



Employee Satisfaction Survey Summary Report

DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Survey Purpose and Overview

The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF) values staff and their contributions to the citizens of Delaware in support of our mission to *engage families and communities to promote the safety and well-being of children through prevention, intervention, treatment, and rehabilitative services*. As part of the Department's continuous quality improvement efforts, employees are surveyed every 18-24 months to gather feedback regarding their satisfaction. This information is used to measure the impact implemented changes have had on the workforce, to guide future initiatives, and allow us to monitor what is going well so we can build on our strengths. DSCYF prioritizes the incorporation of feedback received into ongoing strategic planning efforts.

Employees throughout the department were invited to complete the employee satisfaction survey between March 25th and April 16th of 2025. This survey was conducted using Survey Monkey and all responses were collected anonymously by the Office of Case Management. Employee responses were aggregated and the summaries of narrative statements provided by staff are contained in this summary report.

The survey included 69 questions focused on the following topic areas:

1. Management / Leadership
2. Development
3. Work Environment
4. Organizational Climate
5. Satisfaction
6. Communication

The charts contained within this report provide a summary of the percentage of respondents who agreed with survey statements in each category. Null values indicate the respondent did not select the division in which they work.

- ↑↓ depict an increase or decrease less than 10 percentage points from 2023
- ↑↑↓↓ depict an increase or decrease equal to or greater than 10 percentage points from 2023

Charts are also color-coded as follows to indicate the extent to which the item is a strength or opportunity for improvement.

- Statements for which 75% or more respondents agreed are categorized as a strength and are represented in green.
- Statements for which 61 - 74% of respondents agreed are considered neutral areas or areas of caution and are represented in yellow.
- Statements for which 60% or fewer respondents agreed are considered as opportunities for improvement and are represented in red.
- Average score values are based on a 1-4 scale where 1 is strongly disagree through 4 indicating strongly agree. Scores were averaged and color-coded as follows.
 - 3-4 is represented in green
 - 2-3 is represented in yellow
 - <2 is represented in red
- Statements that were newly added to the survey and have no comparison data from previous years are represented in blue.

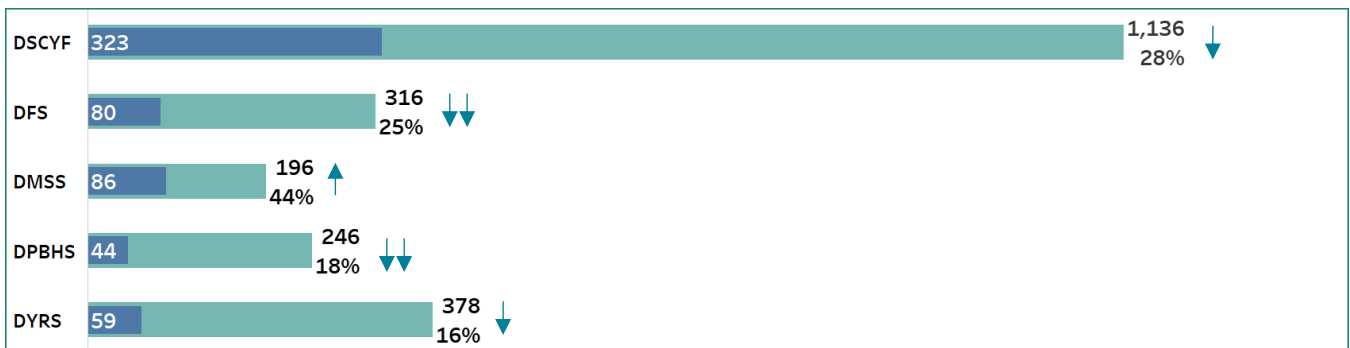
Survey Participation

Four-hundred ninety-six (496) DSCYF employees responded out of the 1,257 active employees for an overall response rate of 39% which is an 11 percentage point increase from 2023 and 5 percentage point increase from 2021. Respondents who did not indicate which division they work in account for 78 of the total responses reflected in the DSCYF number.

2025



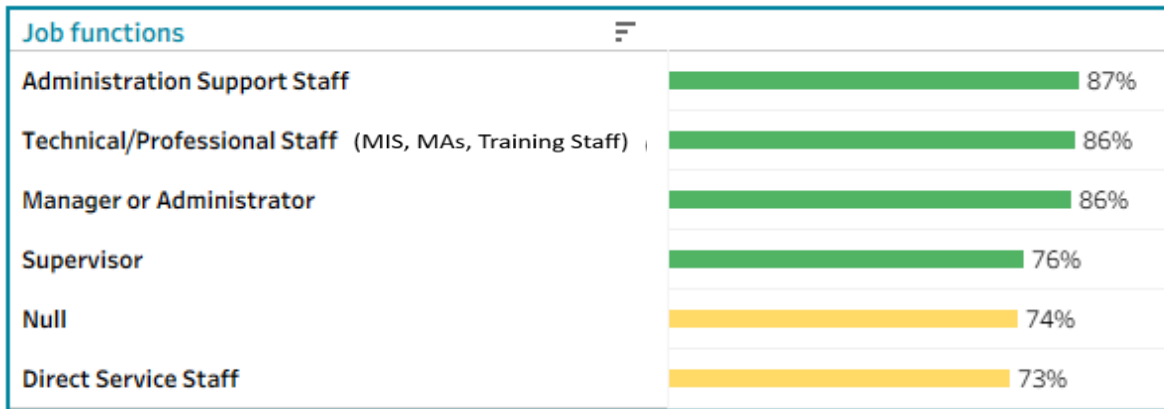
2023



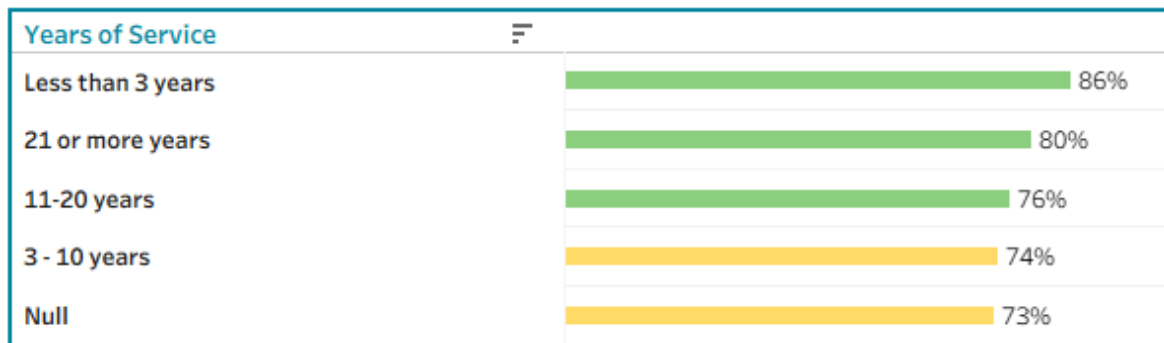
2021



Overall Percentage of Positive Responses by Job Function (2025)



