



Beyond Health Care

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



Introduction

This project builds on the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board's (SLWDB) previous research done on Sarnia Lambton's aging population and our participation in the Age-Friendly Sarnia initiative. Our previous research found that continuous waves of retirement are expected in the community. As a result, Social and Community services will see an increase in access to services, and planning is needed for this increased demand. This report will highlight solutions to current challenges as identified by our community partners in the areas of recruitment and retention.

Social and Community Services

Social and community service workers administer and implement a variety of social assistance programs and community services, and assist clients to deal with personal and social problems. Statistics Canada data indicates that workers are employed by social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, substance abuse centres, school boards, correctional facilities and other establishments.

For the purpose of this report, all occupations under National Occupational Classification (NOC) 4212 include the following:

- Aboriginal Outreach Worker
- Addictions Worker
- Child and Youth Worker
- Child Welfare Worker
- Community Development Worker
- Community Service Worker
- Crisis Intervention Worker
- Developmental Service Worker
- Drop-In Centre Worker
- Family Service Worker
- Group Home Worker
- Income Maintenance Officer – Social Services
- Life Skills Instructor
- Mental Health Worker
- Rehabilitation Worker
- Social Services Worker
- Veteran Services Officer
- Welfare and Compensation Officer
- Women's Shelter Supervisor
- Youth Worker

Wages

Community and social services workers in the Windsor-Sarnia Region earn an average of \$14.25/hour to \$36.13/hour.

	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
Ontario	14.3	22	33.3
Canada	14	21	32
London Region	15.16	22	28.5
Windsor-Sarnia Region	14.25	22	36.13

Table 1 Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census

Educational Requirements

According to Statistics Canada, occupations that fall under NOC 4212 – Social and Community Services workers typically require the completion of a college or university program in social work, child and youth care, psychology or another social science or health-related discipline. However, previous work experience in a social service environment as a volunteer or in a support capacity may replace formal education requirements for some occupations in this unit group. Although not all occupations require post-secondary education, there are regulations for Child and Youth Workers and Social Service Workers, who are required to be a member of a provincial regulatory body in Ontario.

Social and Community Services workers in Lambton County	
Total - Highest certificate, diploma or degree	680
No certificate, diploma or degree	10
Certificate, diploma or degree	675
Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate	45
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	415
University certificate, diploma or degree	210
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	20
University certificate or degree (bachelor and above)	195
Bachelor's degree	155
University certificate or diploma above bachelor level	10
Master's degree	30

Table 2 Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census, custom table T15 POR Boards CD

Current Challenges

SLWDB met with local organizations within Sarnia Lambton to discuss the current challenges surrounding recruiting and retaining employees in social and community service occupations. Employers have been experiencing high turnover in these occupations. They indicate these positions are hard to fill due to numerous contributing factors, including the nature of the occupation, the supply of local talent, and the inability to provide competitive wages.

Social and community service workers provide front-line support and social assistance for individuals, families, and communities in need, working in a variety of settings, including mental health clinics, schools, community centers, hospitals, in private practice, and in domestic settings. Local employers indicated that since these occupations typically involve shift work and/or contract positions and therefore it is difficult to retain employees and attract top talent without being able to provide the guarantee of hours or long-term employment.

Community organizations also expressed challenges in locating qualified candidates with post-secondary qualifications and experience, which is crucial as workers play a direct role in improving the lives of vulnerable individuals with complex social, physical and mental needs. Local employers indicated they had difficulty providing competitive wages or incentives to attract and retain qualified workers.

Solutions

Develop Recruitment Techniques

Employers who took part in a consultation shared strategic solutions to combat the challenges faced with recruitment and retention of employees in social and community service occupations. Some of the suggestions included the development of strategic hiring, recruitment and retention strategies.

In order to investigate the solutions mentioned by community partners, Lisa Isaac, a local HR professional with a CHRL designation, provided an overview of ways to combat turnover in social and community services. According to a 2017 HRPA Trends Survey, the average turnover for health and social services is 9.4% and with the scarcity of qualified candidates, it is critical for employers to focus on retention.

