

TASK 8 FINDINGS

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Task 8 Findings

My evaluation yielded positive results with very little areas that could use improvement. After assessing the feedback from my interview. From the stakeholders I interviewed, including the director, assistant director, supervisor, and senior worker I gathered that the agency is having difficulty hiring people to fill positions. The director stated that since the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, there has been a constant vacancy rate in the building. The Child Protective Unit has a vacancy rate of 30%, the Foster Care Prevention unit has a 20% and Foster Care has a 15% vacancy rate. The turnover rate at the Henry-Martinsville Department of Social Services is increasing as the average social worker works there for 2 years or less. More recently workers have been quitting after 6 months. The supervisor of the Foster Care Prevention unit stated that the workers are providing the best quality care to the clients. She also stated that the caseloads are rising as the vacancy rates increase. The senior worker stated that the caseloads are getting larger as the clients are voluntarily reaching out to receive services verses CPS telling them they have to do them.

After interviewing the clientele of the Foster Care Prevention unit I learned that many clients (85%) were pleased with the services and care they received. There was a small percentage of clients (15%) that were displeased with the care and services they received. The clients that were pleased stated that the caseworker they were assigned was quick to assess the needs of their family and get services in place. The clients who were displeased stated that the worker they had was rude and that they had taken their children. The pleased clients stated that

the quality of the services offered to them was pleasant. The displeased clients stated that they or their family were never offered services. I also interviewed the clients in different settings. Some clients come to the agency for visitations and others the workers go to their homes for a worker visit. The clients that came to the agency stated that it was not convenient for them as they had to have an hour with their children in a little room. The clients that were seen in the home, seemed happier and more open to communicate.

After interviewing the program participants, I then interviewed the workers in the Prevention unit. All the workers were open to talk about how they thought the program was helping the diverse clientele. The unit consists of Family Service Specialists including senior workers. Out of the unit all of the Family Service Specialists were pleased with the way the program helped families. One of them stated that success stories were very rare but, in the area, they serve they are becoming more common. I also asked the workers how the work environment was. They stated that it was very stressful and that something was always popping off. All of them stated that they had suffered from burnout at least one time since starting. One worker mentioned that there was no support when something would happen. I asked them to elaborate on that. The worker stated that she had been through a traumatic experience with a client. She stated that she had went out for a routine monthly visit, when a father that was not supposed to be at the home was there. She told the father that he had to leave, and he began getting irritable and started cussing at her. He stated that he was not leaving and that no one could tell him that he couldn't be around his kids. The worker stated that she could not leave unless the children came with her. The father then stated that he would call his people to take care of her. He then told the mother to put the children in the car because he was going to go where he had to go with his kids and would run over anyone in the way. The worker stated that she then had to call law

enforcement to help diffuse the situation. The officer that responded immediately got mouthy with the father and then began to call for backup as the father was getting even more irritated. The backup officer arrived and about that time the father attacked the responding cop. The whole time she was calling her co-workers for backup as the children would need to be removed and no one would answer the phone. When she arrived back to the office the stakeholders only offered her the free counseling. There was not a day off offered to her whatsoever.

Conclusion

The information gathered during my evaluation was very important. My conclusion that the Foster Care Prevention unit is providing quality care and services to the families they serve was true. It was concluded that the workers are tired and do not receive enough support from the stakeholders. It was also concluded that no support and high caseloads cause the high vacancy and turnover rates.

Implications

The findings of my evaluation of the Henry-Martinsville Department of Social Services can impact the program positively. There is a saying that says that “it can only go up from here”. I believe that this is true for this program. While there is still room for improvement, the program is successfully helping the clientele it serves. I believe that my findings about the workplace environment may not be taken into consideration, however without change the vacancy rates will continue to rise. I believe that the influence that my evaluation will have could be positive and negative. The reason it would be positive would be because the program will hopefully improve. The negative part of it could be the backlash the workers receive for speaking the truth about the work environment.

Recommendations

There are a few recommendations that I would have for the agency and the program. One recommendation is that they need to take a mandatory class on how to speak to a client. 15% of the clientele stated that their assigned worker was rude to them. As professionals, workers need to learn how to keep a calm, neutral tone when speaking with clients, whether they are difficult or not. The stakeholders should consider this as the clients should be our priority and angry clients make for an ugly name on the agency and program. Another recommendation that I have is to allot more time for the employees to take as mental health days. As a worker stated during the interview, they have high stress levels and high burnout rates. As helping professionals, workers are always helping others but hardly take care of themselves. I think that the stakeholders should consider this idea because it would improve the performance of the workers as they would get a small mental break from the stress. Another suggestion I have is for the agency to provide more information to the community about the program. This could be social media posts, flyers or newspaper or magazine ads. Social Services has a bad reputation already due to the CPS unit. If the Prevention unit was advertised more and correctly then social services may get a better reputation. I believe that the stakeholders should consider this because it would bring a better name to the agency and possibly break the stigma behind the name.

Goal

The Henry- Martinsville Department of Social Services will implement 2 hours of mental health and/or self-care time once a week.

Objectives

1. HMDSS will send out a survey to the employees to see what day would work for the mental health and/or self-care time.
2. After a weekday is decided, HMDSS will begin to enforce the mental health and/or self-care time.
3. HMDSS will offer an activity during the mental health/self-care day once a month.
4. HMDSS will ensure that the employees are participating in the mental health/self-care day,