

**REPORT TO THE 2006 LEGISLATURE
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE SERIES FOR
SOCIAL WORKERS AND HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONALS
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRANSITION PLAN
IN COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS
AS REQUIRED BY
ACT 238 AND H.C.R. NO. 265, SLH 2005**

Prepared by the Department of Human Resources Development

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Executive Summary

In accordance with Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005, the Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) separated the Social Worker/Human Services Professional series into two series—the Social Worker series (which requires a social work degree) and the Human Services Professional series, and reallocated employees who were hired as social workers to the Social Worker series.¹ HRD met with the various stakeholders identified in Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265 to develop a transition plan to address those employees who were hired as social workers but do not have social work degrees, to obtain a social work degree by June 30, 2010. Those employees who do not obtain a social work degree by July 1, 2010, will be reallocated to the Human Services Professional series.

The stakeholders discussed whether the State's social workers should be required to possess a social worker license, but decided that the matter should be deferred because of potential problems that would result if licensure were required at this time.

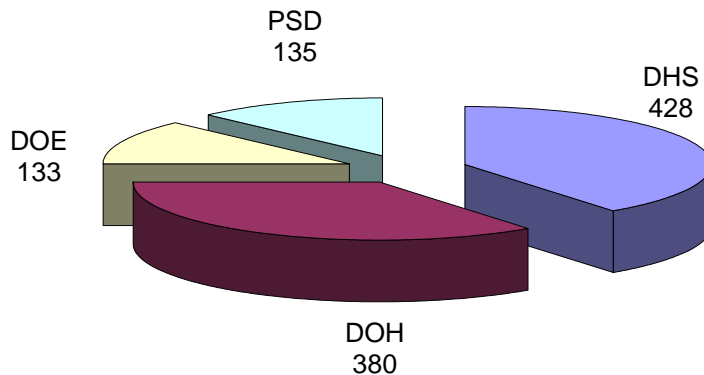
Background

HRD conducted a classification study of social worker positions primarily to address concerns regarding the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified social workers. As a result of this study, in May and September 2004, HRD established three new series and reallocated 1,076 positions located in the Departments of Human Services, Health, Public Safety and Education from the social worker series to one of the following series:

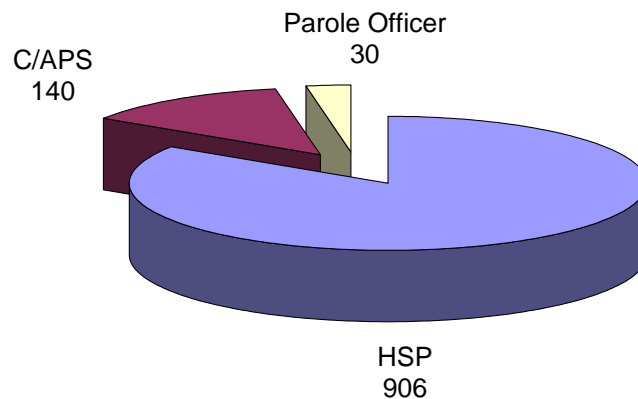
- Human Services Professional (HSP)
- Child/Adult Protective Services Specialist and Supervisor (C/APS)
- Parole Officer

¹ HRD has completed actions for positions and employees in the Departments of Human Services, Health and Public Safety. In accordance with Act 51, SLH 2004, effective July 1, 2005, the Department of Education (DOE) is responsible for administering its own civil service personnel system. HRD does not have authority to take action on any positions or employees in the DOE. DOE has indicated that they will take action on their positions and employees consistent with HRD's actions.

Number of Positions by Department



Number of Positions Allocated to Each Series



Subsequent to the establishment of the three new series and reallocation of social worker positions to the new series, the 2004 Legislature adopted S.C.R No. 127 which requested that HRD delay the elimination of the Social Worker series until “DHRD obtains the examination of, and consults and coordinates with, the Hawaii Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, University of Hawaii School of Social Work, Hawaii Pacific University School of Social Work, Brigham Young University School of Social Work and the Hawaii Government Employees’ Association; and . . . consider any input provided by the Departments of Education, Health, Human Services, and Public Safety, or any other affected department or agency.”

