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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

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## *Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices*

Surveyor recruitment and retention difficulties pose a significant challenge for many State Survey Agencies (SAs),<sup>1</sup> and may contribute to inconsistencies in citation of concerning deficiencies in facility performance.<sup>2</sup> Competition for nurses, who constitute a major component of the surveyor workforce, is believed to be exacerbated by the national nursing shortage and surveyor salary limitations.<sup>2</sup> Other aspects of the surveyor position, such as demanding travel requirements and the stress often associated with working in the regulatory setting, also are believed by SAs to contribute to recruitment and retention challenges.<sup>1</sup> The substantial staffing resources and time dedicated to training new surveyors further intensify the need to retain trained and experienced surveyors and minimize the disruptive effects of persistent turnover. In the face of these difficulties, many SAs are working to improve their surveyor recruitment and retention success.

This compendium describes an assortment of promising retention practices used by SAs, some designed to improve surveyor retention and some to maintain an already strong rate of retention. The compendium was developed to share useful retention strategies that are feasible to implement in the SA environment. Many of the retention strategies, with their aim to create a positive, fulfilling, and flexible work environment and position that will keep staff, also can promote recruitment of new surveyors. (Promising practices related to the procedural aspects of recruiting and hiring are described in another issue brief produced under this project, entitled *Surveyor Recruitment Strategies*.) Although some of the featured practices may be well-established retention techniques in the private sector or in some SAs, they may be new for many other SAs. Agency leadership can benefit from learning how others have implemented useful practices. To help agencies more comprehensively assess their current retention efforts and identify areas that could be strengthened, a checklist of key retention strategies developed from the personnel literature also is provided in this compendium. The SA practices are presented after the checklist and are organized by the categories on the checklist (e.g., providing competitive compensation, promoting work-life balance). The References and Relevant Literature section located at the end of this document provides suggestions for additional resources that may be helpful to agencies seeking further information on retention strategies.

The practices featured in this compendium are only a sampling of the practices used by state survey agencies across the country. Substantial efforts by the project's research team to identify promising retention practices began with e-mail requests sent to all SAs (a small number of agencies were not successfully reached). The research team sent additional e-mails to many agencies that did not respond to initial inquiries and also contacted some agencies regarding specific practices, based on suggestions from the project workgroup. To obtain further information about selected practices, the research team conducted telephone interviews with agency staff and reviewed relevant supporting materials. Draft descriptions of each practice were reviewed by agency contacts to assure accuracy of the content.

*This document presents a compendium of surveyor retention strategies used in State Survey Agencies. The issue brief is one of a series by the Division of Health Care Policy and Research, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, for the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) highlighting promising practices in State Survey Agencies. The entire series is available online at CMS' Website, <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>. The issue briefs are intended to share information about practices used in State Survey Agencies and are not an endorsement of any practice.*

# Checklist of Retention Strategies

*Develop strategies to target key reasons that people stay in a job.*

We wish we could tell you it is easy to retain talented employees.

Follow these 10 steps, 12 steps, 20 steps. Do this, do that.

As an experienced manager, you already know that there are few magic bullets.

In any case, if we made it sound easy, you wouldn't believe us!

Instead, we have reviewed the personnel management literature\*, with attention to the context and constraints of public sector employers, to provide a general framework to help your agency focus on some important strategies for retaining your most valuable asset – your staff of talented surveyors. Important retention factors can be grouped and presented in many different ways - the checklist below is just one representation and is designed to help you “take the pulse” of your agency’s retention culture. Consider whether your agency is paying attention to these important issues. Use the checklist as a guide in your efforts toward developing retention strategies that work for your agency. For each category on the checklist, examples of relevant practices in place at State Survey Agencies are listed. The practices, organized by retention category, are summarized following the checklist.

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\*Reference materials that contributed to the ideas on this checklist are listed in the References and Relevant Literature section located at the end of this compendium.



## **Provide Competitive Compensation**

- ✓ Work to provide a competitive salary within existing constraints
- ✓ Pursue changes to pay bands and job classifications
- ✓ Take advantage of state benefits and classifications that might apply to your staff (e.g., "difficult to fill" classification, travel perks)
- ✓ Explore the feasibility of hiring bonuses

### Examples

Arkansas: Nurse Surveyor Salary Increase

Kansas: Salary Adjustment for Clinical and Nonclinical Surveyors

Louisiana: Special Entry Rate for Nurse Surveyors

Mississippi: Extended Travel Benefit

Oklahoma: Nurse Surveyor Salary Adjustment



## **Support Training and Professional Development Opportunities**

- ✓ Focus training on both professional and personal development
- ✓ Support career growth that fits the employee

- ✓ Create an environment that fosters and promotes continuous learning

#### Examples

Connecticut: Tuition Reimbursement

Florida: SMQT Academy

Kansas: Statewide Inservice Training Meetings

Multiple States: Training on Legal-Related Aspects of Surveying (see *Issue Brief: Training to Strengthen Surveyor Skills and Knowledge Related to Legal Aspects of the Survey Process*)

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## **Promote Work-Life Balance**

- ✓ Offer flexible work hours
- ✓ Provide alternate work schedules
- ✓ Support alternate workplaces when feasible
- ✓ Offer seminars that discuss ways to balance work and life commitments and promote quality of life (e.g., maintaining fitness and nutrition on the road, stress reduction techniques)

#### Examples

Colorado: Four-Day Workweeks and Regional Teams

Connecticut: Flexible Work Hours and Alternate Schedules

Kansas: Four-Day Workweeks

Oklahoma: Using Local Workspace and Region-Based Teams

Multiple States: Telework Programs (see *Issue Brief: Teleworking in State Survey Agencies*)

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## **Implement Performance Recognition Efforts**

- ✓ Implement programs to recognize excellent performance
- ✓ Provide informal feedback on an ongoing basis to reinforce good performance
- ✓ Provide performance incentives, if possible

#### Examples

Colorado: Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer System

Connecticut: Employee Recognition through Health Department Programs and Other Recognition Practices

Oklahoma: Surveyor of the Year and Other Recognition Efforts

Texas: Employee of the Quarter and Other Recognition Efforts

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## **Practice Effective Management and Supervision**

- ✓ Ensure managers and supervisors are trained in staff management and development
- ✓ Communicate clear, well-defined expectations
- ✓ Capitalize on individual strengths and weaknesses - don't try to change people
- ✓ Encourage ongoing communication between employees and supervisors or managers

- ✓ Obtain feedback on reasons why employees leave the job
- ✓ Work to accommodate individual situations when feasible
- ✓ Advocate for your employees

#### Examples

Texas: Management Training Programs

Wisconsin: Annual Supervisors Retreat

Wisconsin: Peer Advisor Program

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## **Provide Technology and Equipment for Effective and Efficient Performance**

- ✓ Utilize technology to enhance productivity and communication
- ✓ Provide equipment, supplies, and a physical environment that support performance

#### Examples

Texas: Voice-to-Document Service

Wisconsin: Using Digital Senders to Enhance Efficiency

Multiple States: Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings (see *Issue Brief: Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings*)

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## **Cultivate a Positive Work Culture**

- ✓ Assist employees in finding opportunities for exciting and challenging work
- ✓ Encourage passion and commitment to the team, organization and goals of public service
- ✓ Express pride in your organization, its mission, and the quality of your product
- ✓ Delegate and provide opportunities for employees to be autonomous and in charge
- ✓ Foster and reward teamwork and cooperation, promote camaraderie
- ✓ Share information and develop ongoing forums for communication
- ✓ Be friendly and set a positive example
- ✓ Encourage fun on the job
- ✓ Promote an inclusive environment with a variety of styles and personal backgrounds
- ✓ Treat employees with dignity and respect
- ✓ Allow staff to create a pleasant physical environment
- ✓ Respect the need for job security

#### Examples

Louisiana: Staff Newsletter

Multiple States: Morale-Boosting and Staff Appreciation Efforts

Multiple States: Enhanced Surveyor Autonomy through Team-Based Scheduling (see *Issue Brief: Team-Based Scheduling Practices in State Survey Agencies*)



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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## *Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices*

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### **Competitive Compensation**

Although most state positions offer excellent benefits packages, salaries often are less competitive. Due to budgetary constraints, State Survey Agencies (SAs) often struggle with providing salaries that can compete with jobs in the private sector or even other public entities, particularly for nurses. Because salary may not be a major draw for the surveyor position, agencies must implement programs and flexibilities to attract and retain highly qualified and motivated surveyors. It remains critical, however, to ensure that surveyor salaries are as competitive as they can be to allow SAs to present a balanced and attractive surveyor position. Opportunities for supplemental payment, in addition to base salary, are another option to consider when seeking ways to increase financial compensation. Many survey agencies recently have made progress with regard to financial compensation for surveyors, as a result of months or years of commitment and effort by agency management staff. The agencies featured in this section successfully attained salary increases for some or all of their survey staff, or discovered ways to supplement base salary, each following a different path to the common goal of increasing surveyors' financial compensation.

#### **Arkansas**

##### **Nurse Surveyor Salary Increase**

In June 2005, the Office of Long Term Care, Division of Medical Services at the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services significantly increased nurse surveyor salaries, primarily by using an expanded salary grid to calculate the salaries of nurse surveyors.

#### **Kansas**

##### **Salary Adjustment for Clinical and Nonclinical Surveyors**

The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging increased salaries for surveyors of all disciplines in spring 2006, through a salary grade and step increase.

#### **Louisiana**

##### **Special Entry Rate for Nurse Surveyors**

In November 2004, the Health Standards Section, Bureau of Health Services Financing of the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals implemented a special entry rate that includes years of experience in the calculation of nurse surveyor salary.

#### **Mississippi**

##### **Extended Travel Benefit**

To help compensate for particularly heavy travel months, the Division of Health Facilities Licensure & Certification at the Mississippi State Department of Health implemented an extended travel benefit in January 2005. Surveyors are eligible for the benefit's \$400 salary supplement when overnight travel meets or exceeds 11 nights in a single month.

#### **Oklahoma**

##### **Nurse Surveyor Salary Adjustment**

In December 2005, the Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health obtained approval for a new pay band and higher salary range for nurse surveyors.

