Appendix A1

NONPROFIT AGENCY #1:

FOCUS GROUP: Administrative Staff Focus Group Interviews

1. Q: Why do you think frontline staff members leave your agency?

A: About 50% quit and 50% are terminated.

Because of the recession the number of people quitting has decreased. The staff is better behaved and they are more thoughtful about the things they say or do. This change makes things harder for management because they have to be creative about accommodating them.

Staff is terminated because they cross the line and have unhealthy relationships with the clients.

Good staff members usually stick around. It is the staff members who have difficulty adjusting to this type of work that generally leave.

One employee stated that she left the last two nonprofits she worked for because of staff reductions and because the program she managed was ended. Overall, her experience working for nonprofits has been positive.

Staff turnover can be the result of boundary issues. Sometimes staff members get too attached, break rules by doing extra “favors” for their clients. They think they are doing the right thing for the person but it is really doing them a disservice.

They have never had to have reductions in staff because of the budget.

2. Q: How many frontline staff member have left your agency in the last five years?

A: About 1 person who leaves every couple of months.

3. Q: How has staff turnover impacted your agency?

A: It gets stressful when there is not enough staff to cover all shifts. People have to take on more duties.

Keeping good employees improves productivity.

4. Q: Does the mission of your agency play a role in staff retention?

A: Mission attachment- not such a problem. They get a lot of satisfaction from helping the clients and having that one on one interaction. “As soon as they walk in the door you know you are already helping them because they are no longer on the streets.”

5. Q: What level of education would you like your frontline staff to have?
A: Minimum level of education required—high school diploma.

The staff sometimes has been recipients of service and wants to give back.

6. **Q:** What is the average salary for your frontline workers?

A: All staff start at the same salary $11.00, the only exception is if a person has a lot of experience—kitchen or maintenance and in that case they are paid a little bit more.

7. **Q:** What benefits do you offer your staff?

A: Medical, dental and vision offered at no cost to the employees. Adding family members can be expensive. Retirement, life insurance, short-term disability

They receive an annual merit salary increase up to 4%.

Personal time-off—5 days plus 2 floating holidays

8. **Q:** Is the salary you offer competitive with other agencies of your size in this area?

A: Salary is competitive with what other agencies offering the same services are paying frontline staff.

Nonprofit workers usually stay within the business; move from one nonprofit agency to another. There are not many choices of agencies within the industry.

There have been instances when an employee left the agency for what they thought was a higher salary and they came back after a few years when they saw it was about the same.

9. **Q:** In your opinion, how much does salary factor into staff turnover?

A: Salary is always an issue. They are underpaid for what they do and the staff worked hard. For most of them, it is not where they want to be. “Some are just one paycheck away from being clients themselves. Many are single moms.”

10. **Q:** What has your agency done or considered to mitigate this issue?

A: The good line-staff stay and are promoted within the agency. Promoting them is a way of keeping them and rewarding them.

The staff are rewarding with schedule change, time off, etc.

Agency is very family oriented and child friendly.

“Nonprofits care about their employees. Big businesses and casinos don’t care; you are just a number. The staff here supports each other.”
11. Q: How much does interaction with the clients your agency serve impact staff turnover? Does your staff complain about burnout?

A: It can be an overwhelming job. Lots of people depending on you. “When you walk in the door you have to focus on them 100%; you can’t be involved in your personal issues.”

12. Q: What steps has your agency taken to deal with staff burnout?

A: When an employee is getting burned out, they start to take more and more time off, call in sick more, etc.

Supervisors try to catch burnout early. The HR director will track time-off and if there is a problem they will work with the employee to make sure they use the EAP or take time-off.

When HR or supervisors sense that the staff member is starting to get burned out they will send the person on a vacation, encourage them to take some time off.

13. Q: In a perfect world, with unlimited resources, what would you offer to retain frontline staff?

A: Recommendations – salary increase because they are underpaid. Better benefits- make insurance cheaper for family members, give COLAs, and have more staff to help the front-line workers.

Reward them with staff appreciation gifts such as gift certificates, spa packages, etc.

14. Q: How long have each of you worked for your agency?

A: The staff interviewed had been with the agency between 3 and 7 years.

NONPROFIT AGENCY #1:

FOCUS GROUP: Frontline Staff Focus Group Interviews

1. Q: Why do you think line level staff leaves nonprofit agencies?

A: Some staff is fired and some just can’t handle it. It can be hard and depressing to listen to the clients.

She feels that the key to this agency and working with the population is being patient. “You have to have a big heart to do this kind of work.”

She said that she is strong and it would take a lot to break her.

2. Q: How long have you been employed with this agency?

A: She has been there 2.5 years.
3. **Q:** Have you ever worked for another nonprofit agency?

A: No.

4. **Q:** What compelled you to accept your current position?

A: She had a friend who referred her that had worked at the agency and said it was a good place to work.

She really needed a job and decided to try out Shade Tree. The mission did not bring her to the agency, but she learned the mission when she started the job.

5. **Q:** Do you feel your agency pays a living wage?

A: She feels that the salary is not a living wage. The benefits are nice but the pay needs to be better.

6. **Q:** Is the performance of the agency affected by employee turnover?

A: It can be stressful when people quit and new people come in and need to be trained.

She said the clients are really nice and it feels fulfilling to help them.

7. **Q:** In a perfect world with unlimited resources, what could a nonprofit agency offer to retain front line staff?

A: Recommendations:
- Get paid more and improve the management.
- She didn’t really elaborate on how the management could improve.