



**South Carolina**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**JUVENILE JUSTICE**  
Sylvia Murray, Director

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**Nikki R. Haley**  
Governor  
State of South Carolina

August 3, 2015

The Honorable Kirkman Finlay, III  
Chairman, Legislative Oversight Committee  
Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Subcommittee  
532A Blatt Building  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Representative Finlay:

Thank you for taking time to make inquiry of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice regarding a few areas related to employee turnover. I understand that the following information was requested by you, through Jennifer Dobson, Director of Research with the House Legislative Oversight Committee:

- The employee turnover rate at SCDJJ
- How exit interviews are conducted at SCDJJ
- The internal measures taken by SCDJJ to address employee turnover
- The reasons behind SCDJJ employee turnover rates

Please see the attached document which is intended to serve as an overview of the prior ten years of employee turnover information at SCDJJ. If you have any additional questions as you read the following document please contact me.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Murray  
Director

SM/kp

cc: Ms. Jennifer Dobson

**South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice**

**Item 1: The employee turnover rate at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice**

<b>SCDJJ TURNOVER RATES BY FISCAL YEAR</b>			
<b>FISCAL YEAR</b>	<b>JCO/JS*</b>	<b>AGENCY WIDE</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>
FY 04-05	52%	27%	SCDJJ closed the Greenwood Girls Center.
FY 05-06	56%	22%	This period of turnover was due to lack of career ladder for JCOs, low starting pay, and a loss of job security.
FY 06-07	45%	21%	This period of turnover was due to a lack of career ladder for JCOs, low starting pay, and a loss of job security.
FY 07-08	33%	21%	Closed a group home for budgetary reasons, implemented a career ladder for JCO staff.
FY 08-09	25%	26%	Due to budget reductions Hope House Group Home closed, and an agency-wide Reduction in Force (RIF) was implemented. Correctional Officers were exempt from the RIF; however, career ladders were discontinued for JCO staff at this time.
FY 09-10	29%	11%	The increase in turnover for correctional staff is attributed to the effects of the Reduction in Force (RIF), fears about job security and the discontinued JCO career ladder. In contrast, other staff not affected by RIF appeared to stabilize.
FY 10-11	32%	15%	DJJ correctional staff experienced salary overpayments during the SCEIS go-live implementation. As required, recoupment for the overpayments was implemented and this impacted staff morale and contributed to the turnover rate.
FY 11-12	17%	20%	DJJ implemented a partial career ladder for JCO's with salary adjustments provided to existing correctional staff.
FY 12-13	18%	18%	The lack of an effective career ladder for JCOs, low starting pay, and inconsistent training played a role in the ability to retain employees.
FY 13-14	25%	18%	The lack of an effective career ladder for JCOs and low starting pay were turnover factors. Additionally, DJJ implemented 12 hour shifts for correctional employees.

\*Juvenile Correctional Officer (short-term detention) and Juvenile Specialist (long-term detention)

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### **Item 2: Exit Interviews at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice**

SCDJJ mails exit interview forms to departing staff. Former employees may voluntarily complete the forms and return them to the agency or request an exit interview. Exit interview forms received by the Human Resources (HR) staff are reviewed and analyzed to determine the reason for the turnover and other feedback about conditions of employment or related issues that indicate a serious issue of concern that may require additional review or investigation. Those exit interviews that reveal a serious issue are also shared with the appropriate member of the executive management team and may be further used by HR for remedial action. SCDJJ does not receive a large volume of exit interview responses. Additional and valuable turnover information is received through the resignation letters employees submit, as well as through face to face meetings with managers or HR staff about the reasons for leaving.

### **Item 3: Internal measures taken by SCDJJ to address employee turnover**

SCDJJ is focused on the turnover of correctional staff which is a critical area with the highest turnover rate. Several of the most frequent cited reasons for leaving SCDJJ by these employees are low salary, lack of career growth, and not receiving on-going salary increases during an employee's tenure. As a result, SCDJJ is addressing this through implementing measures to deal with the high turnover and poor retention for this critical employee group as reflected below.

#### **Phase I- Effective July 17, 2015**

Increasing the starting internal pay levels by 6% for the correctional officer and juvenile specialist series. Updating current staff salaries to the new minimum levels. Juvenile Correctional Officer I and Juvenile Specialist II employees with more than one year of SCDJJ service as a full time employee (FTE) will be reclassified to Juvenile Correctional Officer II and Juvenile Specialist II respectively and receive salary adjustments to the new internal levels. Staff exceeding the new levels will not receive additional compensation at this time.

#### **Phase II- Estimated effective date: September 2015**

Recognize college degrees and implement higher starting salaries for individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree. Going forward, employees in FTE positions who earn new degrees may be eligible for increases, contingent upon available funding and continued executive support and approval.

#### **Phase III- Estimated effective date: November 2015**

Develop career planning for the correctional staff. Employees currently receive salary increases by advancing into management positions. Occasionally, we face situations in which an employee may not be suitable to a management position but is an excellent correctional officer. Career tracks will provide staff the opportunity to select a career discipline suitable for their own individual strengths. SCDJJ will have two (2) primary career tracks – *Managerial* and *Officer*. Each career track anticipates providing monetary incentives for accomplishing certain skills, training, credentials, or other milestones as required to meet the needs of SCDJJ.

#### **Additional SCDJJ internal measures to address turnover:**

Another critical agency function is that of our community services staff who provide statewide services to juveniles through probation and parole oversight. Salary and a lack of career growth has

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impacted our ability to retain this classification of employees also. In December 2014 – the “Community Specialist” job series expanded to allow employees additional opportunities for career advancement. Employees are hired as a Community Specialist I and progress up to a Community Specialist II and III based upon length of service, performance, and management recommendation.

- In July 2014, SCDJJ implemented a bonus program to recognize staff for outstanding contributions, exceptional customer service and other reasons as allowed by the state’s bonus program.
- In tackling turnover issues SCDJJ uses other non-salary, non-monetary measures. Employees want to feel valued and know that their work presence serve a greater purpose. Director Murray visits worksites to meet staff in an informal manner and uses this time to personally let them know how much she appreciates them, their dedication and hard work. She requires the Executive Management Team to do the same with their staff and across divisions.
- SCDJJ recognizes staff accomplishments in a quarterly newsletter.
- SCDJJ has an “Office of the Year” recognition and other similar “Employee of the Year” recognitions in different divisions.
- SCDJJ staff are encouraged to “volunteer” with SCDJJ youth programs outside of normal working hours which gives employees a different sense of purpose in impacting these children’s lives.
- SCDJJ has expanded the staff development and training program curriculum to include leadership development, supervisory training, team building, and customer service to give staff the skills for success and future growth.
- SCDJJ has a comprehensive wellness program and encourages employees to attend and to focus on their health and well-being. Fitness activities are offered to all employees and include lunch time and after work exercise classes, a walking trail, and use of a gym with exercise equipment as a few examples.

### **Item 4: Turnover reasons at SCDJJ**

The top reasons for leaving SCDJJ employment are low salary, lack of career growth, not receiving on-going increases during an employee’s tenure, type of work environment, recent work schedule or shift changes with correctional officers, safety concerns and personal reasons e.g. Relocation of a spouse, care for aging parents or children, medical, and retirement.

In order for SCDJJ to sustain and continually enhance retention improvement measures SCDJJ will continue to review and scrutinize our existing internal personnel budget, seek cost savings to support these retention enhancing goals and examine our current budget request to see if it is adequate to meet the needs of the agency in this area or if future budget requests will need to target employee career and employee salary enrichment efforts.