## **Competitive Compensation**

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### **Arkansas: Nurse Surveyor Salary Increase**

**Summary** In June 2005, the Office of Long Term Care, Division of Medical Services at the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services significantly increased nurse surveyor salaries, primarily by using an expanded salary grid to calculate the salaries of nurse surveyors.

**Intervention** Agency management staff initiated the salary increase as a recruitment and retention tool, to enhance the salary's competitiveness with those offered for other nursing positions in the region. Salaries for nurse surveyors hired as of June 2005 are calculated using the new grid. Recalculations of incumbent nurse surveyor salaries resulted in annual increases ranging from \$400 to \$12,000, depending on surveyors' previous level in the pay grade. The expanded grid incorporates years of nursing experience, a factor that had not previously been included in salary determinations. Education level, gerontologic certification (bringing a 4 percent increase), and a regional market incentive also affect salary calculations, as well as a 5.5 percent increase resulting from the position's "difficult to fill" status due to the heavy travel requirements. The expanded grid applies only to nurse surveyors at this time, representing 43 of 55 nursing home survey staff. All surveyors receive a 5 percent salary increase upon successfully passing the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT), typically six to eight months after hire.

**Implementation** Agency management staff began the effort to expand the nurse salary grid approximately five years prior to its implementation. To demonstrate the large discrepancy between surveyor salaries and those of comparable positions, management staff gathered local salary data for long term care consultants, Directors of Nursing in nursing homes, and nurse managers in hospitals. Staff also collected exit interview data that indicated salary as a key reason for leaving, in addition to the volume of travel. Agency management staff first obtained approval for the proposed salary changes from the Director of the Division of Medical Services and the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services, followed by approval from the Office of Personnel Management in the Arkansas Department of Finance & Administration. Final approval was granted from the Arkansas legislature's Joint Budget Committee.

**Impact** The salary adjustment has enhanced the competitiveness of the nurse surveyor salary with salaries offered for other nursing positions. Agency management staff believe that the adjustment has positively affected recruitment, particularly of more experienced nurses. The increase also appears to have positively influenced surveyor morale, with surveyors expressing appreciation for the efforts made by management staff on their behalf. Turnover rates are believed to be somewhat reduced. A drawback to the new grid is the creation of some salary inequity between nurses and generalist surveyors.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff emphasize the importance of persistence, noting that each time a salary increase is denied, it is an opportunity to educate decision-makers on the difficult job that surveyors perform and increase the likelihood of receiving approval in the future. It is important to use current data to demonstrate the gap between the nurse surveyor salary and salaries for other jobs

## ***Competitive Compensation***

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### **Arkansas (Cont'd)**

for which surveyor candidates are qualified. Management staff recommend obtaining comparative salary data from contacts such as nursing facility owners and educators from local nursing or medical schools, as agencies and organizations may hesitate to share this information due to recruitment competition. Management staff found it to be most effective to plead their own case at every opportunity, rather than relying only on Human Resources staff or others to act on their behalf. It also is critical to retain any advances that have been made; for example, agency management staff fought to retain the 5 percent increase for successful completion of the SMQT for retention purposes when it was suggested that the expanded salary grid could replace this increase. Management staff recommend utilizing contacts to help push the effort through, but caution against involving legislative contacts too early. It is valuable to begin defending the need for another increase as soon as one is implemented, given the long approval process, and to plan time for working through all necessary approval levels.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Carol Shockley, Director, Office of Long Term Care, Division of Medical Services, at the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services at 501/682-8485 or [Carol.Shockley@Arkansas.gov](mailto:Carol.Shockley@Arkansas.gov).

## ***Competitive Compensation***

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### **Kansas: Salary Adjustment for Clinical and Nonclinical Surveyors**

**Summary** The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging increased salaries for surveyors of all disciplines in spring 2006, through a salary grade and step increase.

**Intervention** Agency management staff pursued the salary adjustment to help ameliorate difficulties with longstanding vacant positions, low volume of applicants, and high staff turnover. In addition to providing the higher starting salary to new hires, approximately 51 of 68 surveyors already employed by the agency received a salary increase and step adjustment. (The remaining 17 surveyors were at or above the new starting salary step.) The adjustment resulted in increases up to nearly \$5,000 annually. Several steps remain in the salary grade, which will allow flexibility for salary increases over time. Years of experience do not affect the starting salary.

**Implementation** To initiate the process, agency management staff met with Human Resources (HR) staff to recommend the salary increase to address ongoing recruitment and retention difficulties. HR staff prepared documentation justifying the request, including data on the lengthy duration of vacant positions, low number of applicants, and high staff turnover rates. The critical thinking and decision-making skills integral to the surveyor position also were highlighted as reasons to provide higher pay. HR staff received approval from the Secretary of the Kansas Department on Aging and the Commissioner of the Licensure, Certification, and Evaluation Commission to pursue the salary grade and step increase, and obtained final approval from the State's Division of Personnel Services. The process, from initial meetings with HR to implementation of the salary increase, required approximately 18 months.

**Impact** Agency management staff report that the salary adjustment was received very favorably by surveyors, particularly in light of limited annual increases granted over the past several years and awareness of the difficulty of securing salary increases. In addition, the number of applications received for vacant positions is believed to have increased since the adjustment.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff emphasize the importance of continuing to raise the issue and persisting with the request. Timing is influential in terms of the decision-makers and budgetary constraints in place at the time of the request. Agency leadership staff should not be discouraged if requests are not approved initially and should continue to keep the topic on the table.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Greg Reser, Director of the Licensure & Certification Division at the Kansas Department on Aging at 785/296-1260 or [GregReser@aging.state.ks.us](mailto:GregReser@aging.state.ks.us).

## ***Competitive Compensation***

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### **Louisiana: Special Entry Rate for Nurse Surveyors**

**Summary** In November 2004, the Health Standards Section, Bureau of Health Services Financing of the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals implemented a special entry rate that includes years of experience in the calculation of nurse surveyor salary.

**Intervention** Agency management staff pursued implementation of the special entry rate to address high turnover and difficulty attracting experienced nurses due to the low starting salary. Higher salaries also were intended to decrease the need for surveyors to supplement their salaries by working additional jobs, a practice recently limited by an Ethics Commission ruling that barred surveyors from working for institutions located in the same area in which they conduct surveys.

Under the special entry rate, years of nursing experience are incorporated into salary calculations for new hires. Recalculation of annual salaries for existing survey staff resulted in increases up to \$10,000. The broad salary range within the entry-level surveyor job classification permits the agency to accommodate the varying lengths of candidates' past experience, although the maximum rate that can be offered at initial hire is about midrange for the classification, with rare exception. Surveyors receive a salary increase when promoted to a new classification after completing training and passing the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT), typically nine to 12 months after hire. Surveyors with satisfactory performance evaluations also receive 4 percent annual increases until their classification's maximum pay is reached.

**Implementation** Agency management staff collaborated with Human Resources (HR) staff to develop written justification to request the special entry rate. The justification provided data on the high turnover rate, findings from numerous exit interviews across agency field offices indicating that low salary was a major reason for leaving, and discussion of nurse recruitment difficulties, particularly in light of the national nursing shortage. The request was presented to the Director of the Division of Medicaid, who forwarded it to the State Personnel System for final approval. The process, from preparation of data and paperwork to approval and implementation of the special entry rate, required approximately three years.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that the salary adjustment positively affected surveyor morale. Surveyors who received salary increases appeared to be notably enthusiastic and pleased. Turnover seems to have decreased fairly substantially. Two former surveyors returned to the agency in large part due to the salary increase. It is believed that the special entry rate has attracted many more experienced nurses to apply.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff recommend providing data to support a request for a salary increase, including turnover rates and exit interview data indicating that dissatisfaction with salary is a key reason for losing staff. It also is useful to research starting salaries at other state institutions that hire the same professional discipline to gauge competition in the local market.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Erin Rabalais, RN Manager, Health Standards Section, at 225/342-6096 or ERABALAI@dhh.la.gov.

## ***Competitive Compensation***

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### **Mississippi: Extended Travel Benefit**

**Summary** To help compensate for particularly heavy travel months, the Division of Health Facilities Licensure & Certification at the Mississippi State Department of Health implemented an extended travel benefit in January 2005. Surveyors are eligible for the benefit's \$400 salary supplement when overnight travel meets or exceeds 11 nights in a single month.

**Intervention** During efforts to identify financial and other incentives to improve surveyor recruitment and retention, agency management staff discovered the availability of the benefit through the state personnel system for positions involving extensive travel. Surveyors who have passed the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT) and/or completed all orientation requirements for their position are eligible to apply for the benefit when overnight travel meets or exceeds 11 nights in a single month. Surveyors document the dates of their overnight stays in a form they attach to their travel voucher for that month. The surveyor's supervisor verifies the documented number of overnight stays and forwards the approved form to the financial department. The \$400 payment is taxable income and is received in a supplemental check. Although available to all surveyors, only long-term care (LTC) surveyors have applied for the benefit to date. An average of six of the 28 LTC surveyors receive the benefit each month, ranging from 3 to 11 per month.

**Implementation** Agency management staff first identified the availability of the benefit and its relevance to surveyors, and then pursued approval to designate the surveyor job classification as eligible for the benefit. After receiving this designation, agency management staff added internal, agency-specific eligibility criteria (e.g., having passed the SMQT). The availability of the benefit was announced to surveyors at a staff meeting.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that the benefit helps balance the hardship of months involving excessive travel. Surveyor feedback on an evaluation questionnaire supports this perception, as over 80 percent of those who have used the benefit feel it helps to compensate for occasions when they must spend more nights away than planned or desired. Management staff have not found the benefit to be an incentive for less efficient use of time.

**Lessons Learned** It is valuable to take advantage of benefits available through the state personnel system. Agency management staff emphasize the importance of thoroughly understanding a new benefit before announcing it to staff and ensuring that all staff clearly understand the eligibility requirements. Although the Mississippi surveyors are positive about having access to the benefit, enthusiasm may have been dampened by an initial perception that surveyors would routinely receive the additional compensation due to the position's high volume of travel, rather than receiving it only when they traveled 11 nights during a month.

