# RPG Regional Partnership Grants

# Workforce Stability in the Regional Partnership Grants Program

## Staff Transition and Succession Planning Strategies

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# INTRODUCTION

Effective planning and cross-system collaboration remain essential to building and sustaining a stable workforce over time. This resource brief, developed by the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW), supports Regional Partnership Grants (RPG) recipients and their cross-system partners, including child welfare agencies, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers, dependency courts, family treatment courts (FTC), health care providers, early childhood and child development service providers, as well as other collaborative partners as they strive to strengthen workforce stability.

**This brief**

- Helps program administrators, supervisors, and cross-system leaders manage staff transitions, onboarding, and succession planning.

- Highlights actionable strategies and resources that build a resilient workforce capable of sustaining effective and efficient service delivery for children, parents, and family members who are: 1) affected by substance use, and 2) in—or at risk of being placed in—out-of-home placement.

- Includes concrete strategies and tools, such as: 1) *Five Key Discussion Questions to Plan for Staff Turnover*; 2) *Hiring Process Checklist*; 3) *30-60-90 Day Onboarding Checklist*; 4) *National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) Six-Step Planning Process*; and 5) *NCSACW Resource Spotlights: Sustainability Toolkit, The Blueprint, and Online Tutorials*.

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### Federal Context: Grounding Workforce Strategies

The strategies presented in this brief support the Children's Bureau's (CB) mission to promote child safety, permanency, and well-being through strong partnerships and effective service delivery. These efforts are grounded in the legislative framework of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program, established under the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997. The program was expanded through the Child and Family Service Improvement Act of 2006, which created the RPGs. Reauthorized by the Supporting America's Children and Families Act of 2024, RPGs are required to have cross-system collaboration among child welfare, substance use prevention and treatment, courts, and additional optional partners, which may include state or local agencies that administer Federal health care, housing, family support, or other related programs.*

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* The optional partners identified prior to the 2024 reauthorization remain and include "an Indian tribe or tribal consortium; nonprofit child welfare service providers; for-profit child welfare service providers; community health service providers, including substance abuse treatment providers; community mental health providers; local law enforcement agencies; school personnel; tribal child welfare agencies (or a consortia of the agencies); and any other providers, agencies, personnel, officials, or entities that are related to the provision of child and family services under a State plan."

# Anticipated Outcomes

RPGs and other collaboratives applying the strategies in this brief can expect positive short- and long-term outcomes:

## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness of the importance to plan for staff transitions
- More widespread use of staff transition and succession plans
- Expansion of structured onboarding practices across RPGs and their partners

RPGs can measure these short-term outcomes by the presence and use of staff transition plans as well as the completion and consistency of onboarding activities.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Reduced staff turnover within RPG projects including retention of staff at child welfare agencies, SUD treatment providers, and FTCs, at the service delivery level, management, and leadership
- Improved workforce stability and service continuity leading to families staying safely together and parents sustaining recovery
- Strengthened cross-system collaboration and relationships between the agency and families and ultimately better safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and their families[1]

Long-term effects can be measured in three related areas: analyses of workforce data such as staff turnover and retention rates and staff satisfaction surveys; evaluation of cross-system coordination efforts including joint training initiatives and implementing shared cross-agency protocols; and child and family outcome data such as placement stability, reunification rates, and service access.

# Background

RPG sites report that workforce instability and staff turnover remain persistent challenges across RPGs and their partner systems, including child welfare, SUD treatment, dependency courts, and others.[2] These challenges consistently affect service delivery, program implementation, and family engagement.[3]

High turnover among frontline staff and supervisors among RPGs and their partner systems has led to gaps in care continuity and created barriers to implementing evidence-based practice. These challenges were especially pronounced during the pandemic.[4]

This brief provides concrete strategies, site examples, and "*Resource Spotlights*" to improve workforce stability in three domains: 1) staff transitions and succession planning, 2) onboarding and orientation, and 3) sustaining workforce stability.

## STAFF TRANSITIONS AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Workforce stability requires not only effective recruitment and retention, but also the ability to anticipate and manage staff transitions effectively. These strategies support both planned and unplanned departures, develop role-specific succession plans, and incorporate turnover planning into sustainability efforts. Resources providing detailed steps on succession planning offer practical guidance to further these efforts.

