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**Exploring the perceptions of child welfare social worker's retention rates for five years or more of employment in San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services child protection units**

Victoria Loren Hill

Kimberly Ann Kalloo-Violante

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EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD WELFARE SOCIAL  
WORKER'S RETENTION RATES FOR FIVE YEARS OR MORE  
OF EMPLOYMENT IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
CHILD PROTECTION UNITS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

---

by  
Victoria Loren Hill  
Kimberly Ann Kallou-Violante

June 2008

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Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

Although the majority of child welfare social workers leave their jobs within a few years, some choose to make careers out of it. This study examined twenty-two career child welfare social workers' perceptions of their long-term employment. The study used a qualitative methodology to explore the reasons why the social workers remained working in San Bernardino County's child protection units for five years or more. The results of the study indicated that the primary reason workers stayed in child welfare was related to the significant relationships they experienced with their supervisor, co-workers, and clients. The results of this study can be used to provide insight and guidance into increasing the retention rates of child welfare social workers in San Bernardino County's Department of Children's Services child protection units.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the child welfare workers for their participation in this project. I would also like to acknowledge my partner, Kimberly Kalloo-Violante, without her, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Laurie Smith for her support and guidance through this completion of this project.

Victoria Loren Hill

I would like to acknowledge all of the social workers who work in child welfare. I would like to acknowledge my partner, Victoria Hill. Thank you for all of your hard work! I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Laurie Smith for providing us her expertise that aided in this final product, our thesis.

Kimberly Kalloo-Violante

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my husband Angelo Hill, daughter, Torian Hill, my parents, Joseph and Cynthia Millender, sister, Valencia Little, brother, Joseph Millender, for all of their love and support through this journey. I would also like to dedicate this project to my friend, Tanya Levell for putting up my unavailability, but still providing support when I needed it. Thank you to all.

Victoria Loren Hill

To the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services child welfare social workers who have one of the most difficult and undervalued jobs, I commend and thank you for everything you do for the children and families that you serve. Keep up the amazing work you do! To Dr. Laurie Smith who has guided me through this challenging process. To my partner, Victoria Hill, thank you for keeping me focused and on track. I could not have made it through without you. Last but never least, to my loving and ever supportive husband, Danny Violante, I thank you for your constant encouragement and belief in me through this eventful journey.

Kimberly Ann Kallou-Violante

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Statement

Most people would agree that the social workers in the child welfare system have difficult jobs. These workers are primarily responsible for the country's most vulnerable children (Center for Workforce Studies, 2006). They help to provide the protection of children from the abuse and neglect of others (California Welfare and Institutions Code 300-304.7.) In addition to the protection of children, child welfare workers are required to meet federal reporting mandates, maintain large caseloads, and endure poor working conditions with relatively low wages.

It is estimated that 46% to 90% of social workers in child welfare leave their jobs in two years (Drake & Yadama, 1996.) Child welfare workers leaving the field claim that they have experienced "burnout" from their work. The factors associated with "burnout" include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of their work, and lack of personal accomplishment, (Drake & Yadama, 1996). Drake and Yadama's study (1996) suggests that once

a social worker feels that they are experiencing "burnout", they decide to leave their jobs.

Not only are social workers leaving the field due to "burnout" they are "aging out" of the profession. The Center for Workforce Studies (2006) suggests that the supply of licensed social workers is "insufficient to meet the needs of organizations serving children and families" (p. 7) and "twelve percent report on plans to leave the workforce in the next two years" (p. 24). This factor alone will create an even greater shortage within the workforce. Child welfare agencies will be soon faced with the daunting task of replacing the number of social workers that leave or retire, and recruiting, or retaining those that are already employed (Reisch, 2006.)

Current studies, both quantitative and qualitative, examine why child welfare social workers choose to leave the field. Few focus its efforts on understanding why some child welfare social workers choose to stay working within their demanding careers. This study will focus its efforts on exploring the factors associated with the child welfare social worker retention (five or more years of service) within San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services child protection units.

## Policy Context

Little debate exists over whether or not there will be a shortage of social workers within the upcoming years. There will not be a sufficient number of social workers to handle the increasingly complex cases being managed by professional social workers at a time of decreased community resources and support for clients (Center for Workforce Studies, 2006.)

The Title IV-E child welfare-training program was created as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272) to support training in both foster care and adoption services. This program encourages people to enter careers in child welfare social work by offering academic stipends that pay for tuition and living expenses in exchange for a time-limited commitment to employment with an agency that serves at risk children and families.

In addition to the Title IV-E stipend, child welfare agencies have also turned to on the job training for new social workers and to providing workers with a realistic snapshot of employment within child welfare prior to becoming employed by the agency.

On both the policy and program levels, the government and agencies are attempting to address the problem of social worker retention rates by providing the funding necessary to obtain a social work education and by training new social workers on the job.

### Practice Context

Social worker retention in child welfare agencies impacts both the macro and micro levels of social work. On a micro level, child welfare social worker retention rates have a direct impact on the safety and protection of at-risk children and their families within the United States. This is because there are not enough experienced child welfare social workers available in the field. This decreased workforce results in children (and families) being at a greater risk for abuse, neglect as well as not receiving their services from qualified staff. Also, there are fewer experienced child workers that are available to help train and mentor the newer professionals in the field.

This shortage of social workers place a tremendous strain on agencies that provide direct services to individuals and their families within health care, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and child welfare. The

agencies are forced to do "more" with less qualified personnel.

On a macro level, there are significant financial costs that are associated with the loss of social workers within child protective services (Graef & Hill, 2000). These costs include the monies agencies spend on training the social worker and providing them their workspace. The costs created by rapid employee turnover rates decrease the monies that could be spent on programs and services for the children and families that these agencies serve.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to explore the reasons why child welfare social workers choose to stay working in child protection as their long-term professional career. If these reasons can be identified, child welfare agencies could possibly develop hiring processes, training systems, and other organizational processes that would target and nurture the "right" social worker for the job. Monies will be saved and families will be serviced by qualified social workers. From this study, factors may be identified that contribute to increased child social welfare worker

retention rates within San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services and across the United States. Thus increasing the safety of children, families, and increasing the professionalism within the field of child welfare social work.

