gotten progressively worse over the last 15 years with the cost of living adjustments being wiped out by medical premium and retirement contribution increases so that I have less spending power than I did when I started.”

“Better pay. There is a story on the ESA Homepage that states it takes at least \$76,000 for a family of four to scrape by in Seattle, which reminds me that I currently don't make enough to live in the city of Seattle without a second income. A person who has a job with the State of Washington, a job that requires a college degree, should not be able to qualify for low income housing, food stamps, or other forms of public assistance.”

Some perceive inequities in pay and raises.

“I believe the issue of salary discrepancy amongst SEIU and nurse managers must be fixed, and the issue of other managers and salary discrepancies must also be addressed. Salary inequities drain a person's commitment and drive.”

“The pay is low and the expectations are high.”

“Salaries need to be evaluated. With changes to minimum wage, our wages are no longer as competitive as they once were.”

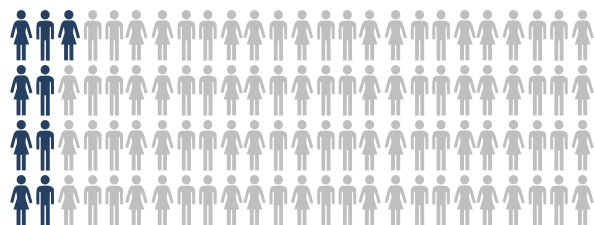
“Who had the gall to say that I got a raise? Five dollars more take home pay in a two week pay period is a slap in the face. Hey, I know, why don't we get an independent civilian panel to compare the wages of similar professions, and have them recommend what we should be making? Maybe we'd get a 20% or more pay increase.”

“Our financial line staff are significantly underpaid, and it negatively impacts morale. I would like to be able to pay the best performers more than the poor/average performers.”

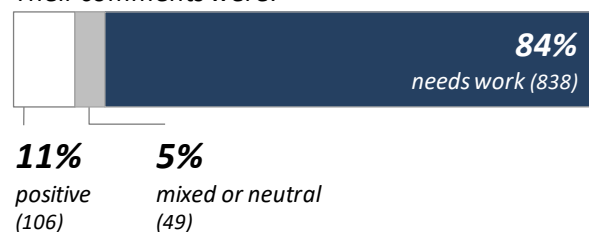
THEME. Training

993 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed training issues.

9% commented on this theme (993)



Their comments were:



Of the 993 respondents who commented about training, more than eight out of ten (84%) described needs for improvement. About one in ten (11%) made positive comments about training issues, and a few made mixed or neutral comments (5%).

Employees would like to see:

- A more organized and thorough approach to new employee training
- Increased use of technology to facilitate remote participation throughout the state
- Opportunities for employee growth and skill development

► What DSHS employees said ...

Many comments included suggestions for new or improved employee training.

“More training in the systems we use each and every day: Access, Outlook, eJAS, online, BARCODE, etc. This is Lean.”

“Even though there is a lot of training available, as a ‘newbie,’ the training has not been sequential. I’m doing payments before having the official training, so a co-worker has to help me.”

“More structure in place for adequate training of new staff (of whom I am one). There is no training plan. Although there are broad trainings, they do not prepare you for the actual day-to-day tasks that you do. I must go to find co-workers who are willing to help me to learn a process. This slows down the work and also isn’t the best scenario for learning how to do something.”

“My only ever complaint that I have had was based on training needs. In the beginning it was a little like ‘sink or swim’ scenario. I have learned to navigate and find the answers to what I need. Slowly I am seeing more and more training opportunities. I do know that if there isn’t an LMS or in-house training on it, I can find someone who does know and they will normally sit down and train me.”

“Mentors need to be seasoned and to work on the ward with the new employees. Not simply dropping them off and coming back to check on them later.”

“Shorten new social worker training at the Alliance by two-thirds. New workers should work and train simultaneously, taking real life scenarios into the classroom creates relevance (i.e. work Monday -Tuesday and train or go to class on Friday).”

Employees mentioned barriers to participating in trainings.

“Training opportunities are plentiful but finding the time to participate is difficult.”

“Go-to meetings and trainings should be recorded so they can be viewed at any time in LMS, much like the standard trainings.”

“Quit making us Eastern Washington people travel in the winter. Why is it safe for us to go over the passes, but it isn’t for one trainer to come over here?”

Current employees want to have continued training options, and appreciate those that are available.