Transitions may be anticipated (e.g., retirements, promotions) or unexpected (e.g., resignations, medical leave, death). Unplanned departures can lead to service gaps and delays in case progress; however, whether expected or unexpected, contingency planning remains essential.

Planning must also account for the unique effects based on role. Leadership transitions often require more intensive planning due to their organizational influence, while frontline staff transitions affect continuity of care and client relationships. Developing tailored onboarding and succession strategies that reflect these unique responsibilities helps ensure smoother transitions. Examples of strategies sites may use include:

- Developing role-specific succession plans using the NCWWI's *Six-Step Succession Planning Process*[5]
- Reviewing the *Five Key Discussion Questions to Plan for Staff Turnover*
- Using *Appendix A: Hiring Process Checklist*
- Using *Appendix B: RPG 30-60-90 Day Onboarding Checklist*

It is also crucial to mitigate disruptions related to staff turnover.[6] Integrating turnover planning into broader sustainability efforts allows programs to maintain service quality and operational stability over time.

# Children and Family Futures' Comprehensive Framework

Workforce instability affects both the agency experiencing it and collaborative partners, each of whom can strengthen workforce development efforts by integrating these evidence-informed policy and practice pillars. All collaborative partners—together—can improve service delivery and promote lasting outcomes for children and families.

According to Children and Family Futures' *Comprehensive Framework to Improve Outcomes for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement*: "With cross-system collaboration at the foundation, an effective system of care for families develops through 10 essential pillars known to promote positive outcomes."[7]

**Retention & Recruitment: What the Data Tell Us**

Evidence from the *National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) III: Child Welfare Workforce Study*, conducted by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), reinforces the urgency of workforce investment. The study found that 53% of child welfare supervisors reported increased turnover from 2019 to 2022, with burnout and job stress cited by 75% of respondents. These challenges directly affect the capacity of agencies to serve families effectively.

*NSCAW III Workforce Turnover Report (OPRE)* reveals that persistent staff turnover in child welfare can disrupt service continuity and negatively affect outcomes for families affected by substance use.

*Bureau of Labor Statistics: Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS)* provides national data on hiring, separations, and job vacancies while also offering critical context for understanding workforce instability. For RPGs, JOLTS data underscore the urgency of implementing succession planning and retention strategies to maintain continuity in services.

## System-Level Policy Efforts that Support Practice Innovations

**Commitment to Shared Mission, Vision, and Goals** → **Efficient Cross-Systems Communication** → **Ongoing Cross-Training and Staff Development** → **Sustainability and Institutionalized Practice** → **Measuring and Monitoring Outcomes**

## Practice Strategies and Innovations

**Early Identification of Families in Need of SUD Treatment** → **Timely Access to Assessment and Treatment Services** → **Recovery Support Services** → **Family-Centered Treatment Services** → **Frequent Monitoring and Collaborative Responses to Needs**

### Key Shared Outcomes for Families

| Recovery | Remain at Home | Reunification | Repeat Maltreatment | Re-entry |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parents access treatment more quickly; stay in treatment longer; decrease substance use | More children remain at home throughout program participation | Children stay fewer days in foster care and reunify within 12 months at a higher rate | Fewer children experience subsequent maltreatment | Fewer children re-enter foster care after reunification |

# Planning for Staff Turnover

Planning for staff turnover remains essential to maintaining stability and continuity across partnering agencies. Some systems experience greater rates of turnover, and organizational challenges can also vary across partnering agencies. RPGs and other collaborative teams can proactively assess their readiness. These key discussion questions are designed to guide collaborative planning efforts that help partners identify risks, strengthen training protocols, and ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

## Five Key Discussion Questions to Plan for Staff Turnover[8]

1. What are the current turnover rates for key partnering agencies? How have those rates changed in recent years?

2. What are the primary organizational challenges that contribute to staff turnover? How can partners begin to manage those challenges within their own agencies?

3. Is the current operational training adequate for new staff? Are there additional considerations when training staff during turnover?

4. Are partners aware of any contextual events that might result in increased staff turnover such as agencies merging or restructuring, proposed budget cuts, retirement incentives?