This study will employ the use of a qualitative research design. Qualitative studies consist of the gathering information that allows for the understanding of the research participant's reality (Grinnell & Unrue, 2005). The study will be a non-probability sample of 22 Social Service Practitioners (SSPs) that have 5 years or more employment in San Bernardino County's Department of Children's Services child protection units. The interviews will consist of 28 structured and open-ended interview questions. These questions will focus on reasons behind their long-term employment with a child welfare agency. A quantitative research study would not allow the researcher to capture the subjective experiences of why these social workers decide to continue their careers in child welfare.

## Significance of the Project for Social Work

From this study, a clearer understanding as to why a social worker might choose to stay in a child welfare agency for at least five years or more may emerge. Based upon these findings, the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services may be able to enact specific policies that would increase the retention rates of their workers. An example, if manageable caseloads are a factor in retention, a policy that provides reduced caseloads for new social workers until they are sufficiently trained could be implemented. Social work practice can be impacted positively by allowing social workers to deliver quality services to children and families. It will also allow for the development of strategies that will help retain the current child welfare workforce and recruit others into the field.

Many studies that employ quantitative research designs have been conducted as to why child welfare social workers leave the field. Few research studies focus on the qualitative reasons why some child welfare social workers choose to make a long-term commitment to careers in such a difficult area of practice. This research study seeks to contribute a rich and detailed

account as to why social workers remain in child welfare for five years or more.

The research question of the study is: Exploration of the perceptions associated with the retention of child welfare social workers for five or more years of employment in the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Service child protection units. Social worker retention will be defined as five or more years of employment within the child protection units for the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services.

#### Title IV-E Relevance

This study is relevant to the child welfare practice for many reasons. There is currently a dangerous shortage of qualified social worker staff and a high turnover in the field of public child welfare. This can have a direct negative impact on the health and safety of this nation's at-risk children and families. If there are too few social workers who are qualified to provide child protection services, then children may become seriously injured or die as a result. Further, the exiting of social workers early in their careers means that the children and families they serve are being deprived of



services from experienced workers. Social worker retention is important to child welfare because those that work in the field are the people who protect those who cannot protect themselves, vulnerable children and families.

CHAPTER TWO  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study will focus its efforts on exploring the factors associated with the child welfare social worker retention (five or more years of service) within the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services. Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the relevant literature to explore the factors related to "burnout" of child welfare workers and the retention of child welfare workers. Chapter Two will also discuss the theories guiding the conceptualization of this study on these child welfare workers employed in child protection.

Burnout Among Child Welfare Workers

Burnout, a chronic, pervasive problem in the mental health and social service fields (Geurts, Schaufeill, & De Jong, 1998), is a major contributor to poor morale and subsequent turnover. It is estimated that 46% to 90% of social workers in child welfare leave their jobs in two years (Drake & Yadama, 1996). Child welfare workers leaving the field claim that they have experienced "burnout" from their work. The factors associated with

"burnout" include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of their work, and lack of personal accomplishment, (Drake & Yadama, 1996). Drake and Yadama's study (1996) suggest that once a social worker feels that they are experiencing "burnout", they decide to leave their jobs. Social workers also experience "burnout" due to the organizational demands placed on them. Social work is potentially very stressful due to the nature and organizational structure of the work (Cherniss, 1980). In addition to the protection of children, child welfare workers are required to meet federal reporting mandates, maintain large caseloads with little to no supervisor support, have little room for advancement, and endure sub- par working conditions with low wages.

Barak, Nissky, and Levin (2001) found through a metanalysis of 25 articles, that "burnout", job satisfaction, availability of employment alternatives, low organizational and professional commitment, stress, and lack of social support are the strongest predictors of turnover or intention to leave. Since the major predictors of leaving are not personal or related to the balance between work and family but are organizational or

job based, there might be a great deal with both managers and policy makers can do to prevent turnover.

Organizational commitment is examined in several studies as a predictor of intention to quit and turnover. Employees with lower levels of commitment are less satisfied with their jobs and more likely to plan to leave the organization (Irvine & Evans, 1992).

"Burnout" has been recognized as a major problem in public welfare agencies for several decades because it impedes effective and efficient delivery of services (Powell & York, 1992). Employee "burnout" in human service organizations may also disrupt the continuity and quality of care to those needing services (Braddock & Mitchell, 1992). This can have a negative impact on the well-being of the children, families, and communities under agency care (Balfour & Neff, 1993).

An organization can incur great cost as a result of "burnout". The direct costs of employee turnover are typically grouped into three main categories: separation cost (exit interviews, administration, functions related to terminations, separation pay, and unemployment tax), replacement costs (communicating job vacancies, pre-employment administrative functions, interviews, and

exams), and training costs (formal classroom training and on the job instruction) (Blankertz & Robinson, 1996; Braddock & Mitchell, 1992). "Burnout", can reduce organizational effectiveness and employee productivity. Demographic factors also play a role in child welfare workers "burnout". Demographic factors are among the most common and most conclusive predictors in the turnover/"burnout" literature. A number of studies find age, education, job level, gender and tenure with the organization to be significant predictors of "burnout" (Blankertz & Robinson, 1996; Jinnett & Alexander, 1999). It is generally accepted that younger and less educated (as well as less trained) employees are more likely to leave than their counterparts (Kayak, Namazi, & Kahana, 1997; Manlove & Guzell, 1997). It seems that employees who have been employed long term have a vested interest in the organization may be less likely to leave. Although demographic factors play a role in "burnout" among child welfare workers, professional perceptions are also seen as a factor of "burnout".

As child welfare workers, it is useful to have the support from family and friends outside the work place to serve as a buffer against the stressors within the work

place and dealings with the population being served. Individuals who experience a conflict between their professional values and those of the organization are more likely to quit, while those who find a good fit between their needs and values and the organizational culture tend to stay longer (Vandenberghe, 1999).

Most literature has discussed the reason for child welfare worker "burnout". These reasons include but not limited to high caseload, lack supervisor/management support, lack of advancement, poor training, workload pressures. These factors may have an effect on social work retention, but an organization can assist with retention in the workplace. Child welfare agencies need to look closely into those who do stay in child welfare. The agencies can learn from those who have chosen to stay through the rough, stressful times. Qualitative studies are beneficial to gain in depth reasoning for why social workers choose to stay in child welfare.