“I would like to see more training and education opportunities (optional and required) for the employees here, due to lack of continuity throughout the facility.”

“We have opportunities to attend trainings and participate in mentorship programs for career development.”

“When I requested training that would improve, enhance, or hone my skills so that I could have the opportunity to advance, I was informed there was no money.”

“I appreciate all the learning opportunities available to staff via online and in educational classes.”

“Experienced staff are forgotten about when it comes to training and input. I would like to see experienced staff be able to have more training opportunities and input on changes.”

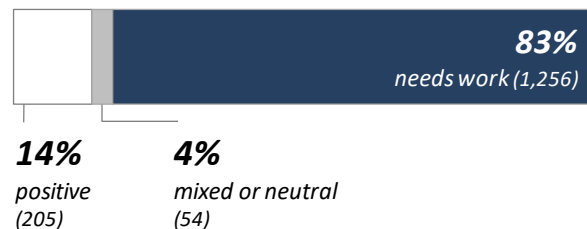
THEME. Facilities/environment

1,515 of the 10,869 respondents who made comments addressed their work environment. These comments touched on offices, institutions, parking, commutes, and surroundings.

14% commented on this theme (1,515)



Their comments were:



Of the 1,515 respondents who commented on the facility they work in, 14% were satisfied. Workplace modernization and other topics related to the workplace strategy initiative are discussed in-depth within chapter 4.

Current and proposed changes to the workplace are prompting many responses. More than eight out of ten respondents (83%) suggested that improvements are needed. They addressed concerns about:

- Transitioning from cubicles to modern workspaces
- Building maintenance
- Noise and distractions
- Lighting and physical atmosphere

► What DSHS employees said ...

Although a few are satisfied, many staff are concerned about their current and future workplace.

“Change is difficult for a lot of people, so while I'd love to see more communal workspaces, I know many others don't want that.”

“I like having a private area that isn't my cubicle where I can go and get my work done without as much interruption.”

“Physical aspects are negative. It is like an endless maze of cubicles with no privacy for clients and staff to conduct state business.”

“I think it's despicable that they took away cubicles, and sat us at tiny tables, with only 3 shelves. I grew up wanting to be a social worker. I worked so hard to go to school at night to get my MSW, while working full-time during the day in addition to doing a practicum. I now feel like DSHS could care less that I have my MSW. I have nothing here to show for it, except a tiny table. At minimum a cubicle would be nice to hang my degree, or pictures of my family. Definitely not what I had dreamed of as a little girl.”

“Modern workspaces to foster creativity and collaboration.”

“I am not certain that the modernization/shared workspace is appropriate in all work settings. CSD headquarters vs. CSOs vs. Call Center vs. CSD Regional Offices. Everyone's work style and job responsibilities are different and the open concept may hinder concentration, increase noise, affect quality of work, etc. I would like to see more discussion on the topic before forging ahead.”

“This is an observation: the open workspace allows for very easy collaboration and communication. However, this also allows for more interruption, which creates more stress due to noise and activity level. It requires much more effort to concentrate and remain focused.”

“I like my current personal space. I am concerned with the move coming next year and the new workspaces/desks. I have a ton of paperwork and need space to complete my work. I am not fond of going to another area or location to spread out. I need my computer, and only having a couple of conference tables for all to share, is not going to work. I know the change has not happened yet; however, many of us have seen pictures of what we are getting into. Overall, I do not see it being conducive to the work we do.”

Environmental improvements are desired by many.

“Windows and natural lighting in the workspace.”

“It would be nice to have heat in the winter and A/C in the summer. This building is a terrible place to work.”

“I love the office location, but the building itself is in very lousy shape. Things are constantly breaking and the air quality is iffy at best. It is impossible to keep things from getting coated in dust due to the air and HVAC.”

“The furniture, lighting and cubicle walls are ancient and dismal with spills and stains everywhere. The carpet is old and stained as well.”

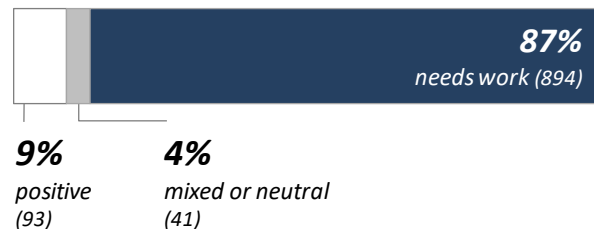
THEME. Resources for clients, and other resources

1,028 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed other resource issues, including resources for clients.

