

Notes

- Approximately 73 staff participated
- Predominately represented Head Start, WIC, and EAP
- Some staff reported informed participation was mandatory
- Several staff reached out via email with concerns

Weakness #1: Communication

Contributing Factors/Challenges

- Lack of a system to inform all staff of critical agency information/updates, policy changes, new staff etc. at the same time and with consistent messaging
- Staff do not receive timely responses to emails from mgmt. and admin. staff
- Front line staff in the dark and at times are uninformed as to the state of the agency, program changes, staff hires which leads to assumptions and “gossip chain”
- Staff unclear how to respond to client and community member questions related to state of the agency and programs
- Staff do not understand strategic priorities and direction of the agency
- Staff expected to read and respond to work emails and communications when off the clock
- Most email communications from admin team are being forwarded to staff from direct supervisors without context or direction
- Lack of receptionist or key personnel at admin office to take and direct calls to appropriate individual, department, or program
- Complaints from clients and community members of unanswered phone calls and inability to leave voicemail messages w/management and admin team
- Phone systems at Huntington and Randolph locations are problematic and have not been fixed
- Staff struggle to receive consistent, updated PTO status reports from Finance Department – questions regarding PTO are often left unanswered for significant period of time
- Staff instructed not to contact administrative team and to work through direct supervisors/program directors for questions

- Focusing all information through program directors as conduit is at times ineffective and leads to misinformation or inconsistent information dispersed to all staff in the agency
- Some supervisors share with staff that they struggle to get a response and/or answer from the administrative team
- Lack of proactive communications planning to inform staff of program start and operations (EAP), how to direct clients to the program, and how to respond to client questions
- EAP staff shortage is creating frustration and anger among clients and within underserved communities – clients are not receiving timely responses to application questions, are unclear of application status, and driving multiple calls to WIC and Head Start programs
- Policy changes are occurring throughout the year, are not being vetted in advance by front line staff, and can be difficult to understand at times
- When clarification on new policy changes are desired by front line staff it is difficult to get a clear answer or even a response at times – however not adhering to the policy change can result in a disciplinary action against the staff person
- COVID safety and work from home policies are not being consistently communicated and held to by all staff. Staff in like positions are instructed differently about the policy (some staff require to take PTO or go without pay while others receive pay to work from home)
- Managers do not communicate well with one another which further contributes to misinformation
- Lack of EAP physical location in Wells and Adams counties is creating a firestorm of phone calls for other programs as well as causing distress for clients trying to access assistance
- Lack of transparency of agency's financial situation and/or troubles (accounts payables delays – staff fielding calls from vendors, etc)
- Overall minimal positive communication between managers and front line staff – lack of acknowledgement of a job well done or important achievements

Recommended Solutions

- Establish a regular email communication from Tom & admin team (weekly or monthly) to centralize agency announcements, staff introductions, policy changes, etc.
- Hold virtual town hall meetings for all staff to interact with Tom and members of the admin team
- Implement internal digital newsletter
- Provide talking points and key facts to all staff regarding agency concerns and programs
- Adopt an open door policy with administrative team
- Ensure voicemail inboxes are checked and cleared daily
- Develop proactive communications plan for all staff to rollout new programs or restart seasonal programs
- Admin team increase visibility at all locations
- Assign an admin team liaison for each location
- Create universal COVID-19 policies and ensure all staff are being held to the same standards
- Establish a committee or working group comprised of representatives from all levels of staffing to vet policy changes, evaluate the efficacy of current policies, and develop new policies as needed
- Establish email response standard for admin and mgmt. staff to ensure emails are acknowledged and responded to