**Contact Information** For further information, please contact Marilynn Winborne, Director of Health Facilities Licensure & Certification at the Mississippi State Department of Health at 601/364-1108 or [Marilynn.Winborne@msdh.state.ms.us](mailto:Marilynn.Winborne@msdh.state.ms.us).

## ***Competitive Compensation***

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### **Oklahoma: Nurse Surveyor Salary Adjustment**

**Summary** In December 2005, the Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health obtained approval for a new pay band and higher salary range for nurse surveyors.

**Intervention** Agency management staff pursued the pay band adjustment to increase competitiveness with private sector salaries and with other Region VI State Survey Agencies. The state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approved a new pay band for Clinical Health Facility Surveyors and an increase within the existing pay band for Nonclinical Health Facility Surveyors as a market adjustment. Although all surveyors previously had the same job classification regardless of clinical qualifications, it became necessary to split the position into the two new classifications to secure the salary increase. Upon implementing the new pay band, agency management staff raised salaries for incumbent clinical surveyors to the cap for that pay band. Salary increases ranged from about \$200 to \$700 per month. Surveyors are aware that they are at the salary cap, and that additional increases are reliant on annual state increases or the addition of funds to the pay band. New surveyors are hired slightly below the salary cap for their pay band, allowing for salary increases at milestones such as passing the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT).

**Implementation** Approximately one year prior to implementation of the higher pay band, agency management staff obtained approval from the Health Department's Deputy Commissioner to proceed with the request. Management staff then collaborated with the Personnel Department to submit paperwork to OPM and subsequently met with OPM staff to further explain the surveyor position and justify that the education, training, and skills associated with the position merited a higher pay band. Although the higher pay band was requested for all surveyors, OPM would approve the shift only for clinical surveyors, requiring that the two staff types be split into different positions and pay bands.

**Impact** Agency management staff indicate that surveyors expressed appreciation for the salary increase and acknowledged the efforts of management staff to secure the increase. The increase appears to have positively affected recruitment, drawing a greater number of applicants and resulting in a training class double the size of typical classes from prior years. The salary differential between clinical and nonclinical survey staff has not resulted in higher turnover of nonclinical staff.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff indicate that substantial effort was aimed at clarifying to OPM staff the level of responsibility and skill associated with the surveyor position, including the need to exercise professional judgment, make decisions related to resident abuse and neglect, and support decisions in testimony before civil and administrative courts. Management staff held open discussion with nonclinical surveyors to explain the market forces and reasoning behind the separation of their job classifications.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Dorya Huser, Chief of the Long Term Care Division of Protective Health Services at the Oklahoma State Department of Health, at 405/271-6868 or DoryaH@health.ok.gov.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices

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### Training and Professional Development Opportunities

Adequate training in all job responsibilities is not only critical to job effectiveness but also significantly contributes to job satisfaction,<sup>1,3,4</sup> a key factor in staff retention. Ongoing learning and professional development opportunities often are cited as reasons employees stay in a job.<sup>3,5</sup> State Survey Agencies implement their own orientation and training programs to prepare new surveyors to pass the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT) and succeed as surveyors. In addition to these rigorous programs, many agencies offer other ways to promote training and education for surveyors in a variety of areas, whether providing dedicated training meetings or supporting further education outside of the agency via tuition reimbursement benefits. Active support of training and professional development opportunities for employees can yield multiple benefits to an agency. These offerings can be provided to ensure that veteran surveyors' knowledge and skills are up to date and practiced, to demonstrate employee appreciation, and to foster a positive, employee-centered environment by presenting training in areas of interest identified by staff members. Agencies approach training and development in a variety of ways; this section presents just a few examples of promising practices in this area.

#### Connecticut

##### Tuition Reimbursement

The Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health offers tuition reimbursement to support staff members' pursuit of continuing education related to their field of expertise. All levels of leadership and management at the agency are highly supportive of education and encourage use of this benefit.

#### Florida

##### SMQT Academy

To prepare new surveyors for the SMQT, the Health Standards and Quality Unit of the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) presents an SMQT Academy three times per year. The SMQT Academy is presented either as part of AHCA's 17-week New Long Term Care Surveyor Training and Orientation program or as a stand-alone preparatory course.

#### Kansas

##### Statewide Inservice Training Meetings

The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging holds two to three agency-wide inservice meetings in Topeka each year. Initially implemented to meet CMS requirements, the agency continues to conduct the meetings to provide consistent and up-to-date training to staff across the state, promote staff camaraderie, and express appreciation for employee efforts.

#### Multiple States

##### Training on Legal-Related Aspects of Surveying

Training programs utilized in the State Survey Agencies in Florida, Texas, and Wisconsin prepare surveyors to effectively and confidently perform in the potentially adversarial regulatory environment; teach them the regulatory language; and strengthen the skills they need to identify, document, and defend findings that may face legal scrutiny, from the informal dispute

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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resolution (IDR) process to hearings. The training programs are described in an issue brief produced under this project, *Training to Strengthen Surveyor Skills and Knowledge Related to Legal Aspects of the Survey Process*, available on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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### **Connecticut: Tuition Reimbursement**

**Summary** The Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health offers tuition reimbursement to support staff members' pursuit of continuing education related to their field of expertise. All levels of leadership and management at the agency are highly supportive of education and encourage use of this benefit.

**Intervention** Any employee who has completed six months of service, is a member of one of the local bargaining units, and is continuing his/her education in a job-related capacity or in an area that will assist with upward mobility or promotional opportunities is eligible for tuition reimbursement. Following approval of a tuition reimbursement application, full tuition reimbursement is equal to 75 percent of the per-credit rate for undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. An employee can receive reimbursement for a maximum of nine credits per semester.

**Impact** Agency management staff indicate that approximately 30 percent of the workforce, inclusive of clerical staff, have taken advantage of the tuition reimbursement benefit. This benefit is easily accessible and is believed to contribute to a positive work environment. Many agency staff members have accomplished advance degrees utilizing this benefit. The benefit is highlighted during the interview process for new or vacant positions and is believed to be an effective recruitment and retention tool.

**Lessons Learned** The tuition reimbursement benefit is frequently used and promotes a supportive, education-oriented environment. Because the fund for the benefit is created through annual state contributions, concern occasionally arises that the fund could be exhausted before the state makes its contribution the following state fiscal year.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Barbara Cass, Public Health Services Manager, Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch, Connecticut Department of Public Health at 860/509-7609 or [Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us).

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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### **Florida: SMQT Academy**

**Summary** To prepare new surveyors for the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT), the Health Standards and Quality Unit of the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) presents an SMQT Academy three times per year. The SMQT Academy is presented either as part of AHCA's 17-week New Long Term Care Surveyor Training and Orientation program or as a stand-alone preparatory course.

**Intervention** The SMQT Academy was developed in the early 1990s as part of a structured orientation program that formalized new surveyor training in response to the introduction of the SMQT and other new federal requirements for the long term care survey. The SMQT Academy is presented over a day and half and consists of two major components. A test taking skills and strategies component includes discussion of mock SMQT questions, tips on reading multiple choice questions, strategies for adult test takers, and practice tests. The second component instructs surveyors on using Appendix P and Appendix PP of the *State Operations Manual* (SOM) as resources during the exam. In addition to presenting the course to its own new surveyors, AHCA staff have presented the SMQT Academy after CMS Long Term Care Basic Training for new surveyors representing multiple State Survey Agencies.

**Implementation** Two instructors present the Academy, supported by the contributions of six staff members in developing content and instructional materials. Mock SMQT questions recently were reviewed and revised to ensure relevance to current survey and practice standards.

**Impact** Surveyor feedback from written evaluations strongly supports the effectiveness of the SMQT Academy for increasing surveyor preparedness for the exam. AHCA has an extremely high rate of successful completion of the SMQT. Other State Survey Agencies have used materials and/or training from the SMQT Academy to help prepare their new surveyors for the exam.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff emphasize that the instructor(s) for the course must be extremely familiar with adult testing strategies and possess expertise in the long term care survey process, including detailed knowledge of Appendix P and Appendix PP of the SOM.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Dr. Susan Acker at the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration at 850/922-9138 or [ackers@ahca.myflorida.com](mailto:ackers@ahca.myflorida.com).

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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### **Kansas: Statewide Inservice Training Meetings**

**Summary** The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging holds two to three agency-wide inservice meetings in Topeka each year. Initially implemented to meet CMS requirements, the agency continues to conduct the meetings to provide consistent and up-to-date training to staff across the state, promote staff camaraderie, and express appreciation for employee efforts.

**Intervention** The training curriculum for the three-day inservice meetings addresses several professional development areas, including CMS communications and mandates, agency policies and practices, clinical issues encountered on surveys, and information on procedural changes and skills strengthening to support consistent and competent performance of the survey process. An additional training track focuses on maintaining work-life balance and other staff-oriented issues, with sessions on such topics as balancing personal life and work commitments, team building, stress reduction, quality of life, healthy eating, and defensive driving.

Session topics primarily are generated from manager and surveyor feedback provided via training evaluations or other channels, Federal Oversight Support Surveys (FOSS) results, and CMS communications. Surveyors and managers statewide prepare and conduct the sessions, which typically involve interactive discussion, role-playing, skits, and other techniques to promote participation and engagement. Exercises are designed to model positive examples and high standards, rather than focusing on avoiding the "wrong" way to do things. For example, in one well-received session, attendees participate in discussion on determining deficiency scope and severity, effectively documenting findings, and managing difficult survey situations by reviewing findings from a challenging but effectively conducted survey. In addition to providing effective instruction, the discussion commends excellent surveyor performance (although not named, surveyor identities often are discovered by the group), fosters peer support and encouragement for featured surveyors, and inspires others to perform well.

An additional purpose of the inservice meetings is to encourage camaraderie, communication, interaction, and shared experiences among the state's widely dispersed surveyors. Many sessions involve collaboration of presenters from multiple districts and encourage interaction among attendees. The meeting's training sessions, breaks, social activities, and free time afford the opportunity for surveyors to visit with one another, discuss their survey experiences and share stories, and nurture the sense of a common goal and providing valued public service.

