

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS



The Social Service Workforce and the Practice of Working With Vulnerable Children and Families

Child Protection in Crisis/Global Social Service Workforce
Alliance

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The State of the Evidence Concerning Social Service Workforce Strengthening



- **Recruitment & Retention of the Right Workforce: Lessons from Research.**
- **Building the Evidence for a Competent, Committed Child Welfare Workforce: Lessons from 2 Decades of Strategies.**

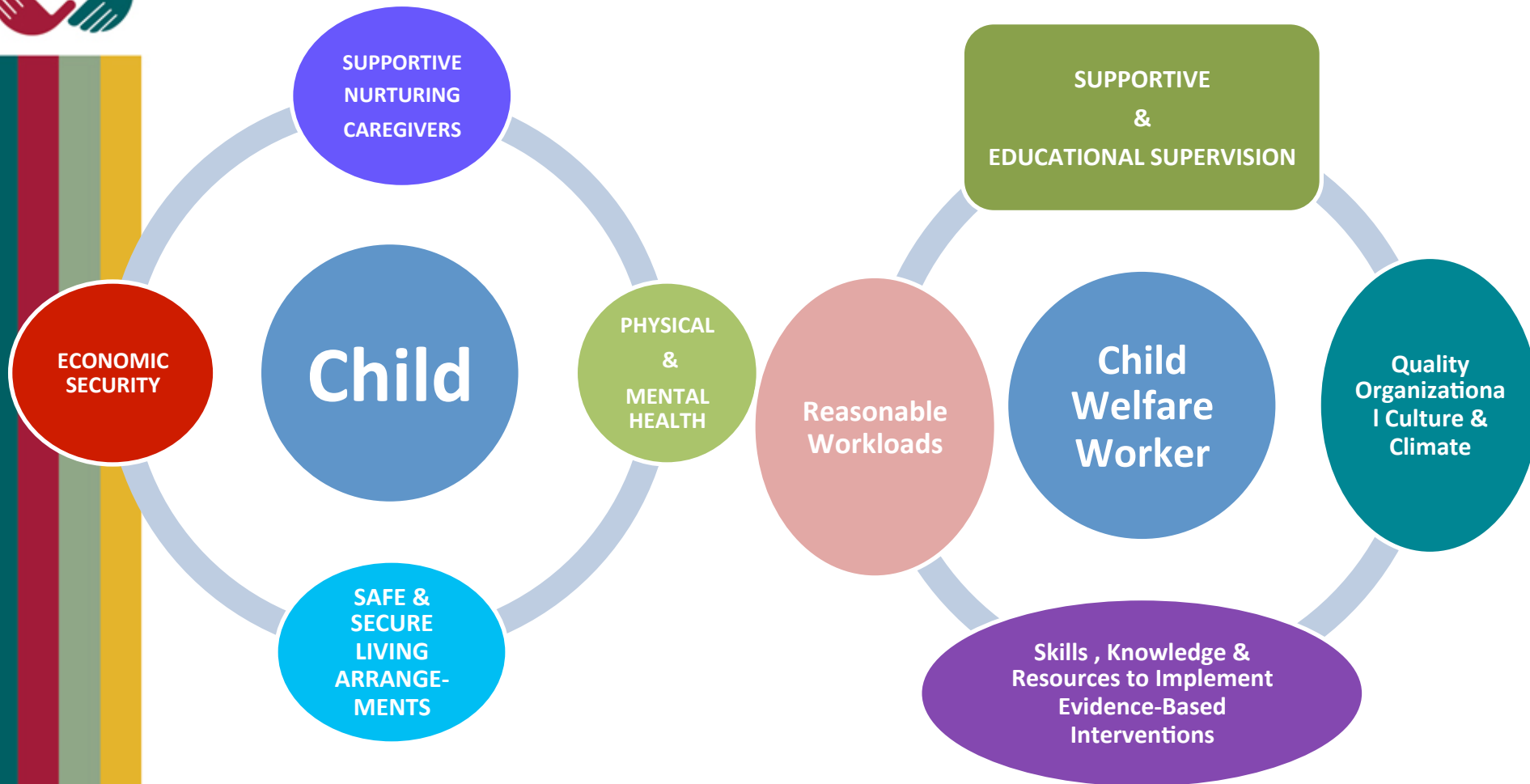
Important Message



No simple answers to
complex problems



Well-being: Parallel Process



Making Workforce Improvement a Priority



- Child welfare workforce crisis
 - Turnover is costly (\$\$ & child and family outcomes).
 - (higher turnover = higher # of moves in foster care)
 - (costs – training, rehiring, impact on remaining workers)
 - Paperwork, agency environment & supports, caseload impact the workforce.
 - Difficulty attracting the “right” workers.
 - What professional qualifications would be optimal?
 - What are the minimum qualifications?
 - Continual questioning – Is social work the right (necessary) degree for child welfare work?

Retention Factors



- Quality Supervision
 - Attributes of supervisors
 - Skills in mentoring
 - **High level of practice knowledge**
 - Workers that stay attach to supervisors
