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Donna,

As you know, the South Central Area Office has the highest caseloads in the state. DCF has prioritized hiring staff for this office, and I, as well as my members in that office, appreciate that effort. However, it has become quite clear that this is not enough. Some of the newly hired staff have already left to seek other jobs, or are in the process of doing so. Experienced staff who had made DCF a career are leaving simply because the job has become impossible to do with such high caseloads.

I was in the office a week and a half ago for a union meeting. The message was clear. The South Central Area Office needs help and needs help now. In addition to continuing to ensure that new staff are hired in the office, my members have some other ideas that may help alleviate some of the caseload issues. They include (numbers 1-3 are relief components noted in Supplemental Q):

1. Cases from the towns on the outskirts of our catchment area to be picked up by other offices
2. *Temporarily* reassign seasoned workers from other offices to Whitinsville
3. Use outside contracted agencies
4. Establish a moratorium on case transfers into the office

The members also feel the additional steps will help the office not only now, but in the long-term:

1. Overflow IAs to be assigned to Investigation staff, as noted in the Caseload MOU, point 5.D
2. Focus on hiring more bilingual workers in languages more than just Spanish
3. Expedite the hiring and promotion process
4. Increase overtime opportunities to those staff who wish to use overtime to attempt to catch up on work
5. Hire Social Work Technicians

It is clear that the South Central Office is at a crisis point. These issues cannot wait. The members are looking to DCF for assistance in this matter. The help needs to come quickly. I look forward to talking more about these ideas. DCF's prompt response will be appreciated.