CalSWEC
California Social Work Education Center

Improving the Child Welfare Workforce by better understanding Employee Retention, Organizational Culture and Climate

County Welfare Director Association Conference 2014

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Importance of Organizational Factors: improving quality of service and retention of staff

"The quality of services provided in child welfare is assumed to be only as good as the competence of the professional child welfare employees that provide those services." (Ewalt, 1991)

The annual turnover rate of child welfare employees is estimated to be between 20% and 40% (Cyphers, 2001; Reagh, 1994; Rycraft, 1994; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003; American Public Human Services Association of America, 2005).
Stability of workforce is a key factor is providing high quality service.

Multifaceted reasons for leaving, worker and organizational factors (Ellett 2009).

Culture particularly important as child welfare services are "soft skills" based. **Factors that strengthen professional organizational culture enhance the retention of child welfare employees** (Ellett, 2009; Ellett & Ellett, 1997; Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999).
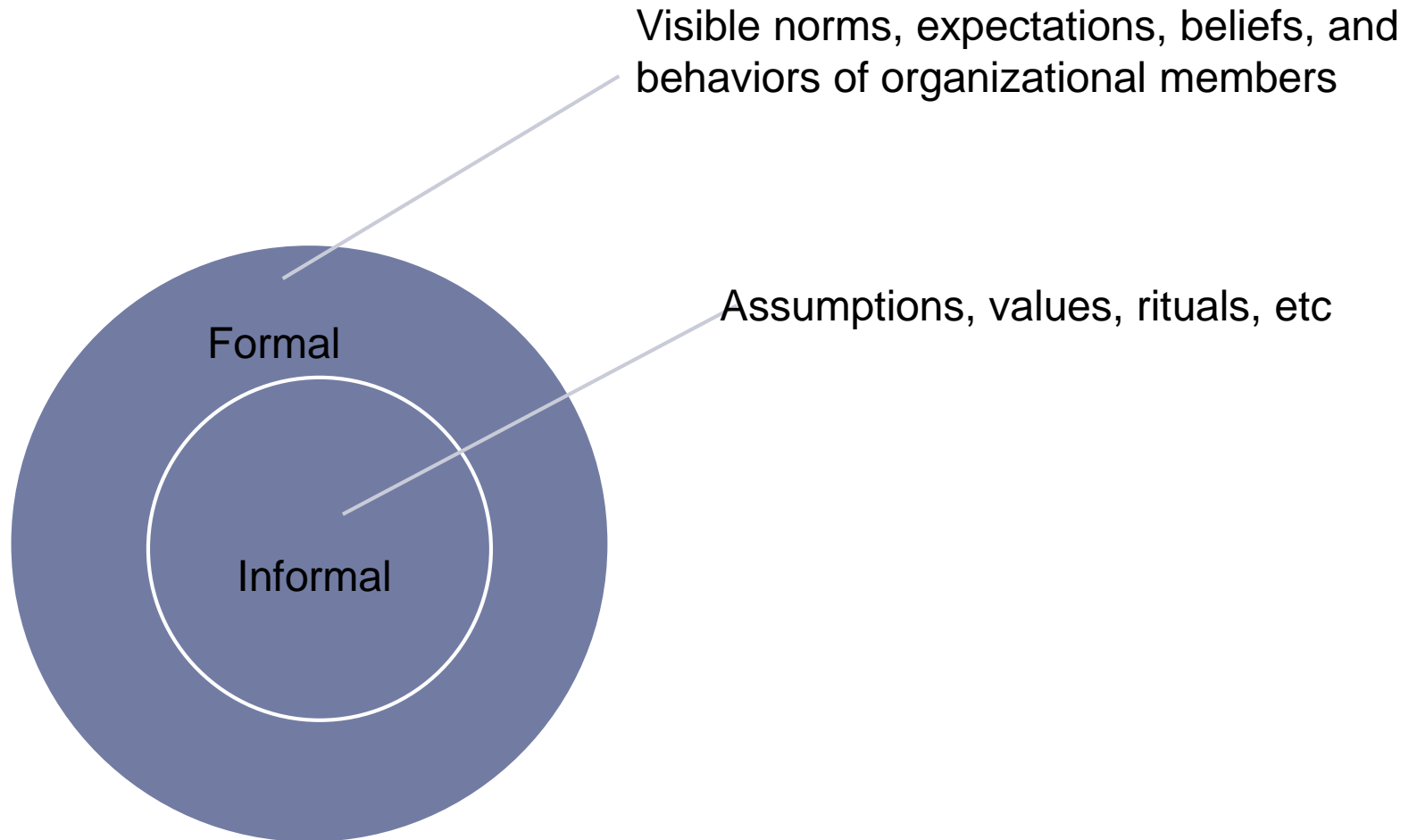
Defining terms: **Organizational Culture**