9% commented on this theme (1,028)



Their comments were:



Of the 1,028 respondents who wrote comments about other resource issues, 87% said that more resources are needed:

- 214 commented on **resources for clients**. Of these, nearly nine in ten (89%) expressed concerns or ideas for improvement, 8% were satisfied with the resources they have to help clients, and a smaller number (3%) made mixed or neutral comments.
- 839 commented on **other resources**. Of these, close to nine in ten (86%) described tools or resources they need to do their jobs. Nearly one in ten (9%) were satisfied with the available resources, and a few (4%) made mixed or neutral comments. More examples of these comments can be found on pages 72 and 73.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees expressed gratitude for the ability to assist clients.

"We do have a lot of resources, and it is rewarding to help our clients access those resources."

"[I like] being able to offer services to families who would not necessarily know how to access the great things we offer."

"[I like] having a hand in changing people's lives and having resources available to support our community."

Comments included requests for specific client resources.

"I would like to see a universal shuttle system for clients to get to work and recreation."

"Funding for intervention services."

"We absolutely need more resources and funds for my activities. Currently myself and other staff spend our own time and money to be able to create our groups."

"There also aren't enough active treatment items to do, due to lack of budget."

"More community re-integration opportunities for patients."

"More services for the families in rural areas."

"I would like to see off-ground activities that would help the patients to prepare for discharge."

Additional resources to support daily tasks were also mentioned.

"I appreciate the efforts to move toward more mobile work abilities but the equipment provided has not been adequate. The tablets are consistently breaking or the batteries are unsafe. I would love to see desktops returned to the offices and for tablets to be provided for field work only. The phones have been a great addition for field work but in the office, desk phones are needed as well."

"Better technology, increased mobile technology options, modernized case management system, paperless technology."

"I agree to 'upcycle' when possible, but it's to the point of ridiculous here. We're using supplies from (seriously here) the 1950s in some cases. We need new equipment and new supplies."

"Wi-Fi. Generally, coming into the 21st century with technology would be helpful."

"I would like to see more state vehicles added to the department. At times there are no cars if an emergency arises or you are not able to plan in advance."

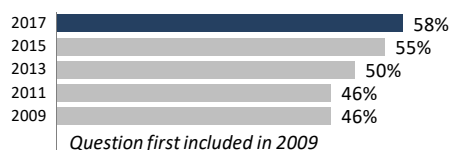
"My only complaints are related to building management, not having supplies needed for my job, such as consistently working fax machines. Running out of necessary supplies such as paper and, even worse, toilet paper."

QUESTION. Overall, my agency supports me in living a healthier life

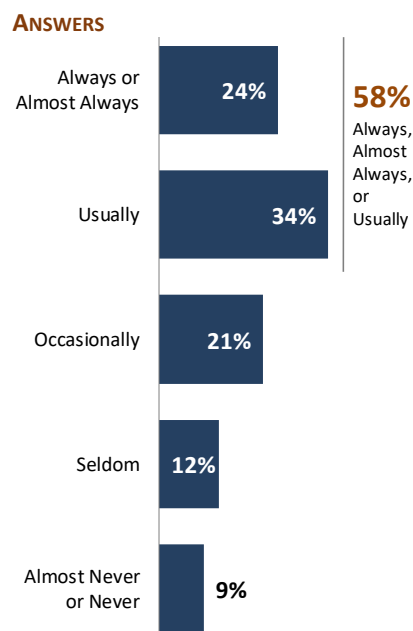
More than half of employees (58%) agreed that DSHS supports them in living a healthier life – a statistically significant increase and the highest ever for DSHS. Nearly one quarter (21%) said the agency seldom or never supports their efforts to be healthier. Employees who commented on this issue are interested in:

- Prioritizing wellness activities in the workplace
- Physical space for stress relief
- Support for healthy lifestyle choices

More staff in 2017 than in 2015 said their agency supports them in living a healthier life.



Increase between 2015 and 2017 is statistically significant at $p < .01$.



► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees appreciate efforts to promote wellness.

“The new wellness center for the staff to finally have a place to take a break.”

“Our ‘quiet’ room where we can go sit and calm down if work is getting too stressful.”

“I like the Employee Wellness Committee.”

“Good focus on personal well-being.”

“I’ve found the department supportive in creating a physically healthy job environment for my unit especially; it’s well known the effects of 8 hours of sedentary work staring at a computer 5 days a week. That really matters to me for my long term health.”