- Professional social workers who stay don't report supervision problems (NASW, 2004)
- If you want Social Work Supervisors – hire social workers and then promote them.

Elements of Supervisory Practice



Administrative Supervision

Provide leadership to unit ◊ Select and train staff ◊ Manage performance and workflow ◊ Communicate agency priorities and policies

Educational Supervision

Case staffing and reviews ◊ Provide professional development and application of training ◊ Monitor practice ◊ Promote evidence-based practice ◊ Promote ethical and culturally competent practice ◊ Promote teamwork

Supportive Supervision

Prevent and address secondary trauma, burn-out and stress ◊ Anticipate and address safety and risk factors ◊ Build and maintain morale and job satisfaction ◊ Create a learning environment and opportunities for peer support

Retention Factors



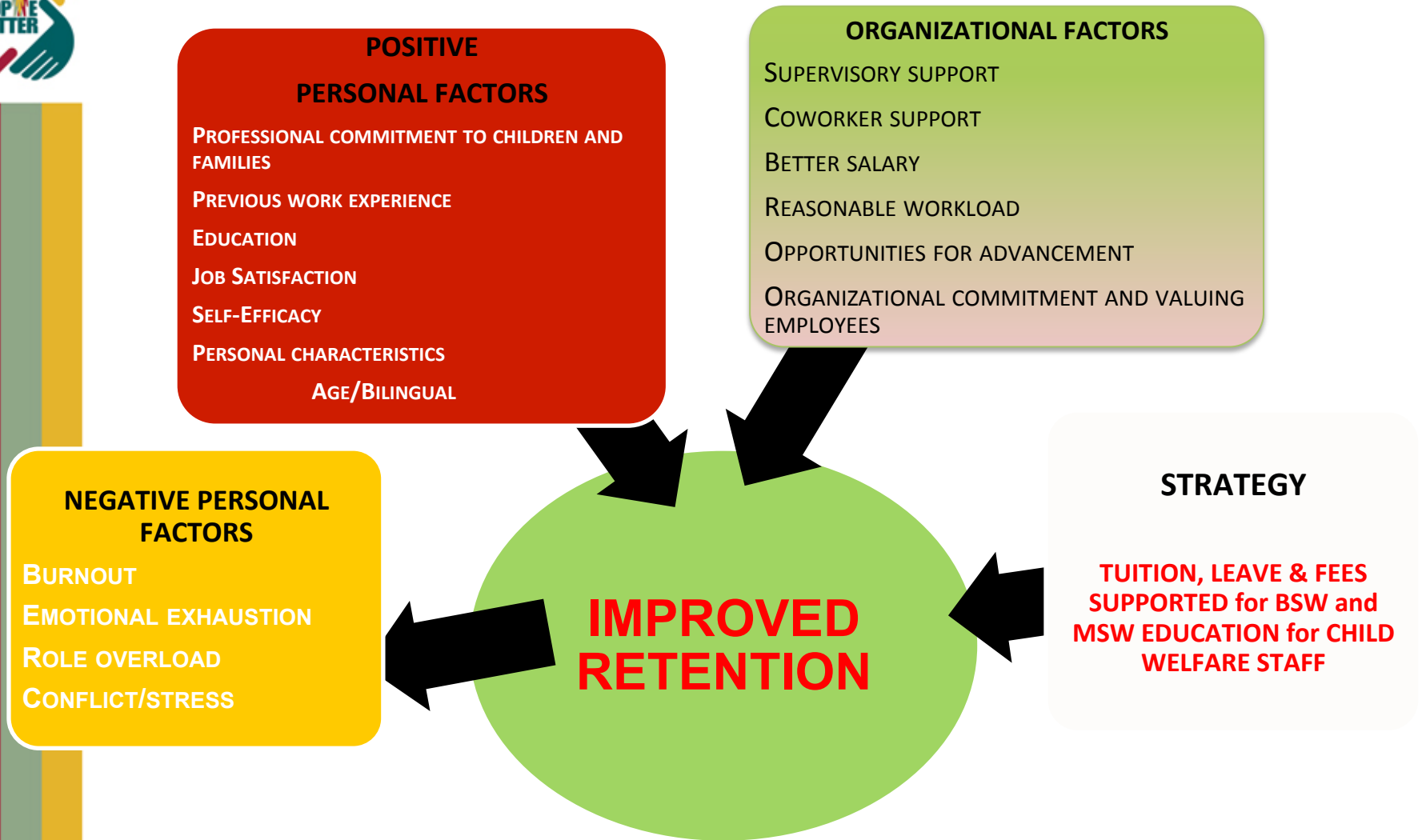
- Personal Factors
 - Those who remain – higher job satisfaction, goodness of fit, preference for child welfare, professional commitment
 - Stronger commitment to child welfare – stronger intention to remain (see also NASW study)
 - Workers who received funding to go to school to earn a social work degree – commitment to stay
 - Connection between human caring and intention to remain (Alberta Ellett, U of Georgia & colleagues)
 - Those without previous experience and exposure most likely to leave
 - Those with most employment options might be most likely to leave

