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# Collaborative Safety

Scott Modell, Ph.D.  
Noel Hengelbrok, MSc.



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# Incidents and Responses across the U.S.



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# Child Welfare



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# Florida



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May 2011

Florida cuts \$48 million from DCF budget, terminates 500 agency positions

# Budget Cuts Lead to Loss of Staff at DCF

Gov. Scott is cutting nearly 500 positions in the Department of Children and Families

Tuesday, May 24, 2011 | Updated 10:38 AM EDT

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Getty Images

Rick Scott

The Department of Children and Families is cutting nearly 500 positions to save the state \$48 million as Gov. Rick Scott tries to balance the state budget and slash spending by nearly \$4 billion, the agency said Monday.

Secretary David Wilkins said critical services will not be affected. About half the positions will come from three state hospitals: Florida State Hospital, Northeast Florida State Hospital and



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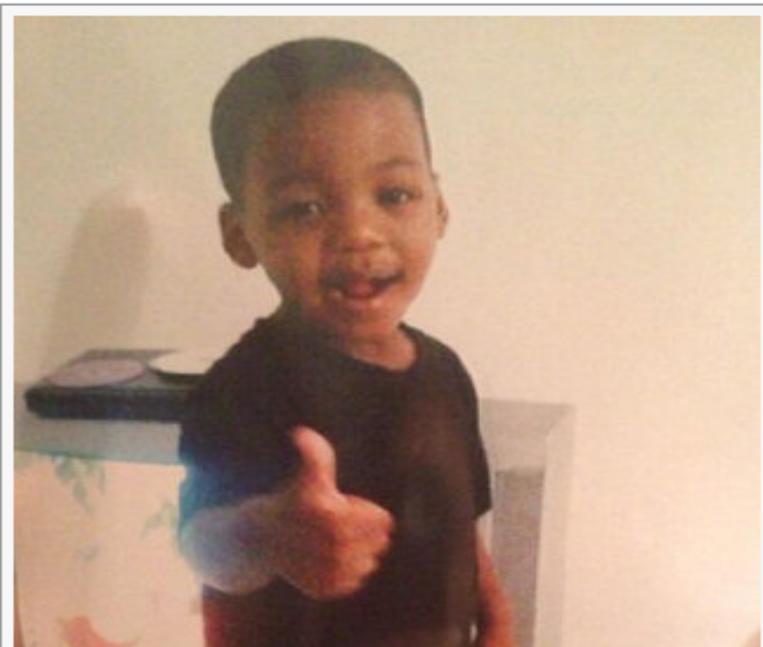
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## June 2013

4 children with DCF history die within 6-week period, causing media maelstrom

CHILD WELFARE

### DCF roiled by another child's death 205



BY CAROL MARBIN MILLER  
CMARBIN@MIAMIHERALD.COM

For the fourth time in six weeks, the state Department of Children & Families is investigating the death of a Florida child who, only weeks or months earlier, had drawn the attention of agency administrators.

The latest to die is Ezra Raphael, age 2. Police say they were "summoned" to Ezra's home at 15664 NE 10th Ct. in North Miami Beach, at 11:08 p.m. last Thursday to check on a "sick and unresponsive child." When paramedics arrived, police said in a statement, they found Ezra unconscious on the dining room floor. The toddler was pronounced dead shortly after he arrived at Jackson North Medical Center.



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Miami Herald publishes series alleging  
DCF underreported child death numbers

**INNOCENTS LOST**

# FLORIDA'S UNDERCOUNT OF CHILD ABUSE DEATHS

The state says abuse and neglect deaths are receding after a spike. But are they? And, if so, by how much? A closer look at the numbers.

**BY CAROL MARBIN MILLER AND AUDRA D.S. BURCH**

CMARBIN@MIAMIHERALD.COM



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# July 2013

## Head of DCF resigns following scandal surrounding the deaths of the 4 children

POLITICS

### Florida DCF head David Wilkins resigns Like 62



David Wilkins, Florida's top child welfare and social service administrator, shown in this Dec. 19, 2012 file photo, resigned Thursday, July 18, 2013, amid [Buy Photo](#)

BY CAROL MARBIN MILLER AND MARY ELLEN KLAS  
CMARBIN@MIAMIHERALD.COM

David Wilkins, Florida's top child welfare and social services administrator, resigned Thursday amid an escalating scandal over the recent deaths of four small children who had a history of involvement with child-abuse investigators.

