

Workforce Inclusion & Innovation

A stable and diverse family preservation workforce ensures continuity of care, fosters expertise and experience, preserves institutional knowledge, promotes cultural competence, encourages collaboration and innovation, and enhances representation and trust. These factors contribute to the effectiveness and impact of programs that support families overloaded by stress.

Stabilizing and Supporting our Workforce

Surpassing the average for all occupations, employment growth for social workers is expected to increase 9% from 2021-2031, with many separations resulting from workers transferring to other occupations or exiting the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Turnover in our workforce is costly to families, staff, and the organizations that serve and employ them. Home-visiting workforce turnover and attrition rates are high, with similar shared challenges contributing to separations. Faced with a shortage of resources and 28.9% of workers leaving to take jobs with increased compensation, home-visiting programs will continue to struggle with recruitment and retention (Fitzgerald et. al, 2020).

We believe that innovation plays a pivotal role in shaping our future workforce, yielding stability as it brings forth fresh perspectives and diverse experiences to empower, equip, and support our families and those serving them. Through cultivating and prioritizing an environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and growth, we can build a resilient and adaptable workforce today that is ready to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

Diversity Representation and Family Voice in the Workforce

Diversifying our present workforce and elevating and recognizing the contribution of families and staff with lived experience in both prevention services and the child welfare system, is essential for change moving forward. Our current social services workforce still lacks representation from the populations it serves. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, 68.8% of our social work workforce is White (Salsberg et al., 2017). Specifically in prevention, in 2020, 63% of our home-visiting workforce were White (Fitzgerald et. al, 2020). Finally, the most recent State of WI workforce report reveals that within the Department of Children and Families, only 29.2% of its workforce are racial and ethnic minorities.

Peer Support: A Powerful Tool in Prevention

The use of peer supports or paraprofessionals in the workforce could ease struggles around workforce recruitment and make services more accessible. It also offers potential solutions to a workforce lacking in diversity, language skills, and cultural understanding of those it serves. Concurrently, by valuing and developing a career pathway for those with lived experience, use of a peer support model also functions as an economic stability intervention.

The Workforce of the Future

In conclusion, workforce innovation plays a pivotal role in shaping our future workforce, as it brings forth fresh perspectives and diverse experiences. By including individuals with lived experience and providing ample support to our staff, we cultivate an environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and growth. Therefore, it is crucial that we prioritize these elements in order to build a resilient and adaptable workforce of the future.