Retention Factors



- Organizational Factors
 - Manageable workload
 - Peer support
 - Feeling valued
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Personal and psychological safety
 - Availability of resources
 - Salary and benefits – people who leave make more \$\$

What Strategies and Conditions Influence the Retention of Staff in Public Child Welfare?



Workload --- Caseload



The Problem -- Do the math!!!

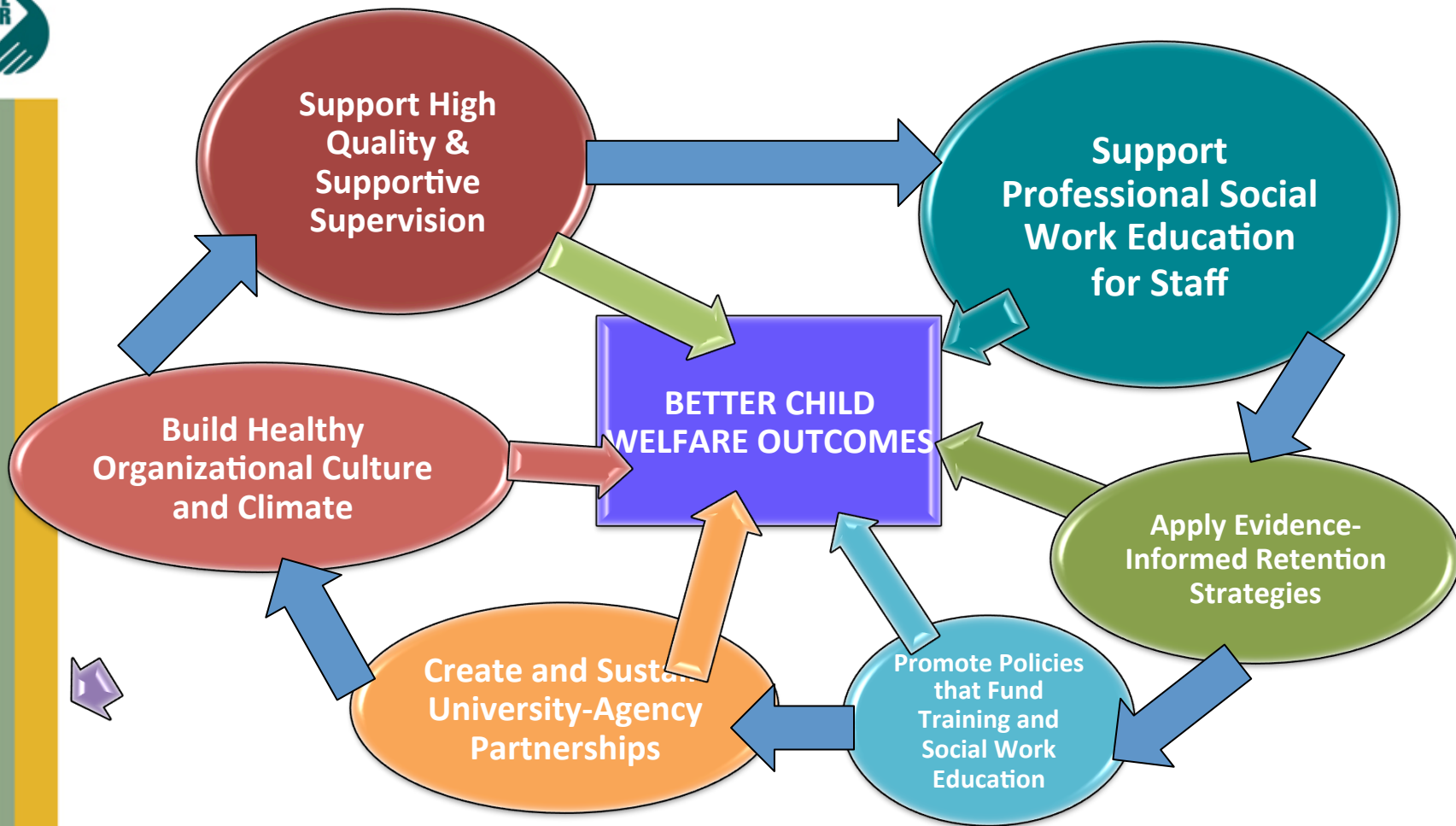
- APHSA 2004 study – top reasons for turnover related to caseload/workload.
- Focus on workload – reflects differential patterns of staffing, structure and service delivery.
- Impacts safety, permanency and well-being of children – insufficient visits/engagement/assessment.
- Workers leave because they are overwhelmed or they stay and just manage – burn out (minimal performers)