Management staff also utilize the meetings to recognize employee contributions. The agency Director shares information on the agency's accomplishments and direction, expresses gratitude to employees, recognizes the challenges of the surveyor position, and emphasizes that agency management staff value the employees' work. To help nurses and licensed social workers meet license renewal requirements without course fees or use of vacation time, several training courses provide continuing education credits. Drawings are held at each break for small prizes (e.g., restaurant gift certificates, chocolates, homemade

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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### **Kansas (Cont'd)**

crafts). Other recognition efforts have included presenting a huge cake, distributing lunch totes, and offering an ice cream sundae bar served by the regional managers and administrative staff. The agency's Training Coordinator also gives each employee a card with a personal note expressing appreciation for that individual's contributions and performance.

**Impact** Agency management staff find the inservice training meetings to be an effective means to increase the consistency of training to all surveyors and ensure that surveyors are up-to-date on CMS-mandated and other training information. The multiple benefits of assembling staff in a single physical location for a consolidated training period are believed to outweigh the financial investment in conducting the meetings and approximate the amount of time that would be necessary to conduct the meetings at individual district offices. Management staff perceive that the training meetings enhance surveyor knowledge and performance and promote camaraderie for surveyors and managers within and across regions. Surveyor evaluations of the training indicate positive feedback and support for continuing the meetings.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff emphasize the value of utilizing interactive techniques to involve staff in active learning. It has been valuable in teaching and reinforcing performance expectations to emphasize surveyors' positive performance and provide examples of actual work that effectively accomplishes expectations. Using positive models and examples, rather than focusing on correcting poor performance, provides important information and learning opportunities in a positive context rather than downgrading performance and creating a negative learning framework. Specific feedback necessary to address weak performance can be handled individually in day-to-day communications.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Greg Reser, Director of the Licensure & Certification Division at the Kansas Department on Aging at 785/296-1260 or [GregReser@aging.state.ks.us](mailto:GregReser@aging.state.ks.us).

## ***Training and Professional Development Opportunities***

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### **Multiple States: Training on Legal-Related Aspects of Surveying**

**Summary** Training programs utilized in the State Survey Agencies in Florida, Texas, and Wisconsin prepare surveyors to effectively and confidently perform in the potentially adversarial regulatory environment; teach them the regulatory language; and strengthen the skills they need to identify, document, and defend findings that may face legal scrutiny, from the informal dispute resolution (IDR) process to hearings. The training programs are described in an issue brief produced under this project, *Training to Strengthen Surveyor Skills and Knowledge Related to Legal Aspects of the Survey Process*, available on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices

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### Work-Life Balance

Employers are increasingly recognizing the need to provide a more flexible and employee-centered workplace to enhance employee satisfaction and commitment.<sup>6</sup> Many State Survey Agencies offer nontraditional schedules and alternate workplace options in an effort to reduce commute time and overnight travel, increase flexibility for staff, and support a better balance between work and life responsibilities and interests. In addition to promoting job satisfaction, retention, and recruitment, some of these strategies also result in cost savings due to reduced needs for travel lodging or office space.

#### Colorado

##### Four-Day Workweeks and Regional Teams

The Colorado Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment implemented four-day workweeks for long-term care surveyors in 2001 and regional teams in 2005. The agency initiated these practices to enhance staff job satisfaction, retention, and recruitment while also substantially reducing travel costs.

#### Connecticut

##### Flexible Work Hours and Alternate Schedules

The Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health offers surveyors a 35-hour workweek, a schedule that results in three-day weekends on alternate weeks, and flexible start times. A three-day workweek is being pilot tested.

#### Kansas

##### Four-Day Workweeks

The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging has utilized four-day workweeks for over a decade. This work schedule was implemented to enhance surveyor recruitment and retention by reducing overnight travel days and providing three-day weekends.

#### Oklahoma

##### Using Local Workspace and Region-Based Teams

In 2003, the Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health initiated the use of workspace at several Health Department county offices. This strategy, in combination with a region-based scheduling approach implemented in 2002, allows surveyors to conduct surveys and complete paperwork in closer proximity to their homes. The efforts were initiated to enhance recruitment and retention by reducing overnight travel and decreasing commute time to facilities and the Oklahoma City central office.

#### Multiple States

##### Telework Programs

Telework programs at the State Survey Agencies in Indiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming reduce surveyor travel and increase flexibility, helping employees better balance work and life responsibilities and commitments. These programs are described in *Teleworking in State Survey Agencies*, an issue brief produced under this project, available on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

## **Work-Life Balance**

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### **Colorado: Four-Day Workweeks and Regional Teams**

**Summary** The Colorado Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment implemented four-day workweeks for long-term care surveyors in 2001 and regional teams in 2005. The agency initiated these practices to enhance staff job satisfaction, retention, and recruitment while also substantially reducing travel costs.

**Intervention** Long-term care surveyors work four ten-hour days (excluding travel time), with survey teams typically working Monday through Thursday or Tuesday through Friday. Most surveys are conducted over three days and the fourth day each week is dedicated to completing paperwork at the Denver or Grand Junction agency office. Surveyors are required to sign alternative work schedule agreements to document expected work hours and availability. Supervisory staff periodically monitor surveyor location and evaluate productivity to identify any difficulties individuals may be having with accomplishing the expected workload or working the expected hours. To further reduce overnight travel and commute time, surveyors are assigned to one of four regional teams based on their home location. Survey teams for each facility are assembled from the regional team. Surveyors are permitted to travel directly from home to facilities.

**Implementation** The agency first implemented the four-day workweek on a trial basis, with approval from the Health Department's Executive Director. The practice was continued based on surveyors' positive response and the cost savings resulting from fewer overnight stays. The rationale and effectiveness of the practice are occasionally reviewed if a new Executive Director is appointed, to ensure that the practice can continue. Regional teams were implemented at the beginning of the federal fiscal year to minimize disruption to the workload distribution.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that workload is accomplished effectively and efficiently under the four-day workweek and that the longer weekend helps attract and retain surveyors. The reduced daily travel time and overnight stays resulting from region-based scheduling also are perceived to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Travel costs have been dramatically reduced by eliminating one night of lodging and per diem expenses per survey team member each time a distant facility is surveyed (approximately 50 percent of long-term care surveys involve overnight travel). Reimbursement for mileage also has decreased due to the four-day workweek and regional teams. The Division has become a model for other Health Department sections with regard to alternative work schedules and supporting policies and procedures.

**Lessons Learned** To ensure mutual expectations and increase surveyor accountability, management staff recommend requiring surveyors to sign an agreement that documents expectations for the alternative work schedule. The agreements have effectively addressed the few difficulties the agency has encountered with the four-day workweek.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact John Schlue, Interim Director, Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at [jschlue@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us](mailto:jschlue@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us) or 303/692-2817.

## **Work-Life Balance**

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### **Connecticut: Flexible Work Hours and Alternate Schedules**

**Summary** The Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health offers surveyors a 35-hour workweek, a schedule that results in three-day weekends on alternate weeks, and flexible start times. A three-day workweek also is being pilot tested.

**Intervention** The 35-hour workweek and alternate work schedule were implemented in 2003 in response to surveyor interest and union negotiation. The 35-hour workweek initially was implemented across all state employees due to budget constraints; the agency retained the practice for non-management staff even after the state requirement was lifted. All surveyors may participate in the alternate work schedule, which requires seven eight-hour days and two seven-hour days during a two-week period, resulting in a three-day weekend every other week. Surveyors typically work a 39-hour week followed by a 31-hour week. To allow staff to tailor their workday to their needs and preferences, surveyors may designate their daily start time, between 7:30 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. The agency also is pilot testing a three-day work schedule for surveys conducted at facilities located more than 1.5 hours drive time away. The goal is to reduce the amount of productive survey time lost to travel time, which is incorporated into surveyors' paid workdays. The three-day schedule requires surveyors to work one 11-hour day and two 10-hour days, followed by two paid days off.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that the shorter workweek, alternate work schedule, and flexible start times all contribute to a positive, employee-centered work environment that encourages staff productivity, supports a beneficial balance between work responsibilities and personal lives, and promotes job satisfaction. The agency has an extremely high retention rate, losing just a few surveyors over the past several years. These practices also are perceived to contribute to successfully attracting a high volume of qualified applicants for the few vacant positions that arise, in combination with a strong salary and paid travel time. Preliminary findings from the pilot test of the three-day workweek for distant facility surveys show positive support from the eight participating surveyors, who have found that the four-day weekend effectively balances the long workdays. Time consumed by travel to the facilities has been reduced, increasing actual survey time and productivity.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff recommend assembling a work team of surveyors and managers to develop policies and procedures for new practices, in addition to soliciting input from all staff via staff meetings or e-mail. It is important to consider the benefits and drawbacks to implementing new practices in particular ways, and anticipate and resolve potential challenges in advance.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Barbara Cass, Public Health Services Manager, Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch, Connecticut Department of Public Health at 860/509-7609 or [Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us).

## **Work-Life Balance**

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### **Kansas: Four-Day Workweeks**

**Summary** The Licensure & Certification Division of the Kansas Department on Aging has utilized four-day workweeks for over a decade. This work schedule was implemented to enhance surveyor recruitment and retention by reducing overnight travel days and providing three-day weekends.

**Intervention** Five of the agency's six district offices chose to implement the four-day workweek. The district office that retained the traditional five-day workweek is located in an urban area and has facilities located in a smaller geographic area, resulting in significantly less frequent overnight travel for surveyors.

**Impact** Surveyors are perceived to be pleased with the four-day workweek and many have indicated that they prefer the schedule over the traditional five-day workweek. Agency management staff believe that the approach is effective and that surveyors tend to be highly efficient to ensure that they accomplish their workload within the four-day week. The four-day workweek and infrequent weekend work are highlighted in recruitment efforts. The practice also substantially reduces travel costs by eliminating one day's lodging and per diem costs for multiple surveyors each week. In addition, agency management staff believe that the longer workdays facilitate meeting the Kansas statute requiring that the agency provide the preliminary 2567 at the time of exit from a facility.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff comment that the transition to four longer days can be an adjustment for some individuals who have always worked the traditional five-day workweek. However, surveyors new to this type of schedule typically adjust quickly, recognize the efficiency of working longer days particularly during periods of overnight travel, and they appreciate the shorter workweek.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Greg Reser, Director of the Licensure & Certification Division at the Kansas Department on Aging at 785/296-1260 or [GregReser@aging.state.ks.us](mailto:GregReser@aging.state.ks.us).