Advertise using various recruitment methods

The top ranked recruitment method listed by SLWDB's 2019 EmployerOne Survey respondents in 2018 was word of mouth. In order to reach a larger audience, employers should consider using multiple forms of advertising, such as:

- Websites (indeed, Kijiji, Service Canada)
- Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Career fairs, industry-specific job fairs
- Talent agencies
- Post-secondary experiential learning opportunities
- Professional associations

Top 6 Recruiting Methods



Table 3 Source: 2019 EmployerOne Survey

Seek assistance from local talent agencies:

According to SLWDB's 2019 EmployerOne Survey results, 23% of participating businesses received assistance from a free employment service agency for recruiting employees, while 12% used a paid recruitment agency. If employers would like support in developing or modifying their recruitment methods, they are encouraged to seek the assistance of local Employment Ontario service providers, including:



Goodwill Career Centre

Phone: (519) 332-4333
Website: www.goodwillekl.com



Lambton College Community Employment Services

Phone: (519) 882-4333
Website: www.lambtoncollege.ca/CES/



The Workplace Group

Phone: (519) 337-7377
Website: www.theworkplacegroup.ca



Four Winds Community Employment Services

Phone: (519) 786-6780
Website: www.kettlepoint.org/four-winds-community-employment-services/

Increase recruitment area

Currently, 72% of local businesses recruit within the local area of Sarnia-Lambton, meanwhile only 20% hire provincially, 6% nationally, and 3% internationally. Employers that strictly hire from the Sarnia-Lambton area are missing out on the graduates of the 14 university programs in Ontario that offer social work and many other college and university programs for related Social and Community Service Worker and PSW programs. They are only accessing 5% of the provincial candidate pool if they are recruiting locally.

For success when recruiting a candidate outside of the local area, employers should highlight the benefits of the Sarnia-Lambton community and connect the potential candidate with community navigators.

Employers can:

- use their knowledge of local housing to help employees find rental spaces,
- provide orientation to local cultural activities,
- direct the candidate to local attractions,
- provide candidates with resources for newcomers and links to resources such as local child care options: <https://onehsn.com/Lambton/>

Track and monitor progress

In order to determine the effectiveness of the strategies that are currently in place, tracking and monitoring turnover can give insight into many different aspects of the workplace. Knowing who is leaving a company, when they are leaving, and what department they are leaving can be critical information when analyzed over time. Monitoring progress can be done using metrics or in combination with simple check-ins with long-standing or new employees to determine why employees stay and to identify potential areas of improvement.

Key metrics to monitor include:

- overall turnover rate
- voluntary turnover rate
- involuntary turnover rate

Once an employer has determined their benchmark key performance indicators (KPIs), they can compare their metrics to the provincial occupation or industry averages to gain an understanding of the overall health of their organization and individual departments.

$$\text{Turnover Rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of Employees who left during set period}}{\text{Average of employees during set period}} \times 100$$

Recruiting and retaining part-time contract workers

As previously mentioned, many of these positions are part-time. To recruit for them, here are some tips to consider. Research conducted on separations in the workplace has shown that an employee's top reason for leaving a company is because of a "bad boss," with the rate of pay ranking much lower on the list of reasons for separation.

Recruiting part-time contract workers:	Retaining part-time contract workers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target lesser experienced candidate pools, more likely to get applicants• Have objective, measurable, specific job postings• Look at personality as well as skills that can be learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer opportunities for career development• Offer flexibility around work-life priorities• Include in work activities with full-timer• Offer management support to prevent burnout

Strategies for Reducing Turnover

Determine the commitment motives of current employees

In order to reduce turnover for new employees, an employer must first understand why current employees are staying. This can give an employers insight into what they should include in their recruitment marketing strategies. Below is a list of the different types of commitment motivators for employees and the corresponding strategies to increase retention.