#### Child Welfare Worker Retention

There appears to be a limited amount of literature exploring the reasons why social workers stay in child welfare profession long term. Most research has discussed

the reasons for child welfare workers exiting the system, but little has addressed the reason for staying.

In Texas, a study found that in the past five years 67% of Child Protection Staff with degrees in social work were still working for protective services. There was an 87% retention rate among those who, in addition to having Bachelors in Social Work, also had a placement internship in the social service agency prior to working there. Workers with human service-related degrees such as psychology or education had a retention rate of 46%, while those with a background outside of those areas showed a retention rate of only 37% (Human Service Research Intitute, 1997). These results suggest that in order for employees to remain on the job, they need to feel a sense of commitment to the organization. This may be accomplished if the organization implemented the development of peer-support groups, or the teaming of new employees and more experienced colleagues.

Many dissatisfied child welfare workers remain in their jobs and job satisfaction does not necessarily lead to employee attrition. Conversely, Landsman (2001), surveyed 1, 133 public child welfare workers in Missouri and found that organizational commitment and job

satisfaction directly influence workers intention to remain employed in child welfare.

Among organizational variables, results of numerous studies have linked the quality of direct supervision to public child welfare employee retention (American Public Human Service Association, 2005). As defined in these studies, quality supervision includes a number of personal attributes and skills: for example, understanding the responsibilities and the demands of child welfare casework; distributing workload in fair/equitable manner; availability; flexibility; possessing knowledge of both child welfare practice and the child welfare system; providing both instrumental and emotional support and praise for job well-done; clearly conveying high, but realistic expectations; and providing concrete suggestions for improving performance. Other organizational variables that have been linked to retention include the availability of promotional opportunities (Conway, Williams, & Green, 1987; Ellett, Ellis, & Westbrook, 2006; Landsman, 2001; Powell & York, 1992), flexibility to transfer to among program areas and organizational commitment (Harrison, 1995; Landsman, 2001). The results of several studies have shown that positive



employee relationship between retention and a professional commitment to enhance the welfare of others attributes to retention among child welfare workers.

From a comprehensive focused interview with 23 caseworkers, the following four factors of retention emerged: mission, goodness of fit, supervision, and investment (Rycraft, 1994). These factors have enabled the child welfare workers to justify continuing their employment when so many others are choosing to leave.

The mission represents the caseworker's view of their jobs and encompasses a commitment to helping others, a priority of working with children, a belief in the importance of child protection, and an acknowledgement of the need for a periodic renewal of energy.

The goodness of fit refers to the degree of suitability and flexibility in job assignments, and advice to others on how to achieve a good fit within an agency was also considered. Supervision was addressed by identifying specific attributes of a supervisor desired by the caseworker.

Investment covers personal and professional investment, the mutual investment between the caseworker

and the agency, and the importance of colleagues and the criteria caseworkers consider when deciding whether to terminate employment (Rycraft, 1994).

Taken together, these findings suggest the need for managers to create organizational conditions to help workers process the negative impact of daily job stress and to deal specifically with the secondary trauma associated with involvement in child abuse and neglect cases on a daily basis (Zlotnik, Depanfilis, Daining, & Lane, 2005). These factors have all played a role in the retention of child welfare workers.

It seems that in the published literature, supervision is an important factor in child welfare retention. Studies have found that supportive supervision is associated with organizational support, organizational commitment, and job retention (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Leiter & Maslach, 1998), and that low levels of supervisor support are linked to turnover (Malatesta, 1995, as cited in Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002).

We cannot begin to explain this commitment to child welfare that some child welfare workers have without

exploring the theoretical concepts that relate to child welfare workers ability to maintain a career within child welfare agencies.

### Theoretical Concepts

Both theory and empirical findings indicate that, through workplace social interactions, employees develop notions about what to expect from a job and how to appropriately respond to job conditions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). After these notions have been learned, they can become reinforced through work related interactions. The Organizational Support Theory suggests that employees develop perceptions about the extent to which their employing organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare (Eisenberger Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Studies that have tested this framework have found that perceptions of organizational support are associated with employee's organizational commitment.

The Organizational Theory suggests that workplace arrangements that facilitate work-life balance will promote employee commitment to the organization. The

aspect of the organizational theory is intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Studies conducted have explored the relative importance of extrinsic rewards and intrinsic job value as motivators of employees (Deci, 1971; Snelders & Lea, 1996).

Social Information Processing Theory suggests that the workers' attitudes are constructed through social interaction with other workers in the workplace rather than determined either by individual worker characteristics or by objective job characteristics (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Economic Theoretical explanations of turnover are based on the premise that employees respond with rational actions to various economic and organizational conditions. Although each of the three domains; psychology, sociology, and economics has strong proponents in the turnover literature, it is widely recognized that theoretical aspects from all three are necessary to explain the process of turnover fully (Barak et al., 2001).

There is no single theory that has been developed to explain the "burnout" among child welfare workers. It appears that there are many theories that can explain the

factors associated with child welfare "burnout" and retention, but there is not just one to explain the issues at hand. The theories suggest that although social workers are employed in a demanding field, they are often able to overlook their daily work stressors to provide the services necessary to the population they serve. The theories show that child welfare workers often learn the behavior of commitment to the organization but can also be swayed to leave due to the negatively among the co-workers.

Future research in child welfare and social worker retention should continue to explore the existence of social change dynamics in child welfare settings, including the role of exchange relationships between child welfare staff and their supervisors, other organizational representatives, and especially coworker and clients.

#### Summary

This study explored the factors why child welfare social workers remain working in child protection for five years or more within the San Bernardino County Department of Children Services child protection units.

These factors included the social workers educational background, job satisfactions, organizational commitment, supervision, distribution of workload in an equitable manner, emotional support, promotional opportunities, and flexibility. The results of this study will assist the Department of Children Services have a better understanding of the factors that promote work retention as well as the factors that affect worker burnout. This information can be utilized to assist the Department of Children Services in retaining more of their child welfare social workers in child protection units.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This section of the paper includes an overview of the research methods utilized in this study. The study's design, sampling methods, data collection process, instruments utilized, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis will be discussed.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of child welfare workers about their reasons for long-term employment in San Bernardino County of Children Services child protection units. The study aimed to gain in-depth information through in-person interviews with the child welfare social worker. The interviews identified and clarified the factors associated with the child welfare social worker's long-term employment. The information obtained from this study can be utilized by the Department of Children Services. These insights will allow the agency to provide the child social welfare worker with the necessary supervision, training, and or

support to help maintain their employment in child welfare and protection services.