### **Oklahoma: Using Local Workspace and Region-Based Teams**

**Summary** In 2003, the Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health initiated the use of workspace at several Health Department county offices. This strategy, in combination with a region-based scheduling approach implemented in 2002, allows surveyors to conduct surveys and complete paperwork in closer proximity to their homes. The efforts were initiated to enhance recruitment and retention by reducing overnight travel and decreasing commute time to facilities and the Oklahoma City central office.

**Intervention** More than 20 of the agency's 68 long-term care surveyors currently utilize space at five county offices. The agency provides furniture, equipment (e.g., desktop computers, copiers, printers, fax machines), and office supplies if these items are not available in the county office workspace. When not onsite at facilities, surveyors use the workspace to complete paperwork and communicate with supervisors and others via e-mail, telephone, and fax. A team of four to five surveyors utilizes workspace at a single county office, with surveyors typically at the office one to two days per week. Team coordinators working out of the Oklahoma City central office maintain communication with the offsite surveyors, assign and oversee survey schedules, and provide information housed at the central office (e.g., facility data). All surveyors attend a mandatory staff meeting at the Oklahoma City central office one day every other month.

**Implementation** The use of workspace at some of the 69 Health Department county offices was pursued to help expand office space for the growing number of surveyors and reduce travel for geographically dispersed surveyors. After receiving approval from the Commissioner of Health and the Deputy Commissioner responsible for County operations, agency management staff approached the Administrative Director for each county of interest to request workspace (typically one room) for surveyors. Management staff explained the surveyor's role in serving the county's nursing home residents, discussed expected schedules and use of the workspace, and offered to provide necessary furniture and equipment. In most instances, the county officials accommodated the request without difficulty, although the size of available workspaces and provision of furniture and equipment varies by county office.

**Impact** The combination of regional survey teams and using county office space has reduced travel time and overnight stays for many surveyors, making the job easier to balance with their personal lives. The agency also has benefited from reduced travel costs. The agency does not pay rental fees for the space, although some costs were incurred for purchasing furniture and equipment. The dispersed office space reduces congestion at the central office and supports greater surveyor autonomy and independent time management. The use of county office workspace also strengthens the link between the central and county offices.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff recommend establishing positive rapport with the county office administrators and staff and avoiding any sense that the central office is pressuring them to share office space. It is important to clearly communicate expectations for workspace, furniture, and equipment, as well as anticipated schedules and use of the space. Ensuring that all levels of the county

## ***Work-Life Balance***

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### **Oklahoma (Cont'd)**

office staff are familiar with the surveyors and their involvement at the county office will promote a supportive work environment and encourage positive professional relationships between central office and county office staff. It also is critical to respect the county office budgetary, space, and other constraints, and avoid being a financial burden. Management staff recommend planning to provide all furniture, equipment, and supplies and being open to the ability and willingness of each county office to provide some of these needs.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Dorya Huser, Chief, Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health, at 405/271-6868 or [DoryaH@health.ok.gov](mailto:DoryaH@health.ok.gov).

### **Multiple States: Telework Programs**

**Summary** Teleworking appears to be particularly well-suited to the typical tasks and responsibilities of surveyors given the high volume of time spent away from the office for facility visits, the capacity to complete and transmit required documentation from a home office, and the facility visit and documentation requirements that serve as inherent mechanisms to help structure day-to-day activities and monitor performance. The frequent face-to-face interaction required during surveys and occasional office meetings help minimize potential feelings of social isolation, a common concern about teleworking.

Telework programs (also referred to as home- or community-based workplace programs) at the State Survey Agencies in Indiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming are described in *Teleworking in State Survey Agencies*, an issue brief produced under this project. Although the program scope and operational features vary by agency, all of the featured agencies appear to have successfully integrated their telework programs into daily operations, and all plan to continue their programs. Overall, the agencies have found that teleworking increases flexibility and job satisfaction for surveyors seeking greater balance between work responsibilities and family and personal demands. The *Telework* issue brief can be accessed on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## *Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices*

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### Performance Recognition Efforts

Recognition for effective performance is consistently identified as an important factor in job satisfaction and retention.<sup>3,4,7,8</sup> As demonstrated in the examples described in this section, State Survey Agencies can recognize employee performance and contributions through formal reward programs and gestures of staff appreciation and, perhaps equally as meaningfully, via more frequent and informal acknowledgment of work well done.

#### **Colorado**

##### **Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer System**

The Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment established an Employee of the Quarter program in 1996 to reward outstanding performance and promote staff morale. The agency's employee recognition efforts were expanded in 1997 with the implementation of the Health Department-wide Star Performer program, in response to a 1996 Governor's Executive Order requiring all Colorado state agencies to develop incentive and awards programs.

#### **Connecticut**

##### **Employee Recognition through Health Department Programs and Other Recognition Practices**

Several surveyors from the Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health have received recognition through the Health Department's Employee of the Month and Nurse of the Year programs. Section leadership staff also individually recognize surveyors who receive positive feedback from facilities or effectively conduct difficult or complex surveys.

#### **Oklahoma**

##### **Surveyor of the Year and Other Recognition Efforts**

The Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health established a Surveyor of the Year award in 1996. The selected surveyor travels with agency management staff to the Association of Health Facility Survey Agencies (AHFSA) fall conference, with all expenses paid by the agency. Agency leadership staff also provide ongoing recognition of staff contributions and performance through staff meeting announcements and e-mail communication.

#### **Texas**

##### **Employee of the Quarter and Other Recognition Efforts**

Region III of the Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services maintains an Employee of the Quarter Program and also provides funds for continuing education and license renewal in support of their staff.

## ***Performance Recognition Efforts***

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### **Colorado: Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer System**

**Summary** The Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment established an Employee of the Quarter program in 1996 to reward outstanding performance and promote staff morale. The agency's employee recognition efforts were expanded in 1997 with the implementation of the Health Department-wide Star Performer program, in response to a 1996 Governor's Executive Order requiring all Colorado state agencies to develop incentive and awards programs.

**Intervention** All agency staff members are eligible for recognition through the Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer programs. Employee of the Quarter recipients receive a \$125 check and flowers, and each recipient's name is engraved on a plaque listing all past awardees. Any agency staff member may nominate any other staff member for the award, although nominations require sign-off from the nominee's supervisor. The nomination form requires indication of the category of performance (outstanding service, innovation/problem solving, public service, appreciates diversity, human relations/leadership, safety and heroism, and teamwork) and a description of why the individual or team should be recognized. The agency's Reward & Recognition Committee, composed of support staff, managers, and survey staff, meets quarterly to review nominations and select the Employee of the Quarter. Nominees remain in the running for the award for four quarters. Award recipients are forwarded as nominees for the Health Department's Employee of the Month program, which awards a \$25 check, offers a parking space close to the building, and displays recipients' pictures on the Health Department's Intranet Website and in the building's front lobby.

The Star Performer program is Health Department-wide but is independently administered by each Division with implementation details and prizes largely determined by the Division. The program has four levels of recognition. Level 1 recognition does not require committee approval and involves completion of a "You Made a Difference" form, which is given directly to a staff member from another staff member, typically in recognition of performance related to a particular work effort. The recognized employee exchanges the form for a \$5 gift certificate for a restaurant, coffee shop, or store. Nomination for recognition at Levels 2 through 4 requires completion of a "Star Performer" form, which indicates the category of performance to be recognized and a narrative description of the reason for recognition. For Level 2 and 3 nominations other than a supervisor nominating a direct supervisee, the Reward & Recognition Committee designates the level of award based on specified criteria. Nominations for Level 4 awards are considered at the Health Department level. Level 2 recipients receive \$25 or two hours of Administrative Reward Leave, Level 3 recipients receive \$50 or four hours of Administrative Reward Leave, and Level 4 recipients receive more than \$50 or eight hours of Administrative Reward Leave.

**Implementation** The agency organized a Reward & Recognition Committee to oversee the Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer programs. Nomination forms are supplied in easily accessible locations, and employees are encouraged to

## ***Performance Recognition Efforts***

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### **Colorado (Cont'd)**

recognize their colleagues' efforts through these programs. The agency is required annually to report award winners, monetary value of awards given, and other information to the Health Department, as part of the Department's requirement to report to the Governor on incentive award programs.

**Impact** Agency staff indicate that the programs have been met with enthusiasm and are easy to implement. Employees seem to strive for and appreciate the awards and recognition, which appears to have a positive impact on performance and morale. The recognition programs have strong participation, as demonstrated by the distribution of 47 Level 1, 16 Level 2, and 17 Level 3 awards among approximately 130 staff members in a six-month period in 2005. A variety of staff types are selected for both the Employee of the Quarter and Star Performer awards, including surveyors, managers, and support and IT staff.

**Lessons Learned** By offering several ways to recognize staff contributions, a larger number of individuals can receive formal recognition. The inclusion of small rewards that can be given frequently, such as the \$5 gift certificates, for smaller-scale efforts also makes the awards more attainable for more staff members. Agency staff recommend establishing a nomination system and forms that are simple and accessible, and facilitate efficient flow of information. Staff also note that supervisor sign-off on a supervisee's nomination should be obtained to ensure that possible performance issues have not been overlooked. It is valuable for supervisors to receive a copy of nomination forms for reference during performance evaluations and other purposes. It is useful to encourage and remind staff to submit nominations by set deadlines.

**Contact Information and Resources** For more information, please contact John Schlue, Interim Director, Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at [jschlue@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us](mailto:jschlue@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us) or 303/692-2817. The nomination form for the Level 1 "You Made a Difference" award can be accessed on this Website by clicking on the links for either the S&C Promising Practices Project List or Map of the S&C Promising Practices Project and searching for the appropriate Supplemental State Resource.

