



CALIFORNIA SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION CENTER AGING INITIATIVE

For more information about CalSWEC Aging Initiative go to:
<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/indexAge.html>

Aging Initiative Labor Force Survey I: Public Services for Older Adults

Background: California has the largest population of persons over 65 years of age, over 3.9 million persons, and the largest population of ethnic elders in the nation. In 2004 the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), which has served since 1990 as a catalyst to increase the number and quality of social workers in California, created an Aging Initiative (AI). CalSWEC is composed of representatives from 18 schools of social work, NASW-CA, the California County Welfare Directors and the California Mental Health Directors Associations representing our diverse 58 counties. The AI was formed with an overarching mission to develop a competent social work workforce to meet the needs of aging Californians and their families.

Purpose: In 2005, the **Archstone Foundation** provided support for geriatric AI labor force development projects. Acknowledging the lack of professional training of persons delivering services to older persons, particularly in public social services, the **CalSWEC Aging Services Labor Force Survey** was conducted from 2006 to 2008. It aimed to describe current public aging service workers and their clients, project future growth in numbers of older clients and workers, and identify the skills required for staff as well as barriers to hiring and retaining qualified aging service workers needed to meet current and potential demand for social workers with geriatric competence. This is the first report of two labor force reports; a second report is on community based organizations.

Methods: The survey instrument, developed by the research team, with input elicited from CWDA members and regional collaboratives, was field tested by representatives from various Adult Protective Services (APS) and In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) programs. Data were collected primarily online, with hard copies also available. Of the 58 counties, 45 submitted data (78% return). This resulted in a sample of 29 APS, 32 IHSS, and 12 combined APS/IHSS programs. While the full report provides descriptions of specific program types, only aggregate of all program types are reported here.

The full report may be viewed and downloaded at the CalSWEC Aging website <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/indexAge.html>

Findings: Clients served Agencies varied widely in size reflecting the diversity of CA counties. The number of older clients served ranged from 13 to 115,000 (average = 4,601 clients). Clients 85 years and older represent about a third of the caseloads (32%). Over half of the clients are white (54.3%), 19% Latino, 8% African American, and 8% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Staff Characteristics Forty percent of aging service workers are 50 years or older, suggesting that a loss of skilled employees due to retirement will occur within the next 5 -10 years. Sixty-one percent of the aging service workers were white, 24% Latino, 8% African American, and 8% Asian/Pacific Islander, therefore somewhat similar to characteristics of clients.

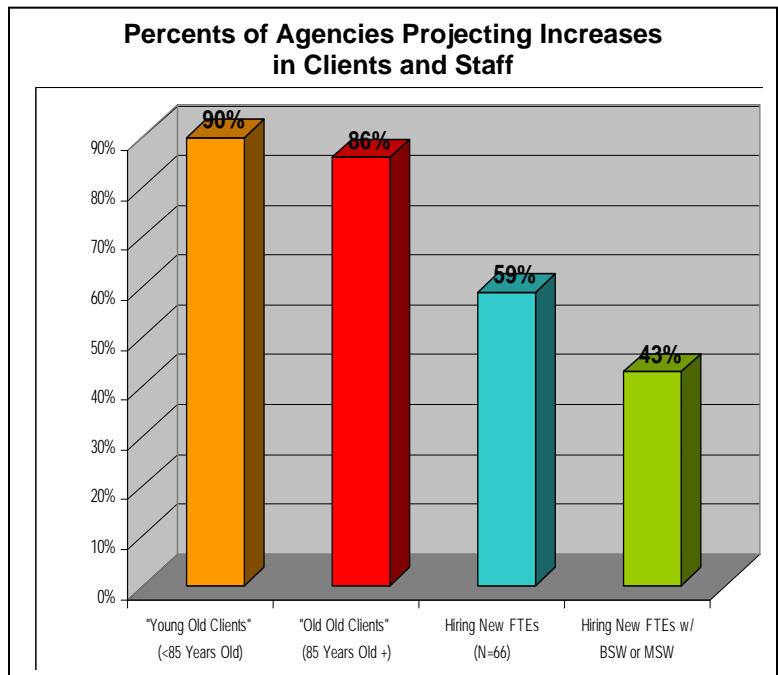
Staffing During Current and Past Fiscal Year Almost half of all programs (45%) maintained the same number of current aging service staff as the past fiscal year, some programs declined in staff number (17%), while others increased (35%), demonstrating limited growth in staff size overall.