To obtain a detailed account of the factors associated with the child welfare social worker retention, a qualitative research design was used. Face-to-face interviews that lasted approximately forty minutes with semi-structured, open-ended questions were administered to 22 subjects. A qualitative design was appropriate for the study because it allowed the collection of in-depth information. The information was related to the child welfare social worker perceptions about their long-term employment in the San Bernardino County Department of Children Services child protection units.

There are limitations to this study. The sample size, twenty-two participants, is small. This limits the generalizability of the results to a larger population of child welfare social workers. Without a larger sample size, it is uncertain whether or not the results obtained from this study can be generalized to a larger population.

Another limitation of this study is the interviewer potentially influencing the participants' response. The



interviews were conducted face-to-face with the participants. The interviewer could have influenced the participant by use of their body language, verbal response to questioning, or by their presence.

The research question was: What are the reasons for retention (five or more years of employment) among child welfare social workers with long term employment in the San Bernardino Department of Children Services child protection units?

#### Sampling

A list of all child welfare social workers that have five years or more years of service in the Department of Children Services child protection units was obtained from the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services Administrative and Research Unit. From that list, 22 participants and 80 alternates were randomly selected. The participant selection process was as follows: from the list each name was cut up, the names were placed into a bowl, the bowl was shuffled, and names were pulled. The first 22 names that are pulled were recorded as the primary group that was contacted via an introduction letter, to participate in the study. If any

of the 22 primary participants chose not to participate in the study, then the alternates were contacted. The 80 alternates that were pulled were numbered 1-79 and recorded. If the alternates were used, they would be selected starting with number 1 onto 79. The goal for the sample size was 22 participants. The participants were asked to respond to interview questions regarding their factors associated with their long-term employment in the Department of Children Services.

#### Data Collection and Instruments

The data that was collected for this study was obtained through in-person interviews using an interview guide. The data collected included demographic information such as age, ethnicity, gender, and years of service within the Department of Children Services. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their reasons for long-term employment (see Appendix A).

Due to the study's use of a qualitative study design, independent and dependent variables were not defined or tested. Some of the topics that were addressed with open ended questions for the interviews were as follows: How satisfied are you with your salary; work

hours; career; training; supervision; room for advancement? What commitment do you have to child welfare; what is some advice you could offer new child welfare employees; and when did you decide to make a career in child welfare?

The interview took approximately forty (40) minutes to complete. The interviews were recorded on audiotape. Written notes were taken during the interview sessions by the researcher. The participant's verbatim responses were transcribed at a later date by the researcher.

#### Procedures

Participants were randomly selected from the list. The participants were contacted via an interoffice mailing of a letter of introduction (see Appendix B), along with an informed consent form (see Appendix C), and the researcher contact information. The researcher emailed the potential participant one-week after sending out the information to determine the participants' interest in the study. The Social Service Practitioners that agreed to participate in the study completed the informed consent form in person at the face-to-face interview, scheduled a date and time for the interview.

At the close of the interview, the participants received a debriefing statement (see Appendix D) and a five-dollar gift certificate to Starbucks. The interviews took place at the location of the participant's choice.

#### Protection of Human Subjects

The researchers did not see any foreseeable risks to the participants. However, in order to protect participants involved in this study, precautionary measures were taken. Informed consent forms were given to the participant prior to the administration of the study. Participants were informed of their right to end the interview at any time. In order to maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a number for identification purposes. The interviews were administered in a place of their choice. The data and Social Service Practitioner list is stored in a locked drawer at the researcher's home. At the close of the data collection, it was transcribed, coded, and analyzed. All of the written and recorded data was destroyed.

Upon completion of the interviews, a debriefing statement and discussion was allowed for the participant. This statement/discussion addressed, clarified any duress

or risks that the participant may have experienced during the interview.

The researchers received Cal State San Bernardino Master of Social Work Sub-Committee Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this project.

### Data Analysis

The data from this study has been analyzed in a number of ways. Descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, and modes of the demographic information were produced. The quantitative data calculated the average age of the participants, years of service, gender, and ethnicity. The open-ended in-person interviews were transcribed from the audio tapes by the researchers. Once transcribed, the participants' common responses to the open-ended questions were identified and common themes emerged. By grouping the common responses from the interviews on the audio tapes, themes emerged as to the reasons why the child social welfare worker has maintained long-term employment in child protection.

### Summary

Chapter 3 of this paper included an overview of the research methods utilized in this study. The study's

design, sampling methods, data collection process, instruments utilized, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis were discussed.

This study explored the factors associated with the child welfare social worker retention (five or more years of service) within the San Bernardino County Department of Children Services child protection units. These factors included the social worker's perception of their wages, supervision, co-workers, career advancement, and advice that they would offer to new child welfare workers. The results of this study will help the Department of Children Services better understand the factors that affect the retention of long term child welfare social workers. This information can be utilized to assist the Department of Children Service in retaining more of their child welfare social workers in child their child protection units.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

In this study, twenty-two participants were interviewed to explore the perception of child welfare social workers regarding factors associated with their retention for five years or more of employment in San Bernardino County's Department of Children's Services child protection units. This chapter reports on the participants interviewed within this study and the findings found within the nine categories; job specification, training, supervision, co-workers, work hours, salary, career advancement, and reasons for five or more years of employment.

#### Presentation of the Findings

Of the twenty-two participants, seventeen were female and five were male. They ranged in age from 31 to 65 years of age. One participant did not respond to the question of age. The ethnic makeup was nine Caucasian, ten African American, and three were Hispanic/Latino. At the time of the interview, thirteen were married, three were single, two separated, and four were divorced. Of

the participants, five had no children while the other seventeen participants had two or more children.

The educational level ranged from Bachelors Degree to Master Degrees. The majority of the participants had Masters Degree in Social work while the other participants had various Behavioral Science Degrees ranging from psychology, human services, human development, marriage and family counseling, education and psychology, and rehabilitation counseling.

