
EXPLORING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES FOR
BC'S COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR EMPLOYERS

A REPORT BY SPARC BC
MARCH 2008

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EXPLORING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES FOR BC'S COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR EMPLOYERS

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Executive Summary

This independent study was commissioned by the British Columbia Government Employees Union (BCGEU) on behalf of the community social service unions to determine if there is support for anecdotal evidence about recruitment and retention problems among unionized employers in the community social service sector. The study, which includes qualitative and quantitative data, was conducted by the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC).

Interviews and surveys were conducted with unionized employers in the community social service sector that provide child care, day and residential care for people with: developmental disabilities, family services, counseling services for people experiencing abuse or sexual assault, and services to Aboriginal people and immigrants. Through the survey and interviews, it was determined that unionized employers in the community social service sector in BC are experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention.

In terms of recruitment challenges, almost half of the organizations surveyed indicated that they had vacancies for existing positions, and many positions had been vacant for over three months. Responding organizations also reported having to run increased numbers of competitions for existing positions.

Unionized employers in BC's community social service sector also reported difficulties with retention. Turnover rates were particularly high for casual employees. The employers also told us through the survey that the average length of stay for casual employees is far shorter than for regular full-time or part-time staff in the bargaining unit.

Employers identified a number of reasons for their problems with recruitment and retention. Employers consulted through the interview process all said that low wages in the sector are a contributing factor to their difficulties around recruitment and retention. They also said that they are having trouble finding qualified applicants, partially as a result of the low wages, but also because of the instability in the sector created through the short-term funding models for non-profit social service delivery

agencies. Study participants expressed great concern around the lack of public and government respect for those working in the sector and those served in the sector. They said this lack of respect is also a contributing factor to the difficulties experienced in the sector around recruitment and retention.

The study revealed that recruitment and retention challenges have impacts for both employers and employees. Employers said that as a result of recruitment and retention challenges, they are seeing increased costs and declining quality of services offered through their agencies. Employers said that the work-life balance is compromised for employees, which leads to burnout and perpetuates recruitment and retention problems.

Employers said that they need to work together with the employer association, unions, and government to make sure that government funding for the sector is adequate to cover the cost of living, but also to ensure that the funding reflects the value of the work done in the sector. Employers said that all the stakeholders have to do more public education to promote the valuable contributions to society made by those who work in the sector and those they serve.

Based on the findings of this report, we recommend that:

- The provincial government increase funding for the community social service sector to allow employers to pay employees wages that cover the cost of living and reflect the value of the work done in the sector;
- Wages be set at a rate that is comparable to similar work done in other sectors to promote both recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in BC;
- Benefits be extended to casual workers in the sector to help with retention problems;
- The provincial government funding models for the non-profit community social service delivery agencies be reviewed to identify models that would allow for more stability in the sector;
- The provincial government create training incentives such as bursaries and scholarships, to encourage people to seek training in the related community college programs to increase the pool of trained workers in the sector;

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- The provincial and federal governments look into options for creating a universal child care system where government funding for child care goes towards the creation of high quality child care spaces, rather than to individuals with children;
 - The unions, employer association, and employers be prepared for advocacy by having research available in the form of fact sheets around the funding trends over time in BC, how they compare to other provinces, and information on wages in comparable lines of work;
 - The unions and employers be joined by the employer association in advocacy efforts to create a unified and stronger voice on this issue to ensure that the public and government understand the importance of the work done in the sector and the challenges they are currently experiencing around recruitment and retention;
 - The employer association, with support from the unions, ensure that the collective agreement is understood by employers and that all three stakeholders work together to determine how to best address issues of recruitment and retention without undermining the collective agreement;
 - Employers and the employer association work with community colleges to create training programs that suit the local needs of employers and allow employees to balance work while seeking training; and
 - The employer association, employers, and unions look into methods of creating a regional pool of casual workers to share recruitment and training costs for employers, as well as help to guarantee more regular hours for casual employees.

Introduction

There is strong anecdotal evidence that community social service employers in British Columbia are having trouble recruiting and retaining workers. The British Columbia Government Employees Union (BCGEU) commissioned the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC) to conduct an independent study of recruitment and retention issues on behalf of the the community social service unions. The study involved collection of qualitative and quantitative data from unionized employers in the sector to support this anecdotal evidence. The goal of the study is not only to examine whether there is evidence to support claims that recruitment and retention is difficult in this sector, but also to look the impacts and at ways of improving recruitment and retention efforts in the sector.

This study was conducted with unionized employers in the community social service sector. The employers consulted in the study provide a wide range of services, including community living and residential care services, child care, child and family services, and counseling services. These employers provide these services to people with developmental disabilities, the deafblind population, children, families, and victims of abuse and sexual assault, as well as immigrant and Aboriginal populations.

This report begins by providing an overview of some of the challenges around recruitment and retention in general, based on the findings of a literature review. This discussion will look at some of the internal and external factors that contribute to recruitment and retention issues. The report then highlights the findings of the study, which show that there is in fact evidence that employers in the community social service sector are experiencing difficulties in recruiting and retaining employees, as well as why study participants think they are experiencing these problems. The report also looks at the impacts of recruitment and retention challenges in the sector for employers and for employees, as perceived by employers.

Next the report moves into a more solution oriented discussion. The report provides examples of some best practices around recruitment and retention, as shared by employers consulted throughout the study. We then discuss the roles of the various stakeholders in addressing recruitment and retention issues in the sector. We look specifically at the roles of employers, the employer association, the government ministries, and the unions, with a particular emphasis on how these stakeholders can work together to improve recruitment and retention in BC's community social service sector.

Finally, the report concludes by providing some guiding principles for moving ahead with efforts to address recruitment and retention issues in the sector, based on themes that emerged throughout the study. We then provide some recommendations for action so that the stakeholders can begin the process of improving recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in BC.

Methodology

This study was conducted between August 2007 and March 2008. The report was released during Community Social Service Month in March 2008. In order to ensure a complete and credible study of recruitment and retention issues faced by BC's unionized employers in the community social service sector, we made use of both qualitative and quantitative research tools, as well as opportunities to confirm the findings to date throughout the process.

As a preliminary tool to familiarize the research team with the issues related to recruitment and retention in the community social service sector, a literature review was conducted. The purpose of the literature review was firstly to identify common indicators for measuring recruitment and retention in the sector, as well as possible strategies for addressing these issues. The literature helped us to understand the important questions to ask throughout the study.

The next major task of the study was to conduct an online survey of unionized employers in the community social service sector in BC. The goal of this survey was to gather quantitative data around recruitment and retention issues for employers. The survey was administered to executive directors and human resources representatives, based on a list provided by the BCGEU. Follow up calls were conducted to ensure an

adequate response rate. The survey followed up on some of the findings of literature review. The literature suggested that providing supportive work environments and opportunities for growth are key factors in recruitment and retention. We, therefore, asked employers about their human resources management policies and practices. We then moved into a discussion of recruitment issues, to find out if there is evidence of recruitment challenges in the sector. We asked about the number of vacancies within organizations, length of vacancies, positions that are particularly hard to recruit for, how many times they have had to run competitions for existing positions that are vacant and how that number compares to previous years. We also tried to get a sense of the current cost of filling positions and whether organizations are having to pay at top rates or hire unqualified staff to fill positions. In terms of retention issues, we asked about turnover rates and the average length of stay for various types of employees. We also asked about why employees are leaving the organizations and what can be done to address recruitment and retention challenges.

The final phase of this study, interviews were conducted with over 20 BCGEU employers in the community social service sector, as well as an additional three employers from the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). The purpose of the interviews was to gain a fuller understanding of the results of the previous phases of the study. The 25 minute telephone interviews with employers from around the province looked for qualitative data around the impacts of recruitment and retention for both employers and employees, as well as best practices for addressing these issues and the roles of the various stakeholders. Throughout the study, we try to indicate the proportion of interviewees that provided certain responses to the general questions. It is important to note that these were top of mind responses, so just because a particular interviewee did not mention a certain response to a question does not mean that it is not an issue for their organization.

Throughout the process of conducting the study, the research team made several presentations to various stakeholders to get confirmation on the findings to date. A presentation was made upon the completion of the literature review and employers' survey to the executive of the community social service component of the BCGEU. A presentation was also made to the multi-union roundtable on the

community social service sector just as the final pieces of data were being collected. This roundtable included representatives from the BCGEU, HEU, and CUPE. Upon the completion of the draft report, a presentation was made to 35 stakeholders at a dialogue on community living that was attended by advocacy groups, workers, employers, BCGEU, HEU, and CUPE representatives, as well as a representative from the provincial government.

Problems/Issues Around Recruitment and Retention

The literature suggested that there are many indicators of recruitment and retention problems. The literature pointed out that the causes of recruitment and retention challenges can be both on the micro level, meaning that they are individual organization related problems, or they can be more macro level challenges that are as a result of problems facing the sector as a whole.

Recruitment

The literature reviewed for this study described an organization as facing recruitment challenges if it is not getting enough qualified applicants for existing jobs in the organization and does not have the human resources capacity to keep up with the number of competitions that need to be run in order to maintain current staff levels.

The literature review revealed that organizations might experience such challenges due to internal problems, such as not having enough funds or available human resources to run competitions, especially smaller organizations. It was also said that organizations in remote or smaller locations might have a harder time finding qualified applicants locally or applicants that are willing to relocate. As well, organizations that offer casual jobs or jobs with irregular hours, few hours, or weekend and evening shifts often have a hard time recruiting qualified applicants.