Overall Percentage of Positive Responses by Years of Service (2025)

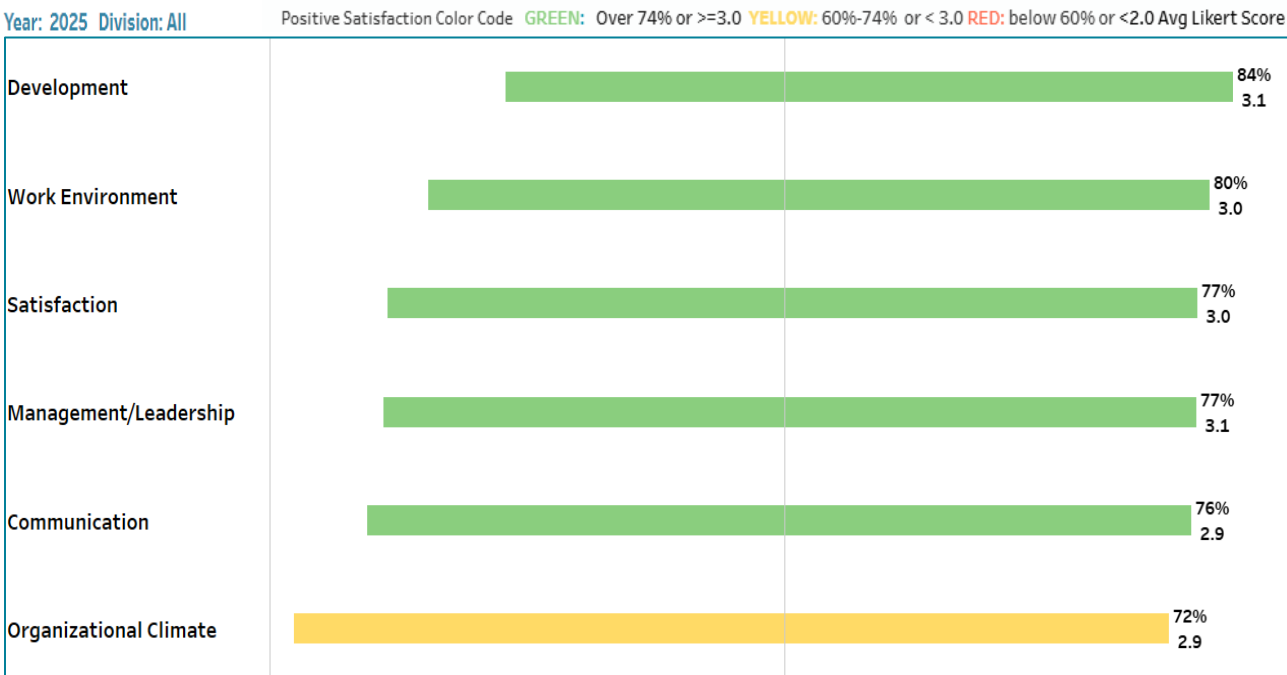


Overall Percentage of Positive Responses by Work Location (2025)

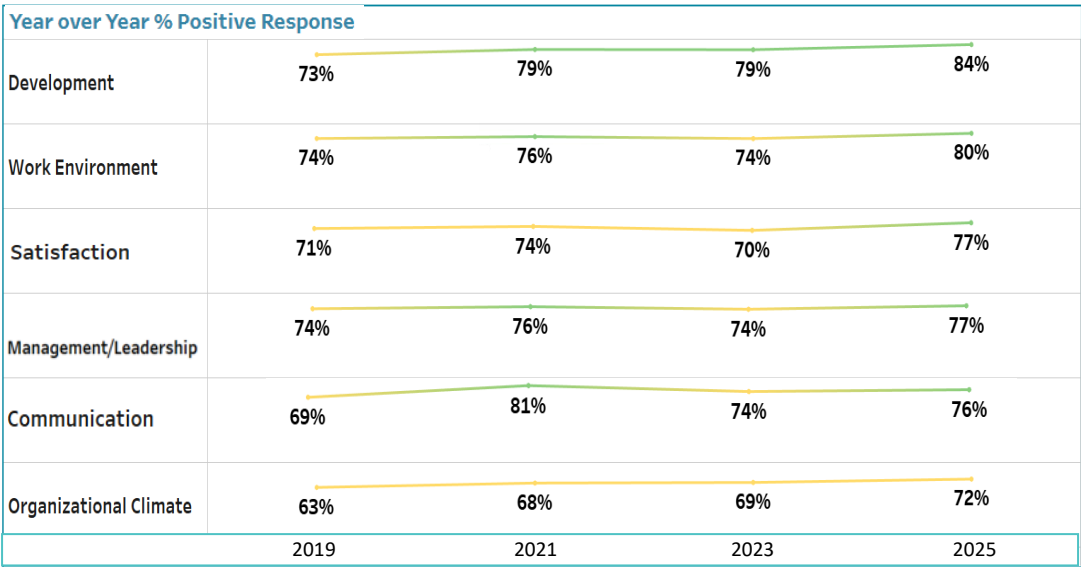


Overall Satisfaction by Category

Departmentwide satisfaction across all 6 categories for 2025 is **78% positive** with a 3.0 average score. This is a 5 percentage point increase compared to 2023 and 3 percentage point increase compared to 2021. The bar chart below represents negative and positive responses from the 39% of DSCYF employees who completed the survey for each category.



The **positive** percent response rating from each survey year is displayed in the below visualization. In 2025, all categories experienced a positive increase with the most significant increases from 2023 represented in Satisfaction, Development, and Work Environment. Five of these six categories similarly improved from 2021 and all categories have increased since 2019.



1) Management / Leadership

The overall satisfaction with management/leadership increased from 74% to 77% compared to the 2023 survey which is also a 1 percentage point increase compared to 2021. The areas of greatest strength in this category are related to staff feeling their immediate supervisor supports them, listens to them, and provides meaningful feedback. Staff also affirm having confidence in their division's supervisors/managers. A 7 percentage point increase is noted in staff feeling that managers are responding to their concerns and a 2 percentage point increase is seen in staff having confidence in their division's leadership team.