Affective Commitment: emotionally attached to organization	Continuance Commitment: financially attached to organization	Normative Commitment: morally obligated to organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and encourage a teamwork culture • Weekly/monthly debriefing, emotional debriefing • Management support for preventing burnout • Allow employees to contribute to departmental decisions or decisions about the work they do • Emphasize the importance of the work and the organization’s mission • Explain why decisions are made that impact them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase pay rate • Focusing on continuance commitment improves both applicant pool and retention rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment perks prompt feelings of reciprocation • Career development • Can include special projects • “Fun things to do at work” • Inexpensive/free things: theme days, potluck lunches, gift exchanges • Inclusive and engaging things: milestone celebrations, organizational retreats

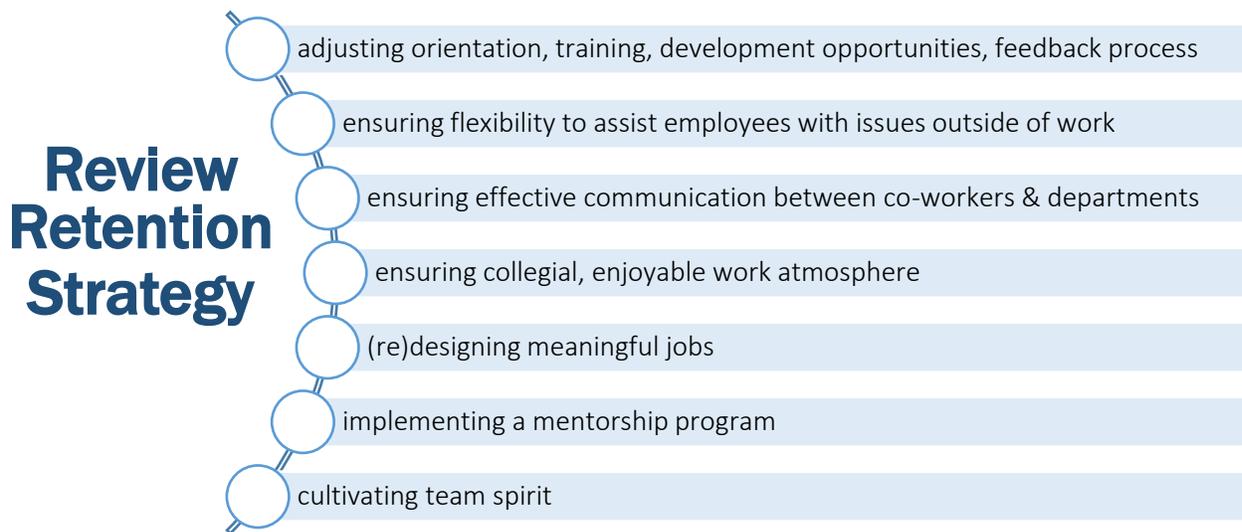
Table 4 Source: Ariely, D. (2017). *Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motives*.

Creating a positive workplace and building loyalty between employees and their employer begins with developing a strong retention strategy. A few examples of strategies to implement include the following:

<p>Train managers in retention strategies, hold them accountable for retention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay is not the main reason for turnover, a bad boss will make people leave • Incorporate emotional intelligence into supervisory skills, be communicative, be considerate, engage employees on a personal level
<p>Reward fairly, consistently, and differentially on the basis of performance and results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-cost rewards: recognition, taking them out to lunch • Employ deferred benefits plans to reward loyalty/sticking around
<p>Hold regular feedback and career development discussions with your employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual or bi-annual reviews • Offer professional development opportunities • Offer cross Training

Figure 1 Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment (Vol. 1)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

When reviewing existing retention strategies, it is best to ensure you are:

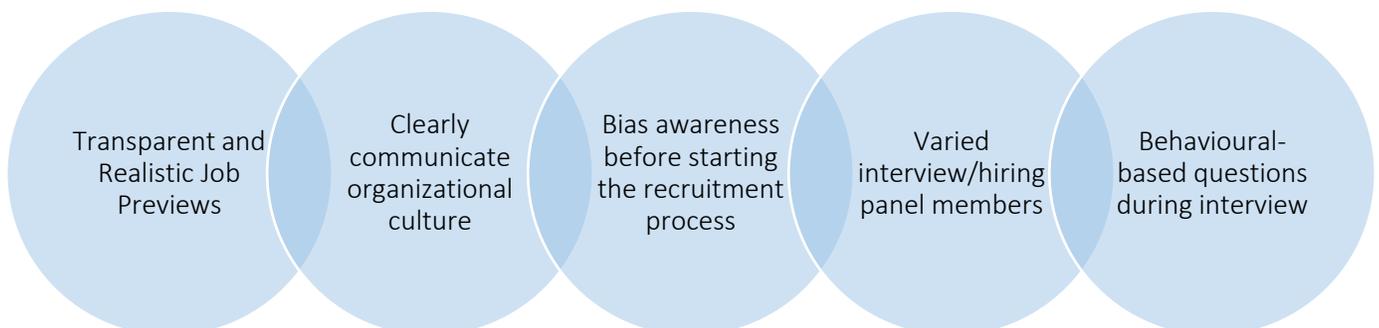


Increasing Recruitment

It is not always easy to recruit top talent, especially when qualified labour is scarce. It can be beneficial to think differently about ways to grow candidate pools and go beyond the typical methods of recruiting.

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- Look for similar backgrounds that can apply to the position
 - Advertise in towns/areas with high unemployment
 - Hire new grads
 - Use relocation bonuses with a commitment contract
 - Ask great current employees for referrals
 - Access talent in local Indigenous communities
 - Target underrepresented groups (i.e. women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities).

Having an efficient recruitment process can minimize the time and cost associated with searching, interviewing, hiring and training. A few best practices to increase the number of successful applicants that have a strong organizational fit include:



Experiential Learning

One of the solutions discussed with community partners to combat recruitment challenges included the benefits of hiring post-secondary students. Experiential learning has many benefits to employers who are looking to attract and retain local talent with the skills and qualifications required, while also keeping recruitment and hiring costs low.

What is experiential learning

Experiential learning is often defined as combining academic theory with real life experience. Experiential learning can be inside the classroom, in the community, or within the workplace. The purpose of this real-world experience is to advance the academic learning outcomes to enhance employability skills. Students not only engage in the activities the job demands, they also obtain a period of reflection into how the skills learned in an academic setting can be applied beyond the classroom. These types of experiential learning opportunities allow students to confidently enter the workforce with the skills necessary to succeed. There are many forms of experiential learning, including:

- Workplace tours
- Mentoring
- Practicum
- Cooperative Education – paid or unpaid
- Job shadowing
- Internship
- Field placements

The benefits of experiential learning

This hands-on approach to training assists students in understanding their employer and the key information they need to thrive in the company by directly performing the task or skill at hand. The immersive learning environment that experiential learning provides has many benefits to both students and employers.

Student Benefits	Employer Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to build on their academic knowledge through opportunities that allow them to understand and experience the connections between theoretical concepts and current practices.• Gain the ability to increase the efficiency in skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making.• Engagement is increased, allowing for an efficiency in memory retention since the information processed is associated with values and feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuous access to a diversely talented and motivated pool of potential candidates• Access to new ideas, fresh perspectives, and enthusiastic short-term employees• The ability to evaluate and assess potential long-term employees• Short term needs met for peak work periods and special projects• A competitive edge since students are up to date on the latest technologies and concepts in the respective fields

Conclusion

Employee retention in social and community services is a significant challenge, and employee turnover is difficult for everyone involved. It can be expensive for employers, distressing for employees who desire a stable work environment, and negatively affects workplace culture. Addressing some of the challenges with the recruitment and retention strategies highlighted in this report can assist employers in reducing employee turnover while attracting and retaining qualified candidates.

Please give us your feedback on our Beyond Health Care Report
by answering a 3-question survey.

Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHCReport2019>



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