Negative Factors

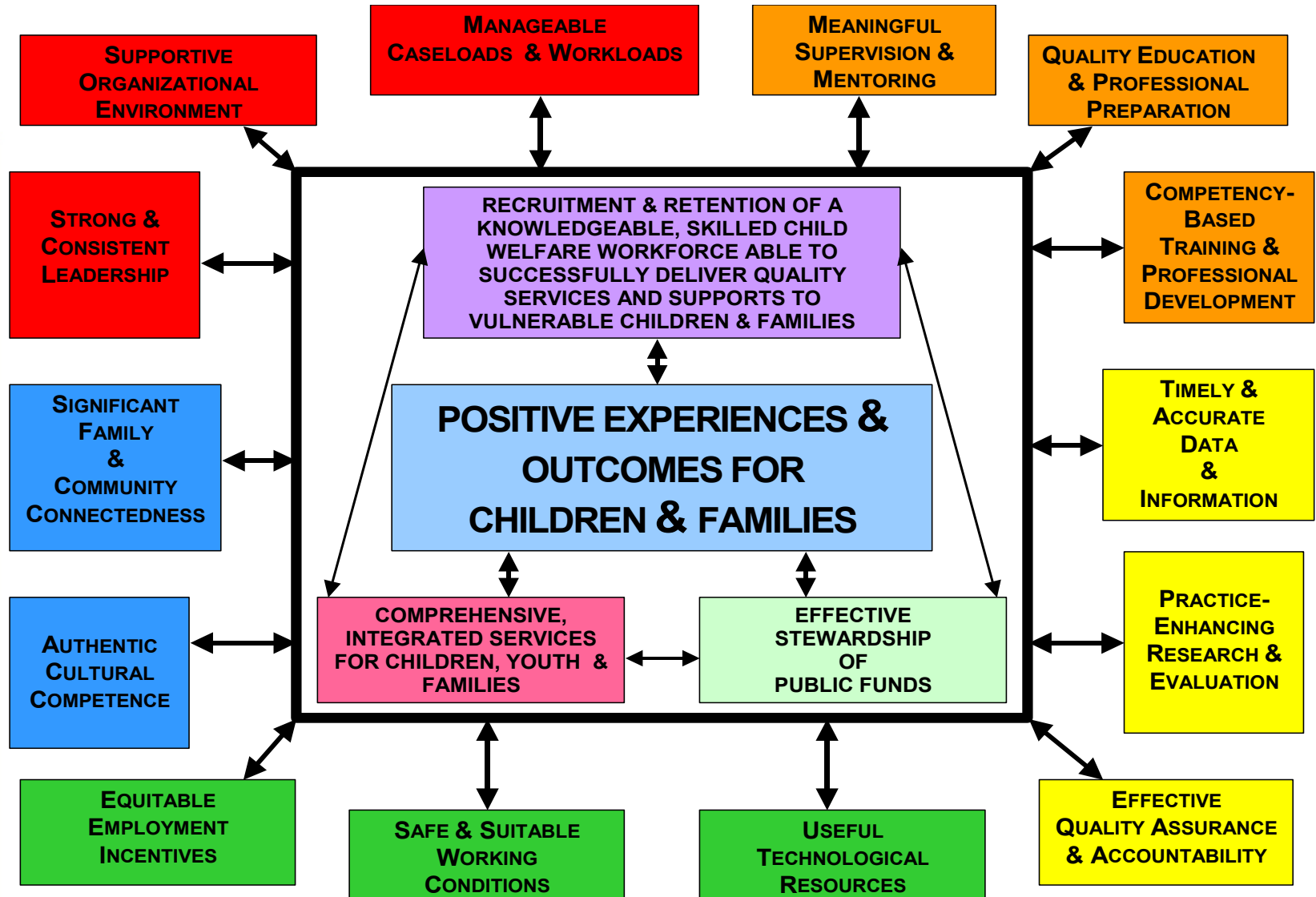


- Burn-out
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Depersonalization
 - Lack of personal accomplishment
- Negative organizational environment can lead to or reinforce personal factors
- Work and family life imbalance
- Lack of commitment – no “goodness of fit”
- Those with the least relevant and/or least education – most likely to leave.

Linking Workforce and Outcomes



14 Components of an Effective CW Workforce (CDF/CR Child Welfare Policy Workgroup)



Implications for University/Agency Partnerships



- Schools of social work are uniquely positioned to support improved agency outcomes (research, analysis, evaluation, consultation, technical assistance & professional development).
- Funding to support students to pursue child & family careers -- educational preparation and training are important.
- Implementation and sustainability are major issues – the university can help.
- Universities have multiple roles for greater engagement with agencies and service delivery improvements.
- Develop research-based briefs to address workforce policy improvements.

Improvement through Policy Change



- Promote the importance of workforce to outcomes for children and specific practice and policy improvements
- Expand the knowledge base on links between workforce and child outcomes
- Promote and build on promising approaches in states, public and private agencies, and universities
- Translate lessons learned into policy changes and better outcomes for children

Achieving Sustainable Solutions



- Leadership support and consistency
- Creating and sustaining a “learning community”