▸ Simply conceptualized as *the way we do business around here.* (James & McIntyre, 1996; Hemmelgarn, Glisson & James, 2006)

▸ Commonly defined as a *set of shared, latent assumptions, beliefs, values and norms that influence the espoused values, attitudes, and behaviors of organizational members* (Ellet, 2008; Denison, 1996; Rousseau, 1990; Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Schein, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

   ▸ Property of the organization vs. the individual

   ▸ Layered construct (Schneider, 2000)

   ▸ Can have subcultures within groups, units, locations (Trice & Beyer, 1993)

Conceptualization

▸ Ellett et al. (2003) conceptualized Professional Culture (supervisory support, administrative support, professionalism, collegiality, and autonomy)

▸ Rousseau (1990) focused on more visible norms, expectations, beliefs, and behaviors of organizational members; not more deep-seated latent assumptions, values, rituals, and symbols (inner layer, informal structure)

▸ Cultures can be constructive or passive-defensive (Cooke & Szumal, 2000)

Rousseau: Structure of Culture

Visible norms, expectations, beliefs, and behaviors of organizational members

Assumptions, values, rituals, etc

Formal

Informal

Defining terms: **Organizational Climate**

▸ Simply conceptualized as *How it feels around here.*

   ▸ Considered to be a property of the individual

Psychological vs. Organizational

▸ *Psychological Climate* is workers perception of impact of work on well-being (e.g., emotional exhaustion, role conflict; James, James & Ashe, 1990).

▸ Employees agreement of this perception creates *Organizational Climate*.

Culture and Climate

ATTRACTIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION BUT….

▸ Disagreement on conceptualizations – are culture and climate distinct or related? If related, how?

  ▸ Content analysis identified 32 definitions of climate and 54 different definitions of culture (Verbeke, Volgering & Hessels, 1998)

  ▸ No real empirical evidence about their relationship (Payne, 2000; Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994; Tesluk, Farr, & Klein, 1997; Virtanen, 2000)

  ▸ More work needed to understand how they are different, practically speaking (Glisson, 2000).

Some research on the impact of culture and climate: Retention

▸ **More favorable perceptions of culture = greater intention to stay**

▸ **Employees intention to stay in child welfare is linked to:**

  ▸ human caring
  ▸ self-efficacy beliefs
  ▸ worker morale
  ▸ job satisfaction
  ▸ professional organizational culture

(Westbrook et al. 2006; Ellett, 2000; Ellett et al., 2003; Ellett & Millar, 2005; Ellis et al., 2007)

Some research on the impact of culture and climate: Org Change & Practice Change

▸ Studies in business link culture to affecting meaningful organizational change

(Cavanagh, 1997; Fullan, 1993; Reichers & Schneider,1990).

▸ In mental health agencies, Constructive culture was associated with more positive attitudes toward adoption of EBP *and*

▸ Poor organizational climates associated with perceived divergence of usual practice and EBP

(Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006)

Some research on the impact of culture and climate: Outcomes

Culture and climate is associated with*:

▶ More positive worker attitudes,

▶ Better outcomes for children

▶ Higher service quality (more continuity)

*(Glisson & James, 2002; Glisson, Dukes & James, 2006; Glisson & Green, 2011)

Opportunities to support your improvement efforts

Culture change through in-service training

▸ Theory on Organizational Culture and Climate has been integrated into the emerging *CA Core Practice Model*, and will be supported by the Statewide Training System via the *Common Core* and other related advanced training.