The current employment status of all the participants is full time employment. Their current years of employment with the San Bernardino County Children Protective Services ranged from five years to 30 years. Respondents were from the four regions of San Bernardino County, two offices in the cities of San Bernardino, Rancho Cucamonga, Rialto, and Victorville California. The job specifications ranged from carrier worker, emergency response workers, and mentor/trainers.

Open-ended interview questions were used to explore the perceptions of child welfare social workers regarding factors contributing to their retention of five years or more of employment in San Bernardino County's Department of Children's Services child protective units. The



participants' responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to provide information on common themes that emerged. A total of nine categories were addressed during the interview, job specification, training, supervision, co-workers, work hours, salary, career advancement, reasons for five or more years of employment, and advice to be shared with new county social workers. The interview on average lasted approximately 35 minutes per person.

Within the nine categories common themes developed. These themes are relevant to the main focus of the project and emerged from the narratives of the participants.

#### Job Specification

Within this category, the participants addressed what they liked about their jobs. The common themes that emerged were: advocacy, take into account individual needs, recognition of clients change, and compassion. Out of the twenty-two participants, all expressed enjoyment in working with the children and families. These common themes emerged from the narrative and are illustrated by the participant comments below.

"I like the most, intervening and assisting families to keep them intact."

"I really like working with the families. Family reunification gives you the opportunity to really, I think make a difference because you are involved with the entire family, you really get involved in their problems and really to match services to what their original problems was that got the children removed."

"I like the kids, I like the families, and I like helping people"

### Training

Within this category, the common theme that emerged to describe the participants training experiences within San Bernardino County Department of Children Protective Services was that the training was more than adequate to accomplish their jobs. Out of the twenty-two participants, twenty participants agreed the training was adequate to accomplish their jobs.

"Yes, I'd say so but it's always changing, there something new every day, every week so the training is ongoing."

"Yes, the training was most adequate."

"I believe so; it was a week long intensive training and umm in addition to on the job training followed by structured training."

Not only did the twenty-two participants find the training adequate that was provided by the Department, but they also found on the job training valuable as well. "It was sort of like do the job and then mess up we'll let you know."

"It is a hand on job, you can't learn unless you do it over and over again."

"Also there is a lot of training in house to attend on the various changes in the office and work load."

Although twenty-two of the participants agreed the training was adequate, two participants felt the training was overwhelming and not adequate.

"It was grueling because it was 5 days a week"

"At times I don't feel it's adequate"

"The things that I find or feel the least well trained about are the technical things, like how do I get that computer to work or that CAT to work?"

### Supervision

Within this category, common themes emerged from fifteen participants in regards to supervision which

reflected upon self-help, mutual aid, and supportive relationship of the supervisor that has affected their long-term employment within the Department of Children Services.

"My supervisor is very supportive, she's flexible, and she always asks for input and feedback from her staff, she empathetic, she remembered what its like to working on the line a she helps."

"Oh, he backs you whatever decision you make, he backs you, he'll support you, as long as it doesn't compromise the child's safety."

"He's very laid back, much like myself, knowledgeable and he has an open door policy if we have questions, he doesn't duck the questions or anything like that."

"My supervisor is very supportive"

"Offers me support, she is there for me, like my mother at work."

"He is very supportive; he seems to be there for me."

"Um, I love about this supervisor is that she is really supports me, really trust my assessment skills, doesn't second guess me, believes in my strengths, and actually works with me on trying to um if I have

any kind of you know challenges just try to really restructure me.”

Although fifteen participants felt the supervision offered support, flexibility, and mutual aid. The other seven participants felt as though the supervision lacked supportive and autonomy.

“Supervisor is not very supportive, does not really back you up on things. And someone I can not really trust what he says when he is giving me advise because I don’t think that he has had much as experience as my previous supervisor”

“Well my supervisor is not very supportive and very controlling. This affects my work moral”

“My supervisor does not advocate on my behalf regarding my job decisions”

“My supervisor is brand new to his position and does not know how to interact with others”

#### Co-Workers

Within this category, seventeen participants found it helpful to have a supportive, mentoring supervisor but also helpful to have supportive and mutual aid between co-workers.

"I am very lucky that I've got a good unit, very supportive, umm you know at the drop of a dime I can ask anybody in my unit to do me a favor they're there, there available."

"My co-workers I find them very helpful, regarding work stuff, personal stuff, just to talk with to vent."

"Overall, the relationship with the co-workers is that of support, assistance, concern for one another."

"Co-worker, good relationship, tag team, help each other, work with good people."

"Um I would say that I have supportive relationships with my co workers that um we're able to process together and just help manage our stress levels."

"I'd say my relationship with my co-workers are very good, very positive, we know in this job that we cant do this work along so we really rely on each other and for the most part everyone is pretty cooperative and pretty giving and networking and um you know kind of village sharing the child kind of thing, we've sharing each other resources and information so I think I have a positive interaction, communication."

"I have great relationships with my co-workers. I believe that we all work together and the majority of my coworkers care and their clients and we share and talk about resources and ways to deal with difficult clients which really allows us to vent at times and takes some of the stress off."

Although the eighteen of the participant expressed a strong supportive working relationship with co-worker, four participants expressed lack of friendship outside of the organization.

"I don't really socialize that much at work, I am friendly but have not made any friends at the workplace that I hang with after work."

"Awkward, being in the mentoring unit, I only have one co-worker, so the rest of the workers in the office are not co-workers, just simply because of the status of a mentor. But as a whole I get along with most of the people in the office."

"I don't really socialize with many co-workers."

One of the participants described her experiences to other workers as exciting and new to their work experience.

"You know I actually like the experience of having exposure to new social workers and having the opportunity to give the input to new workers in how they assess and um deal with the families and children."

### Work Hours

Within this category, of the twenty-two participants all work a 9/80 work schedule on average. These work schedules consist of working nine hours days and having every other Friday and/or Monday off. The participants reported working overtime to get the objectives of their job met.

"I work whatever I need to work to get the job done and it often requires work after hours to meet the needs of the clients."

"In reality it fluctuates greatly."

"And the on call lasts from 5:30pm to 7:30am so anytime during those fourteen hours or if it's the weekend that's twenty-four hours you can get called out so I'm not only just working the regular schedule, I'm working on call and nights, weekends, holidays whatever."



