Talent Development

Executive Summary

Problem Statement

How can DSS improve their training program within the Family Support Division Income Maintenance (IM) Unit in the next six months?

Background

Income Maintenance is the Unit that is responsible for benefit delivery for SNAP (otherwise known as Food Stamps), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Medicaid – MAGI (family Medicaid), and Medicaid – Non-MAGI (Medicaid for elderly and/or persons with a disability). Each program has numerous steps, verifications, and more. In response to the long wait times, Income Maintenance created a Statewide Lobby for all customers calling into the call centers so that workers throughout the State can answer phone calls and assist people from anywhere in Missouri. Most frontline workers are now expected to spend a certain number of hours per week answering phone calls and working cases over the phone, regardless of their assigned full-time duties.

QPS Q1 - 2024

Only 32% of FSD Income Maintenance state that employees receive the training and development they need to be effective at their job. This is below the Department of Social Services' average of 50%. After reviewing, the last 8 QPS scores for this question, a downward trend was noted for FSD Income Maintenance from their QPS 6 high of 50%. We found a comparable statistic (2023 Pew Research Center Survey) that showed that 44% of American workers are extremely or very satisfied with their opportunities for training and developing new skills and used this as a Nationwide benchmark.These three facts are how Income Maintenance was identified as an area of investigation.

Training Satisfaction Rates

State of Missouri	59
DSS	50
National	44
DSS IM	32
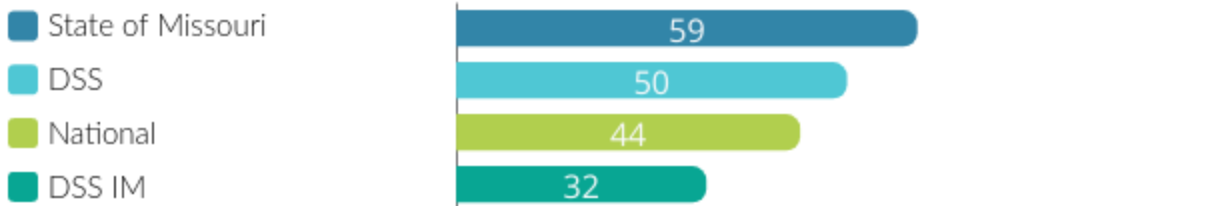
Professional Development Survey

A survey was conducted with Income Maintenance employees. The survey received 618 responses out of 1436 total team members. The survey revealed that those who had the most positive view of their training experiences were mostly newer employees, with less than 3 years tenure. The biggest hurdle that this area faces is a lack of time to complete ongoing training, especially when changes are made either in policy or in the systems they use. Process, policy, and navigating the software were big concerns in this survey, specifically for Missouri Eligibility Determination and Enrollment System. 62% of individuals felt that training in-person, either in a classroom or 1 on 1, were the most effective ways to receive information.

Recommendations

There were several recommendations that came directly from the team via the survey that should be listed. The workers requested more refresher trainings. This could potentially be accomplished by flexing schedules to allow training attendance or providing virtual attendance options so that tenured staff could join onboarding for specific topic refreshers. Employees also requested real-life scenarios be added to the existing training program and intermediate/advanced classes in software navigation and policy interpretation. Our overall recommendation is to establish a peer support group. A peer support group allows for staff to talk with another team member about a specific matter and seek immediate guidance to work through an issue. The peer support group utilizes subject matter experts who care about the well being of other members and are available if there is ever a need. Supervisors promoting and encouraging a peer support group could alleviate some of their workload. A peer support group could be focused at a local, regional or state level. The group would give the opportunity for staff to network outside of the norm. Utilizing chat groups for specific subjects would help the team connect to subject matter experts. Being a subject matter expert can be a stretch project for a team member to further their talent development.