

REPORT TO THE 2005 LEGISLATURE

ON THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT'S

FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF COLLABORATION WITH

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS REGARDING THE SOCIAL WORKER SHORTAGE

AS REQUIRED BY

S.C.R. NO. 127, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, C.D. 1, SLH 2004

Prepared by the Department of Human Resources Development

December 27, 2004

Introduction

This is the last of three reports being submitted to the Legislature in accordance with S.C.R. No. 127, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, C.D. 1, SLH 2004, which requested that the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) delay the elimination of the Social Worker series until DHRD "obtains the examination of, consults and coordinates" with the Hawaii Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), University of Hawaii (UH) School of Social Work, Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) School of Social Work, Brigham Young University (BYU) School of Social Work, and the Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), to ensure that relevant concerns are addressed.

This report explains the final outcomes of the social worker classification study and the results of the six collaborative meetings held with DHRD and the stakeholder group—the UH School of Social Work, HPU Social Work Program, NASW Hawaii Chapter, and HGEA. (The BYU School of Social Work was represented only at the final meeting.)

Background

The social worker classification study conducted by DHRD began in January 2001, primarily to address line departments' concerns regarding the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified social workers. Numerous meetings were held with personnel and program staff from the Departments of Human Services, Health, Public Safety, and Education.

According to comments received from the departments, factors which contribute to problems in social work recruitment/retention include perceived pay inequities compared to private sector jobs, poor working conditions (including high caseloads, lack of resources, inadequate training), and management problems. Ancillary concerns included the outdated, 30-year old social worker class specifications.

In order to address some of the problems in social worker recruitment/retention, DHRD classification staff initially developed two earlier versions of a new social worker series. Input was sought from affected departments; however, neither version of this social worker re-tooling met with wholehearted support from all affected departments. The development of the Human Services Professional (HSP) series was thus the third attempt to establish standards in this current social worker classification study, and the one which, despite controversy, appeared to be the most workable for, and acceptable to the departments.

During the early months of 2004, DHRD held a series of meetings with employees and managers to provide information, obtain feedback on the proposed new HSP series, and to respond to questions and concerns. Meetings were also held with staff from the UH School of Social Work, HPU Social Work Program, Chaminade University Criminal Justice Program, NASW Hawaii Chapter and the HGEA.

DHRD's efforts to provide information to affected employees and agencies regarding the social worker classification study, which included proposals to establish new classes and to abolish the existing Social Worker series, were met with a great deal of concern and anxiety.

DHRD and Stakeholder Group Collaboration

S.C.R. No. 127 requested that DHRD and the stakeholder group work together to determine whether the proposed classification changes would adequately address the social worker shortage problem and ensure that effective social services are provided.

DHRD and the stakeholder group—the UH School of Social Work, HPU Social Work Program, NASW Hawaii Chapter and the HGEA, met over a period of six months, and worked toward a common goal—to address the issue of providing an adequate supply of competent social service professionals to provide needed services to the community. The first two reports (Attachments 2 and 3) that were submitted to the Legislature describe the progress made in addressing this goal.

Short-Term Goals

DHRD and the stakeholder group initially addressed short-term goals and agreed that although professional social workers with master's degrees in social work are the preferred candidates for many programs, we could not count on having enough professional social workers to fill our positions. The HSP series, developed by DHRD to help alleviate recruitment problems, provided more flexible qualifying experience requirements. The minimum qualification requirements for the new HSP series in no way diminished requirements for professional social services. After lengthy discussion with the stakeholder group, it was agreed that the new HSP series, with a new title—Social Worker/Human Services Professional (SW/HSP), could facilitate a larger applicant pool to fill our vacant positions.

As indicated in the first report submitted to the Legislature, the first HSP III and IV recruitment yielded 123 qualified applicants, or more than twice the number of applicants than the last recruitment for the old Social Worker III and IV classes. The first recruitment under the new Social Worker/Human Services Professional title yielded 85 qualified applicants. The establishment of the SW/HSP series has thus resulted in more qualified applicants for the previously vacant Social Worker positions.

The stakeholder group also accepted, with no major concerns, the establishment of the following specialized social services classes which were also established as part of the social worker classification study:

1. Child/Adult Protective Services Specialist (SR-23) and Child Adult Protective Services Supervisor (SR-25); and
2. Parole Officer I, II, III, IV, V and VI (SR-16, SR-18, SR-20, SR-22, SR-24 and SR-26, respectively).

DHRD had also planned to establish two other classes—Clinical Social Worker (SR-23) and Clinical Social Work Supervisor (SR-25). However, the establishment of these classes has been held in abeyance, as requested by the affected department (Department of Health), until a later date.

DHRD is also considering incorporating positions currently allocated to other classes which provide related human/social services into the SW/HSP series.