Management/Leadership	DSCYF		DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
	2023	2025										
My supervisor is supportive and listens to me.	84%	88% ↑	89%	91% ↑	87%	94% ↑	80%	89% ↑	78%	77% ↓	83%	83%
I have confidence in my supervisor.	77%	86% ↑	80%	88% ↑	86%	93% ↑	59%	86% ↑↑	71%	77% ↑	78%	83% ↑
My supervisor gives me meaningful feedback.	77%	85% ↑	81%	88% ↑	81%	93% ↑↑	66%	85% ↑↑	75%	73% ↓	78%	81% ↑
My supervisor involves me in team decisions.	75%	81% ↑	80%	86% ↑	76%	91% ↑↑	73%	82% ↑	66%	67% ↑	76%	74% ↓
I have confidence in my division management team (managers, section/unit supervisors).	71%	75% ↑	68%	77% ↑	83%	93% ↑↑	59%	68% ↑	63%	63%	74%	72% ↓
Management listens and responds to my concerns.	67%	74% ↑	60%	78% ↑↑	78%	89% ↑↑	57%	67% ↑↑	66%	66%	72%	67% ↓
I have confidence in the DSCYF Leadership Team (secretary- director levels).	70%	72% ↑	51%	67% ↑↑	88%	94% ↑	75%	64% ↓↓	69%	69%	65%	67% ↑
I have confidence in my division’s leadership team (director and deputy director).	68%	70% ↑	54%	74% ↑↑	88%	88%	57%	51% ↓	69%	69%	67%	65% ↓
Feedback from employees of all backgrounds is considered in departmental decision-making.		64%		64%		88%		59%		50%		56%

2) Development

Overall, satisfaction in the development category has improved by 5 percentage points compared to the 2023 and 2021 surveys with the 2025 results reflecting an 84% positive response rating. Increases are seen across the board with the exception of employees indicating that they understand how their unit helps to achieve the department's mission. The largest improvement this year, with a 13 percentage point increase, is related to all employees feeling they have opportunities for personal and professional growth. An 8 percentage point increase is also noted in employees recognizing opportunities for advancement within the department although this is an area for further improvement to be made with an overall positive response rating of 62%.

Development												
	DSCYF											
	2023	2025	DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
Training on the departments core values should be required for all employees, including management.		95%		92%		98%		98%		95%		95%
I am able to use my skills and abilities to contribute to the success of our work.	89%	93% ↑	93%	96% ↑	91%	99% ↑	89%	91% ↑	85%	86% ↑	86%	86%
I find my job to be interesting and challenging.	86%	91% ↑	86%	92% ↑	92%	97% ↑	77%	89% ↑↑	83%	88% ↑	89%	88% ↓
I have a good understanding of how my unit helps achieve the department’s mission.	89%	89%	85%	91% ↑	95%	98% ↑	89%	85% ↓	85%	80% ↓	89%	86% ↓
I am encouraged to participate in training to improve my skills and performance.	85%	91% ↑	83%	86% ↑	85%	98% ↑↑	86%	95% ↑	83%	87% ↑	92%	88% ↓
I have a good understanding of how my role contributes to Dept operations and goals.	85%	89% ↑	84%	91% ↑	93%	97% ↑	84%	84%	78%	84% ↑	83%	90% ↑
I know what the performance expectations are of me.	86%	88% ↑	85%	85% ↓	88%	94% ↑	80%	83% ↑	88%	88%	86%	91% ↑
My job requirements are clear.	79%	81% ↑	74%	78% ↑	86%	95% ↑	75%	74% ↓	78%	78%	78%	79% ↑
I receive adequate and timely feedback on performance.	75%	81% ↑	78%	82% ↑	83%	94% ↑↑	77%	85% ↑	61%	70% ↑	72%	64% ↓
Our departments initiatives and trainings on topics related to TIC, cultural awareness, and under-represented groups are effective.		78%		75%		91%		82%		67%		74%
I am involved in the goal setting process for my performance plan.	72%	79% ↑	71%	74% ↑	80%	88% ↑	73%	82% ↑	63%	73% ↑↑	72%	74% ↑
Employees of all backgrounds have opportunities for personal and professional growth.	65%	78% ↑↑	59%	77% ↑↑	79%	92% ↑↑	50%	73% ↑↑	59%	65% ↑	75%	79% ↑
I have opportunities for advancement within the department.	54%	62% ↑	53%	73% ↑↑	58%	75% ↑↑	32%	42% ↑↑	61%	59% ↓	64%	52% ↓↓

3) Work Environment

The overall satisfaction related to work environment increased from 74% to 80% compared to the 2023 survey which is an increase from the 2021 survey as well. The areas of greatest strength in this category are related to staff feeling they have reasonable work hours and a safe working environment. Some opportunities for improvements to be made are related to ensuring workload is fairly distributed within teams, although this received a significant 11 percentage point increased positive response rating this year. Making sure the physical work environment is comfortable is another area for future focus as this question experienced a decreased response rating and captured the lowest overall percentage.

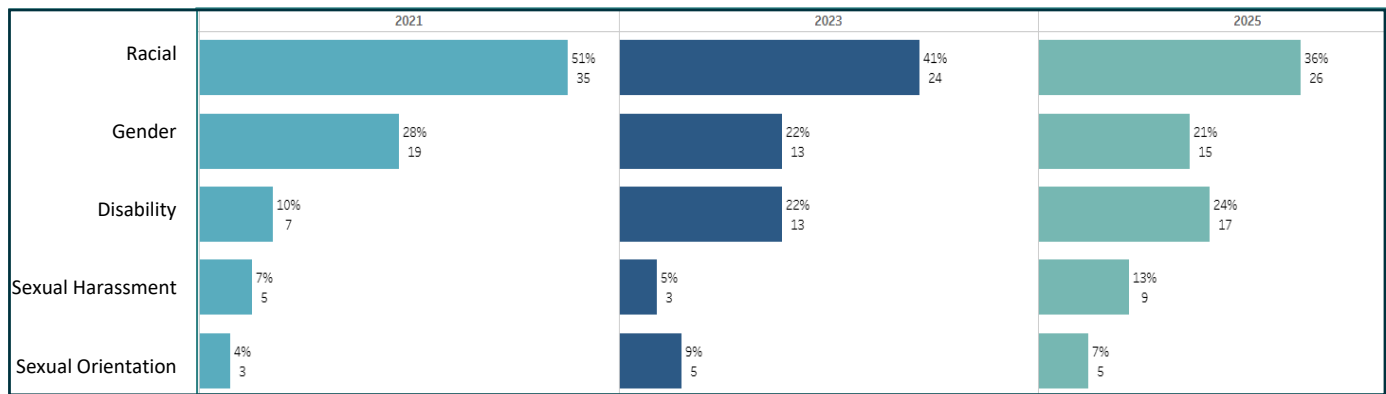
Work Environment		DSCYF		DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
		2023	2025										
I have reasonable working hours.		86%	91% ↑	70%	86% ↑↑	97%	96% ↓	98%	98%	80%	90% ↑	89%	87% ↓
Our workplace accommodates the needs of employees with disabilities, including accessibility and provision of reasonable adjustments.			86%		84%		92%		85%		80%		87%
DSCYF ensures the values of the organization are included in performance expectations and evaluations.		78%	81% ↑	69%	81% ↑↑	88%	93% ↑	73%	76% ↑	75%	73% ↓	83%	76% ↓
My work environment is safe.		75%	82% ↑	63%	80% ↑↑	92%	93% ↑	82%	92% ↑↑	64%	62% ↓	74%	78% ↑
I have the tools and resources needed to do my job well.		72%	76% ↑	53%	75% ↑↑	91%	91%	80%	76% ↓	59%	62% ↑	80%	72% ↓
The physical working environment is comfortable.		74%	71% ↓	55%	69% ↑↑	88%	79% ↓	80%	82% ↑	75%	55% ↓↓	71%	67% ↓
Workload is fairly distributed within my unit / team.		62%	73% ↑↑	49%	73% ↑↑	72%	82% ↑↑	66%	73% ↑	58%	62% ↑	66%	72% ↑