 ▸ Core Practice Model will specifically reference attending to organizational culture and climate, and supporting a competent workforce

 ▸ Common Core will introduce these concepts in the Core Practice Model

 ▸ As the Core Practice Model is implemented, leadership and management training will address more advanced topics and issues.

Culture change through in-service training, coaching and workforce development

▸ Regional Training Academies are developing an *infrastructure for coaching and mentoring*

▸ *Implementation toolkits* are developed for new initiatives that centralize information and training/coaching materials
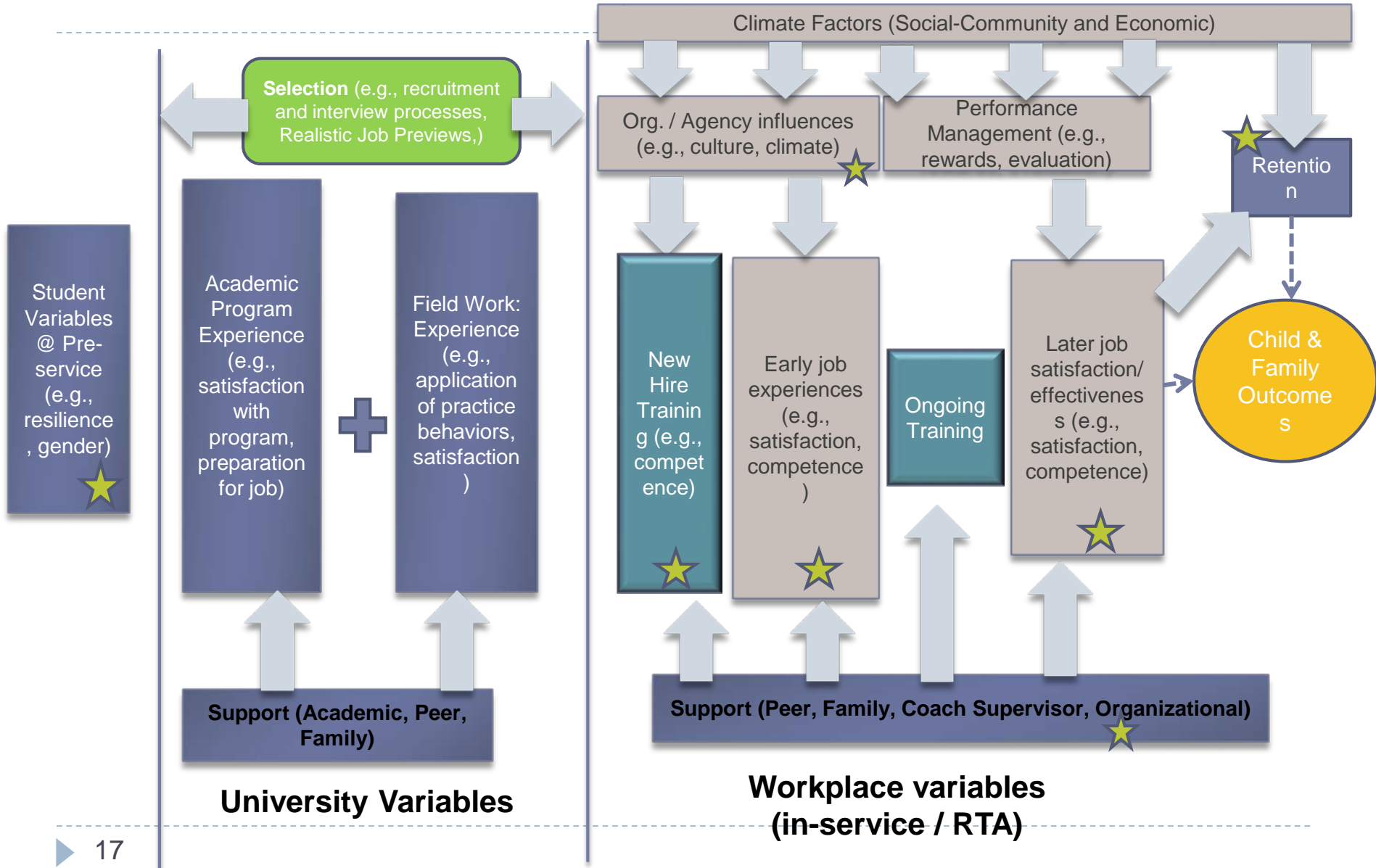
Culture change through the IV-E Field Model

