

SAFESELECT

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Examination of Child Protection Worker (CPW) Employment Duration: A Comparison of Two Groups

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Executive Summary

This study found that a group of new Child Protection Workers hired with DFP Recruitment and AIFP¹ Job Suitability Profiling had 8% less turnover during their first two years of employment than a group hired before these services were introduced. As a result, the CP division was required to hire 12 fewer new staff.

Turnover is not the best method of assessing the effectiveness of pre-employment profiling. This is because there are many factors that will influence turnover that cannot be predicted at the time a hiring decision is made. On the other hand, at the time this study was conducted, this was the only reliable data that was able to be collected.

We recognise that the amount of turnover is of considerable concern to the Department. Later in this paper we make suggestions for future research that may be of assistance in this area.

Background

Job Suitability Profiling of candidates for entry level positions in Child Protection was introduced in May 2006. At the same time DFP Recruitment Services were engaged to

¹ AIFP has since rebranded as SAFESELECT

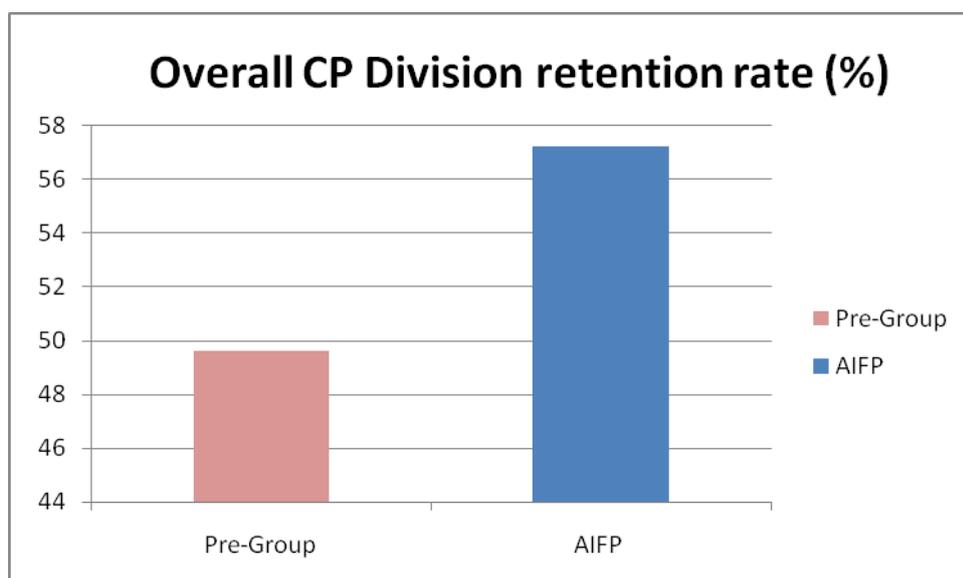
attract and help select applicants.² The intention of this analysis is to examine any differences between two cohorts of new employees (DFP recruited/AIFP Profiled) and (DHS recruitment/not profiled) on a longitudinal basis.

Method

Retention data was collected for the pre-group who were employed in 2003\2004 and 2005\2006. This included 115 new employees. The same data was also collected for the post group (hired using AIFP Profiling/DFP Recruitment) for the years 2006\2007 and 2007\2008. This included 152 people. The differences in group size were controlled by calculating percentages of staff that left the organisation. Data was collected for the first two years of employment for each group.

The study also examined how frequently a new CPW employee quit the job and left the organisation completely, and how often they quit the job and transferred to another area within the Division.