5. What steps can the partnership take to ensure continuity of services and practices in the event of turnover? Are providers of our evidence-based programs able to continue delivering services uninterrupted if staff leave?

## SITE EXAMPLE

*An RPG Round 6 site used supplemental funding to offer recruitment and retention incentives for staff, including peer support specialists. Employees received a monetary bonus upon hiring and again every 6 months. The strategy helped reduce staff turnover and boost morale.*

High turnover can drain resources and disrupt service delivery, making retention a leadership priority. Recruiting, onboarding, and training new staff are costly processes that divert RPG and other funds from strengthening programming and improving outcomes for families. Implementing strategies such as recruitment and retention incentives can reduce turnover, boost morale, and preserve funds for direct services. Sites can use workforce data—such as vacancy rates, time-to-hire, onboarding costs, and retention trends—to demonstrate the return on investment to funders and justify continued support. Linking these improvements to better family engagement and permanency outcomes reinforces the value of these efforts. Ultimately, workforce stability not only enhances program quality but also advances long-term sustainability goals.

**NCSACW Resource Spotlight**

*Sustainability Planning Toolkit: Five Steps to Build a Sustainability Plan for Systems Change*

- Offers practical tools and templates to help RPGs develop long-term plans for maintaining effective staffing practices.

- Includes guidance on succession planning, onboarding, and leadership continuity as key components of program sustainability.

- Provides RPG staff with information to assess current workforce capacity, identify gaps, and institutionalize staffing strategies to reduce turnover and enhance service delivery.

**NCSACW Resource Spotlight**

*Building Hope for Families Affected by Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders: A Blueprint for an Effective System of Care to Promote Lasting Recovery and Family Well-Being*

- Outlines 10 essential policy and practice pillars to improve outcomes for families affected by substance use and child welfare involvement.

- Offers actionable strategies for cross-system collaboration, workforce development, and service integration, making it a valuable guide for RPGs to strengthen onboarding, succession planning, and staff transition strategies.

- Highlights how workforce stability enhances service continuity and improves child and family outcomes.

# Succession Framework

The NCWWI *Six-Step Succession Planning Process* helps RPGs and their partners build resilient teams while minimizing disruption due to staff turnover.[9]

## SIX-STEP SUCCESSION PLANNING PROCESS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Link Strategic and Workforce Planning Decisions** | Clarify the organization's long-term goals and strategic direction while ensuring succession planning aligns with core values. Identify key roles critical to maintaining program effectiveness and achieving desired outcomes. Roles may include supervisors, project directors, peer support, and specialized service providers. |
| **Analyze Gaps** | Identify core competency requirements and evaluate current staff for leadership potential and readiness to assume critical roles. Use performance data, feedback, and professional development records to inform assessments. |
| **Identify and Develop Talent** | Invest in training, mentorship, and leadership development to prepare staff for future roles. Agencies that build internal talent pipelines are better equipped to respond to vacancies.[10] |
| **Develop and Document Succession Strategies** | Identify recruitment, retention, and staff development strategies, including recruitment and retention bonuses as well as special staff development programs such as coaching, mentoring, shadowing, and communities of practice which brings together peers for knowledge and experiential exchanges and both informal and professional support to enhance retention. Capture institutional knowledge through manuals, shared information, and cross-training. Clear documentation is essential to ensure continuity.[11] Include internal staff, external partners, and leadership in succession planning discussions and identification of strategies. Onboarding and transition planning benefit from cross-system collaboration and shared expectations.[12] |
| **Implement Succession Strategies** | Implement recruitment, retention, and staff development strategies. Determine what and how to measure whether strategies are successful. |
| **Monitor and Evaluate** | Regularly review succession plans and adjust based on staffing changes, organizational needs, and feedback. Ongoing evaluation can ensure plans remain relevant and effective.[13] |

### Resource Spotlight

### National Child Welfare Workforce Institute

NCWWI has resources that support the development of a strong, stable, and effective child welfare workforce, offers RPGs (and partners) research-based tools, leadership development programs, and organizational strategies (e.g., *Six-Step Succession Planning Process*) to help build resilient teams, reduce turnover, and sustain effective service delivery for families affected by substance use.*

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*The NCWWI website will continue to exist through at least September 2026; however, the final edits and updates were completed in September 2024.