In accordance with S.C.R. No. 127, SLH 2004, between June and December 2004, HRD met with the stakeholder groups to address the issue of ensuring an adequate supply of competent social service professionals in order to provide needed services to the community. As a result of the meetings, it was agreed that the Human Services Professional series was necessary to alleviate recruitment difficulties and would be

retitled 'Social Worker/Human Services Professional.' The stakeholder group also recognized that: 1) Hawaii colleges and universities must do their part and be supported to provide greater numbers of social workers and human services workers; 2) State managers must be better trained to provide proper supervision of workers; 3) workers must have manageable caseloads, safe worksites and access to training; and 4) cooperation and coordination with other involved agencies is necessary if social problems are to be confronted, ameliorated and eliminated. These issues and recommended solutions were presented to the Legislature in reports dated November 10, 2004 and December 27, 2004.

Despite the discussions that occurred between HRD and the stakeholders during the latter half of 2004, there was continued concern, particularly with regard to protection of the social worker title and recognition of the social work profession and the quality of services provided by the State. As a result, two House bills and five Senate bills were introduced to delay and/or prohibit the abolishment of, and/or restore the social worker series in the 2005 Legislative Session. By the end of the session, Act 238 was passed into law, and House Concurrent Resolution No. 265 was adopted.

Act 238 and H.C.R. 265, SLH 2005

Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005, included the following provisions:

- Two separate series will be maintained (i.e., Social Worker and Human Services Professional). The Social Worker series will require persons to possess a social work degree from an accredited school/institution. The Human Services Professional series will not require a social work degree.
- As of July 1, 2005, persons hired as Social Workers must possess a social work degree.
- All employees who were reallocated from the Social Worker series to the Social Worker/Human Services Professional series in May 2004 shall be reallocated to the revised Social Worker series prior to January 2006.
- The Department of Human Resources Development shall work with the parties identified in Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265 to develop a transition plan for the above-mentioned employees who do not have social work degrees. Those employees who do not have a social work degree by July 1, 2010, will be reallocated to the Human Services Professional series.

Transition Plan

A series of six meetings, facilitated by the Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution, was held between the months of July and November 2005, to discuss the requirements

of Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005, and develop the transition plan. Attendees included HRD staff from three different divisions; representatives from the HGEA, NASW - Hawaii Chapter, and local colleges and universities with social work education programs; managers from various social service programs and staff of the personnel offices from the Departments of Human Services, Health, Public Safety and Education. Discussion topics included: 1) class specifications and minimum qualification requirements; 2) varying circumstances under which impacted employees (who do not possess a social work degree) would retain their 'right' to be allocated to the social worker series until June 30, 2010; and 3) the availability and accessibility of social work education for employees who wish to pursue a social work degree.

In addition to the stakeholder meetings, various subcommittees met to work out details regarding the class specifications and minimum qualification requirements, recruitment issues and personnel transactions issues.

A total of 1,442 person hours was spent by HRD and the various stakeholders in various meetings and performing staff work required to develop and implement the transition plan and to prepare the report to the Legislature. Of the total, 396 person hours was spent in stakeholder and subcommittee meetings, and HRD and departmental personnel office staff expended 1,046 person hours in developing and reviewing various documents and procedures, and preparing for and processing various transactions required to implement the transition plan.

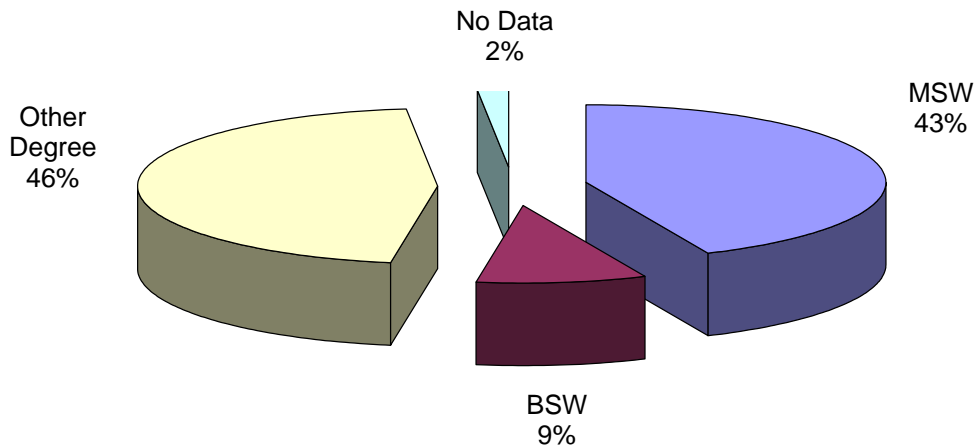
To date, the following items have been accomplished:

- Two letters were distributed to employees informing them about the requirements of Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005, changes that would result, and the impact of such changes.
- Two separate series—the Social Worker series and the Human Services Professional series, were established on October 17, 2005.
- Employees who occupied Social Worker positions and were converted to the Human Services Professional series were reallocated “back” to the Social Worker series, effective October 17, 2005.
- Employees who were hired as Social Worker/Human Services Professionals were reallocated to the Human Services Professional series, effective October 17, 2005.
- Employees who were hired as Social Worker/Human Services Professionals and provided appropriate verification of a social work degree by October 31, 2005, were reallocated to the Social Worker series effective November 1, 2005.

- Employees who were hired as Social Worker/Human Services Professionals and provide verification of a social work degree after October 31, 2005, will be reallocated to the Social Worker series at the beginning of the pay period following the date such verification is received by their respective departmental personnel offices.
- A survey was developed and distributed to employees to assess those interested in pursuing a social work degree. HRD will issue the results of the survey to all stakeholders and the 2006 Legislature early next year. The survey will be used by the local schools of social work to assess the feasibility of offering special programs and/or arrangements to facilitate the accessibility of coursework to interested employees. The schools and the departmental programs will work together to work out details and communicate available options to interested employees.
- Act 238, SLH 2005, indicated that the transition plan “may examine the intent of the legislature to require licensure for social workers employed by the executive branch and appropriate compensation for those who are licensed.” As discussed by the stakeholders, although the hiring of licensed social workers is desirable, the requirement that all State social workers be licensed would pose potentially serious problems at this time. Currently, only about half of the State’s social workers and human services professionals possess a social work degree, which is a requirement to take the social work licensure examination. If State social workers are no longer exempt from the licensure requirement, it will be extremely difficult to fill our positions and programs will not be able to provide necessary public services. It would also trigger the layoff of existing social workers, with and without social work degrees, who do not possess a social work license. The shortage of degreed social workers does not exist only in Hawaii; it is a nationwide problem. In light of the potential problems that would be created if the State’s social workers were required to be licensed, the stakeholders agreed that this issue should be deferred.²

² The NASW Hawaii Chapter believes that a long-term goal of establishing licensing of State social workers would be beneficial to: 1) ensure quality of services to clients; 2) ensure consumer protection; 3) attract third party reimbursements to the State; and 4) potentially attract trained social workers to State positions.

Educational Backgrounds of Social Worker/Human Services Professional Employees as of February 2005



Other Issues

Although not required by Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, the stakeholder group felt it was important to discuss other issues relating to the establishment of the two separate series and those issues that contribute to the shortage of social workers.

Supervision

Some stakeholders expressed concern with regard to whether HSPs (without social work degrees) should supervise Social Workers (with social work degrees). Those stakeholders felt that supervisory positions should be held by persons with social work degrees whenever possible. There was discussion regarding the roles and responsibilities of supervisors within the departments and the ability of persons without social work degrees to provide case consultation to their subordinates. Some program managers believe that for supervisory/managerial positions, it is more important that persons possess exemplary supervisory/managerial skills, rather than focusing on social work clinical skills. Currently, there are employees without social work degrees who effectively supervise employees with social work degrees. Finally, in some locations (e.g., neighbor islands) there are an insufficient number of candidates with social work degrees to fill supervisory positions. If HSPs are not allowed to qualify for supervisory positions, this would limit their promotional opportunities.