Figure1: Overall CP Division Employee retention

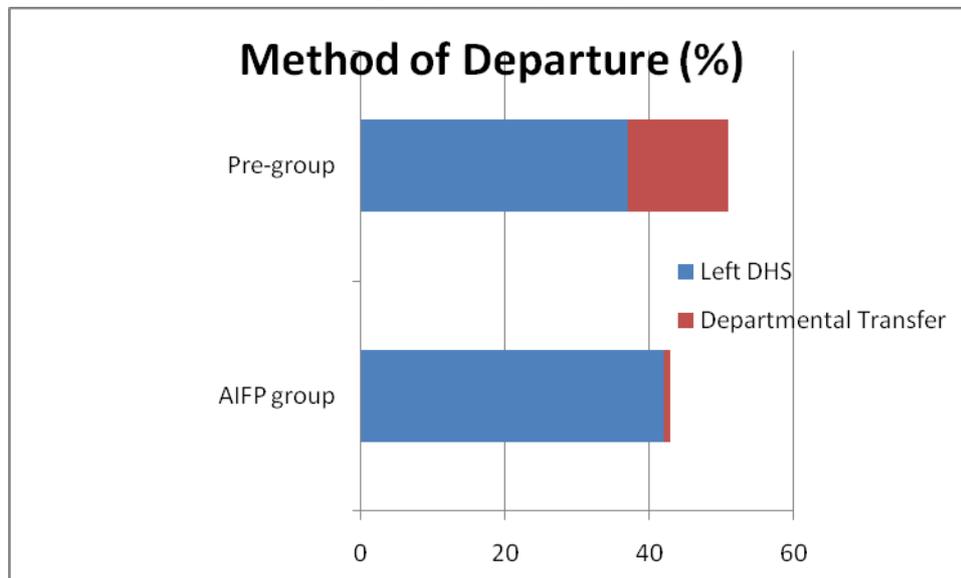


The pre-group's two year **CP division** retention rate (described in Figure 1) was approximately 8% lower than the AIFP group's retention rate (49.6% vs. 57.2%). This means that the AIFP/DFP group were more likely to stay within the CP division - either in the CPW-2 position, or in another position within CP – than those hired in the pre-group.

² AIFP and DFP have a long history of working together in the recruitment and selection of applicants to a number of different roles in Australian Customs and Border Protection.

The method of departure from the CP division also varied between the two groups. Pre-group members were much more likely (14% compared to 1%) to transfer to another division, but were slightly less likely (37% vs. 42%) to leave the Department of Health (Department of Human Services) completely. These findings are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: CP Division Method of Departure by Group



Summary and Discussion

Two primary observations can be made. Firstly, new CPW 2 employees selected with the combined AIFP/DPW strategy showed an 8% reduction in leaving the job during their first two years in the role. As a result, the recruitment, selection, and training costs for 12 people were saved.

Secondly, when considering whether a new employee left the organization, the AIFP/DPW group had a much lower rate of transferring to other areas within the greater department. (1% compared with 14% for the pre-group). Essentially, if people in the post-group were going to leave, they left for good – they didn't attempt to parlay themselves into a different role within the Department of Human Services.

It is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion as to exactly why the groups showed different retention rates. One potential confounding variable is that the two groups were hired several years apart. As a consequence, they completed their first two years of service at different time periods. It is difficult to know to what extent the organization changed – and in what ways – over those time periods.

Very similar findings have been found in four studies of newly employed police, five studies of newly employed correctional officers, and one study of newly employed fire fighters.

These studies each compared two groups of new employees – one group hired without AIFP Profiling and the other with Profiling. The follow-up period ranged between two and nine years of employment. While they are clearly different occupational groups, the fact remains that in each of these ten studies the group selected with AIFP profiling stayed in their respective jobs significantly longer than the matched comparison group selected with conventional selection methods.³

It is therefore quite likely that the AIFP Profiling process – combined with the DFP recruitment and selection methodology - better identified personnel with the best job-person congruence. It also likely that the entire recruitment and profiling process identified applicants with specific problem traits or issues that might be the precursors to short employment duration and ruled them out as candidates.

Conclusion and Future Research

Employees recruited using the combined strategies of AIFP Job Suitability Profiling and DFP recruitment were more likely to remain with the organisation during their first two years of employment than those staff selected using earlier methods.

Future research could assist in identifying whether there are any significant features in the data gathered at the pre-employment stage that would help predict who might be likely to resign or transfer early in their career. If this can be identified the entire recruitment and screening process can be “fine-tuned” to better identify applicants at high risk of leaving early in their tenure.

The next steps in this program of research involve:

- Identifying by name the candidates who were hired in the post group, determining who is still employed, and who has left the organisation. We should then determine how long each person remained employed.
- Next is conducting a detailed analysis of the psychological profiles of “early leavers” and “stayers” to determine if there are any predictors of leaving the organisation early.
- It would be useful to obtain performance data about those selected without psychological profiling and the advice of professional recruitment firms compared with a similar group hired without these services. While we want to know whether people have stayed in the job longer, we also want to identify the people who have been problem performers.

³ The DFP Recruitment services were not used in these studies. Selection decisions were made by internal staff who completed the AIFP Training and Certification Workshop.

- A study of problem performers may allow us to create a “profile” of individual test factors that would help identify future applicants as having increased risk demonstrating undesirable behaviour.

Ethical Considerations in Conducting Research

We note that those who have been hired with the AIFP/DFP approach have signed a release form giving specific permission for the Department to use data about their employment (on an anonymous basis) for research purposes. To honour this, we would of course only provide data to the Department about the trends found in a group of employees, without naming any individuals.

Final Notes

Turnover is a complex issue, and though we anticipate this research will help, obviously there are other issues that should be explored as well. We will be happy to work with the division in any way that we can to improve things. We also stress that AIFP would be delighted to continue this research in collaboration with the Department at absolutely no cost. This offer extends to consulting with you on other strategies for reducing turnover.

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