4) Organizational Climate

This category experienced the most increases across all questions with an overall 72% satisfaction rating which is up from 69% in 2023 and 68% in 2021. Although organizational climate remains the weakest categorical area, there are significant improvements noted in responses received. The most significant responses indicate that staff feel their supervisor promotes a collaborative and supportive environment where staff are encouraged to share new ideas with their team. The largest improvement in this category is related to employees believing they are working for a department in which they can be proud of with a 7 percentage point increased response rating. There are slight increases this year related to the department having a climate of cooperation and collaboration WITHIN divisions and having an environment that is supportive and accepting of different opinions. Some areas of improvement, which are consistent with past years, indicate the department could do better at embracing an environment of trust (63% response rating), placing a greater emphasis on solutions rather than blame or making excuses (55% response rating), and enhancing cooperation and collaboration ACROSS divisions (51% response rating).

Organizational Climate												
	DSCYF		DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
	2023	2025										
My supervisor promotes a collaborative and supportive work environment where everyone feels heard, valued, and respected.	80%	85% ↑	86%	89% ↑	85%	93% ↑	75%	86% ↑↑	71%	70% ↓	73%	84% ↑↑
I am encouraged to share new ideas with my team members and supervisor.	79%	83% ↑	79%	85% ↑	85%	95% ↑↑	82%	84% ↑	71%	65% ↓	73%	81% ↑
I am treated with respect.	78%	82% ↑	71%	84% ↑↑	85%	95% ↑↑	77%	76% ↓	76%	73% ↓	77%	81% ↑
I can be creative and innovative.	79%	82% ↑	71%	81% ↑	88%	93% ↑	75%	80% ↑	71%	73% ↑	90%	77% ↓↓
People are treated with respect and appreciation regardless of race, gender, position, age, etc.	77%	81% ↑	74%	80% ↑	88%	93% ↑	70%	80% ↑	66%	70% ↑	87%	81% ↓
I work for a department for which I can be proud.	72%	79% ↑	53%	75% ↑↑	90%	95% ↑	77%	76% ↓	68%	70% ↑	77%	79% ↑
DSCYF is an organization that embraces continuous quality improvement.	71%	73% ↑	56%	72% ↑↑	85%	87% ↑	66%	69% ↑	71%	64% ↓	77%	72% ↓
There is a climate of cooperation and collaboration WITHIN my division.	67%	69% ↑	58%	63% ↑	86%	90% ↑	52%	62% ↑	54%	57% ↑	80%	72% ↓
The environment at DSCYF is supportive of different opinions, styles, and perceptions.	67%	68% ↑	55%	65% ↑	74%	88% ↑↑	66%	67% ↑	64%	53% ↓↓	87%	60% ↓↓
Policies are administered fairly.	65%	69% ↑	48%	64% ↑↑	79%	82% ↑	64%	68% ↑	69%	60% ↓	63%	67% ↑
We have an environment of trust and support.	58%	63% ↑	46%	62% ↑↑	73%	83% ↑	52%	59% ↑	49%	48% ↓	67%	53% ↓↓
People are focused on solutions rather than blame and/or excuses.	51%	55% ↑	45%	50% ↑	64%	73% ↑	45%	57% ↑↑	42%	42%	57%	49% ↓
There is a climate of cooperation and collaboration ACROSS divisions.	49%	51% ↑	34%	47% ↑↑	65%	71% ↑	39%	42% ↑	51%	44% ↓	57%	47% ↓↓

In this category, respondents were also asked, **“Have you observed or experienced any form of discrimination or harassment at DSCYF since the 2023 survey?”** Overall, 17% of staff indicated they had. This is a 4 percentage point increase from 2023 and 1 percentage point increase from 2021. Racial, gender, and sexual orientation discrimination all experienced decreases from the previous survey while disability and sexual harassment percentages increased this year. The graphs below compare responses from this year’s survey to the 2023 and 2021 surveys.



Comments related to **culture, diversity, and discrimination** reflected the following themes:

- Discrimination and inequity
 - inappropriate comments about someone’s age, including inquiries about retirement
 - selective enforcement of policies with some employees while others are not being held to the same standards
 - newer or younger staff being held to different expectations than senior colleagues
 - perceptions of favoritism, where individuals who are not part of a “clique” are treated differently, with decisions influenced more by personal relationships than by merit
- Harassment and bullying
 - passive-aggressive comments and name-calling
 - accusations of dishonesty without basis
 - remarks about an individual’s physical appearance