The underlying issue, however, is that a lot of these organizational problems actually stem from problems that are being experienced throughout the sector. For instance, the lack of funding to run competitions can be a sector-related issue, especially for non-profit sectors or sectors that are dependent on government funding models, when that sector is not a priority to government. In addition, the issue of casual jobs

and shift work is a reality in the community social service sector, which means that this is more of a sector related challenge. Related to the issue of funding, if workers in the sector are underpaid for the work that they do, potential workers are likely to choose careers in other sectors that are better paying and that offer benefits. The instability of the sector is also a contributing factor to potential employees, as word of frequent job loss or organization closures can be a deterrent to selecting a job in the sector.

When organizations within a sector find themselves competing for the same individuals, competitions for job openings can become more costly in that they often takes much longer. Organizations are also put into a position of having to offer more competitive wages and benefits packages. Difficulties with recruitment can also lead to long-term vacancies, which in turn lead to high caseloads and longer hours for existing staff. Longer hours for staff often mean increased overtime costs and lower quality of care, as employees become over-burdened and burnout.

Retention

According to the literature, an organization is experiencing problems with retention if they have high turnover rates and if staff are only staying for short periods of time. Again, the causes of such problems can be internal or external.

Internally, the literature points to term hiring, lack of benefits, job instability, few opportunities for professional development or upward mobility, lack of supervision, and poor orientation practices as factors that may contribute to high turnover rates or short stays with an organization. The literature also suggests that long commute times or professional isolation for staff working in smaller or remote communities as other contributing factors to retention problems. Interestingly, the literature tended to focus more on the working environment in terms of retention challenges, rather than the issue of low wages.

However, as in the case of recruitment issues, many of these 'internal' factors are in fact realities of working in the sector. Again, the issues of term hiring and job instability are common to the sector, due to the short-term nature of the funding contracts for organizations in this sector.

Problems with retention have negative impacts on both employers and employees. For the employers, it is costly to run repeated competitions and train new staff when experiencing high turnover rates. Again, there are more overtime costs for current staff to fill the gaps until positions are filled. For employees, they are impacted by the need to carry high caseloads while filling gaps due to staff shortages. This, in turn, leads to high stress and burnout, thereby perpetuating the retention problems.

Indicators of Recruitment and Retention Challenges Based on the Literature

The literature pointed to a number of indicators of recruitment and retention challenges to be monitored while conducting our study on recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in BC.

Around recruitment, the literature suggests a number of questions to keep in mind. Are employers in the sector reporting challenges as a result of low wages and job instability? Are they reporting more difficulties with recruitment in more remote locations or with hiring casual workers? Are employers demonstrating evidence of the impacts of recruitment difficulties such as more frequent and more expensive competitions and long vacancies? Are employers paying increased overtime costs to maintain services due to staff shortages?

As for retention problems, the literature pointed to high turnover rates as an indicator of retention problems. It also recommended looking at length of stay for staff and issues related to work environment, such as opportunities for upward mobility and professional development, good orientation practices, and strong support for staff. We also wanted to know whether employers are seeing increased costs for competitions and training, and whether employees are experiencing burnout.

Throughout our study of recruitment and retention issues in BC's community social service sector, we looked for evidence of these indicators of recruitment and retention challenges, as revealed through the literature review.

Evidence to Support Claims of Recruitment and Retention Challenges

One of the goals of this study was to see if there was support to confirm the anecdotal evidence that BC's unionized employers are experiencing challenges with recruitment and retention in the community social service sector. We looked for evidence of these challenges by monitoring the above mentioned indicators of difficulties with recruitment and retention.

Respondents throughout the study indicated that they are in fact experiencing more difficulties than in the past in recruiting and retaining employees. All of the employers interviewed said that they are currently experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention, especially for casual workers. The survey findings shed some light on what those problems look like for employers.

Evidence of Recruitment Challenges

Our survey found that 43% of respondents had at least one vacancy in their organization. The problem of vacancies is particularly acute in the case of positions for casual or relief workers. While organizations reported having only an average of 1.2 regular full-time vacancies, they said they have an average of 5.3 casual positions vacant. Study participants said that it is particularly difficult to find relief workers for residence workers and early childhood education workers.

Not only did organizations say that they have a number of vacancies, but in many cases these positions are vacant for extended periods of time. Over half of the respondents said that they had positions that had been vacant for over three months. On average, the responding organizations said that they had 2.7 positions that had been vacant for longer than three months.

Respondents also said that they are running more competitions than they have in the past. Over half of the respondents said that they have had to run more competitions for existing positions in the past year compared to the previous 10 years. One third of respondents said that they had to run more than five competitions in the past year

to fill existing positions. Almost 30% of employers interviewed mentioned that they are advertising across a broader geographic area to recruit staff. They said that they now have to advertise provincially and even nationally.

Evidence of Retention Challenges

Respondents reported difficulties with retention issues as well and, again, the difficulties were more pronounced with casual workers. Respondents said that the average turnover rate for full-time employees in the bargaining unit was 10% in the past year, compared to 47% for casual employees. Many employers interviewed through the process confirmed this finding. They said that they do not have a hard time retaining their permanent staff, but that they experience major difficulties in retaining casual employees. Almost half of the respondents said that their organizations' turnover rates had become worse in the past five years. Organizations reported that they had a total of 168 casual employees that discontinued their employment with the responding organizations or stopped making themselves available in the past year.

These findings are further confirmed by looking at the length of stay of employees as reported through this study. We found that while regular full-time employees stay an average 82 months, active casual employees only stay an average of 20 months. Survey respondents said that administrative and management or supervisory level staff stay longer with organizations than front line workers, such as counsellors, residential care workers, and early childhood education workers. Employers highlighted the issue of difficulties with retaining casual workers during the interview process. Every single employer interviewed in this process said that they have trouble retaining casual workers.

When looking at turnover rates in responding organizations that operate in urban versus rural areas, we see that the organizations in rural areas have higher turnover rates for all types of staff in the bargaining units. The turnover for full-time staff in organizations that operated in rural or both rural and urban areas is 20% compared to only 9% in organizations that

operate in only urban areas. Part-time staff in organizations that fully or partially operate in rural areas is 39% compared to only 19% for urban organizations. There was high turnover for casual staff in both the urban and rural areas, but it was more pronounced in the organizations that have rural operations, with a rate of 59% compared to 38% for organizations in urban areas.

According to the survey, retention is also more difficult for smaller organizations. Survey respondents with 30 or more regular full-time staff in the bargaining unit only had a turnover rate of 9%, compared to 17% for responding organizations with less than 30 full-time staff. Larger organizations said they had a turnover rate of 19% for their part-time staff in the bargaining unit, compared to 35% in the smaller organizations. Larger organizations also reported having more success at retaining casual workers. The turnover rate was 42% for casuals in the bargaining unit in large organizations, compared to 65% in smaller organizations.

Why Employers Are Experiencing Recruitment and Retention Challenges

The survey and interview results provide clear evidence that unionized employers in BC's community social service sector are experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention. The question is why are they experiencing these challenges?

Low Wages

Almost every single employer interviewed throughout this study said that low wages in the sector are a major factor contributing to the challenges employers are experiencing in recruiting and retaining staff. This finding was further confirmed through the survey of employers, where 96% of respondents said that the solution to the current recruitment and retention challenges they are experiencing could be addressed through increasing wages in the sector. Employers also identified increasing wages in the sector as the top solution to addressing the issue of low enrolment rates in the relevant training programs at colleges.

Lack of Suitable Applicants

When asked why positions have been vacant for so long, the top reason given by organizational representatives was that there is a lack of suitable and trained applicants. Employers said that it is difficult to recruit trained applicants to the positions at the current pay rates. Over half of the employers interviewed said that one of the impacts of the current recruitment and retention challenges is that they are having trouble finding qualified staff. One employer said that there is little incentive to go through the training programs, incur debts while doing so, and then come out of school to work in jobs with such low pay. However, this means that there are fewer qualified applicants from which to choose.

Nature of the Work

Survey respondents also pointed to the fact that jobs in the sector, especially entry level jobs, often involve shift work, sometimes with undesirable hours. Through the survey and interviews, employers said that they do not have as hard a time retaining their full-time permanent employees, which means a lot of the openings, especially for new recruits, are in the part-time or casual positions when they are trying to get their foot in the door.

As non-profit service delivery agencies, the employers interviewed are required to bid on contracts for funding from the government to deliver their services. The organizations have to bid for this funding every few years. Almost one fifth of the employers interviewed mentioned the instability caused by this funding model as a contributing factor to their difficulties with recruitment and retention, as this instability leads to fears around job security

As well, the instability in the sector that results from short-term funding models for non-profit service delivery agencies means that many employees in the sector are forced to take contractual positions or casual work, instead of permanent work. One fifth of employers that responded to the survey said that they have employees in contractual positions that would prefer to be in permanent positions.

Lack of Respect for the Work

Lack of respect for the work done in the sector and the people served in the sector was a common theme throughout the study. Interviewees throughout the study said that the public does not have a good understanding of how rewarding work in the sector can be and its important contributions to the overall well-being of society. Almost three quarters of the employers interviewed said that there is more work to be done around promoting the value of the work done in the sector to the public. They were concerned that the public only hears about the sector in the media when there is some sort of scandal, rather than all the positive day to day activities of the job.

Employers also said that the government also shows a lack of respect for the work in this sector. They said government does so by providing inadequate funding that does not allow employees to receive wages that reflect the cost of living. Almost every single employer mentioned that the government does not provide adequate funding to allow employers to pay fair wages. Interviewees said that this shows a lack of respect on the part of government for the value of their work. They also said that the funding models show a lack of respect in that they have to bid on government contracts for funding every few years, despite the fact that they have been providing these services for years. Almost half of the employers interviewed said that the short term contracts funding model used by government creates instability. Some added that this instability contributes to the negative image about the sector in the market place.