Wilkins is leaving the agency to "pursue opportunities in the private sector and to provide more attention" to a foundation he leads, Gov. Rick Scott said in a statement.

Wilkins, who became the governor's longest-serving agency head, served as secretary of the Department of Children & Families since Scott's inauguration in 2011. But in recent months, Wilkins became mired in a simmering controversy over the deaths of four youngsters in a six-week period, all but one from Miami-Dade and Broward counties. A fifth child, also from Miami, nearly died from a lacerated liver after the agency failed to act when the infant suffered a broken thigh bone months earlier.



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April 2014

Legislators pledge \$47 million in new funding for child welfare

LEGISLATURE 2014

## House, Senate settle on \$47 million in new money for child welfare

 Like  41



The Miami Herald and WLRN hosted a town hall meeting to discuss Innocents Lost, the investigative series that looked at 477 Florida child deaths by abuse or neglect that occurred over a six-year span.

BY MARY ELLEN KLAS

HERALD/TIMES TALLAHASSEE BUREAU

TALLAHASSEE -- With breakneck speed, House and Senate budget negotiators met Tuesday and agreed to \$47.8 million in new money for child welfare, far below what child advocates had hoped for but with more money for treatment services than either chamber had originally sought.

The proposal also gives the governor only about \$21 million of the \$39 million he had asked for to expand child protection services.

The agreement may be only preliminary, said Senate President Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who said budget negotiators may find additional funds for child welfare programs as they work to finish their \$75 billion budget this week.



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# Georgia



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# 2007 – 2012

## Georgia DFCS budget reduced by 28% over five-year period

Updated: 9:57 a.m. Thursday, April 12, 2012 | Posted: 5:38 a.m. Thursday, April 12, 2012

### Hit hard by budget cuts, DFCS strains as workload jumps

Email 3 Share 20 Tweet 8 ShareThis 898

#### Related

Photos: Agency faces funding cuts

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Phil Skinner

By Shannon McCaffrey and Craig Schneider

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

More abused and neglected children are getting state protection under an aggressive new policy mandate, but deep budget cuts are threatening efforts to help those children and their families heal, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has found.

The Division of Family and Children Services lost 28 percent of its state funding for child welfare services over five years and is bracing for the loss of millions in federal dollars. Now, under a new regime, DFCS is emphasizing children's safety by opening thousands of additional investigations and taking hundreds more children into foster care.



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# November 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

## Alleged mishandling of child death cases by DFCS prompts media firestorm

Posted: 9:14 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2013

### DFCS investigating alleged child abuse deaths

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Father charged with murder claimed boy drowned

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By Alexis Stevens

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Eric Forbes and Emani Moss lived 60 miles apart. But together, their tragic deaths allegedly at the hands of their parents could spark changes for the state agency responsible for protecting children.



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# November 13<sup>th</sup> 2013

## DFCS fires two employees connected to reportedly mishandled death cases

### Two DFCS employees fired after two child deaths



Two Georgia Division of Family and Children Services employees involved have been fired, after deaths of two children.

11Alive Staff, WXIA 3:27 p.m. EST November 13, 2013



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ATLANTA -- Two Georgia Division of Family and Children Services employees have been fired, after internal investigations into the deaths of Eric Forbes and Markea Berry.



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November 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal proposes plan to increase DFCS budget by \$27 million and hire 500 additional caseworkers

Local

6:00 AM THU NOVEMBER 14, 2013

## Deal Proposes \$27M DFCS Funding Boost

[Share](#) [Tweet](#) [g+1](#) [E-mail](#) [0 Comments](#) [Print](#)

By MICHELL ELOY

Gov. Nathan Deal says he wants to expand the Division of Family and Children Services.