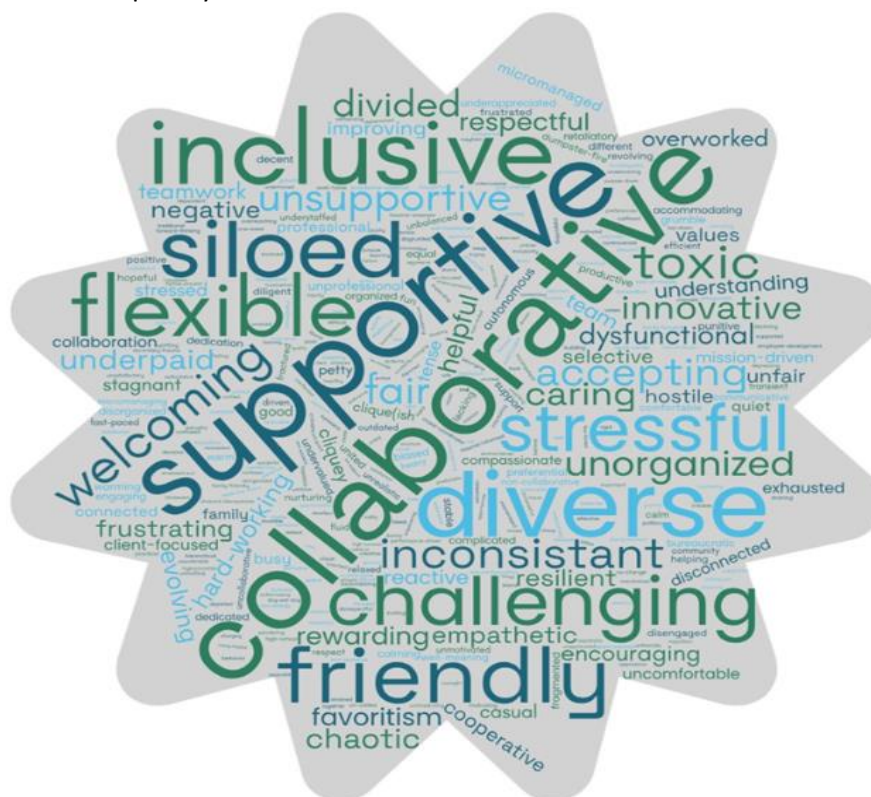
Some employees acknowledged that leadership and managers addressed these issues effectively when brought to their attention. However, several employees expressed concern over Human Resources’ response to reports of harassment and discrimination. These individuals felt their concerns were inadequately addressed, leading to frustration with the organization’s overall response.

Employees were also asked the following question, **“Has our department’s approach to cultivating an accepting and supportive workplace helped you feel more valued and understood at work?”** In response to this, 62% of staff responded with “yes” and indicated they do feel valued and supported by their immediate teams and appreciate the department’s efforts to foster a positive, inclusive, and flexible work environment with opportunities to contribute meaningfully. Some concerns were shared about inconsistent support, recognition, and appreciation from leadership. Feedback referenced a lack of follow-through on supportive practices and a

Respondents were then asked to describe the culture at DSCYF in two words. The words used to describe the department culture were categorized as positive, negative, or meaning unclear. Those falling into the latter category could be considered either positive or negative depending on the writer's intent. A total of 386 unique words were used in 857 total responses to describe the agency culture as follows:

2025 Survey	Negative		Positive		Meaning Unclear		Total
Unique Words	214	56%	156	40%	16	4%	386
Total Responses	385	45%	437	51%	35	4%	857
2023 Survey							
Unique Words	151	57%	94	35%	21	8%	266
Total Responses	294	52%	238	42%	30	6%	562
2021 Survey							
Unique Words	160	52%	124	40%	25	8%	309
Total Responses	331	44%	394	52%	32	4%	757
2019 Survey							
Unique Words	228	58%	137	35%	28	7%	393
Total Responses	465	50%	406	44%	53	6%	924

The DSCYF organizational culture word cloud below illustrates responses. Frequently used words appear larger in the cloud than words less frequently mentioned.



5) Job Satisfaction

Overall, job satisfaction increased to 77% which is up from 70% in 2023 and 74% in 2021. Staff throughout DSCYF believe the work they do makes a difference in the lives of others and they are happy with the employee benefits. While the majority of staff indicated they see themselves working for DSCYF one year from now and would reapply for their current position if given the chance, fewer responded that they would recommend employment at DSCYF to a friend although this question experienced a notable 8 percentage point increased response rating. The lowest rating in this category was driven by staff not feeling fairly compensated for the work they do although the overall response received was a 9 percentage point increase from 2023 and 12 percentage point increase from 2021 which can be positively attributed to the variety of efforts made over the past few years related to raises, bonuses, opportunities for overtime, and other incentives that have been made available.

Satisfaction	DSCYF		DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
	2023	2025										
My job makes a difference in the lives of others.	90%	94% ↑	91%	95% ↑	93%	97% ↑	86%	94% ↑	83%	87% ↑	94%	96% ↑
The employment benefits at DSCYF are good.	84%	89% ↑	79%	86% ↑	85%	94% ↑	93%	93%	80%	88% ↑	94%	74% ↓↓
I see myself working for DSCYF one year from now.	79%	85% ↑	66%	84% ↑↑	88%	91% ↑	82%	89% ↑	80%	78% ↓	76%	83% ↑
My work gives me a feeling of personal and professional accomplishment.	77%	86% ↑	66%	87% ↑↑	91%	96% ↑	77%	87% ↑	73%	73%	65%	87% ↑↑
I am able to successfully balance my home and work life.	73%	77% ↑	48%	69% ↑↑	95%	91% ↓	86%	85% ↓	64%	67% ↑	71%	70% ↓
If I were given the chance, I would reapply for my current position.	67%	77% ↑↑	53%	72% ↑↑	80%	92% ↑↑	70%	81% ↑↑	66%	63% ↓	59%	83% ↑↑
Overall, I am satisfied working for DSCYF.	65%	78% ↑↑	45%	74% ↑↑	86%	92% ↑	66%	79% ↑↑	63%	66% ↑	59%	78% ↑↑
If I had a friend who was looking for work, I would recommend DSCYF.	59%	67% ↑	36%	57% ↑↑	79%	85% ↑	64%	67% ↑	59%	63% ↑	47%	65% ↑↑
I am fairly compensated for the work I do.	34%	43% ↑	13%	41% ↑↑	53%	61% ↑	36%	44% ↑	27%	26% ↓	53%	35% ↓↓

6) Communication

Overall, communication received a satisfaction response rating of 76%. This is a 2 percentage point increase from 2023 although reflects a 5 percentage point decrease from 2021 which had an overall positive response of 81%. The majority of staff continue to feel that the department does well at communicating the mission, vision, and values clearly and that communication is trauma informed, culturally competent and responsive. There is an increase this year related to staff feeling they are able to communicate their concerns with department leadership, division management and supervisors which was the largest improvement across all questions. Based on the responses received, staff think the department is doing slightly better at keeping employees informed about what is going on although they would like to see improvements with communicating the importance of their wellbeing and success which received a decreased response rating.