▸ Creating stronger partnerships between the agency and the university

   ▸ *Solution Focused Supervision Training* *as part of intern program we have in partnership at Chico State University, Chico.*

   ▸ *The support group process **has increases the level of quality supervision for field instructors**.*

   ▸ *The support group process for interns has provides an environment to **address issues and form connections with fellow interns to support them in their professional development**.*

Culture change through the IV-E Field Model

▸ Prepares *future* workforce (pipeline)

▸ Professional development for incumbent staff

▸ Enhances *supervision* capacity

▸ Develops and maintains *learning organization* culture

▸ Agency connection to social work *theory and practice*:

  ▸ Social justice, economic justice, community development, amelioration of poverty

▸

CalSWEC Workforce study investigates the impact of culture and climate among other variables

Scales and Instruments. . .some examples

▶ **Child Welfare Organizational Culture Inventory** (CWOCI) measures administrative support, supervisory support, autonomy, professionalism, professional sharing and support, beliefs, and ceremonies and rituals

▶ **Organization Culture Profile** (OCP) measures innovation, attention to detail, outcome orientation, aggressiveness, supportiveness, emphasis on rewards, team orientation, and decisiveness.

Scales and Instruments. . .some examples

- **Parker Climate Scale:** Role Dimensions (*Ambiguity*, *Conflict*, *Overload)* Job Dimensions *Importance, Autonomy, Challenge)* Organizational Dimensions (*Innovation*, *Justice, Support*) Supervisor Dimensions (*Trust and Support*, *Goal Emphasis, Work Facilitation)* Workgroup Dimensions (*Warmth*, *Pride, Cooperation)*

- **National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's (NCWWI) Survey Instruments:**
  - Organizational Health Assessment
  - Readiness for Change
  - Climate Scale

San Francisco is starting the work. . .

- **University partnership grant through the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)**
  - Partnership with UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare & Seneca Family of Agencies
  - 4 MSW interns placed in Macro placements at San Francisco HSA and Seneca
  - Beginning with an Assessment of Organizational Culture and Climate administered by NCWWI
    - >80% Return rate on the survey from staff (!)
    - Presenting the preliminary results in the next couple of weeks to all staff

NATIONAL Child Welfare WORKFORCE INSTITUTE

Learning, Leading, Changing

Linking Organizational Culture and Climate to Other key system efforts

San Francisco change effort is building a ***culture and climate*** to support ***Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)***

San Francisco Theory of Change: *If we change the culture of the agency to be more* *data-driven, performance-oriented and team-focused,* *then our services will become more responsive to families and children's needs, our staff at all levels will improve their services, and outcomes will improve.*

Linking Organizational Culture and Climate to Other key system efforts

San Francisco Goals

▸ Develop a CQI-based approach to leadership and casework at SF FCS and Seneca;

▸ Improve the organizational culture and climate of our agencies;

▸ Build a dynamic partnership between Berkeley Social Welfare, FCS and Seneca that supports a performance based culture in all three organizations

▸ Strengthen & support the workforce

Discussion Questions:

▸ *What is appealing about examining and working to improve your organizational culture and climate?*

▸ *What scares you about it?*

▸ *What are some initial steps that you could take?*

How will you begin?

Thank you for participating!

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