Impacts of Recruitment and Retention Problems

As a result of these recruitment and retention challenges in the sector, employers, employees, and the sector as a whole are experiencing a range of negative impacts.

Impacts on Employers

The employers consulted during this study were all too familiar with the impacts of recruitment and retention challenges. They said that they are seeing increased

costs and declining quality of services as a result of their recruitment and retention problems. They said that they are especially feeling these impacts around the recruitment and retention of casual employees.

Increased Costs

The obvious impact of recruitment and retention challenges for employers in the sector is around increased costs. Almost half of the employers interviewed reported increased costs as a result of recruitment and retention problems. They said these increased costs partially come from higher advertising costs. As previously mentioned, almost a third of employers mentioned that they have to cast a wider net when advertising, with some even advertising nationally to find qualified employees. As well, the high turnover rates mean that there are increased human resources costs to run more frequent competitions to fill existing positions. One fifth of employers said that they have lost contracts to provide services, funding for positions, or have had to close programs because of long vacancies, which has serious implications for the organizations' overall budgets.

Employers said that they also have to pay out more in wages, within the limits of the collective agreement. As a result of the difficulties with filling existing positions, just under one fifth of employers mentioned during the interviews that they are paying out more overtime to current staff to fill in the service gaps while they are short-staffed. Almost one fifth of employers interviewed also mentioned that their staff are needing more sick days due to the stress of having to work more overtime, which is costly for an organization. Over a third of survey respondents said that in the past year alone, they have had to pay new hires at the top rates in order to attract staff. Over one tenth of the surveyed employers said that they had to pay over 75% of their new hires in the past year at the top rates. Almost a fifth of employers interviewed also identified this as an additional cost. Having to pay new hires at top rates has implications for the organizations' overall budgets, in that it is already difficult to make ends meet within the budgets, but also for retention, as the literature shows that upward mobility is key to retention. If employees are starting at the top of the pay scale, there is less opportunity to advance within the organization.

Employers also talked about the increased costs associated with hiring people who are not qualified. This means more on the job training and supervision to ensure quality of services are maintained. Over a third of employers interviewed mentioned that they have to pay more money for training and supervision of staff because they are now having to hire untrained staff and because of the high turnover rates.

Compromised Quality of Services

Quality of services is also a major concern for employers in the context of recruitment and retention challenges. Over three quarters of the employers interviewed mentioned concern about the quality of services as a result of their recruitment and retention challenges. Survey respondents said that on average, they had to hire seven staff members without the relevant qualifications in the past five years. Over a third of the organizations that responded to the survey said that they have had to hire unqualified staff in the past five years. During our interviews, the vast majority of employers also said that they are having more trouble finding qualified staff. One person added that they are now hiring people that they would have overlooked five years ago because the available pool of qualified people has diminished.

Employers were concerned about the implications in terms of the quality of services provided through their organizations when they are forced to hire unqualified staff. As mentioned before, hiring unqualified staff requires more training and supervision resources. When resources are limited, this takes away from time that could be spent providing services to clients. It also means that qualified staff are experiencing additional workloads and stress as they try to make up for the lack of trained workers. This perpetuates the problem of recruitment and retention, as trained workers are more likely to burnout quickly under these conditions.

The high turnover rates also have implications for the quality of services. Employers said that the high turnover of staff is also very hard on clients in that they often experience a setback in their progress as they deal with staff changes. One agency said that its clients are having to stay longer in the programs because of these setbacks, as they essentially have to start over every time they have to deal with a new staff person. Clients are also stuck on long waitlists while organizations are struggling with staff shortages.

Inability to Retain Casual Employees

As previously mentioned, employers in this sector reported a high degree of turnover with their casual employees, which suggests that it is extremely difficult to retain casual employees. Employers are in a position of competing with each other for staff, so employers said that casuals will go wherever there is work. In smaller organizations especially, it can be difficult to provide regular or guaranteed hours. Half of the employers interviewed mentioned that they cannot provide adequate hours for their casual staff through their organizations. Employers said that they feel they are putting in resources to train casuals, but then find that the casuals are never available to them, because they are forced to make themselves available to several organizations at the same time to get enough hours of work. As well, employers said that most employees are looking for permanent positions, so they will leave casual positions if they get the opportunity to take on a full-time position. One third of employers said that without available casuals, they feel that they are not providing a supportive work environment, one which allows regular employees to take their desired vacations and take sick time when they need it.

Impacts on Employees

Challenges around recruitment and retention are also felt by employees in the sector. Employers were asked to itemize some of these impacts. According to employers, the impacts on employees are both positive and negative.

Stress

In terms of the impacts of recruitment and retention challenges on employees in the sector, the literature focused primarily on the work-related

stress that results from such challenges. The findings of this study showed that stress is in fact a major impact on employees in the sector. Over a quarter of the survey respondents said that stress or burnout was one of the main reasons cited for leaving among staff that left their organizations in the past year. Employers interviewed in this study emphasized this finding by pointing out that when staff are working overtime to make up for staff shortages and to fill the gaps of untrained workers, their work-life balance is compromised. Almost half of the employers interviewed reported that their staff are experiencing higher stress and burnout while trying to maintain the quality of services in light of staff shortages, as well as the implications of this on their work/life balance.

Feeling Undervalued

Many employers said that although they make efforts to try to value their employees, it can be difficult to make the time to do this when the existing staff can barely maintain their services to clients due to staff shortages. Employers said that staff are also left feeling undervalued when they are unable to take their desired holiday time or sick days because of the lack of relief workers. Almost half of the employers interviewed pointed out that despite the fact that workers in this sector are professionals, they are not treated as professionals.

Demanding Better Opportunities

Employers did point out that the current recruitment and retention challenges do have some benefits for employees though. Employers said that employees can be more demanding on their employers in terms of wages, schedules, career advancement, and professional development opportunities. According to our employer survey, it appears that employees are moving around between organizations as better opportunities arise. Over half of the survey respondents said that they had employees leave in the past year for jobs with better pay or for jobs with more or better shifts. Just under half of the respondents said that they had employees leave in the past year to join organizations that were offering them better career advancement opportunities. This shows that employees are taking advantage of staffing shortages to improve their own employment situation. When asked about the impacts of recruitment and retention problems on employees in the

interviews, most employers talked about the negative impacts, but almost a third of employers confirmed the findings of the survey by pointing out that employees can often be in a position of advantage over the employer in this situation.

Impacts on the Community Social Service Sector

Many of our study participants expressed concern that the factors that are causing the current recruitment and retention problems in the sector are contributing to an overall negative image of the sector in the market place. Survey respondents and employer interviewees said that the low wages in the sector make the sector unappealing to potential employees. Every single employer said that the community social service sector is not faring very well when it comes to competing with other sectors for employees. They pointed out that other sectors pay better wages. They said that other sectors even pay better for similar work. The vast majority of interviewees said they are losing staff not just to the retail, restaurant, construction, and forestry sectors, but also to the education system and government positions that involve similar work to what is done through the non-profit social service delivery agencies.

Roles of Stakeholders

During this study we asked employers about their own role in addressing recruitment and retention challenges. In addition we inquired about what roles employers see for their employer association and the provincial government in addressing recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in BC.

Role of Employers

Employers mostly saw their role as making their work places as supportive and positive as possible to remain competitive in attracting staff to their organizations. The employers suggested that they need to have formal policies in place to support employees in professional development and training, such as reimbursement programs for relevant courses. Informally, employers also said they need to monitor the well-being of their staff, provide opportunities for socializing, and allow for flexible scheduling so that staff can balance their work life with responsibilities at home. About one third of employers interviewed thought that the factors contributing to

problems with recruitment and retention, such as low wages, instability, and lack of respect for the work in the sector, are more 'big picture' than what individual employers can address. However, all employers interviewed did say that they see a role for individual organizations in helping to improve the reputation of the sector. Over a third of employers interviewed said that they need to lobby civil servants and politicians to increase funding to the sector, as well as create public awareness about the importance of the services provided through the sector.

Best Practices

As part of the study, we took the opportunity to ask employers about some of their best practices around improving recruitment and retention.

Best Practices for Recruitment

One fifth of the organizations interviewed mentioned that they have had success in recruiting new staff among people who have worked for the organization in the past through internships or volunteer opportunities. The fact that interns and volunteers have chosen to work with the organization in a volunteer or educational capacity shows that they are interested in the organization and the type of work they do. Interns and volunteers also get a sense of how the organization operates and how they would fit in with the organization. Employers said they like to recruit interns and volunteers when positions open up because they already have a sense of how that person works and interacts with other staff and the clients.

Employers said that it is important to tap into as many networks as possible, especially when dealing with the reality that trained potential employees are hard to find. Employers said they need to cast a broad net by advertising through many different sources, such as the internet, other organizations, professional or employer association, and community colleges. They also said that they need to advertise not just locally, but also provincially and nationally. Employers said to never underestimate the power of word of mouth. Many organizations have said that this strategy has worked well for them.

Employers said that since they are often limited in their ability to be competitive in terms of wages, they have to make their work environments as positive and

supportive as possible to attract workers to their organizations. They said they do this by providing opportunities for socializing, offering strong mentorship programs, creating time for debriefing, providing around-the-clock support and supervision (given that shift work is common in the sector), and creating opportunities for staff recognition.

