



Realistic Job Previews

Faller, C. K., Masternak, M., Grinnell-Davis, C., Grabarek, M., Sieffert, J., & Bernotavicz, F. (2009). Realistic job previews in child welfare: State of innovation and practice. *Child Welfare, 88*(5), 23-47.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article discusses the development, utilization and effectiveness of Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) on the recruitment, selection, and retention of child welfare workers, based upon a review of ten RJPs, interviews with human resources personnel and others, and outcome data related to one state's RJP.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Although business and military sectors have utilized them for the last 40 years, RJPs are relatively new to the child welfare field. RJPs are designed to provide applicants with an accurate picture of the position under consideration to strengthen applicants' decision-making about child welfare work. Applicants are often required to review RJPs before or during their interviews. It is hoped that RJPs can better assure goodness of fit between prospective employees and child welfare positions, ultimately increasing job satisfaction/morale and reducing costly turnover. RJPs can be created in multiple formats, including video, verbal presentations, job tours, and written brochures. Videos have become the preferred format for child welfare agencies, so that the information can be shared in multiple ways, such as DVD, streaming video, and on the Internet. Once created, RJPs can be distributed to social work education programs, libraries, employment offices, and human service agencies. The figure below highlights the common descriptive components of the RJPs reviewed in this study:

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| LENGTH | Approximately 30-min in length (range: 11-36 minutes) |
| CONTENT | All address both substantive elements (working with children, working with families, removal of children, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, court work, and working with others, such as law enforcement) AND process element (job-related stress, paperwork, documentation, computer skills, after-hours work, time management, high workload). All indirectly address staff and client diversity. Most de-emphasize social work skills and emphasize case management skills. Only a few mention in-service training and agency support. |
| FORMAT | Most use pictures, worker/supervisor narratives/interviews & mock client interviews. Some contain agency administrators, and footage of actual clients who were past their initial encounters with the child welfare system. |

Interviewees noted that RJPs are a useful strategy for recruitment, selection, and retention. Outcome data provided by one state found that their RJP positively impacted the selection process, new hires' job expectations, and employee retention.

*(Study Limitation: Lack of systematic evaluation of RJPs as a recruitment, selection, and retention mechanism.)

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Child welfare agencies should take steps to Communicate the positive and negative aspects of child welfare positions (e.g., dealing with changing priorities, stressful situations, high workloads, paperwork, the legal system; the satisfaction that comes from making a difference in a child's life, strengthening families, co-worker support, engaging in challenging, non-routine work, etc).

Incorporate the perspectives of staff, supervisors, administrators and former clients into realistic job information provided to applicants during the recruitment process.

Undertake a careful job analysis to define the knowledge, skills and abilities required for available positions, and integrate this information into RJPs, and the screening and hiring process (including any tests and interviews); and revise existing RJPs to ensure continued relevance, given frequently changing positions and policies, and evaluate their effectiveness.