Compensation

Some stakeholders expressed a desire to pay persons with social work degrees more than those without social work degrees. While such an action could provide an incentive for people to obtain social work degrees and perhaps demonstrate a preference for social workers, implementation of such a practice would require differentiating the work that is currently performed by both groups.

Recruitment and Retention

The stakeholder group recognized that the shortage of qualified social workers is a multifaceted problem—one that has existed for decades, and exists not only in Hawaii, but nationwide. It is not only difficult to recruit qualified social workers. It is also difficult to retain them. Some stakeholders suggested that contributing factors may include high caseloads, inadequate support staff, intimidation by angry clientele, societal problems, criticism from the public, insufficient training and staff development, insufficient capacity of our social work schools, and insufficient pay.

Possible solutions that were offered and/or discussed by the stakeholders include:

- Increasing the ability of Hawaii's colleges and universities to enroll and graduate more students with social work degrees;
- Providing State-sponsored stipends, scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to BSW and MSW program students with the requirement that they work in the public sector for a specified period of time;
- Developing distance education programs in social work that are web-based or conducted through the UH educational television system to address the shortage of professionally trained social workers on the neighbor islands where social problems are serious and often unaddressed;
- Exploring ways to decrease worker caseloads;
- Ensuring ongoing training and staff development opportunities for all social work and human services professional staff;
- Reviewing the role of government in providing social work services, specifically what services should be performed by the State social workers vs. contracted out to the private sector.

In addition, other recommendations were made in the reports to the 2005 Legislature dated, November 10, 2004, and December 27, 2004, which are attached.

HRD and the stakeholders recognize that the issues and recommendations presented above are beyond the scope of the present group. We all recommend that appropriate parties be organized to address these important issues and recommendations.

Conclusion

HRD has fulfilled the requirements of Act 238 and H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005—two separate series, the Social Worker series and the Human Services Professional series, have been established; positions that were reallocated from the Social Worker series to the Human Services Professional series have been reallocated to the Social Worker series; a transition plan has been developed for employees who were reallocated to the Social Worker series, but do not have social work degrees; and a survey will be used to assess the feasibility of providing accessible social work programs to State employees who desire to pursue a social work degree.


As noted above, HRD has taken action to establish separate Social Worker and Human Services Professional series. The action was taken by HRD, as opposed to the stakeholder group, because HRD alone has statutory responsibility and authority to establish and modify civil service classes of work. That assignment of responsibility and authority is based on the premise that HRD staff has the expertise to determine appropriate position classification actions. While HRD acknowledges that it is appropriate for the Legislature to express concern or request reconsideration of HRD actions, we believe that matters of position classification should be determined by the department charged with that responsibility, on the basis of technical analysis, rather than through legislation.

The problems of recruiting and retaining qualified social workers has been a long-standing issue not only in Hawaii, but nationwide. The development of the Human Services Professional series, which allows for a broader applicant pool, the development of the specialized and higher paid Child/Adult Protective Services Specialist/Supervisor classes, and the establishment of the Parole Officer series will help to alleviate some of the continuing problems with social worker recruitment and retention. However, many obstacles continue to exist and need to be addressed through a coordinated effort between various State departments, Hawaii's colleges and universities, HGEA, NASW – Hawaii Chapter and the Legislature to ensure that the State will have the personnel necessary to provide quality services to adults, children and families served by our public social service agencies.

Attachments:

1. Act 238, SLH 2005
2. H.C.R. No. 265, SLH 2005
3. Class Specifications for the Social Worker series
4. Class Specifications for the Human Services Professional series
5. HRD Letter to Employees dated August 24, 2005
6. HRD Letter to Employees dated October 5, 2005
7. Meeting Summary - July 26, 2005
8. Meeting Summary - September 1, 2005
9. Meeting Summary - September 15, 2005
10. Meeting Summary - September 29, 2005
11. Meeting Summary - October 12, 2005
12. Meeting Summary - November 17, 2005
13. Report to the 2005 Legislature dated November 10, 2004
14. Report to the 2005 Legislature dated December 27, 2004
15. Expressions of stakeholders' dissent with report

Respectfully submitted,


Marie C. Laderta, Director
Department of Human Resources Development

12/5/05
Date