Employers said that they have to create interest in the sector among students – not just post-secondary students, but also secondary students, before they make their educational decisions based on what careers they would like to pursue. Almost every single employer mentioned the importance of exposing youth to the work done in the sector. Employers said they do this by sending staff and clients to do presentations or to staff tables at job fairs, to show how rewarding the jobs can be and what valuable contributions they can make to society and the people they serve through this sector. Employers said that creating internship programs with local universities is another means of generating interest in the sector. One employer suggested that offering job shadowing for students who might be interested in the sector is also a good option for creating interest. Employers said that it is important to have promotional materials available for people that might be interested in the field to highlight the benefits of choosing a career in the sector.

Many employers interviewed said that with the current difficulties finding trained potential employees, employers have to be more willing to take on employees without relevant qualifications and do on-the-job training. Two thirds of the employers brought up the importance of providing professional development and training opportunities for staff. They said this professional development and training can happen through supporting the employee to get the relevant training from a community college while balancing work or through providing a strong mentorship program and ongoing supervision and supports.

One fifth of organizations interviewed mentioned that they have been trying to bring on foreign workers to fill vacancies in their organizations. They said that this process has been difficult though, as there are many bureaucratic barriers to bringing in foreign workers. During our consultation with union representatives, however, unions said that that workers should have rights to citizenship and permanent residency from the moment they arrive, as well as be permitted to bring family members into

the country. The unions felt that temporary foreign worker programs are exploitative if the program allows workers to be sent home after a short period of time. All employers said that flexibility is key when trying to recruit in such a competitive labour market. One employer said that interviews need to be more flexible to get a better sense of the potential employees' needs and career goals and then design the position to suit those needs. Other employers said that they have readjusted the job descriptions for positions where there have been long vacancies to allow for promotion from within the organization or to find better-suited candidates.

Best Practices for Retention

Just as it is important create a positive work environment to improve recruitment, it is also important for improving retention of staff. Employers said that providing a supportive work environment with flexible schedules that allow for a healthy work-life balance is essential to avoid burnout, and to prevent high turnover rates. Employers said that creating a supportive and flexible work environment is how to encourage loyalty to the organization.

All employers mentioned the importance of encouraging staff to pursue professional development opportunities. Some organizations said that they provide tuition reimbursement to help staff access education. Professional development is not just a means of broadening the pool of potential employees for recruitment; it is also helpful for job satisfaction, especially when there are limited opportunities for upward mobility. Connected to the idea of professional development, some employers also pointed out that having a good internal training program is important for retention, as it allows employees to get started on the right foot.

Some employers said that they do their best to find ways to increase salaries. One organization said that they often look for ways to tighten up their business practices and when they do find a way, they increase salaries for their staff. Another said that they fast track employees through the pay steps based on good performance. Employers said that having good internal communication practices is essential. They said that it is really important for employers to know the needs of their staff and this can be achieved through both formal and informal communications. Employers talked about the need for flexibility in the recruitment process, but they

also said it is important for retention. Employers suggested many ways to make the work flexible to reflect the fact that the sector is female dominated and that women are often the primary caregivers for their children. Employers also said that they try to make start and finish times flexible to allow parents to be in sync with their children's schedules. Employers talked about flexibility in scheduling as being key to allowing a work-life balance for staff.

Best Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Casual Employees

Several employers interviewed, especially in the larger regions, suggested that a regional pool of casuals be created to allow employers to have one common source of casual employees. About one third of the employers surveyed also said that an area-wide relief staff assignment would be beneficial to their organizations. This would eliminate the competition between organizations that is taking place when casual employees are making themselves available to several different employers at one time. Employers said this would also mean that casual employees could be guaranteed more regular hours, even if it is not with one organization. A regional pool would also allow agencies to share the cost of recruitment.

Some employers suggested offering casual employees benefits. They said that the lack of benefits for casuals is a deterrent to staying in a casual position.

Some employers suggested that casual staff need to be made to feel like they are part of the team. Organizations said they achieve this by inviting casual staff to regular staff meetings and including casual staff in the staff recognition programs. Another organization said that providing casual staff with the same professional development opportunities as regular staff is helpful.

Employers said that it is important to have strong communication practices with casual employees. They said that often casual employees are simply let go if they offer limited availability. One employer said that the employer should have a discussion with casual staff before this happens to find out why they are not making themselves available. Another employer said that the organizations should have seniority lists available to casual staff so that they know where they are in the calling order.

Role of the Employer Association

Almost every employer consulted during this study belonged to the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA). We asked employers about what they think CSSEA can be doing to address the sector's challenges around recruitment and retention as the employer association.

Although it was mentioned from time to time during the study that CSSEA does not do advocacy, employers thought that CSSEA has the capacity to take on a more 'big picture' role to address these issues. The vast majority felt that CSSEA should be doing advocacy to address the recruitment and retention issues faced by the sector. All but one employer interviewed said that CSSEA should be using its position with government to lobby for more funding for the sector to ensure that the non-profit service delivery agencies can adequately pay their staff in a way that values their work. Several employers also said that they would like to see CSSEA use its resources to do more to promote the sector as a desirable career opportunity. While individual employers can talk to the civil servants they deal with and do local presentations to encourage people to pursue careers in the sector, employers said that the employer association needs to be the collective voice of the employers to have a stronger impact.

About one quarter of employers also saw the role of the employer association as providing support to employers to help them address these issues within their organizations, while the big picture changes are taking place in the sector. Some employers pointed out that CSSEA has done a good job in the past of supporting employers by collecting and sharing information on best practices for addressing recruitment and retention at the organizational level. Employers said they would like CSSEA to continue taking on this role. However, some employers said that there has been so much research into the problems faced by employers in the community social service sector, so the employer association needs to use that information to start taking action to effect positive change.

Role of the Unions

During the interview process, some employers shared some of their ideas about what the unions could be doing. We also asked the multi-union working group for the community social service sector what they saw as their role in addressing these issues.

Some employers pointed out the benefits of being unionized in terms of creating a supportive work environment. However, over half of the employers mentioned that in some ways, they feel that their creativity to address recruitment and retention issues is limited by the collective agreement with unions. Employers suggested that the unions have to be as flexible as possible when negotiating their collective agreements. The employers said that unions need to recognize that employers are experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention and find ways of designing the wage grids that allows room for employers to offer the best wages possible when they are competing with other organizations for staff, without having to undermine the agreements. It is important to note that in some cases, there did seem to be some misunderstandings about how to interpret the collective agreement, which may have led to the comments about the agreements being inflexible.

The union representatives saw their main role as creating public awareness. They said they need to take an active role in improving the perception of the sector through putting resources towards marketing the value of the work done in the sector. They said that they have to show the benefits of working in this field for both the workers and the community as a whole. They pointed out that they are already taking on initiatives to achieve this, such as dedicating March as Community Social Services month to promote the sector and its contributions to society. The unions said that they also need to do more to ensure that the public and government see the workers in this sector as professionals and that they are compensated accordingly. The unions said that they also need to be prepared to do advocacy, by making sure that they have facts and evidence to support their efforts to improve wages and funding to the sector. They said that they need to highlight this information around election time to make sure that people are aware of the current funding conditions for the sector when they vote.

Role of Government

Employers were fairly unanimous in what role they saw for government in addressing these issues. Essentially, they saw government as having the ultimate power to address the recruitment and retention challenges of the sector. They said that this all boils down to funding. Employers said that government needs to increase its funding to provide contracts that allow for wages that reflect the cost of living and sufficiently value the work that is done in the sector. They also said that the government needs to rethink its funding models, so that non-profit service delivery agencies do not have to bid on contracts for funding every few years and risk losing their funding every time the contract expires.

Field-Specific Recruitment and Retention Issues

We went through the employer interviews to determine if there were any issues or themes that emerged specifically for the child care and residential care fields.

Child Care Employers

Interviewees identified some reasons as to why they are experiencing recruitment and retention challenges in the child care field. Low wages were the most often cited reason for problems. They said that students are seeking training and jobs in sectors that pay better. They also said it is difficult to find relief workers. However, because of licensing requirements, there needs to be a certain staff to child ratio, which means that staff cannot get their desired holiday and sick time. This leads to frustration and burnout. Employers also pointed out that there is not much room for promotions or upward mobility in the field, which affects retention, but is also a deterrent for young people considering entering the field. One interviewee said that staff are frustrated by inadequate funding, which limits their ability to purchase the resources they need to provide quality care. Interviewees also pointed out that people currently working in the field are retiring, so there is all the more need for new workers.

Employers in the child care field identified a number of specific impacts that they are experiencing as a result of recruitment and retention problems. They said that as a result of staff shortages, they have long waiting lists. Some said there are enough families on the waiting lists to warrant opening new centres, but there is no funding or staff. Employers said that when families cannot access child care, they make private arrangements and the organization lose them as potential clients.

Employers said there is always the dilemma of how to deal with the need for increased funding to ensure that their staff are paid adequately. They said that when the government does not give them enough, their only other option is to increase fees for the families using their child care centres. The employers, however, do not feel that this is fair to the families.

Employers said that because wages are so low and there is limited stability in child care, the centres are losing staff to the education system or government positions. These sectors pay more, offer better benefits, and have more stability. Employers said that once staff get a bit of experience, they move to the education system. Employers said that providing quality child care is similar to the work done in the education system, so workers should be paid similar wages. Employers said that because wages are so low, those opting to work in the field often have to supplement their wages with additional jobs in other sectors, such as working in a restaurant in the evening.

