Appendix A3

NONPROFIT AGENCY #3:

FOCUS GROUP: Administrative Team Focus Group Interviews

1. **Q:** Why do you think frontline staff members leave your agency?
   
   A: Agency has not experienced a lot of turnover.
   
   Staff members stay because HELP is like a family. They have an atmosphere where staff feels comfortable about telling the admin staff about their personal issues.

2. **Q:** In your opinion, how much does salary factor into staff turnover at nonprofit agencies?
   
   A: It has not been an issue for us.

3. **Q:** What has your agency done or considered to eliminate this issue?
   
   A: They try to increase staff salaries as quickly as possible to staff members will stay on; depends on additional grant funding, expansion and addition of programs, promotions, etc.

4. **Q:** Is budget a limitation for improving staff salaries?
   
   A: “If you are creative and always coming up with new programs, funding sources and seeking new grants you can create new promotional opportunities for your staff.”

5. **Q:** Is public/donor perception an issue when considering salary increases?
   
   A: No, not really.

6. **Q:** What benefits do you offer your staff?
   
   A: Staff has flexible time schedules. They work Mon. through Thurs. This allows one day off for staff to take care of personal business. This cuts down on commute expenses and saves the agency money on utilities.
   
   Staff appreciation - The agency’s Sunshine Committee plans monthly employee events
   
   Stress the importance of work life balance.

   Employees start with 14 days vacation, 14 paid holidays, plus sick days

   Agency pays 90% of employee’s health insurance premiums for the employee only. Life insurance, vision and dental included.

   Employee Assistance Program – 5 visits per incident
Training program, online learning, and management training to prepare employees for promotion opportunities.

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

**A**: Front line staff is paid $28,000 per year. Only part-time staff is hourly ($10 per hour) - 36 hour work weeks, paid lunch hours. Merit increases of 3-5%.

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

**A**: Yes, everyone pays about the same.

9. **Q**: What level of education would you like your frontline workers to have?

**A**: Most frontline positions only require a HS diploma but it depends on the position. Experience can be substituted for education.

About 60% of their employees are former clients. They have “walked in the shoes of their clients.” This helps them to relate with their situations. “It makes a powerful impact when they can relate.”

Employees are rarely terminated for performance. “You can teach a person the work skills, but you cannot teach the passion. People who don’t have the passion don’t last.”

The agency stresses the importance of succession planning. Nonprofit agencies should operate like a business.

Promotions are given on a trial basis. If the employee does not work out, they can return to their former position with no repercussions.

10. **Q**: Does your staff complain about burnout?

**A**: Admin staff watches for signs of burnout in the faces of their team members and in the way they are interacting with clients. They try to address it right when they see the signs before it becomes an issue. Offer them time off, away from the job, EAP referrals to help them cope with difficult situations.

11. **Q**: What other steps has your agency taken to address staff burnout?

**A**: Admin staff walks the floor all the time; interact with staff on a regular basis so they do not feel they are being spied on.

Open communications makes a difference. The admin staff has no secrets from the staff, they are aware of everything that happens in the agency. Staff is encouraged to talk to auditors, to bring issues to the administrations attention.
Ask for input and feedback from staff on all issues. They are open to making changes based on staff suggestions especially when they will help the staff.

12. *Q: In a perfect world with unlimited resources, what would you offer to retain frontline staff? What would you offer to improve staff productivity?*

A: To increase staff retention, they would like to purchase more space. Their primary staff complaint is that they are working on top of each other.

Increase salaries, do more staff appreciation activities.

Streamline grant reporting. The same client information is entered into several different systems. “It would be great if funders could agree on one system. That would remove some of the stress from staff members.”

**NONPROFIT AGENCY #3:**

**FOCUS GROUP: Frontline Staff Focus Group Interviews**

1. **Q: How long have each of you been with the agency?**

A: Staff interviewed had been with the agency between 2 months and three years.

One staff member had been a client of HELP. Came in to get school supplies for her children when her family fell on hard times. She had never heard of HELP before she came in for assistance.

2. **Q: Have you ever worked with another nonprofit before coming to this agency?**

A: None of the participants had worked for another nonprofit.

3. **Q: What compelled you to accept your current position (salary, benefits, mission of the organization)?**

A: Only one of the participants had heard of the agency before coming to work there. She came to the agency to get school supplies for her children and decided to apply for a position. The other participants came to the agency because they were looking for work.

4. **Q: Do you think nonprofits in this area pay employees a living wage?**

A: Group agreed that what they are paid is a fair wage. They had not seen a lot of staff turnover.

“It is not like anyone is here to get rich. You are making a difference. You see it in the people you help.”

5. **Q: What do you think agencies can do to decrease staff turnover?**
A: The agency has a good atmosphere, everyone is really helpful, there is an open door policy, and staff can always ask questions.

“They are really good to us.”

Staff enjoys the staff appreciation events. They help to eliminate burnout. It is a time to relax and get to know everyone. Helps staff to bond and support each other.

6. **Q: Why do you think line level employees leave nonprofit agencies?**

A: A front line staff person has to be really giving and patient. They have to be emotionally strong.

“You have to be concerned but not affected. If you can’t adjust or can’t handle it, it gets to you. No amount of money will make you stay if you can’t handle it emotionally.”

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

A: Recommendations:

- Increase salaries. “It is sad when your employees qualify for the services you provide.”
- Hire staff to deal with all of the reporting and paperwork
- There is not a lot to complain about.