Long-Term Goals

DHRD and the stakeholder group determined that several long-term goals must be pursued in order to ensure a continuing supply of social services workers. It was also determined that as the need for social services is predicted to escalate nationwide, workers at all levels, paraprofessionals to professionals, must be made available. The stakeholders concluded that the provision of such workers can be fostered by:

1. Providing support to the professional schools of social work; encouraging the sharing of funds and resources between agencies and organizations; e.g., UH and the community colleges, BYU, and HPU; establishing/expanding paraprofessional human services degree programs in the community colleges; reaching out to the high schools to foster interest in social services employment; providing innovative means to foster social services education such as web-based, distance education training, on-site training, and expansion of stipend and other comparable education aid programs.
2. Providing sufficient resources to the UH School of Social Work, which is the primary source of qualified professionals for the State's social service programs. The UH School of Social Work has had to turn away applicants interested in pursuing social work education due to a lack of or limited faculty, space and other resources.
3. Providing support to current employees in the form of manageable caseloads, training, and adequate supervision. Based on interviews with program managers (who were invited to address their concerns before the group) and internet research, recruitment/retention of social workers could certainly be enhanced by providing such support. Comments from workers regarding high caseloads, inadequate supervision, etc., were forwarded to line departments' personnel staff for dissemination to line managers. These concerns can only be

addressed by management staff of the respective line departments, and not through any classification study.

4. Providing fair wages to workers. The general perception is that public sector social workers are paid less than their private sector counterparts. However, in 2002, when the last social work pay survey was completed, it was found that although the starting pay for journey level State social workers (including shortage differentials) was 17% below that paid in the private sector, the State median pay for these workers was only 3% less than the private sector. At the maximum pay range, the State and private sector pay rates were comparable. DHRD has established the Child/Adult Protective Services Specialist and Supervisor classes at higher pay grades to recognize more complex protective services work. Also, although pay is important, surveys conducted by DHRD staff have indicated that working conditions (e.g., caseload size and complexity, supervision, etc.) frequently are just as important, if not more important than pay in determining whether or not a worker stays in social work, or in a particular unit in a social work program
5. Forming a coalition of individuals and agencies, including the Governor, the Legislature, state and private social services agencies, educational institutions, hospitals, schools, affected unions, and the Federal government to work collaboratively in addressing the problems of recruiting, training, and retaining qualified human services workers.
6. Increasing the proportion of preferred, appropriately educated (i.e., BSW, MSW) personnel, and possibly re-establishing the Social Worker series if warranted.

Conclusion

Problems with social worker recruitment/retention have been long standing, and have been addressed many times in the past, as evidenced in part by various reports prepared by the Office of the Legislative Auditor; e.g., Study of the Social Worker Shortage Among State Agencies (1990); Audit of the Child Protective Services System (1999); Follow-Up Audit of the Child Protective Services System (2003). There have also been a number of studies conducted by DHRD and the line agencies.

The development of the SW/HSP 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 we have had with social worker recruitment/retention. However, it is also recognized that our schools (high schools, community colleges, universities) must do their part and be supported to provide greater numbers of social workers and human services workers; our managers must be better trained to provide proper supervision of their workers; workers must have manageable caseloads, safe worksites, and access to training; and cooperation/coordination with

other involved agencies will be necessary if social problems are to be confronted and ameliorated or eliminated.

DHRD and the stakeholder group, together with input from program managers, have worked together over a period of approximately six months and feel we have met the stipulations indicated in S.C.R. No. 127, and resolved the concerns generated by the elimination of the Social Worker series and the establishment of the new Social Worker/Human Services Professional and other series and classes. Now, however, as noted in the second report submitted by the stakeholder group to the Legislature, it will require a coordinated effort and support by all concerned parties to ensure that quality social services are available and provided to the people of Hawaii.

Acknowledgements

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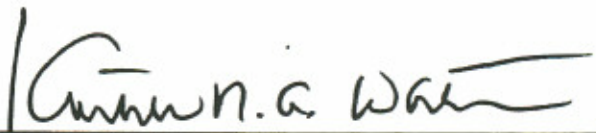
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Attachments:

1. S.C.R. No. 127, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, C.D. 1, SLH 2004
2. Report to Senator Brian Kanno and Representative Marcus Oshiro, dated August 25, 2004

3. Report to Senator Brian Kanno and Representative Marcus Oshiro, dated November 10, 2004
4. Class Specifications for the Social Worker/Human Services Professional series
5. Class Specifications for Parole Officer series
6. Class Specifications for the Child/Adult Protective Services Specialist & Supervisor
7. Social Worker/Human Services Professional newsletter, July 2004

Respectfully submitted,



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Date