Some of the child care employers talked about the impact of government policies that give money for child care directly to the parents instead of the child care centres (this refers to the introduction of the federal government's Universal Child Care Benefit in 2006 that gives \$100 a month to all families with children under the ages of 6 years). One employer said that giving the money directly to parents has meant that parents are 'poaching' staff to get private care. This exacerbates the shortage of workers available to work in child care centres and creates even more competition for staff. Employers said that the government needs to give the money to the centres rather than individuals to ensure quality care. Many employers called for a universal child care program. They said the emphasis should be on early childhood education, not just babysitting. One employer pointed out that the centres cannot provide high quality child care based on the fees of parents alone – the support of government is needed.

Employers expressed concern that the public does not see the early childhood education workers as educators, but more as babysitters. They said this shows a lack of respect for the work done in the field. Employers said there needs to be public education around the importance of quality child care to help people understand why there needs to be a universal child care program. Employers said that this can be achieved by demonstrating the benefits and outcomes of being in a positive social and educational environment at a young age.

Residential Care Employers

Residential care employers had a number of similar concerns, but some also identified some field-specific issues. When asked why they are experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, they said that often people are not viewing jobs in this field as a career. They said that the government and public need to recognize that workers in this field are professionals.

Another contributing factor to the recruitment and retention difficulties is that the field involves 24-hour services. Employers said this makes it particularly difficult to recruit and retain staff, especially casual workers. One employer said that the organization's casual workers make excuses when asked to work on the weekends or on a night shift. They also said that employees will move around between organizations to get day shifts, leading to retention problems.

As with the child care centres, residential care employers also said they are competing with other sectors for employees, but in this case it is with hospitals, where staff get paid more and there is more stability. Again, they said this is especially the case for casuals. They said casuals are going to hospitals to work because they are larger organizations, so casuals have more opportunities for work and are more likely to be offered more hours on a regular basis.

Employers in the residential care field expressed more concern about being constrained by collective agreements than child care employers. Residential care employers said they want to provide flexible schedules for their staff to help promote recruitment and retention, but feel limited by requirements of the collective

agreement. Some mentioned the limitations on the number of hours staff can work in a shift as an example of a limitation on their flexibility for scheduling.

Employers pointed out that residential care facilities do not have the same licensing requirements as child care facilities, so it is easier for them to hire people who may not have the right qualifications, but do have the right kind of attitude. Employers said they are dealing with increased numbers of untrained staff by providing more on-the-job training and mentorship, so that they can meet their staffing needs in the face of a diminished labour pool.

Guiding Principles

Throughout this study, a number of key themes emerged. These themes can be looked at as guiding principles to be considered by all stakeholders when thinking about how to address the problems around recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in British Columbia.

According to the findings of the study, collaboration is important to addressing issues of recruitment and retention. The employer association could work together with unions to lobby government to increase funding to this sector. This collaboration needs to involve an open dialogue between the three key stakeholders, where personal agendas are left aside and all stakeholders make a genuine commitment to address the challenges in the sector. Having a unified voice creates a stronger voice and allows each organization to ensure that their message appeals to a broader audience.

The word respect came up over and over again throughout the study. There is concern that work in this sector is undervalued by government, thereby creating a lack of public respect for workers in the sector. The work done in this sector is rewarding for both workers and their clients, and makes valuable contributions to society. The stakeholders need to keep in mind that efforts to address issues of recruitment and retention must also focus on building respect for the workers in this sector. This happens through both creating healthy work environments and offering wages that adequately reflect the work that is done in this sector and its contributions to the overall health and well-being of our society.

Many of those consulted throughout this study said that the lack of respect for the workers in this sector stems from the fact that the public does not respect the clients served through the sector. The clients in the community social service sector are often marginalized and the importance of the services provided for these clients are typically undervalued. Efforts must be made to show not only that providing programs and services to the clients in the sector is rewarding and valuable, but that the clients themselves and the contributions they can make to society are recognized and valued.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations provide a starting place for addressing recruitment and retention issues in the community social service sector in British Columbia. These recommendations are built around the principle of fostering respect by government and the public for the work done in the sector and providing them with a better understanding of the people served by the sector and their value to society. This work is best done through collaborative efforts by stakeholders in the sector.

Government has the ultimate power to address the funding and stability issues that are contributing to the recruitment and retention problems faced by the community social service sector in BC. As such, we recommend that:

- The provincial government increase funding for the community social service sector to allow employers to pay employees wages that cover the
- cost of living and reflect the value of the work done in the sector;
- Wages be set at a rate that is comparable to similar work done in other sectors to promote both recruitment and retention in the community social service sector in BC;
- Benefits be extended to casual workers in the sector to help with retention problems;
- The provincial government funding models for the non-profit community social service delivery agencies be reviewed to identify models that would allow for more stability in the sector;

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- The provincial government create training incentives such as bursaries and scholarships, to encourage people to seek training in the related community college programs to increase the pool of trained workers in the sector; and
 - The provincial and federal governments look into options for creating a universal child care system where government funding for child care goes towards the creation of high quality child care spaces, rather than to individuals with children.

The reality is, however, that increasing funding contracts, reviewing funding models, and implementing a universal child care system might take a bit of time. These changes might move along faster through advocacy and public education. Therefore we recommend that:

- The unions, employer association, and employers be prepared for advocacy by having research available in the form of fact sheets around the funding trends over time in BC, how they compare to other provinces, and information on wages in comparable lines of work;
- The unions and employers should be joined by CSSEA in advocacy efforts to create a unified and stronger voice on this issue to ensure that the public and government understand the importance of the work done in the sector and the challenges they are currently experiencing around recruitment and retention;
- The employer association, with support from the unions, ensure that the collective agreement is understood by employers and to determine how to best address issues of recruitment and retention without undermining the collective agreement;
- Employers and the employer association work with community colleges to create training programs that suit the local needs of employers and allow employees to balance work while seeking training; and
- The employer association, employers, and unions look into methods of creating a regional pool of casual workers to share recruitment and training costs for employers, as well as help to guarantee more regular hours for casual employees.

Appendix 1: Summary of Literature

Recruitment Issues

Reasons for Recruitment Challenges

Organizations may experience challenges in terms of recruiting new employees for several reasons, according to the literature review. Some of these challenges are due to sector-related issues, but others are organization-specific.

Sector Related Recruitment Challenges

The literature points out that organizations in the sector are often in direct competition with each other for the same individuals in terms of recruiting new employees. This competition can be amplified when the sector is experiencing shortages of qualified workers. The shift work nature of the sector can also present a challenge to organizations trying to recruit new employees. The literature makes the point that employees in other sectors are often better paid, which makes recruiting new qualified workers to the sector all the more difficult.

Other external factors that may influence the sector's ability to recruit staff have to do with general labour market trends, according to the literature. The birth rate is declining, which means a diminishing pool of available workers. The employment rate in Canada and, especially BC, has also increased substantially in the past few years, further contributing the diminishing pool of available workers. Additionally, the Canadian population is aging, with a large proportion of the population reaching retirement age, which means the loss of intellectual capital to train up-and-coming staff. In such a competitive labour market, low wages make it even more difficult to recruit people to the sector.

The literature also shows that casual jobs with irregular or few hours or weekend and evening hours are particularly difficult to fill. The community social service sector in particular needs casual workers and workers willing to do shift work because of the 24 hour nature of the sector. The literature says that casual employees are more

likely to leave casual positions if regular full-time opportunities come up that offer more stability in terms of hours, better pay, and the opportunity for benefits.

One study also found that negative perceptions about the stability of the sector also make recruitment difficult. The study said that there is a perception that the community social service sector suffers from frequent job losses and organizations that dissolve. This creates an image of instability, which is not very appealing to those looking for employment. This perception might lead potential employees to seek careers in other more stable sectors.

Organization Related Recruitment Challenges

A specific organization may also experience difficulties with recruitment due to internal factors. For example, the cost of running competitions for positions is high and can be a barrier for some organizations. Organizations may also have limited human resources capacity, which makes running competitions and seeking out suitable candidates difficult. Organizational practices such as term hiring, uncompetitive benefits packages, and offering below average wages can make an organization unappealing to potential employees.

The location of an organization can also making recruitment more complicated because the type and size of a community be a factor. For example, organizations in small or remote communities often have a harder time recruiting employees, according to the literature. Organizations in small or remote communities typically face challenges in recruiting in that many new graduates leave these communities for larger urban centres with the assumption of better job prospects and more competitive pay.

Impacts of Recruitment Issues

When organizations within a sector are faced with competition for the same individuals, recruitment for job openings can become more costly in

that they often take longer. Organizations are also put into a position of having to offer more competitive wages and benefits packages. Difficulties with recruitment can also lead to long-term vacancies, which in turn, leads to high caseloads and longer hours for existing staff. Longer hours for staff often mean increased overtime costs and lower quality of care, as employees become over-burdened and burnout. Difficulties with recruitment and long term vacancies also compromises the quality of services provided and limits an organization's ability to expand services to meet demand.

Recruitment Strategies and Solutions

The literature suggests that recruitment issues can be addressed primarily through efforts to encourage students to pursue studies and careers in the field. The literature also recommends some other strategies mainly targeted at smaller or remote communities.

Encouraging Students to the Sector

The literature frequently notes the importance of encouraging both high school and post-secondary students to the sector as a strategy for addressing challenges of recruitment. Encouraging students to pursue studies and careers in the sector helps to ensure that qualified professionals will be available. The literature proposes a number of ideas to help encourage students to pursue careers in the sector. For example, it is suggested that offering scholarships to students entering related programs is a good strategy. Creating internship opportunities, either through coops or summer positions, is also a means of attracting students to the sector. These positions allow the employer and student to develop on-going professional relationships and give the employer a chance to assess the potential of a student. These positions also allow the student to evaluate his/her career choice and become more familiar with what it is like to work in the sector. The literature also recommends the use of the internet and other communications technology to recruit potential students to the sector, as this form of communication is particularly appealing to young people.

