



# Staff Recruitment and Retention

*Strategies from PbS Agency Coordinators and Leaders*

More than 70 juvenile justice professionals from across the country gathered for a session at the 2022 PbS Agency Coordinators Training and described their challenges like the strain of having too few staff and employee burnout. They talked about the demanding jobs, inadequate pay, lack of respect, and difficulties recruiting and retaining individuals who want to help young people. They share their strategies and welcome additional creative and innovative solutions to the current staff shortages.

## Recruitment

### *Financial Incentives*

- Offer new hire bonuses (\$1,500 to \$5,000 for staff who stay on for a minimum of 6 months)
- Provide referral bonuses (for staff members who refer/recruit new hires who stay for a minimum of 6 months)
- Ensure continuous service bonuses (for hard to fill positions. \$1,500 at 6-month intervals, \$6,000 total for two years of employment)

### *Increase Job Posting Access and Awareness*

- Post jobs on social media networks
- Use online job application tools
- Conduct virtual interviews
- Place QR codes on the back of business cards and on agency vehicles
- Create an agency recruiter position focused on hiring strategies younger generations
- Attend job fairs
- Recruit at local colleges for full-time or internship positions

### *Streamline and Expand the Hiring Process*

- Reduce the timeframe between application and hiring
- Increase hiring flexibility (allow tattoos, body piercings, vibrant hair colors, discretionary ability to hire individuals with criminal histories, retired staff members to come back and work on an “on-call” basis)
- Reach out to organizations helping to employ formerly incarcerated individuals
- Create a “Day in the Life” video to depict accurate representation of the position
- Offer and/or require facility or program tours before hiring
- Pair candidates with veteran staff to ask questions about the position
- Create per diem and part-time staff positions for weekends and hard to fill shifts

## Retention

### *Offer Flexibility*

- Offer creative shift rotations (10-hour shift schedules, 12-hour shift schedules)
- Flexibility for staff who may be occasionally late (transit and traffic in larger cities)
- Allow staff to have cell phones with them while working to be available for family members and increase work/life balance
- Stagger schedules to allow information exchange at shift briefings

### *Employee Recognition*

- Host annual award ceremony for staff (provide gas/coffee cards and plaques)
- Send monthly newsletter to promote achievements/recognition/program updates
- Staff appreciation events with leadership in attendance that are timed to allow for all schedules to participate (barbecues with interactive games and holiday celebrations with decorations, goodie bags, meals for staff)
- Offer staff transportation help (shuttles, gas money)
- Provide bonuses for longevity, double shifts and weekend work
- Recognize dates of hire and birthdays

### *Staff Development*

- Provide staff with professional development opportunities (use the list of training requests staff report in the PbS Staff Climate Survey)
- Ensure staff have the opportunity for upward movement
- Create a wellness committee and offer wellness events (e.g. massage, yoga, meditation)
- Foster team building
- Pair senior staff with newer staff
- Allow housing unit staff extra 15-minute breaks while management covers (“15 on me”)
- Create a staff leadership academy
- Use off-site services to build relationships between staff (escape rooms, bowling, paint nights)
- Use exit surveys or interviews to find out why staff leave employment and make changes when possible
- Have an ombudsperson or use a grievance/compliment box to facilitate communication between young people and staff to find out what helped during their stay