## ⚙ SITE EXAMPLES

### Enhanced Peer Support Role

*One RPG Round 6 site enhanced the peer support role by merging it with the responsibilities of family navigators, thus creating a new position titled "**peer family navigator**." This change led to increased salaries, a broader scope of work, and improved recruitment and retention outcomes.*

Expanding job roles can significantly build organizational capacity and improve workforce stability. By merging the peer support role with family navigator responsibilities to create the "peer family navigator" position, the site broadened the scope of work and increased salaries, making the role more attractive to qualified candidates. This approach not only expanded the applicant pool—critical in a competitive hiring environment—but also streamlined service delivery by combining two complementary functions into one position. The result was improved recruitment and retention outcomes, reduced vacancies, and enhanced continuity of care for families. For leadership, this demonstrates how strategic role redesign can strengthen organizational capacity, maximize resources, and support sustainability goals by creating positions that are both appealing to staff and aligned with program needs.

### Increased Benefits for Peer Positions

*An RPG site (Rounds 1 and 2 recipient) increased peer support specialist pay, provided an avenue for upward mobility by creating a lead peer support coordinator position, and provided free tuition at state universities, which enabled several peer support specialists to obtain advanced degrees and transition into child welfare worker positions.*

By creating clear career ladders and educational opportunities, the site resolved common retention challenges—such as limited advancement options—and fostered strong engagement and commitment among staff.

For leadership, this example illustrates how investing in workforce development can reduce turnover, build internal capacity, and support sustainability by cultivating a pipeline of qualified professionals committed to the organization's mission.

### Internship-to-Hire Pathways

*An RPG Round 5 site created internship-to-hire pathways for students. The recipient hired an "internship and training specialist;" began offering paid internships; partnered with local colleges to promote career opportunities in social work, mental health, and substance use treatment; created structured onboarding for new staff; and developed transition plans for full-time employment. This innovative approach resulted in improved recruitment and retention outcomes, reduced vacancies, and enhanced continuity of care for families.*

For leadership, this approach demonstrates how proactive workforce development can improve recruitment, enhance retention, and advance sustainability goals by reducing reliance on costly external hiring and creating a steady pipeline of committed professionals.

### Managing Staff Turnover

*Several Rounds 2 and 3 RPG recipients identified staff turnover as a significant challenge. Many manage by "actively reaching out to and increasing the frequency of engagement with partners, conducting additional staff training, and holding ongoing meetings to ensure continued awareness about the project."*

While specific data on retention outcomes is not available, the fact that grantees consistently implemented and maintained these strategies indicates they were viewed as effective and valuable in resolving turnover challenges. For leadership, investing in structured communication and ongoing training creates a supportive environment that improves team cohesion, reduces turnover, and promotes long-term sustainability.[14]

# A HIGHLIGHT ON HIRING

When staff transitions occur, or new positions are created, a structured hiring process is essential to maintain workforce stability and service quality. ***The Hiring Process Checklist*** **provides detailed steps:**

- **Defining the Need** – Confirm program requirements and funding
- **Developing the Job Description** – Ensure clarity and compliance
- **Recruiting Strategically** – Use mission-aligned platforms and networks
- **Screening & Interviewing** – Apply consistent and fair practices
- **Onboarding Effectively** – Support new hires with a 30-60-90 day plan

## ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION: THE ROLE OF ONBOARDING IN WORKFORCE STABILITY

**Onboarding Defined:** *Onboarding, also known as "orientation" or "induction," is the act or process of integrating a new employee into an organization.*[15]

Workforce stability begins by welcoming and preparing new team members. Effective onboarding remains a cornerstone of workforce stability in child welfare, SUD treatment programs, and other public and private agencies. The process helps new staff feel confident, connected, and prepared to meaningfully contribute from the start.[16] When thoughtfully designed, onboarding strengthens engagement, supports cross-system collaboration, and reduces early turnover. Structured onboarding also builds trust and clarity, resulting in reduced anxiety and turnover. Staff who quickly understand their roles and expectations are more likely to stay and thrive.[17]

### NCSACW RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

*Online Tutorials for Treatment Professionals and Child Welfare Professionals*

Available at no cost and cover specific disciplines that: 1) foster collaboration across systems, and 2) enhance knowledge and skills for professionals working with families affected by substance use, co-occurring disorders, and involvement in the child welfare system. Several states and jurisdictions include this training as a required component of their onboarding program.