## Salary

Within this category, nineteen participants agreed that their salary was adequate.

"I like it."

"I feel the salary is appropriate for what I do."

"I am actually happy with the money we get paid here."

"Very happy with salary"

Although nineteen participants were happy with the salary, three participants expressed unhappiness with their current salary.

"Very underpaid by a substantial amount of money, when you consider the numerous hats we wear during the day and night especially now with safe measures stuff, we are working as attorneys, workers as transporters, mediators, I could go on, but for what we do, we are grossly underpaid."

"I think the salary is really not adequate. It may be well paid for this area, but for the work and the demands and requirements, it is adequate."

## Career Advancement

Within this category, all of the twenty-two participants reported room for career advancement, but

fifteen indicated that they were not interested in a promotion at this time.

"There are several different departments you can go to as a practitioner."

"I think right now the scheduled that I have works for me and works for my family time and everything"

"I rather stay to be an on line worker because it does give me the flexibility"

"I am satisfied with career advancement"

"Not interested at this time in promotion."

#### Reasons for Five or More Years of Employment

Within this category, the twenty-two participants described what they like about their jobs. The themes that emerged were: the fast pace, altruism, the job's flexibility, and the constant changes in the job that have attributed to their long time career in child protective services.

Five participants indicated that enjoyed their job due to the face pace.

"Because I enjoy it and its, my particular position is faced paced and that what I like most about it. Its fast paced, I like to get in and out I don't like to drag things out."

Ten participants indicated their joy in working with the children and families making a difference in their lives.

"Because I like the population that I am working with, I enjoy the type of work we I do, I feel that I am making a difference and I love the fact that it's coming to a lot of changes. It's not boring job at all its always changing, I think they are always trying to better the plans and better the intervention so that ah you know the family does grow from more services and benefit from them. So I guess it's the ongoing changes really keeps me on my toes."

"Knowing that I am impacting people lives not for this immediate family I am working with but for the next generation and hopefully and generation after that"

"I enjoy the families and the children"

"Knowing that I am impacting people lives not for this immediate family I am working with but for the next generation and hopefully and generation after that."

"I enjoy the families and the children."

"I really do enjoy my job."

Fifteen of the participants described flexibility as a reason for staying employed for five or more years.

"I really enjoy the flexible schedule."

"I really enjoy the flexibility"

"I get to get out and not sit behind a desk"

Twenty participants indicated altruism as a reason for staying employed in child welfare for five or more years.

"I really like what I do and I feel that it is necessary.

I got not other interest."

"I prayed a lot and that empowered me to be able to stay."

"Star fish mentality, save one save many"

"I enjoy doing something to help out society"

"I have done social work in some way or another"

The twenty-two participants described what has kept them working in child protection, but they also gave suggestions for new social workers to assist them in having a long-term career within Child Protective Services.

"Be realistic."

"Just do your job. Do what you can in the time frame allow and don't get caught up in other co-workers unhappiness."

"Just do your job to the best of your ability. Take things one day at a time. In order to last in this field, you need to be flexible and deal with stress."

"I think understanding the true acceptance what this job is asking you to do, how they are asking you to do it and what the consequences of those decisions are. The rewards and the consequences of those decisions."

"Mentoring new workers, I tell them they need to go out with a bunch of different people to see all the different styles, create their own styles, which would make them more comfortable on the job so they would enjoy it more."

"Be patient."

"Don't be afraid to ask for help from supervisors and co-workers"

"Continue in trainings and education that fulfill the needs of the ever changing society and the dynamics of families"

“Develop a support system among colleges, don’t isolate yourself, continue to question, continue to ask question and seek consultation even if your supervisor is not requiring that.

#### Summary

The responses reported in this chapter were obtained from twenty-two face to face interviews of social service practitioners of the Department of Children Services, child protective units. Audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed for their thematic content. The responses indicated some common themes that helped to explore the perceptions of the child welfare social workers retention for five years or more of employment in San Bernardino County’s Department of Children’s Services child protective units. Nine categories were examined in order to help get a clearer understanding, from the participant’s perspective, of the components that facilitate long-term employment within the San Bernardino County Department of Children Services Child Protective Units.

CHAPTER FIVE  
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

After analyzing the responses of the participants involved in this study, common themes emerged from the eight categories of job related factors that were asked about by the researchers. The positive themes that supported the workers staying in their jobs included: client relationships, adequate training for the job, supportive supervisors and co-workers, room for career advancement, and job flexibility.

The themes that emerged regarding job dissatisfaction with the job were the consensus of being underpaid, overworked, and devalued.

Although the majority of child welfare social workers leave their jobs within five years or less because they feel overworked, underpaid, and devalued, some choose to stay working in the field for seemingly unknown reasons. The participant responses of this study seem to indicate that it is the importance of the human relationships that the social workers have developed with their clients, peers, and supervisors that might be the

primary reason why they continue to work in child protection and child welfare.

#### Discussion

Child welfare social workers who stayed working on their jobs for five years or more described the importance of human relationships as the most common reason for remaining in their field. This includes advocating for their clients. The participants conceded that working with the families by providing support and resources to maintain and strengthen the family gave them a sense of accomplishment and that they were played a part in preserving the family. The participants report having positive relationships with the families that they work with and state that they value and respect these relationships.

The participants stressed the importance of a positive mentoring relationship with their supervisors as a reason why they stay working in their field. Most of the participants felt their supervisors were knowledgeable and could answer any questions that they had in regards to the job. The participants perceived their supervisors as being empathetic and understanding



to the difficulties that they face in their jobs daily. Overall the participants stated that they believed that their supervisor respected them, the decisions that they make, and are there for them when they need guidance.

The importance of supportive, mutual aid relationships with co-workers was reported by the participants as a reason why they stay working in their field. The participants stated that they know that their co-workers were there for them to assist them with anything that they needed. This included the technical advice for the job, providing and sharing of each others resources, and helping to debrief with one another on a difficult case or situation.

Some of the other reasons that were indicated as to why these participants might stay working in their field were because of the adequate training that they have received. Most participants indicated that their in class trainings and on the job field training has been invaluable to them within their jobs. Most agreed that they have received and continue to receive adequate training for their jobs. Overall, the majority of the participants agreed that the Department provides them

with the training and information needed to conduct their jobs adequately.