However, the literature does not overlook the importance of in-person recruitment as well, emphasizing that the sector should have a strong presence at job fairs and other such events, saying that recruiters at job fairs should come prepared with career kits to explain the career opportunities in the field. The literature mentions that these promotional visits need to be well organized and well promoted. These visits should also be timed appropriately, when students are looking for work.

Paying for Training

The literature suggests that covering some of the costs of training is a good recruitment strategy. The literature says offering to pay for some of the certificates staff might need before being hired, such as first aid, class 4 license, and wellness certificates, can help with the recruitment process. Some other ideas include offering training incentives or bursaries.

Addressing Wage Concerns

In order to remain competitive with other sectors, the literature recommends a number of potential incentives to help recruit potential qualified employees. The literature recommends the use of signing on bonuses and other hiring incentives. Another tool is to pay entry level jobs at higher rates than step one as a recruitment strategy.

Attracting Workers to Remote Communities

The literature says that hiring incentives are particularly useful for small and remote communities. To be competitive, small and remote communities might have to offer higher salaries. It is also important to promote the community as part of the recruitment process. Some ideas from the literature include creating information packages to market the community and encouraging site visits to not only introduce potential employees to the work environment, but also to show off the community and what it has to offer.

Retention Issues

Reasons for Retention Challenges

The literature identifies a number of issues that contribute to an organization's inability to retain staff. These factors can be divided into factors that are external to the organization and those that are internal problems.

External Factors

External reasons for retention problems are obviously difficult for organizations to address. An example of a sector related factor which presents a challenge for retention is commute times. If employees have to travel a long way to work, they may burnout more quickly, as this adds several hours to their working day and keeps them away from their families and friends and other personal interests. Organizations located in more remote or smaller communities also have more difficulties retaining staff, as employees are more likely to feel professionally isolated, according to the literature. As well, employees who relocate for work may find that they are not happy in their new community.

Again, there are sector-related challenges that can cause organizations within the sector to have trouble with retention. Firstly, there are hiring practices that make retention difficult. For example, term hiring can be a barrier to retention, as staff hired in this manner may look elsewhere in order to find a permanent position and job security. Studies found that part-time staff had higher turnover rates than full-time staff. The lack of benefits for employees can also be a disincentive for employees to stay with an organization. The literature also suggests that organizations that do not provide prospects for professional development or promotion can cause employees to feel trapped due to a lack of growth opportunities, and therefore look for work elsewhere at an organization that does offer these opportunities. Upward mobility is not a key feature of the community social services sector.

Organization Related Factors

According to the literature, certain organizations may also have policies in place or practices that contribute to difficulties with retention. Lack of adequate supervision was identified as a reason that employees may leave an organization. This lack of supervision is a factor when an employee starts at an organization, as well as throughout their time with the organization. The literature suggests that orientation and mentoring for new employees helps the new employees better integrate into the organization, while ongoing supervision, such as performance reviews, provide clear lines of communication for both employees and managers to express and address concerns. A lack of ongoing supervision can also contribute to a feeling of isolation among staff, when they do not feel that they have people to bounce ideas off of or proper guidance to improve their performance. Too much bureaucracy within an organization or inadequate amounts of resources were also identified as internal factors that lead to frustration for employees. It was also pointed out that the lack of recognition for good work can be another source of frustration for employees.

Impacts of Retention Issues

Poor retention in an organization has impacts on both the organization and the organization's employees. For the organization, repeatedly running competitions to fill positions and training new staff can be very costly. High turnover rates also require the organization to spend more time looking for short-term relief workers and pay out more overtime to current staff.

In terms of impacts for staff, the literature points out that the remaining staff will have to carry high client loads and work additional hours to compensate for vacancies, which can lead to further burnout and frustration. This, in turn, leads to higher turnover rates, as the literature claims that appropriate caseload is critical to job satisfaction.

Retention Strategies and Solutions

Retention strategies outlined in the literature focus both on creating a supportive and positive work environment, as well as creating positions that suit employees' need for a work-life balance.

Creating a Supportive and Positive Work Environment

The literature points to a number of ideas for creating a supportive and positive work environment as a means of improving retention. A general recommendation in the literature is to promote the agency mission and values that are developed and supported by staff, rather than imposed on staff, and ensure that the agency supports this mission and values through its work. The literature also suggests that implementing multi-cultural policies can help make employees feel more comfortable in their work environment.

As mentioned above, the literature states that the lack of a formal orientation procedure can be a barrier to retention. The literature strongly suggests formalized orientation. One recommendation involves using current employees as mentors or trainers for new people entering the organization to help make the new employee feel comfortable and get their footing. This can also help build relationships among staff members to create a sense of belonging, so that employees feel that they have a support network within the organization.

The literature often mentions the need for increased supervision to support staff, as well as performance appraisals. Performance appraisals serve as a means of gauging satisfaction levels of employees and allow employers and employees to catch problems early and address them. It can be easier to address problems than to replace an employee. Performance appraisals also provide opportunities to develop individualized work plans, so that employees can map out targets for their desired progress in the organization. They also allow employers the chance to recognize employees' positive efforts within the organization. The literature also states that it is important to have open and honest relationships with staff, which can be facilitated through the performance review process. Performance reviews also allow the opportunity for hands-on management, which the literature recommends.

In order to support professional development, the literature suggests using the internet and other communication technologies for online learning or information sharing. This will help employees stay current with new developments in the sector, by connecting them with other practitioners and online professional development opportunities. These online or other in-person learning opportunities allow employees to develop new skills and competencies, which will help employees feel more confident and satisfied with the work they do. The literature says that this could also allow for job rotation within the organization, to help keep the work fresh and provide new challenges for employees.

Allowing Work-Life Balance

Given that jobs in the sector may require shift work and overtime and that the work itself can be demanding, the literature provides a number of strategies for increasing work-life balance. An appropriate work-life balance helps reduce stress and prevent burnout, which in turn leads to higher employee retention. Some ideas from the literature include increased vacation time, more flexibility with work hours to allow time to address family needs, and job sharing. The literature also suggests granting personal leaves.

Other Strategies

The literature also presents some other strategies to improve retention. For instance, contract completion bonuses can help motivate term employees to complete their contracts. Exit interviews also offer a means for employers to learn what they could do differently to improve the work environment and promote retention. The literature also suggests, particularly for smaller and remote communities, for the employer to encourage their employees to integrate into the community and create a sense of belonging.

Appendix 2: Employers Survey Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this survey was to gather quantitative data to determine if unionized employers in the community social service sector are experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention, as well as what factors may contribute to difficulties in terms of recruitment and retention. The survey also examines possible strategies to address recruitment and retention issues, should it become evident that organizations in the sector are experiencing difficulties.

The survey was circulated to the executive directors of 95 community social service organizations that are unionized under the BCGEU between November 1 and 19, 2007. A total of 50 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 53%. Of those 50 surveys, 25 were totally complete, as not all organizations track the quantitative statistics asked about in the survey. When just looking at the surveys that were totally complete, there was a response rate of 25%.

Other Factors

It is difficult for community social service organizations to find the time to complete surveys. Quantitative data is particularly difficult for the some organizations to track, given that that they are often short-staffed, underfunded, and often do not have a human resources manager.

Another important factor to consider when looking at the response rate to this survey is that there have been a number of studies conducted on this topic recently. As a result, several organizations contacted to fill in the surveys were unwilling to participate. Some organization representatives said that they have already completed a number of surveys on this topic recently and did not want to participate in our study because there is no immediate benefit to participating in studies for them, especially given their constraints around time and funding.



Introductory Questions

The first set of questions had two purposes. Firstly, the questions were designed to get a sense of the types of organizations responding to the survey to ensure that there was a range of respondents. Secondly, the survey asked several questions about the organization and what it offers to staff in order to test some findings of the literature.

The organizations that responded to the survey provide a range community social services. Almost two thirds of the organizations provide day programs to their clients and 44% provide residential care services. One third of the organizations that responded provide employment or youth services. A quarter of the respondents provide counseling services and only 7% provide health care services. Many respondents also added that they provide services specific to children, such as day cares or other early learning programs.

Table 1: What is the PRIMARY type of community social services your organization provides? [Select all that apply]

Services	%
Residential care	44.2
Day programs	60.5
Employment services	30.2
Health care services	7.0
Counseling services	25.6
Youth services	30.2
Other	41.9

N=43

The organizations that responded mostly serve urban areas. Over two thirds of respondents said they serve an urban setting, while 18% said they serve rural areas. Another 18% said they serve both rural and urban areas.

Table 2: Does your organization operate in a rural or urban setting? [Select one]

Rural Vs Urban	%
A rural setting	17.8
An urban setting	64.4
A mix of both rural and urban	17.8

N=45

Almost half of the organizations that responded operate in the Lower Mainland. One fifth of the organizations operate on Vancouver Island and 16% are in the Okanagan. There were no respondents from the Sunshine Coast, but 7% serve the Kootenays, and 9% serve Northern BC.

Table 3: In what region does your organization operate? [Select one]

Location	%
Lower Mainland	48.9
Vancouver Island	20.0
Okanagan	15.6
Sunshine Coast	0.0
Kootenays	6.7
Northern BC	8.9

N=45

The literature suggests providing employees with strong supervision is a means of promoting retention among staff. As such, survey respondents were asked about their ratio of managers or supervisors to non-management staff. There were a range of responses. The smallest manager to non-manager ratio was 1 manager to 4 non-managers. Other organizations have one manager for over 20 non-management employees. The average was 1 manager to 12 non-managers.