His plan, which will be introduced in his upcoming FY2015 budget proposal, calls for hiring about 500 DFCS case workers and supervisors and increasing the division's budget by nearly \$27 million over the next three years.



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# Illinois



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2012-2016

## Illinois cuts \$50 million from DCF budget, terminates 375 agency positions

Chicago Tribune

TUESDAY MAR. 24, 2020 SPORTS BREAKING BUSINESS E-NEWSPAPER OPINION ENTERTAINMENT BEST REVIEWS ADVERTISING DEATH NOTICES

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News

### DCFS cuts may force more kids into foster care

By **Bill Ruthhart, Chicago Tribune reporter**

SEPTEMBER 4, 2012

**F**or decades, the state's child welfare agency has kept tens of thousands of families of abused and neglected children together while helping struggling parents cope with problems ranging from alcoholism and substance abuse to explosive anger.

Without that assistance, called intact family services, the state's only alternative often was to place those at-risk kids in foster care — a traumatic, life-changing moment for most children and a significant expense to the state. The [Illinois Department of Children and Family Services](#) in recent years has done all it can to avoid that step, but a steep budget cut has forced the agency to slash such assistance.

The agency's latest challenge is a \$50 million budget cut that state lawmakers approved in May, which requires DCFS to lay off 375 workers, about 12 percent of its workforce.

More than 275 employees targeted for layoffs are intact family workers who visit parents regularly to ensure they are undergoing necessary treatment. They also interview children to try to ensure further harm hasn't occurred.



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April 2019

DCFS has multiple contacts with 5-year-old child prior to his death

NEWS METRO/STATE CRIME

## State investigates handling of AJ Freund case after boy found dead

By Matthew Hendrickson | @MHendricksonCST | Apr 24, 2019, 11:30pm CDT

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April 2019

## DCFS comes under fire from various media sources

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### Illinois child welfare system under fire after boy's death

by DON BABWIN and JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press | Thursday, April 25th 2019

AA



Mourners gather outside the home of 5-year-old Andrew "AJ" Freund for a vigil Wednesday, April 24, 2019, in Crystal Lake, Ill. (John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune via AP)



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# December 2019

DCFS case workers are fired after the death of child

## 2 DCFS workers fired over handling of AJ Freund case

Carlos Acosta and Andrew Polovin had been reassigned to desk duty after the boy's shocking death in April.

By Mitchell Armentrout | @mitchtrout | Dec 13, 2019, 4:38pm CST

   SHARE



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**Feb 2020**

Governor pledges \$147 million in new funding for child welfare

## **Pritzker plans \$147 million boost for DCFS in second-year budget**

The governor plans to increase the agency's headcount to 3,056 employees in hopes of reducing caseloads for overwhelmed investigators and adding staff at a hotline that collects tips on abuse and neglect.

By Tina Sfondeles | Feb 17, 2020, 5:00am CST

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# Massachusetts



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# 2008 - 2013

Massachusetts cuts \$137 million from child welfare, 15% reduction



**January 2014**

Disappearance and presumed death of  
5-year-old receiving DCF services causes media uproar

## Mass. DCF under siege regarding handling of child welfare cases



**Mass. DCF under siege regarding handling of child welfare cases**

Recent cases of children like Kaydn Hancock and Jeremiah Oliver have agency, Mass. gov. accused of negligence



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February 2014

Boston Globe publishes piece claiming that children under the watch of DCF "die with alarming regularity"

# Savage toll of abuse for children in DCF care

More than 95 have died since '01, state reports say

By Jenifer McKim | NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING FEBRUARY 02, 2014

ARTICLE

COMMENTS ( 31 )



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**April 2014**

DCF Chief resigns after discovery of missing 5-year-old's body and deaths of two infants with DCF contact occur within 15-day period

## DCF Chief Olga Roche Resigns After Deaths

By The Associated Press April 29, 2014 Updated Apr 29, 12:05 pm



Gov. Deval Patrick, who had earlier defended DCF chief Olga Roche, said it was clear now that Roche had the expertise to do her job but no longer had the support of the public or her staff. (Josh Reynolds/AP)



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May 2014

Lawmakers propose \$38 million increase to DCF budget

# As Mass. DCF Moves Under New Leader, Lawmakers OK Funding Boost

*by: Sarah Birnbaum*

MAY 1, 2014

BOSTON

As the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families undergoes a change in leadership, lawmakers are trying to increase the agency's budget.