Although most of the participants indicated that they do not want to advance in their careers, there is room for career advancement opportunities within the Department. The participants are all eligible and encouraged to apply for a supervisory position within the Department of Children's Services. Once the participants have advanced to a supervisor and worked within that position for two years or more, they can apply to become a child welfare manager, a deputy director, and if the position is available, the director for the department. If the participants have their Master of Social Work, then they can also apply to obtain the hours to get their licensure. The majority of the participants were not interested in a promotion because they claimed that the position was either a pay cut, a forced desk job that they did not want, or a position in the agency that has a tremendous amount of responsibility with no real authority.

Most of the participants stated that they enjoyed the fast pace and flexibility that their job entails within the field of protective services. They claim that

they enjoy the multiple changes that occur, no one day is ever the same, and nor is any one family. The participants claim that they like the flexible work hours that the job requires in order to accommodate the families that they serve.

The participants offered some useful advice to new employees entering the field of child protection. All stated that good time management skills were a requirement for the job. This is because of the strict time frames that have to be adhered to in terms of federal, state, and local mandates. New employees need to understand that they are there to do a job and not to get caught up in other social workers unhappiness or negativity. Other advice that was offered included being patient when learning the job, making sure that it is the right fit for you, and the acceptance of what can and cannot be accomplished with the children and families in which they work with.

#### Limitations

There are important limitations of this study that affect its generalizability to larger populations. The sample size of twenty-two participants was small and may

not reflect the views of social workers within San Bernardino County, other counties or states. There was not a large enough sample size that included a representation of most ethnicities. Because this study was conducted in San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services Child Protection Unit, the results obtained from this study may not be reflective of child protection units in other counties or states. Although the participants were randomly selected from a list, they self selected by agreeing to participate in the study. Therefore, these participants could differ from others because they might have an agenda of their own or have some other strong reason why they wanted to participate in the study.

The study was conducted in uncontrolled, natural environments of the participant's choice. The location of where the interviews were conducted could have influenced how much time the participant had to answer the questions, could have hindered their responses in some way, or could have provided a distraction from the interview for the participant.

The interviews were conducted by two different researchers using the same interview guide. This could

have impacted the results of the study dependent upon whether or not each interview had a different style of interviewing the participant or if the interviewer had a personal or professional relationship with the participant.

There was not enough time to run a pre-test on the interview guide. There were questions on the interview guide that could have been eliminated because the participant would answer the question as part of another. So, some questions would have to be asked twice because of this. If a pre-test were to have been conducted on the interview guide, this redundancy could have been avoided.

There is limited literature that provides reasons why social workers make a career out of child protection services. It was difficult to develop an interview guide (tool) that could capture the results to that question. The researchers had to make (educated) guesses from their own experiences in order to (maybe) capture the results.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

The results of this study should be use to develop policies, practices, and ongoing research to promote the child welfare social worker retention in San Bernardino

County's Department of Children's Services child protection units.

Since the findings of this study indicate that some of the primary reasons why social workers remain in the field of child protection is because of their relationships with clients, co-workers, and supervisors, practices should be implemented in order to help foster these relationships.

In order to increase the relationships between the social worker and their clients, a policy and practice of using Family Group Conferencing and Team Decision Making for every child welfare case should be developed. The relationship between the social worker, their clients, the agency, and advocating on behalf of the client can be fostered by the Department allowing the client and the family to share the power of decision-making for their families within the agency. This can be accomplished by the increased use of Family Group Conferencing and Team Decision Making as an intervention and prevention for families. Moore (2004) focuses on why conferencing is a powerful tool in child welfare and justice systems. Conferencing encourages participatory democracy for the people who are affected by the conflict. If people are

allowed to be involved in decisions that affect their lives they are more likely to be satisfied with the process of the conference versus the outcome. Moore (2004) describes how conferencing is used as a form of conflict resolution in child welfare and justice systems.

The relationships between the supervisory staff and co-workers should be fostered by developing the practice of using mentors in San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services Child protection units. These relationships appear to serve as "buffers" for the potential "burn out" of child protection workers, they should be nurtured. The Department should seek out those employees that they know are capable of fostering supportive relationships with their staff. These positive relationships appear to retain social work staff. The senior social workers and their co-workers should be encouraged to develop mentoring relationships with newer social work staff. These relationships help to provide the direction, guidance, and support that the newer social workers need to become proficient within their difficult jobs. Gibbs (2001) suggests that in order to retain child welfare workers, supervisors must provide the opportunity for the worker to reflect on their

experiences, deal with the emotional impact that their job has on them, and provide the administrative function for getting their jobs done.

Ongoing research in the area of any additional training that might be needed both on site and off site of the Department can be used to retain and possibly recruit new social workers into the field of child protection. The better trained and educated the social work staff is, the more likely they are to be competent within their jobs and be less likely to become overwhelmed with the constant changes with child welfare. Lieberman, Hornby, and Russell (1988) found that the more education that the child social worker had, the more likely they were to be prepared and knowledgeable about their jobs.

Another policy that could be implemented to retain senior child protection social workers should be a monetary incentive to promote into supervisory positions. In order to encourage social workers to promote within the agency some additional monetary benefits should be offered to them to make the job seem more attractive to them such as a pay bonus or additional vacation and sick time off. Sharma, McKelvey, Hardy, Epstein, Lomax, and



Hruby, (1997) suggest that if the child welfare worker is not satisfied with their career advancement, they are likely to be satisfied with their jobs as long as they perceive the agency as being committed to them.

A policy that child protection social workers could be allowed to work from home and report into their office only once a week could be implemented to encourage child protective social worker retention. The majority of the work that child protection workers do is in the field. So, social workers should be able to work from home, complete their paperwork on-line, and report to their office once a week. If this increased flexibility within this job were allowed, a lot of social workers would be attracted to child protection and remain working in the field.

#### Conclusion

The participants in this study suggested that the factors that are associated with their long term employment in child protective services is their relationships with their clients, their supervisors, and their co-workers, the ongoing training that they receive,

room for career advancement, and the flexibility of the job.