Estimated Turnover On average, one in every four workers left the organization during the last fiscal year.

Current and Optimal Caseload APS programs reported 35 current and 25 optimal, combined APS/IHSS programs reported 128 current and 91 optimal, and IHSS programs reported 220 current and 167 optimal caseload size. In most cases, optimal caseload (under favorable staffing) was a lower number than current caseload, with optimal at 74 to 75% of current caseload size.

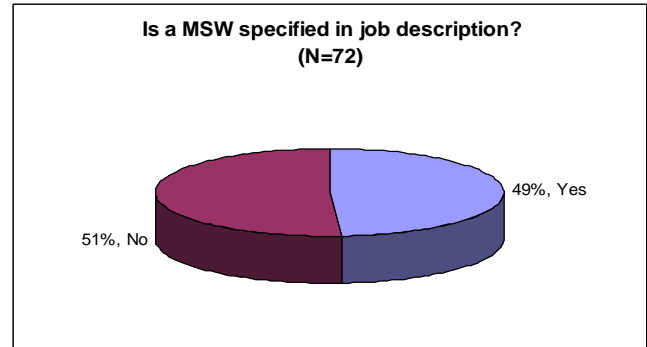
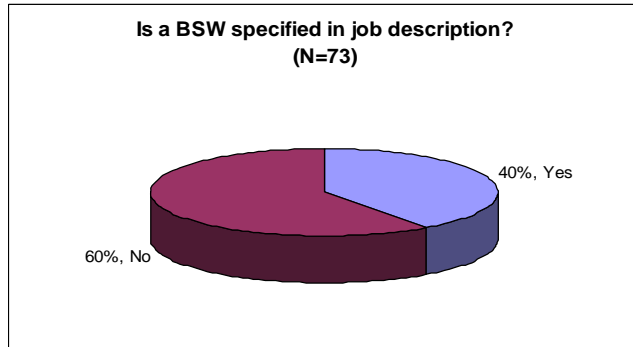
Client Projections Almost all programs projected more clients in the upcoming three years (by the year 2010), 90% projected more young old; and 86% projected more old old during this time period (see graph, right). Over half of the total group of programs (54%) projected an increase in clients with little or no English skills. Expected extent of growth was on average 17% for young and old old populations and 13% for clients with little or no English skills.

Projected Hiring Increases in future hiring was projected by 59% of the programs responding, with the remaining 41% projecting no change. In terms of hiring MSW/BSWs, new hiring was seen as likely by 43% and no change by 53% of the agencies, with 4% predicting a decline in hiring MSW/BSWs (see graph, right).



Job Positions and Social Work Of the agencies reporting on education of their aging service workers and based upon FTE estimates, between 7% and 9% of aging service workers held an MSW degree. Social workers were more likely to occupy administrative or supervisory positions in the organizations. Therefore, of the agencies reporting educational levels, between 44% and 51% of the directors had MSWs and between 17% and 22% of the supervisors had MSWs. A similar pattern was evident for BSWs with higher proportions of BSWs among directors and supervisors than aging service workers. In general, BSW level workers were infrequently specified in position descriptions for aging service positions (30-40% of programs), with the exception of combined programs (specified by 58%). Overall, BSW levels were specified in 40% of all programs. In contrast, MSW level workers were specified in one or more job descriptions for most APS programs (59% of programs) and combined programs (67%), but not IHSS (only 33%). Overall MSW level workers were specified in 49% of all programs (see graphs next page).