Table 4: What is the ratio of management to non-management staff in your organization? (e.g. 1 manager to 5 non-managers)

Supervision	%
1 manager to less than 5 non-managers	9.8
1 manager to 6 - 10 non-managers	41.5
1 manager to 11 -15 non-managers	29.3
1 manager to 16 - 20 non-managers	2.4
1 manager to 21- 25 non-managers	4.9
1 manager to 25 or more non-managers	12.2

N=41

The literature also suggested that a formal orientation process is a factor in staff retention. Respondents were asked if their organizations have formal orientation procedures for new staff, such as providing mentoring from another staff person or an orientation manual, which is regularly used when a new staff member joins the team. An overwhelming majority of respondents said they do have orientation procedures that are regularly used (See Table 5).

Seven organizations said that they have an orientation checklist to go over with new employees. Some organizations also said they their orientation goes beyond just familiarizing staff with their own tasks and departments, to include tours of the organizations other departments and facilities. Many organizations make a current staff member available to mentor new staff members. Fourteen organizations provide manuals to help guide new staff. According to the responses, orientations can last from 4 hours to day long sessions, to being closely monitored throughout the new employee’s three month probation period.

Table 5: Does your organization have a formal orientation procedure for new staff (e.g. provide mentoring from another staff person or provide an orientation manual), which is regularly used when a new staff member joins the team? [Select one]

Orientation	%
Yes	93.2
No	6.8
DK/NA	0

N=44

The literature also points to the importance of providing staff with professional development opportunities as a means of retaining employees. Respondents were asked if they actively encourage and support staff in pursuing professional development opportunities. Again, most respondents said that they do.

Table 6: Does your organization actively encourage and support staff in pursuing professional development opportunities? [Select one]

Professional Development	%
Yes	92.9
No	4.8
DK/NA	2.4

N= 42

Performance reviews were also recommended in the literature as they allow employers to check in with staff to ensure they are happy or to address any problems that may occur. Respondents were asked if their organizations conduct regular performance reviews for every staff member. Approximately 90% of respondents said their organizations do this.



Table 7: Does your organization conduct regular performance reviews for every staff member? [Select one]

Performance Reviews	%
Yes	90.5
No	9.5
DK/NA	0

N=42

Related to providing professional development opportunities, the literature also says that employers should provide employees with room for growth within the organization through promotions to help retain staff. On average, 12% of employees in the responding organizations received promotions since they started at the organization. Almost half of the organizations reported that between 1% and 19% of their employees had received a promotion since starting at their organizations. However, over one fifth of respondents said that no employees in their organizations had received promotions since they started.

Table 8: What percentage of your current full-time permanent employees has received a promotion since they began at your organization?

Promotions	%
0%	21.2
Less than 20%	48.5
20%-39%	21.2
40%-59%	6.1
60% or More	3.0

N=33

Most organizations (65%) reported that the average age of their employees is 36-45 years, which corresponds to Statistics Canada's profile of the sector. Almost one fifth of respondents said that the average age of their employees was between 25 and 35 years.

Table 9: What is the average age of your workforce?

Age	%
25-35	17.5
36-45	65.0
46-55	12.5
56+	0.0
DK/NA	5.0

N=40

Recruitment Issues

Respondents were asked how many vacancies they had in their organizations at the time the survey was in field. On average, the responding organizations had 1.2 regular full-time, 1.9 regular part-time, and 5.3 casual positions vacant in their organizations, which shows that it is more difficult to recruit and retain regular full-time and regular part-time staff than it is casual staff. This assertion is further confirmed by looking at the proportion of vacancies. Close to half of the reporting organizations have no regular full-time or part-time vacancies, while only 14% of the organizations said they do not have any casual vacancies. Only 7% of organizations reported having 5 or more regular full-time vacancies, while 39% of organizations said they have 5 or more casual vacancies.

Table 10: What is the current number of vacancies in your organization?

# of Vacancies	Regular Full-Time	Regular Part-Time	Casual
0	56.7%	48.3	14.3
1 or 2	30.0%	17.2	21.4
3 or 4	6.7%	17.2	25.0
5 or more	6.7%	17.2	39.3

N=30, 29, 28

In terms of regular full-time positions, the organizations reported that most vacancies among residence worker and counsellor positions. One respondent said that they had recruited five times in the past year for a counsellor position, but the staff in this position quickly move into other vacant positions within the organization. According to those respondents reporting the number of months the regular full-time residence worker positions have been vacant, these positions were vacant for an average of 3.4 months. For those reporting the length of vacancies for counselors in their organizations, this type of position was vacant for an average of 4.6 months.

Table 11: Please list the titles for the REGULAR FULL-TIME positions that are currently vacant in your organization.

Position	#
Residence Worker	12
Counsellors	8
Outreach Workers	2
Supervisors	4
Day Program Worker	4
Early Childhood Educator	1
Occupational Therapist	1
Admin	3
Drivers	4
Other	2

N=16

Respondents reported even more vacancies among the regular part-time residence workers. Many respondents said they have vacancies particularly for night-time residence workers positions. Among those who indicated the length of vacancy, the average length of vacancy for part-time residence care workers was 5 months.

Table 12: Please list the titles for the REGULAR PART-TIME positions that are currently vacant in your organization.

Position	#
Residence Worker	22
Counsellors	6
Outreach Workers	1
Day Program Worker	4
Child Care Worker	1
Admin	2
Other	3
Drivers	1

N=16

Responding organizations also reported a number vacancies for casual residence workers. A number of organizations also said they are having difficulties finding relief workers for early childhood educators. Many respondents added comments that they have far fewer casual or relief workers available to them than in previous years and that they frequently have to recruit for these positions.



Table 13: Please list the titles for the CASUAL positions that are currently vacant in your organization.

Position	#
Residence Worker	12
Counsellors	1
Day Program Worker	4
Early Childhood Educator	7
Community Support Worker	6
Home Support Worker	1
Drivers	2
Other	5

N=25

Long vacancies are an indicator of difficulties with recruitment. On average, the responding organizations had 2.7 vacancies within their organization for longer than 3 months. Although almost half of the respondents said they did not have vacancies for more than three months, one quarter of respondents said that they had between 1 and 3 vacancies for over three months. Almost 10% of respondents said they had more than 10 positions open for more than three months.

Table 14: In the last year, how many positions have been vacant for longer than three months?

Vacancies	%
0	46.9
1 to 3	25.0
4 to 6	12.5
7 to 9	6.3
10+	9.4

N=32

Respondents were asked to specifically discuss the positions in their organizations that have been vacant for more than three months and why they had been vacant. The lack of suitable or trained applicants was the top reason for extended vacancies. The lack of qualified applicants probably relates closely to the second most common answer, which was that the positions were vacant due to their pay rate. Positions with undesirable hours of work, shift work, or temporary work were also mentioned as being difficult to fill. Some respondents simply said that they did not have time to run recruitment processes, and others said their remote location was a deterrent for potential applicants. One respondent said that because of their difficulties in filling some positions, they have actually lost the funding for those positions. The respondent also said that in order to deal with the fact that positions have been vacant for so long, they either have to fill positions with people that are not technically qualified or offer pay at the top rate of the grid, sometimes even to unqualified staff.



Table 15: Please list the titles of the positions that have been vacant for more than three months in the past year and why the positions have been vacant. (e.g. direct service provider - unable to recruit someone at the current pay rates; administrative assistant - no time to run recruitment process).

Vacancies	#
Pay Rate	10
Difficult Clients	2
Lack Of Suitable/Trained Applicants	14
Remote Location	2
Hours Of Work/Shift Work	5
Temporary/Not Guaranteed Hours	4
No Time To Run Recruitment Process	3
Other	5
Don't Know	1

N=19

Respondents reported having to run an average of 8 competitions in the past year to fill an existing position within the organization. Only 10% of the responding organizations said that they did not hold any competitions for existing positions in the last year, but 57% said that they held between 1 and 5 competitions. Over half of the respondents said that they held more competitions for existing positions in the past year compared to the previous ten years. Less than 10% said that they held fewer competitions in the past year than in the previous 10 years. The fact that many organizations are running more competitions than in previous years can be of concern, as it is often costly to run a competition. Respondents said the average cost of running a competition for a direct service provider is \$476. They said the average cost of running a competition for an administrative position is \$593.

Table 16: How many times have you had to run a competition for job openings to fill an existing position within the organization (i.e. not a new position) in the past year?

Competitions	%
0	10.0
1 to 5	56.7
6 to 10	13.3
11 to 15	6.7
16+	13.3

N=30

Table 17: How does this number of competitions for existing positions (as provided in question 7) compare to the previous ten years? [Select one]

Competitions	%
More competitions per year	53.1
Same number of competitions per year	28.1
Fewer competitions per year	9.4
Don't Know	9.4

N=32

Wages have over and over again been identified as an issue in recruitment. Organizations have said that they often have to offer new hires top pay rates in order to entice workers to come to their organizations. Interestingly, over two thirds of respondents said that they did not pay any of their new hires at top rate, despite some of the concerns expressed earlier about low pay being a challenge in recruitment. Just over a quarter of respondents said that they paid between 1 and 25% of their new hires at the top rate, while over 10% said that they had to pay over two thirds of their new hires at top rates. Respondents said that some of the positions they have had to pay hires at top rate for are:

- Residence workers
- Counsellors
- Child care workers
- Fund developers
- Nutritionists
- Support workers



Table 18: In the past year, what proportion of your organization’s new hires is being paid at the top rate?