The most important conclusion from this study is that there are tangible reasons why social workers remain working in child protection. If child protection agencies could tap into, focus on, and nurture these reasons, a lot more social workers could potentially be recruited and retained within the difficult field of child protection services.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

## **Interview Guide**

### **Demographics:**

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) What is your ethnicity?
- 3) What is your current status: single, married, divorced, never been married?
- 4) Do you have any children? If so, how old are they?
- 5) What is your educational level? What degree held?
- 6) How many years employed as a social worker in child protection?
- 7) What is your salary range?

### **Job Specification**

- 8) Tell me about your job: location and region.
- 9) Tell me about what you like about your job: tasks, goals, how they are accomplished.
- 10) What do you like/dislike about your job?

### **Training:**

- 11) Tell me about the training you received for this job. Was it adequate?

### **Supervision:**

- 12) Tell me about your supervisor and the support they offer you.

### **Co-Workers:**

- 13) How would you describe the relationships you have with your co-workers?

### **Work Hours:**

- 14) Tell me about your work hours.

**Salary:**

- 15) What are your thoughts on your salary?
- 16) Do you have the opportunity to make more money at your job?

**Career Advancement:**

- 17) What room for advancement do you have?
- 18) Are you interested in a promotion?
- 19) How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the career advancement in your job?

**Reasons for Five or more Years of Employment:**

- 21) Why have you worked in child welfare and child protection for as many years as you have?
- 22) Overall, how satisfied are you with your career in child protection?
- 23) What has given you the greatest satisfaction?
- 24) Tell me about experiences that you've had that may have influenced your decision to stay working in child welfare.
- 25) At which point, working in child welfare that you knew you wanted to make a career of it?
- 26) What are some suggestions that you'd offer new child protection workers to enjoy a long career in the field?
- 27) What long-term commitment do you have to child welfare?
- 28) Why do you think others don't stay in child protection?

APPENDIX B  
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Department of Children's Services  
County of San Bernardino  
1504 Gifford Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0058

To the Department of Children's Services:

Victoria Hill SSP and I, Kimberly Kalloo-Violante SWII, are currently in the second year of our Masters program at Cal State University San Bernardino and are beginning work on our thesis research project. The project is entitled "The Factors Associated with Long-Term Employment in San Bernardino Department of Children's Services, Child Protection Units." The purpose of our research is to investigate the reasons why Social Service Practitioners chose to remain working in child protection services for five years or more.

To conduct our research, twenty Social Service Practitioners from each office throughout the county will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide designed by Victoria Hill and Kimberly Kalloo-Violante. The Practitioners will be asked multiple questions in regards to their perceptions of the supervision and training they have received, office location, and relationships with co-workers, salary, etc. These questions should help identify the common factors why these Practitioners remain employed long-term in child protection. The San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services Administrative Resource Division (ARD) will be contacted to identify participants for our study. Participants will be randomly selected from the list obtained by ARD.

Each interview will take approximately one hour to complete. The interviews will be conducted on a date and location of the participants' choice. A five-dollar gift certificate will be given to each participant. Data collection for this research will begin April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 and should conclude on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The results of this study will be available after September 30, 2007.

The rights and welfare of all participants will be protected in this study. Informed consent will be received from each Social Service Practitioner who participates in this research. There are no significant risks associated with participation in this research. The results of this research will be given to the Department of Children's Services following completion of our thesis. However, all participant information will remain anonymous to ensure participant protection and confidentiality. Any information that would link data with an identity will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project. It is our hope that our research will provide implications for improving the retention rates of Social Service Practitioners in San Bernardino County child protection units.

If the Department has any questions or concerns, Dr. Janet Chang may be contacted at (909) 537-5184 or by e-mail at [jchang@csusb.edu](mailto:jchang@csusb.edu). The Department may also contact Dr. Smith, our research advisor at Cal State San Bernardino at (909) 537-3837.

Respectfully,

Vicotria Hill Social Service Practitioner  
Kimberly Kalloo-Violante Social Worker II.

APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT



**CSUSB Department of Social Work Research Project**  
**“Exploring the Perceptions of Child Welfare Social Workers**  
**Retention for Five Years or More of Employment in San**  
**Bernardino County’s Department of Children’s**  
**Services Child Protection Units”**

**Informed Consent**

This study in which you are asked to participate is designed to explore the factors associated with the retention of child welfare social workers that have been employed for five or more years. This study is being conducted by Victoria Hill and Kimberly Kalloo-Violante under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Smith, professor of the Department of Social Work. This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work Institution Review Board Sub-Committee.

In this study you will be asked about your work experience within the Department of Children Services. You will be asked some questions regarding reasons for long-term employment. It will take about 40 minutes to complete the interview. All of your responses will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be released. You may receive results of the study upon completion on or about September 2008 at the Pfau Library, located at California State University, San Bernardino, California.

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time during this study without penalty. You can allow or refuse tape recording of your interview. For participating in this study the participant will receive a five-dollar Starbuck’s gift card.

If you have any questions about this study please contact Dr. Laurie Smith at California State University, San Bernardino, the Department of Social Work, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California 92407 or call (909) 537-3837.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of the study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Place a check mark here

Today’s date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to have my interview audio tape recorded: YES  NO

APPENDIX D  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

**Exploring the Perceptions of Child Welfare Social Workers  
Retention for Five Years or More of Employment in San  
Bernardino County's Department of Children's  
Services Child Protection Units**

This study you have just completed was designed to explore the perceptions associated with child welfare social workers' retention for five years or more of employment in child protection units. The researchers were interested in the reasons why social workers stay in the child welfare field of child protection. It is hoped that the findings from this study will help the Department of Children Services retain child welfare social workers in child protection. Information from this study will be used to inform San Bernardino County's Department of Children Services about some of the reasons that are associated with the retention of child welfare social workers.

Thank you for your participation in this study and for not discussing the contents of these interview questions with other participants. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Victoria Hill, Kimberly Kalloo-Violante at (951) 833-1551, or **Dr. Laurie Smith** at **(909) 537-3837**. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, please contact Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino at the end of Spring Quarter of 2008.

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

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Team Effort: Victoria Loren Hill &  
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2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Victoria Loren Hill &  
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3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Victoria Loren Hill &  
Kimberly Ann Kalloo-Violante

b. Methods

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c. Results

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