## ***Performance Recognition Efforts***

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### **Connecticut: Employee Recognition through Health Department Programs and Other Recognition Practices**

**Summary** Several surveyors from the Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch of the Connecticut Department of Public Health have received recognition through the Health Department's Employee of the Month and Nurse of the Year programs. Section leadership staff also individually recognize surveyors who receive positive feedback from facilities or effectively conduct difficult or complex surveys.

**Intervention** The Employee of the Month program, established over ten years ago, is open to all employees of the Department of Public Health. Selected employees receive a party in their honor and are presented a plaque by the Department Commissioner. The Employee of the Month is announced in the Health Department's monthly newsletter and the honoree receives on-site parking privileges for the month, a valued perk given the off-site parking typically required. In the past two years, four survey agency staff members have received the Employee of the Month award.

Three survey agency nurses have been selected as the Department of Public Health's Nurse of the Year within the past five years. Recipients of this award move on to compete at the state level with honorees from other state agencies. The Nurse of the Year receives a proclamation from the Governor, a trophy, and a letter of appreciation from the Department of Public Health Executive Leadership Team, and is recognized in the Department's newsletter.

On a more informal basis, when positive feedback regarding surveyors is received from a facility or if a survey was particularly difficult or complicated, the Section Chief and Branch Chief of the Licensing and Investigations Section send e-mail correspondence to the surveyor or survey team to personally commend their performance.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that acknowledgment and appreciation of staff efforts, whether expressed through nomination for recognition programs or less formal verbal or e-mail commendation, boosts morale and is a factor in retention. Positive recognition may play an even more valued role in the often stressful and adversarial regulatory environment in which surveyors work.

**Lessons Learned** It is beneficial to encourage staff members to nominate their peers and supervisees for established recognition programs. Agency management staff believe that the Department Commissioner's vision of a positive and productive organization and desire to enhance job satisfaction supports successful employee recognition programs and retention in the Department as a whole.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Barbara Cass, Public Health Services Manager, Facility Licensing and Investigations Section, Health Care Systems Branch, Connecticut Department of Public Health at 860/509-7609 or [Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Barbara.Cass@po.state.ct.us).

## ***Performance Recognition Efforts***

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### **Oklahoma: Surveyor of the Year and Other Recognition Efforts**

**Summary** The Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, at the Oklahoma State Department of Health established a Surveyor of the Year award in 1996. The selected surveyor travels with agency management staff to the Association of Health Facility Survey Agencies (AHFSA) fall conference, with all expenses paid by the agency. Agency leadership staff also provide ongoing recognition of staff contributions and performance through staff meeting announcements and e-mail communication.

**Intervention** The Surveyor of the Year is a peer-nominated award established to recognize outstanding contribution as identified by fellow surveyors. The award is given to one long-term care surveyor each year. Surveyors complete ballots to indicate their nominee for the award and the reason for nomination, including comments on leadership skills, participation on surveys, interaction with other surveyors, commitment, accountability, and reliability. Several agency leadership staff review the ballots. The surveyor receiving the most votes is named Surveyor of the Year. The award recipient is announced at a Long Term Care Division staff meeting.

Additional employee recognition efforts include sharing announcements during staff meetings or by e-mail to recognize individual or group accomplishments such as passing the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT), receiving a strong Federal Oversight Support Survey (FOSS) review, or instances of exemplary performance or noteworthy effort. In addition, positive feedback from provider facilities about how their survey was conducted or efforts of a particular surveyor is shared with all staff. Staff meetings also are used to announce new surveyors, promotions, birthdays, special projects, and other news.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that surveyors appreciate the involvement and empowerment in selecting the Surveyor of the Year and value the recognition accorded by the award. In addition, management staff note that taking the time to regularly recognize staff in smaller ways, such as through announcements at staff meetings, is simple and straightforward to do and helps create a positive, supportive, and motivating environment.

**Lessons Learned** Management staff emphasize the importance of scheduling the Surveyor of the Year award selection process and announcement in advance (to avoid letting it fall by the wayside due to the press of work), supporting the award's significance, and encouraging surveyor participation in the selection process. Some managers believe that formally honoring a surveyor only once a year may enhance the perceived importance of the award. Management staff strongly support utilizing staff meetings as a valuable venue for commending individual and team performance as well as promoting camaraderie and positive morale through recognition of staff members' special events, both personal and professional.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Dorya Huser, Chief, Long Term Care Division, Protective Health Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health, at 405/271-6868 or DoryaH@health.ok.gov.

## ***Performance Recognition Efforts***

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### **Texas: Employee of the Quarter and Other Recognition Efforts**

**Summary** Region III of the Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services maintains an Employee of the Quarter Program and also provides funds for continuing education and license renewal in support of their staff.

**Intervention** As required by state statute, the Regulatory Services Division annually designates \$100 per staff member for employee recognition purposes, leaving specific recognition practices at the discretion of the regional managers. Region III uses the funds to support an Employee of the Quarter Program, which involves nomination of staff members by their colleagues, including support staff, surveyors, and program managers. All employees are encouraged and reminded to submit nominations. The nomination form focuses on the nominee's strengths and the reasons he or she is deserving of the award. The completed Employee of the Quarter nomination forms—excluding the names of the nominees—are reviewed by a revolving group of staff members composed of support staff, surveyors, and managers. The reviewers independently rate each nominee and points are tallied by the Employee of the Quarter program coordinator. The selected employee is announced to all staff via e-mail and is recognized during a staffwide meeting. The awardee receives a plaque and eight hours of paid leave to be taken when desired.

Through a separate program, \$150 per person is available to fund staff participation in external courses that help meet continuing education requirements necessary to maintain professional licensure. The Division also supports employees by paying for required license renewal fees for nurses and other surveyors.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that surveyors value the recognition of being named Employee of the Quarter and work to be acknowledged in this way. Management staff feel that the Employee of the Quarter program and the provision of funds to support continuing education requirements and license renewal contribute to a supportive work environment that enhances the morale and job satisfaction of their staff.

**Lessons Learned** Management staff advise monitoring employee recognition programs to ensure that selection of awardees is focused on work performance and that the program is fair and inclusive for all staff.

**Contact Information and Resources** For more information, contact Chris Adams, Director of Survey Operations, at 512/438-5695 or [chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us](mailto:chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us). The Employee of the Quarter nomination form can be accessed on this Website by clicking on the links for either the S&C Promising Practices Project List or Map of the S&C Promising Practices Project and searching for the appropriate Supplemental State Resource.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## *Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices*

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### **Effective Management and Supervision**

The effectiveness of managers and supervisors has been identified as a critical factor in job satisfaction and retention.<sup>3,5,7</sup> In fact, according to findings from over 80,000 interviews conducted by The Gallup Organization with managers across a variety of industries, an employee's relationship with his or her direct manager is the key determinant in the employee's level of productivity and longevity at the organization.<sup>8</sup> By providing managers and supervisors with training specific to employee management and development, agencies can help promote managerial effectiveness. State Survey Agency examples of management training approaches and a Peer Advisor Program, which provides guidance and direction to new surveyors, are described in this section.

#### **Texas**

##### **Management Training Programs**

Recognizing the key role of effective management in the retention of quality staff, the Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services has targeted manager training and development as a priority and supports several training opportunities.

#### **Wisconsin**

##### **Annual Supervisors Retreat**

The Office of Quality Assurance at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services holds an annual retreat for supervisors and managers to promote effective management and continuous improvement of the organization.

#### **Wisconsin**

##### **Peer Advisor Program**

The Peer Advisor program offered by the Office of Quality Assurance at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services provides professional support to new surveyors and assists them in becoming confident members of the survey team.

## ***Effective Management and Supervision***

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### **Texas: Management Training Programs**

**Summary** Recognizing the key role of effective management in the retention of quality staff, the Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) has targeted manager training and development as a priority and supports several training opportunities.

**Intervention** In addition to supervisor training required by DADS Human Resources, the Regulatory Services Division requires managers to attend a 1.5-week course specific to the manager's duties in survey and certification activities and responsibility for leading and developing surveyors. The manager training course, first implemented in 2002, was developed by Regulatory Services curriculum development staff and is taught by DADS Educational Services staff. The course addresses a range of topics, such as the manager's role in state and federal compliance, the manager's role in developing surveyors and support staff, survey scheduling, state performance standards, leadership skills, and interviewing strategies for surveyor and survey support staff positions. Managers also are required to take a computer-based training course on surveyor recruitment and retention strategies. This course, also developed by curriculum development staff, was implemented in late 2006 and typically requires one to two hours to complete. A computer-based training course on mentoring is planned for release in 2007. In addition, statewide annual training conferences generally include a session focused on management skills and strategies.

Regulatory Services managers also are encouraged to pursue additional, optional leadership training within DADS, as their schedules permit (e.g., a course on Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, presentations by contracted speakers) and at the Governor's Center for Management Development. Regulatory Services covers the fee for Governor's Center courses. Managers attend these supplementary training activities on paid time.

**Impact** Regulatory Services senior management staff indicate that feedback on the management training courses has been positive. Managers report benefiting not just from the ideas and practices offered in the training but also from the opportunity to interact and network with other managers. Senior management staff believe that the courses provide managers with direction, guidance, and the opportunity to learn from peers, resulting in improved efficiency, competence, and ability to interact successfully with staff.

**Lessons Learned** Senior management staff emphasize the importance of designing training specific to the job function and environment, and note that state and federal regulations impose specific responsibilities on survey agency management staff. It is essential to encourage management staff to take advantage of opportunities for training, despite the workload that frequently ties them to their work. Senior management staff need to recognize the benefits of management training and give managers opportunities and time to expand and strengthen their management skills.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Chris Adams, Director of Survey Operations, Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services at 512/438-5695 or [chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us](mailto:chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us).

## ***Effective Management and Supervision***

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### **Wisconsin: Annual Supervisors Retreat**

**Summary** The Office of Quality Assurance (OQA) at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services holds a mandatory annual retreat for supervisors and managers to promote effective management and continuous improvement of the organization.