“My sit/stand desk. I like that I can stand and work.”

“Agency promotes good health (physical, mental, and emotional).”

“I appreciate that my supervisor supports the attendance of wellness activities at the office during the work day.”

Balancing the effects of stress and promoting well-being are important aspects of the workplace.

“Changes I would like to see in my workplace are better resources for staff to get support and/or therapy services for dealing with the stresses and demands of this job.”

“More stress relief opportunities for social workers to reduce staff burnout.”

“I would really like to see more help towards employees’ health in the workplace. Maybe a break with exercise equipment, help with gym memberships, or anything else that would help employees stay healthy and in shape while at work and away.”

“Quiet room or wellness room – somewhere to take a quiet restorative break during work hours to recharge and re-center.”

“More available space for quiet time during breaks, for things like reading or meditation. Also, more space available for us to meet with our co-workers on breaks or lunch and the encouragement to plan our lunches and breaks together as long as it won’t adversely affect lobby flow. We need time to get to know each other and also need down time to recharge throughout the day.”

“More supports of healthy living – filtered water bottle filling stations, encouraging walking outdoors.”

“I would like to see more opportunities for health and wellness activities at work. Such as exercise equipment and wellness fairs.”

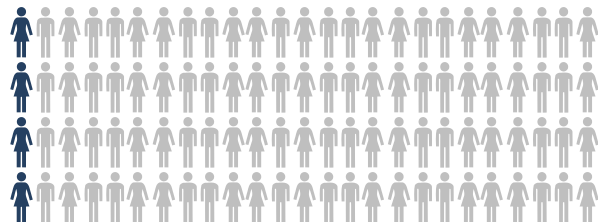
“I appreciate our wellness programs, but wish they were more affordable. I’d like to take nutrition and yoga classes in OB2, but I can’t afford them.”

“My supervisor is very understanding when it comes to us being able to use our time as we need to. I always feel like my family, health and especially my children’s well-being is always a first priority. Which has allowed me to have an amazing work and life balance.”

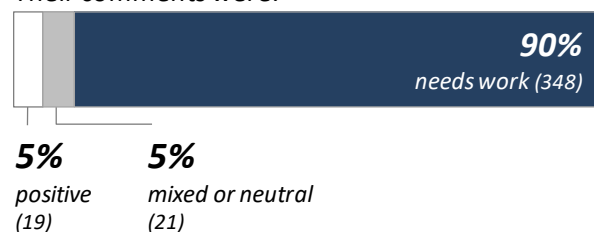
THEME. Safety issues

388 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed staff safety issues.

4% commented on this theme (388)



Their comments were:



Of the 388 respondents who commented on staff safety issues, one out of twenty (5%) said they feel safe in their workplace.

More than nine out of ten comments about safety issues (90%) identified areas where work is needed. Employees want:

- Proactive safety measures
- Alterations in the physical workspace for added security
- Consistent training and practice drills
- Adequate staffing

The majority of those expressing safety concerns (222 of the 348) work in residential facilities.

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees want solutions to potential security issues in their physical workspace.

“The field office buildings should have working cameras inside and outside the building beyond just the DCS public lobby. It should not take a disaster for employee safety to be prioritized.”

“A serious concern is the safety of the front desk staff. There is only a Plexiglas barrier and with the climate of society I would think something much stronger (bullet proof glass) and better designed would be beneficial to increase the safety.”

“There is an issue with the set up of our desks, which put us at risk as we are cornered in our cubicles. I feel that in an emergency situation, we would not be able to get past a violent client.”

“Not a safe workplace when the community has easy access to the office and staff, where customers can walk in and roam the office without being greeted and directed to appropriate services, etc.”

Training and increased safety measures are a priority.

“I would like to see safer practices, more tools for staff to keep them and the residents safe, policies that can be effectively implemented without straining your workforce more than it is and then saying that we need to suck it up in a way.”

“More safety or security measures in place for workers. I shouldn't have my life threatened in carrying out my duties of trying to interview parents or caregivers of children.”

“I would like for management to take staff safety seriously beyond having a few classes on how to properly run away from a combative patient.”

“Rainier School has been taking in more violent and aggressive clients, however our policies and structure have not adjusted to this. Staff are being put in more dangerous situations without adequate means for protection or safety. My staff have suffered many injuries in my house alone, however there hasn't been much put in place to avoid these types of incidents. Our clients need more restrictions and our staff need more protection.”