Communication	DSCYF 2023	2025	DFS		DMSS		DPBHS		DYRS		Null	
The DSCYF mission, vision, values and objectives are clearly communicated.	84%	84%	78%	80%↑	93%	91%↓	91%	87%↓	75%	77%↑	85%	84%↓
Dept communications are trauma informed, culturally competent and responsive.	79%	83%↑	66%	80%↑↑	94%	95%↑	80%	84%↑	75%	72%↓	77%	84%↑
I have the information I need to do my job well.	76%	78%↑	64%	78%↑↑	94%	90%↓	75%	74%↓	69%	66%↓	69%	84%↑↑
DSCYF clearly communicates the importance of the wellbeing and success of all employees.	77%	73%↓	69%	71%↑	90%	92%↑	77%	69%↓	69%	59%↓↓	85%	74%↓↓
The dept regularly sends out communications with useful information to me.	73%	75%↑	60%	74%↑↑	87%	85%↓	73%	70%↓	71%	71%	77%	74%↓
I am able to communicate my concerns with my dept leadership, division mgmt and supe..	70%	77%↑	58%	79%↑↑	85%	90%↑	64%	67%↑	68%	73%↑	69%	68%↓
The dept communication effectively keeps me informed about what is going on in DSCYF.	70%	72%↑	51%	74%↑↑	87%	84%↓	80%	67%↓↓	64%	64%	69%	58%↓↓
The information I receive from my division management is straightforward and honest.	66%	68%↑	54%	70%↑↑	85%	86%↑	50%	58%↑	66%	57%↓	62%	63%↑

Staff were asked, “**What is the ideal frequency of communication you prefer to receive from the department?**” While the majority prefer weekly (49%) followed by monthly (31%) being favored, comments received suggest that communication should occur as necessary, especially in relation to sharing important changes, information, or updates that are time sensitive. Staff were also asked, “**What type of information would you like to see communicated more often?**” The most prevalent category of information is that which includes **departmental** news. The preferred method to receive this information is via a combination of town halls and engaging newsletters. Comments included:

- updates on what’s happening across divisions and highlights on different units in each division and what they do
- opportunities to get involved in projects, initiatives, or workgroups and encouragement of employees across divisions to connect and develop relationships
- updates on strategic plan goals and accomplishments within the department
- upcoming changes to the organization, policies or procedures, and the ‘why’ behind the changes
- relevant legislative and federal updates, budget initiatives and funding impacts, and how they affect the priorities of our department and direction of our work
- personnel related information, i.e., employee retention/recruitment, salary increases, changes in staffing of key positions across the department including promotions, retirements, and new hires along with updated organizational charts, etc.
- updates on RFPs, resource recruitment efforts, new services and contracts, program spotlights, service outcome measures, and our partnerships across agencies and how these efforts connect to the department’s mission
- trends and innovative practices in our field of work that promote improvement-focused conversations
- concrete efforts being made to address employee concerns and opportunities for employees to engage directly with leadership to discuss challenges

The second topic of interest staff would like to see communication on is related to **job specific** information. Comments referenced the following:

- updates to policy and processes which directly impact job duties or expectations
- critical and pertinent information related to the day-to-day work
- regular updates on division objectives and planned changes even if there isn’t new information to be shared, for example, efforts to improve workplace culture and workload even if these efforts have not been successful
- division statistics, outcomes, and continuous improvement efforts
- introductions of new staff when they come on board and announcements when staff are no longer with the division
- information on career advancement opportunities
- information from management related to safety and security of staff and youth

Highlighting **positives/successes** of our colleagues and the difference we make in the community is another topic staff expressed wanting to receive more communication on. This includes:

- staff recognition and “shout outs” for a job well done and kudos across divisions for working well together as a way to celebrate each other
- awards, celebrations, and points of pride for the department
- positive feedback from youth and families that have benefited from the hard work of our staff

- success stories and victories of those we serve that inspire and highlight the positive impact of the work we do

Training is also noted as a topic of interest. Staff would like to see more of the following:

- trainings and webinars that support professional growth and include CEU opportunities
- cross-divisional training opportunities on what various units across the department do
- trauma-informed care and wellness strategies
- Human Resources and Labor Relations process-related training
- navigating FOCUS more efficiently
- tips on how to take advantage of the state benefits package and other available employee resources and discounts
- training on important policies that include trivia-style questions to increase engagement
- consolidated events/training calendar

Free Response Items

Respondents were provided an opportunity at the end of the survey to include their feedback regarding what they think is going well and ways in which the organization can improve. All comments were reviewed for themes across responses and are summarized below.

Please share what is going well for you within DSCYF

The importance of having **supportive relationships** continues to be the predominant theme this survey year. Overall, feedback highlights a widespread appreciation for leaders who foster a safe environment for asking questions and discussing challenges while also empowering staff with autonomy and trust in their decision-making. Employees appreciate open-door policies and transparency which create a positive and psychologically safe work environment. Feedback also includes comments around the importance of having a strong sense of teamwork which encourages collaboration, and employees expressed appreciation for the relationships they have with supervisors and colleagues across divisions. Having dedicated, hardworking, and reliable teams makes it easier for employees to accomplish tasks and meet demands.

- Respondents noted the following attributes related to positive relationships with **supervisors, managers, administrators, and organization leaders**:
 - creating a welcoming and comfortable environment that fosters inclusivity and encourages collaboration and proactive communication
 - encouraging the sharing of ideas, opinions, and input, and valuing those contributions
 - giving staff the ability to ask questions, talk through challenging situations, and ask for guidance or clarification without fear of judgement or criticism
 - trusting staff to make decisions, empowering them, and giving them autonomy in their role
 - acknowledging everyone's strengths and promoting the values of the department
 - understanding staff have competing priorities and important commitments both at work and in their personal lives

- being approachable, available, and responsive in person and via email, Teams, text and phone
 - demonstrating a genuine interest in the wellbeing of staff and the families we serve
 - setting clear expectations, holding employees accountable, providing an honest assessment of work, and addressing concerns as they arise
 - encouraging solution-focused conversations when deficits are identified and talking with staff, not at them
 - making time for professional development opportunities to nurture learning and inspire career advancement
- Respondents noted the following qualities related to positive relationships with their **co-workers**:
 - willing to share expertise, knowledge, and guidance
 - offering to assist and support one another when needed
 - hardworking, reliable, trustworthy and well-intentioned
 - focused on improving the lives of others
 - respecting and encouraging one another to have work/life balance

Having a **positive work environment** and **collaborative culture** are also particularly valued. Several key factors contribute to boosting morale with the main indicator as having strong working relationships and rapport with colleagues and community partners who are genuinely committed to the work. Despite some challenges, such as stress and external pressures, employees feel their contributions are valued and that they are part of a mission-driven organization that prioritizes teamwork and mutual support.

Respondents noted the following characteristics were strongly related to encouraging a work environment which is conducive to increased morale:

- developing professional partnerships with colleagues and other community agencies and professionals who care about this work
- being treated with respect and compassion
- having flexibility in scheduling daily tasks, the ability to work an alternative work schedule, and options for telework
- encouragement to think of ways to improve and innovate while finding solutions to problems
- sharing information on resources, trainings, and events with each other to promote success
- having a reduced number of vacancies which reduces caseloads and increases opportunities to shadow experienced staff

The **intrinsic satisfaction** that comes from working with young people and their families to promote positive change is described by staff as a combination of challenging, inspiring and rewarding. The feedback received highlights a deep sense of personal fulfillment and commitment among staff who take pride in their roles helping youth, families, and communities. Many feel a strong personal connection to the individuals they serve, viewing their work as more than just a job. There is a consistent theme of satisfaction in making a positive impact, whether it's through advocating for families, assisting youth in the foster care system, or helping families navigate challenges. Employees express pride in their contributions, emphasizing the importance and value of their work.