**Intervention** The Annual Supervisors Retreat, first held in 2006, is designed to promote sharing of knowledge, experience and strategies among managers and supervisors with the goal of continuing to improve and build the agency's leadership team. Sessions presented during the two-day, overnight retreats address a wide variety of topics, such as effective leadership, using data for decision-making on workload monitoring and employee performance, responding to issues related to professionalism in the workplace, and handling problems such as absenteeism and poor performance. Other sessions focus on remote supervising of teleworking staff, tips and techniques for motivating employees, navigating the hiring process, and using the Automated Survey Processing Environment (ASPEN) as an effective management tool. Training strategies include informational lecture; using skits, scenarios, and role playing to demonstrate effective management responses to workplace issues; and group discussion of topics suggested by managers and supervisors. Breaks and on-your-own evening time give managers and supervisors an opportunity to network, share ideas, and discuss strategies and issues presented during the formal sessions.

**Implementation** One staff member from the agency's Provider Regulation and Quality Improvement Section (PRQI) leads coordination of the retreat, initiating planning approximately six months prior to the planned event date. The agenda is determined two to three months in advance to provide sufficient time for session preparation. Many session topics evolve from supervisor suggestions, as requested in a survey distributed by retreat organizers. PRQI staff, senior management staff, Department Human Resources staff and the agency Director prepare and conduct retreat sessions. The agency covers the costs of meals, lodging, and mileage reimbursement for attendees.

**Impact** Senior management staff believe that the retreat helps participants become more effective managers, promotes consistency in management for the 32 supervisors and managers across the agency's five regional offices and central office, and provides managers with more tools to effectively oversee and monitor workloads and staff. In evaluations from the first retreat, participants rated all sessions highly and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in a retreat dedicated to the supervisor/management role and issues encountered. Many attendees also commented on the positive networking opportunity provided by the retreat, as it allows staff from typically distinct sections within the agency to interact and strengthens familiarity and connections among supervisors within the same sections. Senior management staff perceive that managers and supervisors successfully apply information and skills learned during the retreat. Some of the retreat topics (e.g., information on telework policies) translate into staff training and discussion with surveyors.

## ***Effective Management and Supervision***

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### **Wisconsin (Cont'd)**

**Lessons Learned** Senior management staff recommend keeping plans simple and straightforward. It is useful to choose a date well in advance, to ensure all supervisors can reserve the time. Holding the retreat at an offsite location, removed from routine work environments, can help managers and supervisors focus attention on the issues and techniques shared during the retreat. It is valuable to request from retreat attendees feedback, suggestions for improvement, and topic ideas for the next year's retreat. The first retreat's agenda was developed primarily by the agency's senior management team and emphasized "refresher" information related to personnel issues. It is important to make the retreat as useful and practical as possible for attendees, retaining the focus on management and supervision issues. Management staff recommend designing sessions to be interactive, to facilitate opportunities for attendees to share their knowledge and expertise. Emphasize at the retreat that some of the important goals of gathering all supervisors and managers are to allow them to get to know each other better, develop additional contacts among management staff, and to build a stronger sense of team across the agency rather than a "section" or "unit" team.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Sharon Rickords, Training and Quality Improvement Director, Office of Quality Assurance, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services at 608/267-3745 or RickoSL@dhfs.state.wi.us.

## ***Effective Management and Supervision***

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### **Wisconsin: Peer Advisor Program**

**Summary** The Peer Advisor program offered by the Office of Quality Assurance at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services provides professional support to new surveyors and assists them in becoming confident members of the survey team.

**Intervention** Each new surveyor is assigned a Peer Advisor (PA) to provide support throughout the agency's New Employee Orientation and CMS Basic Surveyor Training. Long-term care surveyors are assigned a primary and secondary PA. Key PA responsibilities include coaching the new surveyor in learning the survey process and developing optimum skills for the position; serving as a resource to answer questions on the survey process, agency policies and procedures, and other issues; and facilitating the new employee's successful integration into the organization, job responsibilities, and staff. The PA reinforces information taught through the New Employee Orientation program and assists the new surveyor with using the Automated Survey Processing Environment (ASPEN) and other software systems. Throughout the orientation period, the PA identifies experiences and information the new surveyor needs and provides feedback to the employee's supervisor, training staff, team coordinators, and other survey staff to ensure these learning needs are met. The PA's main purpose is to guide and support the new surveyor, whereas the supervisor evaluates performance and progress in accomplishing learning objectives, and provides feedback to strengthen performance and hone skills. The PA, supervisor, and new surveyor meet regularly throughout the orientation period, which typically lasts six-to-twelve months, to discuss progress and learning needs. Communication and feedback among the PA, supervisor, new surveyor, and agency training consultants are a key part of the orientation process.

**Implementation** After a brief run in the early 1990s, the agency reestablished the PA program in 2002 with a more comprehensive training program, written policies and procedures, and greater management support and involvement. Training and management staff collaborated to develop PA selection criteria and clarify the roles of PAs, agency training staff, supervisors, and new surveyors in the orientation process. Managers and supervisors also completed a needs assessment to identify skills and information that should be mastered by an effective PA. Using this feedback, training staff developed a policy and procedure guide and training plan for the reestablished PA program, and presented a two-day training session for new and experienced PAs, supervisors, and all training staff. The full training session is presented annually for new PAs. Experienced PAs also participate in a one-day annual training and occasional teleconferences to refresh skills or discuss issues, concerns, challenges and solutions.

**Impact** Agency management staff believe that the PA program expedites new employee productivity, enhances surveyor consistency, and helps new employees connect with peers and the agency in a caring and supportive environment. The program also is a career development opportunity for the PAs as they provide new

## ***Effective Management and Supervision***

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### **Wisconsin (Cont'd)**

surveyors with a way to learn from experienced surveyors about the survey process, tips on being an effective surveyor, how the agency works, and resources within the agency, at the same time refreshing their own knowledge and skills. The PAs gain knowledge and experience in mentoring and coaching and enhance skills in communication, decision-making and leadership. The program is thought to have a positive effect on staff retention for new surveyors and PAs as well as increasing agency efficiency by utilizing the expertise of experienced surveyors to facilitate the positive assimilation of new employees in conjunction with the New Employee Orientation program.

**Lessons Learned** Based on the agency's initial experience with the PA program, it became clear that management support for the program is essential to its success. Additionally, the program should include a comprehensive training component for new and experienced PAs and supervisors to promote consistency and help keep the program running. It is critical to clearly define the responsibilities and roles of PAs and all staff involved in the orientation and training process, and to emphasize communication and feedback in the set of responsibilities.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Sharon Rickords, Training and Quality Improvement Director, Office of Quality Assurance, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services at 608/267-3745 or RickoSL@dhfs.state.wi.us.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

Issue Brief: *Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices*

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## Technology and Equipment

Providing staff with the tools they need to be effective in their work promotes performance, commitment to the organization, and retention.<sup>9</sup> Access to current technology is cited as a factor in retaining staff.<sup>5,7</sup> This section presents examples of creative solutions that utilize technology to save time, reduce daily hassles and stress, and increase surveyor productivity.

### Texas

#### Voice-to-Document Service

The Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services utilizes a call-in dictation service that allows surveyors to call in their on-site findings to develop survey and investigation reports from any location.

### Wisconsin

#### Using Digital Senders to Enhance Efficiency

The Office of Quality Assurance at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services enhances work productivity and efficiency by using digital senders to scan documents and e-mail them directly to teleworking surveyors, CMS staff, and other recipients.

### Multiple States

#### Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings

Survey agencies, given their intense demands for ongoing staff training and the dispersion of the surveyor workforce, offer an ideal environment for the application of technical approaches to employee training courses and meetings. The use of interactive technology for these purposes at the State Survey Agencies in New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin is described in *Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings*, an issue brief produced under this project. The issue brief is available on the CMS Promising Practices Survey & Certification Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

## ***Technology and Equipment***

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### **Texas: Voice-to-Document Service**

**Summary** The Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) utilizes a call-in dictation service that allows surveyors to call in their on-site findings to develop survey and investigation reports from any location.

**Intervention** The agency implemented the dictation service in 2005 as part of an effort to better utilize available technology to promote work productivity and efficiency, in response to a recommendation from the agency's recruitment and retention workgroup. The agency contracts with a 24-hour voice-to-document service, which provides surveyors the option of calling in their reports from any location (e.g., home, hotel, or the office) to dictate information rather than typing up reports. Surveyors can dial in to the system by telephone, toll-free, and verbally dictate their report, or can use the service's computer software to record information using a digital recorder or a computer speaker and then e-mail the audio file. The recorded dictation, whether transmitted to the service via telephone or audio file, is typed by the service staff in MS Word format. The typed document, after review by the service for accuracy, is e-mailed to the surveyor who submitted the dictation. Jobs typically are returned to the surveyor within an hour. Surveyors or other agency staff copy and paste the typed information from the Word file into the appropriate report format in the agency's electronic reporting system. The agency is charged by the word for each job.

**Implementation** The agency's primary start-up cost was the investment of time in training staff to use the system. Staff from the voice-to-document service assisted with much of the training. To facilitate the billing and payment process for voice-to-document jobs, individual accounts were opened for staff members. The bills are e-mailed to the Regional Directors each month for approval before being paid by the DADS Accounts Payable department.

**Impact** The service is used daily by agency staff, although frequency of use varies by surveyor and by type of inspection or investigation that is conducted. Agency management staff indicate that the system increases surveyor productivity and efficiency by shortening the processing time for typing reports and facilitating submission of reports from any location, often before surveyors return from facility visits. Management staff believe that the service also supports morale and job satisfaction, as surveyors who are adept at using the technology express appreciation for its convenience and utility.

**Lessons Learned** Agency management staff recommend the service to other State Survey Agencies, and comment that the vendor they use has contracts with various state government offices in several states. Management staff also note that it is useful to establish in advance a process for approving and paying the bills for the service.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Chris Adams, Director of Survey Operations, Regulatory Services Division of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services at 512/438-5695 or [chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us](mailto:chris.adams@dads.state.tx.us).

## ***Technology and Equipment***

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### **Wisconsin: Using Digital Senders to Enhance Efficiency**

**Summary** The Office of Quality Assurance at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services enhances work productivity and efficiency by using digital senders to scan documents and e-mail them directly to teleworking surveyors, CMS staff, and other recipients.