Percent of Agencies Having a BSW or MSW Specified in Any Job Description



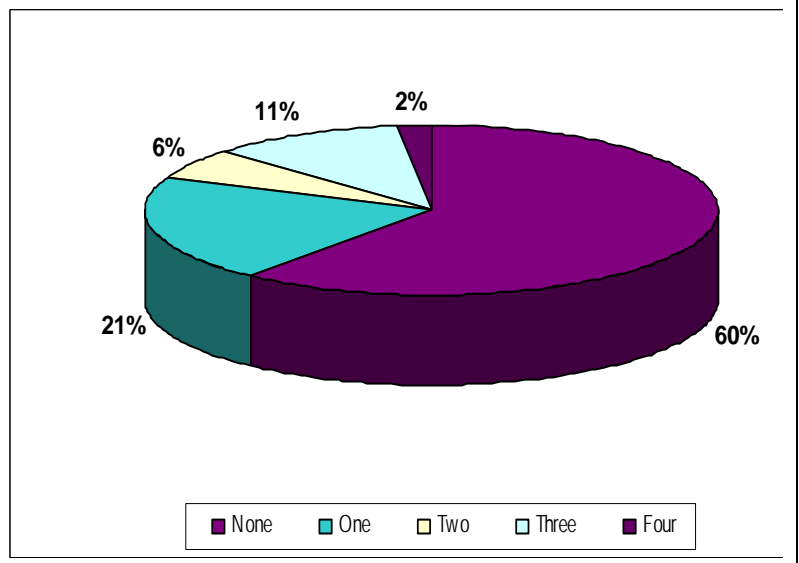
Salary Levels Salary levels for director, supervisor, or aging service worker were elicited not accounting for educational background or time with the agency. Typical salaries for directors were described as over \$100,000, salaries for supervisors varied widely between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and salaries for aging service workers varied between \$40,000 and \$70,000.

Education in Gerontology/Geriatrics

Sixty percent of all programs surveyed reported zero staff with formal training in geriatrics or gerontology (APS 52%, IHSS 70%, and combined programs 60%). (see graph, right)

Skills for Aging Service Staff The most important skills for aging service staff were judged to be establishing rapport/maintaining relationships, and client advocacy. There were 93% and 87% of the programs judged that “most” of their staff possessed these skills respectively. On the other hand, whereas 73% viewed geriatric assessment as very important, only 54% indicated that most of their staff had this skill. Even lower were the estimates of staff with skills in identifying service gaps (51%) and evaluation of practice (35%).

Percent of Agencies Reporting Number of Aging Service Staff with Formal Educational Training in Gerontology (N=52)



Barriers to Hiring and Retaining Qualified Staff Barriers to hiring/retaining qualified aging service workers were primarily a lack of qualified applicants with experience (88%), a lack of ethnic minority applicants (75%), low salaries (71%), and heavy caseloads (62%). (See table, next page.) Combined APS/IHSS programs found the most serious barrier to be “hard to attract candidates due to rural work locations” (100%). Barriers to hiring MSW/BSWs, although primarily similar to barriers to hiring aging staff generally, included lack of applicants with these degrees, which was reported by 74% of APS programs, 58% of IHSS programs, and 91% of combined programs (see table, next page).

Perceived Barriers to Hiring and Retaining Qualified Aging Service Workers (N=73)

<i>Types of Barriers</i>	Serious/Somewhat of a Barrier	Not a Barrier
Lack of applicants with experience (n = 68)	88.2%	11.8%
Lack of ethnic minority applicants, including lack of bicultural and bilingual applicants (n = 68)	75.0%	25.0%
Low salaries (n = 69)	71.0%	29.0%
Heavy caseloads that discourage applicants (n =68)	62.2%	38.2%

Conclusions and Implications: Some positive themes emerged from these data: high skill estimates in communication, reasonable ethnic representation overall of aging service staff, and judgments of success in meeting the language needs of clients with limited or no English skills. Many other factors foretold future deficiencies. High proportions of aging service staff will retire shortly, a relatively high number leave the organization annually, and projections of new hiring are low compared to projections of increases in older adult clients. Indeed, nearly 100% of programs are expecting more clients in the next three years, whereas only 59% of agencies expect to increase staffing over that period. Furthermore, most judge staffing has been inadequate to reach optimal caseload size, suggesting that accommodations are not anticipated to meet increasing needs. Also ominous is the high proportion of programs that report zero aging service staff with formal training in geriatrics/gerontology. Given the importance of evidence-based practice, evaluation of practice is an undervalued skill possessed by relatively few employees. Less than half of aging service positions specify a professional degree in social work. Overall, social workers are more likely to occupy administrative than direct service positions with only 7 to 9% of aging service workers having MSWs. Barrier and skill ratings suggest more highly skilled applicants are needed in direct services in these programs.

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