Staff cited the following related items as going well for them:

- developing relationships with families, schools, and other agencies

- building and shaping creative and innovative programs that directly support others
- making a difference in the lives of others and contributing to the community
- advocating for children and families in ways that are meaningful to them and connecting them with community resources

Additional items that were mentioned as positives, included:

- opportunities for **professional growth** and availability of **online training** and **in person events/conferences**
- continuously identifying **opportunities for improvement** and **ways to streamline processes**
- **state benefits**, including **pension** and **post-retirement benefits**
- recent **salary enhancements**

Please share ways in which we can improve within DSCYF

Ways to improve the **work environment** is a strong theme cited in responses received. Some employees are feeling overwhelmed by high expectations, excessive workloads, and a lack of appreciation for their efforts leaving them to struggle with work-life balance which contributes to burnout. There is dissatisfaction with inconsistent communication as well as micromanagement which creates stress and hinders the ability of staff to perform tasks effectively. Mentions are made to a lack of accountability for poor performance and problematic staff behavior creating a challenging atmosphere. Many employees shared that concerns are not consistently elevated through supervisors to higher leadership which undermines their trust. Additionally, employees feel that some leadership decisions are being made without sufficient understanding of the work or input from frontline staff, leading to frustration.

Employees suggested the following opportunities:

- enforcement of policies and standards equitably and consistently for a more professional environment
- thoughtful and clear communication that presents information in a more organized and intentional way
- trust individuals who are hired to perform a job based on their skills, knowledge, and experience to do the job they were hired for
- disarm top-down leadership culture to reduce resistance and disengagement
- establish tangible action by administrators after feedback is solicited and employees share ideas on how concerns can be addressed
- actively engage staff in discussions around change and seek input often to better understand the impact of a change before it is made
- re-evaluate workload of positions more often and reassess distribution of assignments fluidly to better support the workforce
- use negative situations as an opportunity for learning/teaching instead of assigning blame
- encourage division leaders, administrators, and supervisors to allocate time with front-line workers to observe the work being done and build relationships with those doing the work
- establish quarterly meetings between division leaders and front-line staff to increase presence and communication around current concerns, barriers, ideas, and progress related to new or ongoing efforts
- prioritize quality of work with children and families which promotes success within the community

- increase opportunities for team-building activities and social events with an emphasis on employee wellbeing and staff appreciation
- increase flexibility in relation to work schedules, location and telework options to increase job satisfaction and productivity

Suggestions around **policy and process improvement** is the second most common theme referenced in comments received. Staff expressed interest in wanting to get creative and dig deeper into ongoing issues with a greater focus on being open-minded. Staff understand that our complex system, by nature, is not designed to be perfect. However, staff agree this should not deter us from striving toward improvement and shifting our mindset to one that encourages collaboration and solutions rather than focusing solely on the problems and challenges at hand. Working together, with a collective goal of continuous improvement, will ultimately lead to a more streamlined, effective, and cohesive environment.

Some areas of opportunity to explore include:

- review and evaluation of current policies, manuals, long-standing practices, forms, and written directives for relevance and clarity and ensure there is one unified document accurately reflecting current standards and expectations to promote consistent enforcement and ensure any changes moving forward are updated accordingly and centralized for easy accessibility
- align expectations across the state for staff in similar roles to reduce differences in practice across counties
- overhaul the performance review process to include intentional feedback throughout the year and create a process for employees to provide feedback to their direct supervisor
- embrace technology and tools like project management software and artificial intelligence to improve efficiency
- increase timeliness related to making job offers and hiring staff, and establish a universal onboarding standard
- initiate involvement of staff at all levels in policy development and advocacy efforts related to legislative changes as it relates to improving services for children and families
- increase focus on creativity and critical thinking in case planning to address the needs of a family with less attention to “checking boxes”
- streamline the discharge planning process for children leaving residential facilities to ensure there is a focus on the individual needs of the child and not just the location to which they are discharging
- increase focus on prevention efforts and meeting families where they are to reduce future system involvement and better address their identified needs
- review areas of potential financial inefficiency and redirect funds to employee compensation and retention efforts
- consider reducing the probationary period for workers who transfer internally if they have a certain number of years of service, provided there are no performance concerns
- dedicate time to reviewing the FOCUS system to create a more user-friendly experience
- increase reliance on electronic records to reduce paper usage
- implement a standardized approach to providing foster parent education
- track service outcomes and performance benchmarks for all of our contracted services

Compensation related suggestions are included in feedback as well although this is not as prevalent as was the case in the previous two surveys. The feedback highlights the importance of fair and consistent compensation, not just for frontline workers, but for all staff, including administrative roles, without disparity for similar roles across divisions or other agencies. Many employees feel their pay does not adequately reflect the workload, responsibilities, or nature of the work they do, and does not recognize their experience, education, or the value of their years of service. Feedback indicates that adequate compensation is critical for maintaining morale, retaining employees, and ensuring the quality of work within the organization.

Staff shared the following suggestions to enhance satisfaction:

- salaries should be consistent across divisions and commensurate with the private sector and our counterparts in other departments filling similar roles with similar qualifications
- raises to match the current cost of living which can absorb the increased cost for employee benefits
- explore potential cost-saving measures for staff such as increasing opportunities for telework or other incentives/discounts to offset the cost of living
- establish performance-based pay raises and financial incentives like bonuses as a retention strategy
- implement incremental financial incentives for those who have significant work anniversaries with the department and retroactively apply this for those who have continued to support the department for many years
- make salary baselines negotiable based on years of experience, education/degree, certificates/licensure, and other applicable achievements and contributions

Communication is another theme cited during this year's survey. Staff expressed a significant gap in communication around changes, updates, and ongoing operations at both the division and department level. Employees are feeling out of the loop and unsure about the bigger picture due to the limited information sharing. They are also left wondering if the suggestions and concerns they've shared with leadership are being heard. Additionally, staff expressed a lack of clear, direct communication related to expectations and standards of practice, creating confusion and a lack of transparency.