**Intervention** Digital senders were installed in the agency's central and regional offices in 2005, in response to a CMS request to receive scanned, e-mailed documents rather than mailed hard copies. Agency staff now use the digital senders to scan completed CMS survey forms, save them as PDFs to a network drive where they are stored with the ASPEN survey for the facility, and then e-mail the documents to CMS Regional Office staff in Chicago. The digital senders also are used to support the agency's recent transition to a statewide telework program for surveyors. Staff members working in the agency offices scan and then e-mail documents as attachments directly from the digital sender, reducing dependency on faxing and mailing, less efficient methods of document transmission. To scan and e-mail a document, a staff member simply places a document in the feeder, selects the recipient(s) from the Department's address book (accessed through the digital sender) and hits the send button. Users also can save scanned documents to the network shared drive using the digital senders.

**Implementation** Each digital sender cost approximately \$2500. After central office staff found the first digital sender to be highly efficient and easy to use, IT staff installed digital senders in the five regional offices and a digital sender server in the central office to facilitate monitoring and configuring all of the units. Each digital sender is connected directly to the Department's network and is configured using a Static IP address (similar to a printer) to access the Department's server for e-mail accounts.

**Impact** Agency staff report that the use of digital senders has improved workflow and increased the efficiency of transmitting provider survey information to CMS. Using digital senders instead of mailing hard copies has reduced costs and improved the agency's capacity to meet CMS timelines. The digital senders also are key to supporting the over 100 teleworking surveyors by enhancing the efficient transfer of documents from the agency offices. The digital senders use much less space than a computer workstation/scanner combination, are faster, and require fewer user steps compared to a standard scanner. Scanned files can be compressed and converted to PDFs for efficient storage and e-mailing.

**Lessons Learned** Agency staff recommend purchasing a digital sender that also functions as a network printer and copier. It is useful to connect the digital senders to the e-mail server to pull the Department's e-mail address book to each digital sender, ensuring access to updated information. Although more expensive than standard scanners, agency staff have found the digital senders to result in significant time and cost savings due to improved speed and the elimination of procedural steps.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Sharon Rickords, Training and Quality Improvement Director, Office of Quality Assurance, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services at 608/267-3745 or RickoSL@dhfs.state.wi.us.

### **Multiple States: Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings**

**Summary** The use of interactive technology to conduct meetings and trainings across multiple locations commands a growing presence in industry and education as organizations seek to improve communication and collaboration among dispersed workers. In today's economic climate, organizations are compelled to establish systems to improve communications and teamwork with reduced budgets and constrained resources.<sup>10</sup> Business meetings and in-person employee training programs, long the hallmark of traditional business communication, are costly and time-intensive, fueling the search for technology-driven alternatives. Expensive business travel for meetings and staff development is often the first casualty of budget cuts. The emergence of the Internet and the maturation of other technologies, such as videoconferencing, have expanded the availability and affordability of technology and present a viable alternative to usual practices. Web conference users were projected to increase to 107 million worldwide users in 2005, up from 51 million users in 2002.<sup>11</sup> Distance education by the Internet, CD-ROM, or video enjoys widespread acceptance by training managers and is supported by a large body of literature showing strong results for learning and cost savings.<sup>12,13</sup> Interactive technology also is a key support for businesses that offer teleworking as a method to recruit and retain talented staff.

Survey agencies, given their intense demands for ongoing staff training and the dispersion of the surveyor workforce, offer an ideal environment for the application of technical approaches to employee training courses and meetings. The use of interactive technology for these purposes at the State Survey Agencies in New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin is described in *Interactive Technology for Trainings and Meetings*, an issue brief produced under this project. The issue brief is available on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

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# PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

## Issue Brief: Retaining Surveyors—A Compendium of Promising Practices

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### Positive Work Culture

A positive and supportive organizational culture is critical to employee job satisfaction and retention.<sup>3,5,7</sup> Elements contributing to a positive work culture range from positive, passionate, and friendly leadership to support of employee autonomy to encouraging fun on the job, among many others (as listed in the Positive Work Culture section in the Checklist of Retention Strategies presented early in this compendium). This section presents selected examples of State Survey Agency practices that contribute to a positive work culture.

#### Louisiana

##### Staff Newsletter

The Health Standards Section (HSS), Bureau of Health Services Financing of the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals distributes a biannual newsletter to all HSS staff. The *HSS Staff Update* communicates program updates to staff and also is valued as a forum for sharing staff members' stories, news, and accomplishments, as part of a positive, staff-oriented work environment.

#### Multiple States

##### Morale-Boosting and Staff Appreciation Efforts

Many State Survey Agencies promote a positive work culture with small, informal gestures that demonstrate respect and appreciation for their employees.

#### Multiple States

##### Enhanced Surveyor Autonomy through Team-Based Scheduling

Team-based scheduling shifts the responsibility of scheduling facility surveys from state agency supervisors to surveyors. This model of participatory management, or shared decision-making, decentralizes authority and gives surveyors a greater sense of control, factors that have been found to enhance employee motivation, performance, and job satisfaction.<sup>14-17</sup> Surveyor collaboration in developing schedules that address multiple requirements, preferences, and needs also can reinforce team bonding and promote positive interpersonal relations and a sense of camaraderie, also associated with greater job satisfaction and retention.<sup>15,18</sup> An issue brief produced under this project, *Team-Based Scheduling Practices in State Survey Agencies*, describes team-based scheduling practices at the State Survey Agencies in Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, and Nevada. The issue brief can be accessed on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

## **Positive Work Culture**

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### **Louisiana: Staff Newsletter**

**Summary** The Health Standards Section (HSS), Bureau of Health Services Financing of the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals distributes a biannual newsletter to all HSS staff. The *HSS Staff Update* communicates program updates to all staff and also is valued as a forum for sharing staff members' stories, news, and accomplishments, as part of a positive, staff-oriented work environment.

**Intervention** The *HSS Staff Update* was first developed in 1997. The newsletter presents thoughts from the HSS Manager and updates from Program Managers representing various areas and programs (e.g., technical, OASIS, home health and hospice, adult day health care). Articles and stories written by surveyors and other agency staff members also are an important feature of the newsletter. In the first issue distributed after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, for example, several staff members described their professional and personal experiences and perspectives—including many expressions of thanks to their coworkers—associated with the storms' devastation in a section entitled "Hurricane Impact Stories." The newsletter's "Talk of the Town" section shares news and announcements about staff members working out of the State Office and the six Field Offices. This section announces such events as weddings, the arrival of grandchildren, and children's completion of degrees or notable athletic achievements, as well as welcoming new surveyors, and commending surveyors for passing the Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test. Additional announcements typically shared in the newsletter include information on the recipients of the agency's annual "Outstanding Service Awards" and other award recognitions, Legislative Updates, and articles about staff retirements.

**Implementation** The newsletter is distributed to surveyors and managers as part of the informational packets for the biannual agency-wide training conference and is distributed after the conference to clerical staff members. One staff person compiles and prepares the newsletter for printing, typically requiring two days. All staff are invited to submit articles or information for the newsletter by 2½ weeks prior to the training conference. Using black and white rather than color printing keeps printing costs minimal.

**Impact** The newsletter is designed both to present information on program updates and to share staff stories and news as a way to increase connection among staff members, enhance morale, and foster a supportive, staff-oriented work environment. Agency staff report that surveyors have indicated that they enjoy the newsletter and it helps them keep up to date on occurrences around the state. Surveyors also look for and enjoy seeing their own articles in print.

**Lessons Learned** Agency staff recommend incorporating proofreading and editing into the routine development process to ensure the accuracy of submitted articles and the overall presentation of a polished newsletter. It is important to avoid overlooking any staff submissions, as staff tend to look forward to seeing their submissions in the newsletter.

**Contact Information** For more information, please contact Erin Rabalais, RN Manager, Health Standards Section at 225/342-6096 or ERABALAI@dhh.la.gov.

## ***Positive Work Culture***

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### **Multiple States: Morale-Boosting and Staff Appreciation Efforts**

**Summary** Many State Survey Agencies promote staff appreciation, team bonding, and fun on the job in small, but important, ways. For example, management staff at some agencies encourage morale-boosting activities such as potlucks, coffee hours, and holiday celebrations, typically organized by staff members with management approval. Leadership staff at some agencies foster a positive and supportive environment by recognizing staff accomplishments, birthdays, and other special events during staff meetings or other occasions by announcement, treating staff to food to share, or giving Hawaiian leis or certificates to selected honored staff members. Other gestures by supervisors and managers, such as flexing schedules to approve a longer lunch hour that allows staff members time to work out at the local gym, accommodating scheduling needs for occasional family or other personal events, or surprising staff with pie or other treats in general appreciation not tied to particular events, are easy to implement and can make a meaningful difference in the way employees feel about their workplace.

### **Multiple States: Enhanced Surveyor Autonomy through Team-Based Scheduling**

**Summary** Team-based scheduling shifts the responsibility of scheduling facility surveys from state agency supervisors to surveyors. This model of participatory management, or shared decision-making, decentralizes authority and gives surveyors a greater sense of control, factors that have been found to enhance employee motivation, performance, and job satisfaction.<sup>14-17</sup> Surveyor collaboration in developing schedules that address multiple requirements, preferences, and needs also can reinforce team bonding and promote positive interpersonal relations and a sense of camaraderie, also associated with greater job satisfaction and retention.<sup>15,18</sup> An issue brief produced under this project, *Team-Based Scheduling Practices in State Survey Agencies*, describes team-based scheduling practices at the State Survey Agencies in Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, and Nevada.

The four team-based scheduling practices vary with regard to operational features and degree of surveyor autonomy and supervisor involvement. Regardless of the type of model employed, team-based scheduling is perceived by management staff in the featured agencies to have positively affected surveyor job satisfaction and morale as well as performance in terms of teamwork, motivation, and efficiency. The reduction of supervisor time committed to scheduling, observed in three of the featured states, also can contribute to enhanced agency efficiency and effectiveness. Although it appears that the decrease in supervisory control is an area to be carefully addressed, the agencies' management staff believe the team-based scheduling practice will contribute to a positive work environment and improved surveyor retention. The issue brief on team-based scheduling can be accessed on the CMS Survey & Certification Promising Practices Website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>.

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