The House is recommending a \$38 million boost over last fiscal year for the department. That's roughly what Gov. Deval Patrick proposed.



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# Tennessee



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**2010 – 2012**

Tennessee DCS budget cut by \$30 million, resulting in the elimination of 200 staff and caseworker positions

## **DCS faces Tennessee lawmakers' own investigation**

Hearings to address children's deaths, increased budget

Mar. 12, 2013

---

“DCS is now operating with its smallest budget and case manager levels in five years, even as it grapples with far more children in its care. The number of children in DCS custody increased by 18 percent between 2010 and 2012. During the same period, DCS budget cuts eliminated 200 staff and caseworker positions and lopped \$30 million from the agency’s total budget.”



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## December 2012

Coalition media group files lawsuit against DCS to obtain information relating to child death cases, garnering national media attention

### Media groups file lawsuit against Tenn. children's agency

Dec. 19, 2012

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A coalition of media organizations is suing the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, alleging the agency is violating the law by not providing details about 31 children it had investigated and who died during the first six months of this year.

The lawsuit filed Wednesday is spearheaded by The Tennessean (<http://tnne.ws/ZPaBPK>), which has repeatedly asked DCS for the information. To date, the agency has only provided brief summaries of the deaths.

The lawsuit asks the court to order the agency to explain why the records were not provided. It also asks that the department immediately give those records to the court so a judge can review them and redact any confidential information and for the records to then be opened to the public for review.



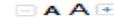
January 2013

DCS fires two executive directors on the same day  
agency officials appear in court for hearing on media coalition lawsuit

## DCS fires executive directors Debbie Miller, Alan Hall

Firings conveyed little explanation

Jan. 10, 2013



Written by  
**Tony Gonzalez**  
The Tennessean

FILED UNDER

News  
News Government -  
State

Two executive-level Department of Children's Services staffers — whose duties at the agency included reviewing the deaths of children — were fired Tuesday.

[Continuing coverage of the Department of Children's Services](#)

Dismissed were:

- Debbie Miller, 61, executive director of family and child well-being, who oversaw medical and behavioral health and education for children in custody and independent living for teens that age out of DCS custody; and
- Alan Hall, 47, executive director of performance and quality improvement, who oversaw department policies, licensing and accountability, and who led the department's internal audit.



Department spokeswoman Molly Sudderth said Miller's position was eliminated as part of a restructuring. Hall will be replaced. The Tennessean asked why Hall was dismissed, and Sudderth did not give an answer.



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## January 2013

# State legislators call for DCS to be investigated in wake of agency not releasing child death records sought in media coalition lawsuit

## Rep. Mike Turner demands investigation into DCS, cites 'secrecy'

'It is well past time that we have a full accounting of problems,' he says

Jan. 11, 2013



One of the state's top-ranking lawmakers has called for an immediate investigation into the Department of Children's Services, saying the matter is urgent and citing the department's refusal to release records concerning the deaths of children in its care.

Thirty-one Tennessee children died in the first half of 2012 after coming to the attention of the state's child protective agency.

On Thursday, House Democratic Caucus Chairman Mike Turner sent letters to Gov. Bill Haslam, House Speaker Beth Harwell and Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey — the state's top three



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**February 2013**

## DCS Commissioner Kate O'Day resigns amidst continuing controversy over agency's handling of child death cases

### DCS commissioner O'Day resigns amid scrutiny of deaths

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*Updated: Tue 12:32 PM, Feb 05, 2013*

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WVLT/AP) -- The commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services has resigned amid scrutiny of how her agency was handling cases of children who died after investigations of abuse and neglect.