“[I like] ongoing training, teamwork, company support. Company makes sure the work environment is safe which gives us the opportunity to give quality care to our patients.”

“More drills just in case something happens to our workplace, and co-workers will be prepared and know exactly what to do in face of a dangerous situation.”

“More safety measures or not have us doing jobs that create safety risks for employees in this position.”

Comments about staffing levels are linked to safety.

“There are many times when I come to work and I feel unsafe due to not having enough staff or not enough trained staff.”

“I would like to see more staff on the wards, especially during periods of high acuity. It can be downright scary at times walking through the halls of the ward, even when other precautions are taken to maintain safety.”

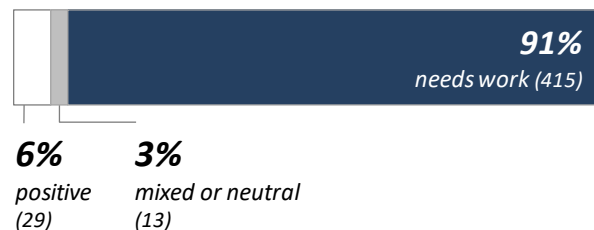
THEME. Wellness resources

457 of the 10,869 respondents who made narrative comments addressed resources for wellness and health.

4% commented on this theme (457)



Their comments were:



Of the 457 respondents who commented on wellness, nine out of ten (91%) see room for improvements. Fewer than one out of ten made positive comments (6%), and thirteen individuals made mixed or neutral comments (3%).

Employees commented about:

- Universal availability of ergonomic equipment
- Break rooms or spaces to decompress
- Consistent enforcement of wellness policies
- Options for physical activity during and after the workday
- Strategic plans for wellness in the office

► What DSHS employees said ...

Employees want wellness in the workplace to be taken seriously.

“If we say wellness is important, we should support it. Employees should not have to do fundraisers for their own wellness programs.”

“I would like to see ‘wellness in the workplace’ actually mean something beyond having an empty wellness room that we are being asked to provide money for to furnish it with anything (doesn't seem right if DSHS is really trying to push wellness). Beyond that, having a committee that meets and doesn't seem to do anything besides telling us to take our breaks.”

“Offer paid or partially paid gym (or other activity) membership.”

“I would like to see and experience a greater support of wellness activities by management, especially those activities that are at the office. In an ideal world, we would have a designated wellness room large enough to hold a class (i.e. yoga or a presentation), and a designated breastmilk pumping room (or maybe the wellness room could be available for this purpose).”

“I would like to see healthy activities offered at lunch (yoga, workouts).”

There were many comments about physical accommodations, such as ergonomic equipment and break rooms.

“Our building desperately needs a relaxing break room rather than one that is always occupied with regional meetings.”

“A health room or somewhere to go in the office to workout or do some sort of physical activity every day.”

“A shower in the building.”

“Better ergonomically correct equipment without needing a doctor's note for everything. It should be my right in the workplace to just have the tools I need to do my job with necessary tools.”

“Standing work stations should be easily available to all employees who wish to have them. Fostering a culture of sedentary work in cubicles leads to obesity and then a cascade of health problems. A focus on fostering WELLNESS would actually result in cost savings as there would be a reduction in the health care costs associated with such a sedentary workforce. The awareness that ‘sitting is the new smoking’ seems to have made little impact on state employment.”

Air quality is an issue, as is enforcement of scent-free and smoking policies.

“The building makes those of us with allergies and respiratory conditions sick. It would show support for a healthier life of the building occupants to investigate and remedy air-quality issues.”

“If this is going to be a scent-free workplace, then this should include essential oils. Sometimes it is overwhelming at work.”

“For an agency with the motto of Transforming Lives, and that has the word ‘health’ as a part of its name: Why do I, a non-smoker, have to walk into OB2 everyday (all general entrances) and inhale second hand smoke? Especially since there has been direct links with cancer causing agents, carcinogens associated with cigarettes.”



“Mt St Helens Summit Headstand” • Honorable Mention
DSHS Photo Contest • Category: DSHS Employees
By Gregory Saunders, with permission

From the photographer:

After reaching the summit on a beautiful July morning, my climbing partner was intent on me getting a great photo of him. It took copious attempts before we got the perfect angle with his legs straight to the sky.

Employee Survey 2017



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

Research and Data Analysis Division