A few suggestions were received which included:

- increasing communication about advocacy and efforts to improve and expand services for children and families
- providing timely updates on organizational and operational changes and how they relate to our department's goals so everyone gets the same messaging at the same time to avoid fragmented information sharing
- creating routine messages that keep everyone in the department informed on division achievements and new initiatives
- sharing uplifting communications related to celebrating staff or spotlighting a team throughout the year

Opportunities to learn and grow professionally are also noted again in this year's survey. Comments received support that staff should be held accountable to complete required trainings to reinforce our departments commitment to ongoing learning. Employees noted a shortfall in job-specific hands-on training and specialized courses which would help them feel more prepared, supported, and able to provide the best care and service they can. Staff mentioned a current lack of career advancement opportunities which is seen as a long-term retention stressor as well.

Staff shared the following ideas for consideration:

- increase accessibility to free or low-cost training opportunities for staff with licenses to get CEUs
- establish a supervisory training course which focuses on a supervisor's role, responsibilities and how to manage performance
- establish a formal training protocol for specific units so all employees receive the same comprehensive training experience and understand the essential functions of their job and the expectations
- increase cross-training opportunities for employees in all divisions to better understand each other's roles and the differences between various division-specific services and programs
- provide access to more engaging training on new technology when it is released to assist staff with the transition
- develop specialized training on topics such as LGBTQ+, gender identity, and federal and state regulations related to services
- establish more extensive FOCUS training on overall system navigation as well as job specific functionality
- create additional career ladders in all divisions to promote advancement and retention
- expand the financial assistance available through the tuition reimbursement program and increase flexibility in work schedules to accommodate degree-related internships

Expanding available resources for those we serve is mentioned as an area where improvement is needed as well. It is important for staff to have access to the necessary tools and resources to best support families or else it could lead to repeat involvement with our department which is not the goal. Several employees specifically reference service gaps in Sussex County. Employees also express being unaware of what all resources and programs are available to assist families in the community noting this as a hindrance to their work.

The feedback received emphasizes the need for:

- additional substance use treatment providers
- increased foster parent recruitment efforts to include cultural diversity and an overhaul of the foster parent education and certification process with a greater emphasis on trauma-informed care
- universal access to authorize family interventionists and parenting classes without division restrictions
- updated programming in our department-operated facilities
- actively seeking grant opportunities to fund the expansion of services to better meet the community's needs
- expansion of prevention services that support at-risk families
- addressing complaints about the quality and effectiveness of specific programs to ensure these services are helpful and not causing frustration for families

Additionally, the importance of **collaboration** is another theme expressed throughout the comments. Feedback includes concerns about the lack of collaboration across divisions within DSCYF, which hampers the effectiveness of care for youth and families. Despite recognition of the issue, divisions remain siloed, making it harder to deliver comprehensive care. This lack of collaboration results in delays and inefficiencies in services for youth and families. Comments received highlighted a lack of understanding/awareness between divisions about roles, responsibilities, and processes which causes misunderstandings when multiple divisions are involved. Additionally, several comments noted that FOCUS is intended to enhance collaboration by allowing different

divisions to access each other's case information however, divisions are not fully and consistently utilizing this system which limits its potential.

Respondents shared the following suggestions for improvement:

- increased flexibility for collaborative case planning and working across divisions instead of the feeling that one division is pushing work onto another
- establishing consistent standards around quality of documentation in FOCUS
- stronger relationships with community partners, schools, and other departments
- ensuring all divisions are sharing information with each other and working as a team to prevent balls from getting dropped
- establishing cross-divisional projects, initiatives, workgroups, and meetings to foster relationship building

Staffing/workload concerns related to staffing shortages and employee caseloads are also documented. Employees expressed feeling that their ability to do quality work is undermined by workload demands, unrealistic expectations, and insufficient support leading to burnout. Several individuals shared that current job descriptions do not accurately reflect the work and believe that de-emphasizing qualifications for certain roles has not added value to the department.

Suggestions of what staff would like to see included:

- re-evaluating the distribution of workload and positions to alleviate the burden on current employees
- continuing to explore incentives to attract new staff and retain existing staff
- ensuring staff are receiving the necessary support and coaching to be successful
- emphasizing a greater focus on quality of work
- identifying creative ways to balance time on the road/transportation tasks with administrative tasks

Safety and security concerns related to physical safety and support for front-line workers in the field is mentioned in a few comments received. Suggestions for improvement included adding car tags, ensuring all cars have key fobs for quick entry, improving outside lighting conducive to perimeter checks, and having two probation officers in the community together.

Lastly, there are several comments regarding issues with **physical buildings and office spaces**, including inadequate meeting rooms, an open-plan layout in some buildings which makes it difficult to concentrate and maintain confidentiality, poor temperature control, and outdated facilities and furniture, which impact employee comfort and privacy.

Summary

To promote continuous quality improvement, the department uses a variety of mechanisms, including surveys, to seek and incorporate employee feedback into both strategic and budget planning initiatives. By conducting an employee satisfaction survey every 18-24 months, this helps to measure the overall impact of changes made within the department and current staff perceptions and levels of satisfaction. The information contained in this report is invaluable and can be used as a guide to plan for the agency's future.

This survey compares employee responses from 2021, 2023 and 2025. Supportive relationships remain the predominant theme in this year's survey, with employees expressing strong appreciation for leaders who create psychologically safe environments, foster open communication, and empower staff through trust and autonomy. Positive relationships with supervisors and colleagues are highly valued, especially when marked by inclusivity, collaboration, approachability, and mutual respect. Teamwork and a sense of shared purpose contribute significantly to morale, alongside flexibility, professional development opportunities, and a reduced number of vacancies. Staff emphasized the intrinsic satisfaction of making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families, often viewing their work as more than just a job. They take pride in their roles, citing fulfillment from advocacy, creative programming, and community impact.

Consistent with past surveys, staff continue to emphasize the importance of enhancing teamwork within the department and strengthening collaboration across divisions. They also value regular, transparent communication about current initiatives and ongoing efforts, and appreciate having the opportunity to contribute and provide input before changes are implemented. Additionally, respondents expressed a desire for more updates on continuous quality improvement efforts and progress toward achieving strategic plan goals.

In following the trend with the previous survey, this year there were many solutions shared related to opportunities for improvement. Suggestions received were creative and demonstrated the desire of our workforce to affect change at all levels. In line with ideas that were shared, an emerging theme of interest was related to digging deeper into processes/procedures to address perceived issues and challenges and to ensure equitable enforcement of policies. Some other common areas of opportunity mentioned were related to streamlining tasks, embracing technology and making enhancements to FOCUS to work more efficiently, ensuring procedure manuals are up-to-date and accessible to everyone, and expanding our community services continuum and access to resources to meet the needs of families.

As we continue to leverage our identified strengths and dedicate efforts to making improvements in areas where opportunity exists, we will be better able to support not only our employees but the community as well. If you have any questions about how this survey was administered or how the data was collected and analyzed, please contact Jerrica Boyer or Angela Palmer in the Division of Management Support Services.