"Kate has informed me that she felt the time was right to step down," Haslam said. "Gov. Bill Haslam announced in a news release Tuesday that Kate O'Day had decided to resign because of concerns that she had become the focus of attention rather than the children the agency is meant to serve."

I appreciate Kate's service to this administration and to our state. She has done a lot of good work in identifying longstanding problems that have hampered the department, and we will build on those efforts as we move forward."



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# Jim Henry named head of Tennessee's Department of Children's Services

May 22nd, 2013 | by Staff Report | in Local Regional News | Read Time: < 1 min. |



NASHVILLE - Gov. Bill Haslam on Tuesday named Jim Henry as the permanent head of the state's troubled Department of Children's Services.

Henry has been working as acting commissioner after the abrupt departure in February of then-Commissioner Kate O'Day, whose department has been engulfed in controversies over inadequate protections for children, children's deaths and questions about how investigations have been handled.

Henry, a former state lawmaker, already was commissioner of the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and has been holding down a dual role at Children's Services as well as Intellectual and Development Disabilities, working to bring order back to DCS operations.

The governor today also named Debra Payne as the new commissioner of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Payne is a department veteran and has been serving as deputy



Photo by Associated Press/Times Free Press.



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**February 2014**

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam proposes plan to increase DCS budget by \$6.4 million and to hire 89 additional caseworkers

## Gov. Bill Haslam proposes DCS funding increase

Anita Wadhvani, The Tennessean 8:53 a.m. EST February 10, 2014

*For the second year, the embattled Department of Children's Services is getting budget help from Gov. Bill Haslam.*



(Photo: WBIR)

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For the second year, the embattled Department of Children's Services is getting budget help from Gov. Bill Haslam.

The governor is proposing a \$6.4 million state funding increase for the agency charged with investigating child abuse and neglect and running the state's foster care system and programs for delinquent youth.

The proposed budget increase would allow the department to hire 49 more child protective service workers and 40 family services caseworkers, buy 2,000 electronic tablets for caseworkers to use in the field, increase payments to foster parents and invest more in adoption programs.



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# Time for Something New



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# Tennessee child welfare officials draw on lessons from aviation, call for "safety culture"



IMAGE DISTRIBUTED FOR COMMISSION TO ELIMINATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FATALITIES à Staffers from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services Offices of Child Health and Safety Noel Hengelbrok (from left), Scott Modell, and Michael Cull speak during a public meeting of the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and



# Contrasting Reviews

**Turkish Air flight TK1951 received erroneous information from the plane's radio altimeter system. The crew's response resulted in a fatal crash that claimed the lives of 4 crew members and 5 passengers.**



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# Contrasting Reviews

A 2 y/o girl left unattended by her foster parents drowns in the family's swimming pool.



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# Expert Findings

- The Captain had close to 11,000 hours on the Boeing 737 alone. This combination of training standards and experience is apparently not enough **to protect crews from the subtle effects of automation failures** during automated, human-monitored flight.
- The documentation and training available for flight crews of the Boeing 737NG leaves important **gaps in the mental model that a crew may build up about** which systems and sensor inputs are responsible for what during an automatically flown approach.

(Dekker, 2009)



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# Expert Findings

- It is indisputable that OKDHS was **well aware of the hazard associated with the pool.**
- The home **should never** have been approved without a specific and shared understanding between OKDHS and the foster parents about the pool.
- The pool **should have been** removed or a suitably protective fence **should have been** placed around it.
- **No children should ever** have been placed in the home before one of these things happened.
- By **failing to ensure** that this hazard was either removed or mitigated, OKDHS **violated** CWLA and COA standards and its own policy.