Top Rate Pay	%
0	64.7
1% to 25%	26.5
26% to 50%	0.0
51% to 75%	0.0
76% to 100%	11.8

N=34

Given some of their challenges with recruiting, respondents were asked how many times their organization has had to hire a worker without relevant qualifications in the past five years. Respondents said that on average they did this 7 times in the past five years. However, almost two thirds of respondents said that they have not had to hire workers without relevant qualifications. Respondents said that they had to hire workers without qualifications for the following positions:

- Counsellors
- Residence worker
- Community support workers
- Early child care worker
- Outreach workers
- Administrative workers

Table 19: How many times in the past FIVE years has your organization hired a worker without relevant qualifications (e.g. someone who has not completed a certificate program in the field) due to a lack of available workers with appropriate qualifications?

Hires Without Qualifications	%
0	61.8
1 to 10	20.6
11 or more	17.6

N=34

Retention Issues

In order to get a snapshot of the responding organizations' employee retention, they were asked to state the number of employees they had on payroll for various types of positions as of January 2007. They were then asked to state the number of employees that discontinued their employment between January 2007 and the time of the survey.

Respondents said that on average they had 50 regular full-time employees that were part of their bargaining unit in January 2007. They also said that on average, 5 of their employees discontinued their employment within the year, which means that on average, 10% of the current employees discontinued their employment. Respondents said that on average 14% of their regular part-time employees in their bargaining units discontinued their employment. On average, almost half of the casual employees who were making themselves available for work and were part of the bargaining unit apparently discontinued their employment. This shows that it is easier to retain full-time staff than it is to retain part-time staff. This also shows that it is extremely difficult to maintain casual workers in this sector under the current labour market conditions.

Table 20: How many employees do you have on payroll as of January 2007? And Please state the number of employees who discontinued their employment as of January 1, 2007 to the current date.

Type of Employee	Current Employees (Average #)	Discontinued Employees (Average #)	Average % of Current Employees that Discontinued Work
Regular full-time (bargaining unit)	50	5	10%
Regular full-time (non-bargaining unit)	14	2	14%
Regular part-time (bargaining unit)	17	4	24%
Regular part-time (non-bargaining unit)	9	0.4	4%
Active casual employees who make themselves available for work (bargaining unit)	17	8	47%
Active casual employees who make themselves available for work (non-bargaining unit)	3	0.3	10%

Respondents were asked how long the average stay for their staff is in months. The responses reflected the retention difficulties, particularly around retaining casual workers, noted in the previous question. The organizations reported that the average stay of staff is much longer if the staff are regular full-time employees. Regular full-time employees in the bargaining unit stayed an average of 82 months, compared to 57 months for regular part-time staff, and only 20 months for casual staff.

Table 21: What is the average stay for staff in months?

Type of Employee	Average Length of Employment (Months)
Regular full-time (bargaining unit)	82
Regular full-time (non-bargaining unit)	105
Regular part-time (bargaining unit)	57
Regular part-time (non-bargaining unit)	45
Active casual employees who make themselves available for work (bargaining unit)	20
Active casual employees who make themselves available for work (non-bargaining unit)	22

Organizations reported that their executive directors, supervisory staff, and administrative staff stay the longest with the organization. The responding organizations did list some counselors, residential workers, and early childhood education workers as having stayed with the organization for a long while, but in lesser frequencies than the more management/supervisor and administrative staff. Employers reported the frontline staff, such as counsellors, early childhood education workers, outreach workers and residential workers as having shorter stays with the organization. Employers also said they have trouble retaining casual staff.

Given the difficulties identified in previous questions about retaining casual staff, respondents were asked how many of their current employees are in contractual positions that would rather be in permanent positions. The responding organizations said that on average they had 0.6 staff members that were interested in permanent positions. Of those that responded to the question, 80% said that they did not have any staff in this situation; however, one organization reported that it has 5 staff members wanting permanent positions.



Table 21: How many current staff people are in contractual positions that would prefer to be in permanent positions?

Employees Wanting Permanent Contracts	%
0	80
1 to 2	10
3 to 4	5
5 or more	5

N=20

Employers were asked why their employees had left their organizations as of January 1, 2007. Most employers selected relocation to a new community or for higher pay rates as the reasons as to why they have had staff leave over the past year. Organizations also had staff leave for better shifts and better career advancement opportunities. Almost half of the organizations said they had employees leave due to retirement.

Table 22: If the reason employees have left the organization as of January 1, 2007 is known, please report the number of employees who have left for each of the following reasons listed below (use one category only per employee).

Reasons for Leaving	% Selected This Reason
Higher pay rate	57
Job I like better	24
More hours of work or better shifts	52
Relocation to new community	62
Career change	48
Dismissal - permanent employee	29
Retirement	43
Burnout (long hours, heavy workload)	29
Better career advancement opportunities	48
Dismissal during probation	29
Return to school	29
Family issues	24
Left the sector	19
Other (please specify)	19

As Table 23 shows, despite the fact that many organizations had people leaving due to retirement and relocation, organizations had the most employees leaving due to finding another job with higher pay rates. As well, organizations had a significant number of employees that left for more hours of work or better shifts and better career advancement opportunities.

Table 23: If the reason employees have left the organization as of January 1, 2007 is known, please report the number of employees who have left for each of the following reasons listed below (use one category only per employee).

Reasons for Leaving	# of Employees That Left for This Reason
Higher pay rate	53
Job I like better	5
More hours of work or better shifts	45
Relocation to new community	14
Career change	10
Dismissal - permanent employee	10
Retirement	9
Burnout (long hours, heavy workload)	4
Better career advancement opportunities	31
Dismissal during probation	6
Return to school	4
Family issues	3
Left the sector	9
Other (please specify)	18

Respondents were asked about how their organizations' current turnover rates compared to their turnover rates 5 years ago. Almost half of the respondents said that the turnover rate is about the same, while the other almost half said that it is worse. Only 1 respondent said that their organization's turnover rate is better than 5 years ago.

Table 24: Is the turnover rate better or worse than five years ago?

Turnover	%
Better	4.2
Same	45.8
Worse	45.8
DK/NA	4.2

N=24

Solutions to Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Respondents were asked whether they think certain strategies for addressing recruitment and retention challenges would be effective. Almost every respondent said that increasing wages would be a means of overcoming the current recruitment and retention challenges experienced by employers. The vast majority (83%) of respondents also said that increasing program funding would be a good strategy for addressing current challenges. Two thirds of respondents said that providing career development opportunities would be useful, while one third said that lowering staff-to-client ratios, having more relief staff, and advertising more among more diverse populations would also be helpful. One quarter of respondents said that recognition of foreign credentials would be beneficial. About one in five respondents would like to see area or community-wide staff dispatching and increased funding for advertising. Only 17% of respondents thought that English language programs for foreign trained workers would help them with their recruitment challenges.



Table 25: What internal strategies would be helpful to assist in recruiting and retaining workers? [Select all that apply]

Strategies	%
Increased wage rates	95.8
Lower staff-client ratios	33.3
Area-wide relief staff assignment	29.2
Area or community-wide staff dispatch	20.8
Increased program funding	83.3
Upgrading and career development opportunities	62.5
Increased funding for advertising	20.8
Circulating postings to cultural, indigenous, disabled groups and education institutions	29.2
English language programs for foreign trained workers	16.7
Recognition of foreign credentials	25.0

The literature identified the importance of attracting students to related training programs to ensure that their will be a strong pool of available and trained workers in the sector. As such respondents were asked what the sector could be doing to promote working in the field to students. The vast majority (92%) of respondents said that increasing the wages is necessary to attract students to the sector. About three quarters of respondents said that providing scholarships for students entering related programs and doing promotion at universities and high schools are important for attracting students to the sector. About two thirds of respondents said that employers should be taking part in job fairs and post secondary and secondary schools, while just over half of the respondents saw the internet as a means of attracting students.

Table 26: What can be done to increase the number of students interested in pursuing careers in the community social services sector? [Select all that apply]

Recruiting Students	%
Increased wage rates	91.7
Promotion at universities and high schools	75.0
Taking part in job fairs at universities, colleges, and high schools	62.5
Scholarships for students entering related programs	79.2
Increased web presence to inform students about the sector	54.2

Appendix 3: Employer Interview Questions

1. What are some of the impacts of recruitment and retention challenges for employers in the sector?
2. What are some of the impacts of recruitment and retention challenges for employees in the sector?
3. What do you see as the role of employers in addressing recruitment and retention issues?
4. What do you see as the role of your employer association in addressing recruitment and retention issues?
5. What is the role of the provincial government in addressing recruitment and retention issues?
6. Do you see any opportunities your employer association, the provincial government, and unions to work together in order to address recruitment and retention issues?
7. Can you provide an example or two of some effective ways in which your organization has approached recruitment?
 - a. The CSSEA survey found that the under 25 age group is under-represented in this sector. Can you think of how employers can make employment opportunities in this sector more appealing to younger people? What are some recruitment strategies that would particularly appeal to younger people?

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8. Can you provide an example or two of some effective ways in which your organization has approached promoting retention?

a. The CSSEA and SPARC BC surveys found that retaining part-time and casual workers is particularly difficult. What could be done by the various stakeholders to address this issue?

b. The CSSEA survey found that there are differences in the reasons why men and women leave the organizations. What strategies do you think would work best to better retain male employees? What strategies do you think would work to better retain female employees?

9. The CSSEA and SPARC BC studies both found that there is a perception that the social services sector has a negative image in the marketplace. Do you agree? Why do you think the sector has this negative image?

a. What should the sector be doing to overcome this negative perception?

Appendix 4: Bibliography for Literature Review

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