- Investment at every level of the service delivery system
- Investment by the governor and legislature
- Public investment in child welfare – own the system

Resources for Moving Forward



- **Supervision: The Safety Net for Front-Line Practice**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/supervision-the-safety-net-for-front-line-child-welfare-practice.html>
- **Children at Risk: Optimizing Health in an Era of Reform**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/report-on-health-care-for-children-at-risk.html>.
- **Educating Social Workers for Child Welfare Practice: The Status of Using Title IV-E Funding to Support BSW & MSW Education**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news/new-policy-brief-highlights-use-of-title-iv-e-funding-to-support-social-work-students.html>
- **Investing in the Social Work Workforce**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/social-work-policy-institute-releases-new-report-on-needed-workforce-investments.html>

Resources for Moving Forward



- **Factors Influencing Retention: Systematic Review of the Research**

<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/publications/iaswr-publications/iaswr-child-welfare-workforce-initiative.html>

- **CDF/Children's Rights National Child Welfare Workforce Policy Workgroup**

– <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/promoting-child-welfare-workforce-improvements.html>

- **Child Welfare Information Gateway:**

http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/mgmt_supervision/

- **National Child Welfare Workforce**

<http://www.ncwwi.org/>

- **Social Care Institute of Excellence**

www.scie.org.uk