# Developing a Safety Culture

Three Transitions



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## **Blame to Accountability**

*To understand how to learn and improve as an organization.*



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## Applying quick fixes to understanding underlying features

*To make meaningful change and address the real problems.*



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~~PROBLEMS~~

SOLUTIONS

**Employees are a Problem to Control to a Solution to Harness**

*To make use of the most powerful resource an organization has.*



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# COLLABORATIVE SAFETY MODEL



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# Collaborative Safety Model



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# SYSTEMIC REVIEWS



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# Systemic Reviews

- Use in the areas of:
  - Continuous Quality Improvement
  - Fatality Reviews
  - Service Reviews
  - Incident Reviews
  - Metrics and Performance



# Systemic Reviews

- Departs from Blame
- Integrates safety science into the learning process
- Establishes an environment that promotes staff engagement
- Values staff perspective
- Compatible with complexity of work



# ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT



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# Organizational Alignment

- Executives
- Leadership/Management
- Supervisors
- Front Line Staff
- External
  - Oversight Entities
  - Legislature
  - Media
- Key Partners
  - Providers
  - Families
  - Community



# INTEGRATION INTO EVERYDAY OPERATIONS



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# Integration into Everyday Operations

- Integration of safety science techniques into leadership and management
- Integration of safety science techniques into existing QA/QI/Investigative processes
- Changes how we:
  - Talk about work
  - Support quality work
  - Meet metrics
  - Treat staff
  - Support teamwork
  - Promote psychological safety



# Integration into Everyday Operations

- eLearns
- Leadership/Management/Supervisors
  - Learning Labs
- Direct Support Staff
  - Advanced Practical Training
- Licensing, QA, Other Oversight
  - Advanced Practical Training

The screenshot shows an eLearning interface with a blue header and a white main area. The title 'Blame vs. Accountability' is in the top left. Below it, there is a paragraph of text: 'Click on each of the statements of blame to reveal how we can rephrase them as statements of systemic accountability. When done, click Next to continue.' Below this is another paragraph: 'We use language carefully to hold the system accountable and avoid blaming individual workers for unwanted outcomes or incidents that occur.' On the right side, there are four video thumbnails, each with a blue caption box. The first thumbnail shows a man smiling with the caption 'Help me understand what happened.' The second shows a woman smiling with the caption 'Tell me about some of the barriers you were facing.' The third shows a woman smiling with the caption 'I want to talk more about your decisions so that we can all learn something and have better outcomes.' The fourth shows a man with glasses with the caption 'I think we can learn from this.' At the bottom left, there is a logo for Collaborative Safety with the tagline 'TRANSFORMING CULTURE | TOGETHER'. At the bottom right, there are navigation controls: 'CC', a pause icon, 'PREV', and 'NEXT'.



# SUSTAINABILITY AND EVALUATION



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# Sustainability

- Safety Champion Communities
  - Collaborative Safety Committee (CSC)
- Ongoing Support





# RETENTION



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# Retention Data

- Tennessee DCS (CY 2014 – CY 2015)
  - Shelby County (Memphis)
    - 400% improvement in turnover
  - Mid Cumberland Region
    - 250% improvement in turnover
  - Davidson County (Nashville)
    - 93% improvement in turnover



# Retention Data

- Heritage Christian Services
  - (CY 2017- CY 2019)
    - 2017: 43% turnover
    - 2019: 29% turnover
  
- Arizona Department of Child Safety
  - (CY 2015 - CY 2018)
    - 2015: 60% turnover
    - 2018: 25% turnover



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# Retention Data

- Minnesota Department of Human Services (CY 2016 – CY 2018)
  - 2016: 18% turnover
  - 2019: 5% turnover
- Hennepin County HHS (Minneapolis) (CY 2016 – CY 2018)
  - 2016: 20% turnover
  - 2018: 7% turnover



# CULTURE CHANGE



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# Culture Change Data

- Enhanced Accountability
  - Created a more neutral and shared way of talking and thinking about critical incidents
  - Shifted language in the workplace from emphasis on individual accountability and laying blame on particular individuals to the systemic nature of the processes and practices involved in child protective services



# Culture Change Data

- Improved Communication
  - This shift to a shared, neutral, systemic language improved communication between the regions/counties and the state
  - Created a systemic way of looking at the agency that opened the whole organizational work structure for inspection, analysis and improvement
- Improved Media Response
  - There was a shift from language of blame to one that emphasized system analysis and institutional improvement



# FINAL DISCUSSION



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