Effective orientation efforts include a focus on collaborative practice. Strategies include intentional introductions to partner systems such as child welfare, SUD treatment, and courts; cross-system training; and education to foster collaboration and shared understanding of service goals.[18,19] These early connections lay the groundwork for effective cross-system work and reinforce a unified approach to supporting children and families.

# ONBOARDING THAT WORKS: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Structured onboarding plans and timelines**
  The 30-60-90-day onboarding plan is a widely used framework that guides new hires through learning, integration, and ownership phases. Having a plan helps set clear goals, track progress, and align expectations.

- **Orientation to agency values, policies, and procedures**
  Include sessions on mission, vision, and values. Introduce policies on confidentiality, documentation, and safety protocols.[20]

- **"Tailored" onboarding for internal promotions**
  Staff transitioning into new roles benefit from role-specific onboarding that acknowledges their prior experience while introducing new responsibilities and expectations.[21]

- **Ongoing support and mentorship**
  Pair new hires with mentors or supervisors trained in reflective supervision. Regular check-ins and coaching sessions improve retention and performance.[22]

## ONBOARDING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- **Checklists and templates**
  Use onboarding checklists that cover both agency programs and staff roles to ensure consistency and completeness. (See *Appendix B: RPG 30-60-90 Day Onboarding Checklist*)

- **Training modules**
  Ensure they focus on child safety, child welfare laws, SUD treatment and recovery principles, case management systems, and family engagement.

- **Highlight relevant evidence-based practices**
  Embed onboarding strategies that align with implementation science and evidence-based frameworks. These strategies can include fidelity monitoring and continuous quality improvement.[23]

## SITE EXAMPLE

*Onboarding for Cross-System Collaboration*

*RPG Round 3 recipients developed onboarding plans that included*

- Joint orientation sessions with child welfare and SUD partners

- Shadowing opportunities across systems

- Early mentorship pairings

*Effect: These practices improved staff confidence and reduced early turnover.[24]*

These onboarding strategies help build trust and shared understanding across systems early in the collaboration. By fostering strong relationships and clarifying roles from the start, programs can reduce staff burnout and strengthen long-term workforce stability.

## NCSACW RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

**Building Collaborative Capacity Series:**

*Module 2 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Examining Values and Developing Shared Principles and Trust in Collaborative Teams* provides key steps to understanding differences and commonalities among partners, as well as strategies to build both trust and a shared commitment.

RPG sites and their partners can use Module 2 to improve staff hiring, transitions, onboarding and succession planning by understanding and building a shared commitment to improving workforce stability.

*Module 4 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Administrative-Level Data Sharing to Monitor and Evaluate Program Success* focuses on establishing administrative-level data sharing, the development of shared metrics, and dashboards that help teams evaluate service quality and collaboration.

RPG sites and their cross-system partners can use Module 4 to strengthen workforce stability by leveraging shared data and dashboards to monitor workforce trends, assess onboarding outcomes, and understand staff transition effects—ultimately improving service quality and collaboration.



# SUSTAINING WORKFORCE STABILITY

A sustainable workforce strategy begins with a shared vision for all partners. It requires ongoing collaboration between child welfare, SUD treatment, mental health treatment, courts, and other partners. Staff turnover, however, can lead to greater challenges as collaborative teams work to build trust.[25] Steering committees and other cross-system team meetings provide a forum to discuss workforce challenges, share updates, create efficiencies, and coordinate solutions. Joint training and technical assistance to enhance onboarding and succession planning can strengthen and standardize the process. RPGs and partners may co-host collaborative learning exchanges for project leaders, supervisors, and managers on onboarding and succession planning to reinforce consistent practices among partners.

This shared vision reflects a commitment to staff well-being, professional growth, and service excellence.[26] Strategies such as shared dashboards, joint training calendars, and feedback loops can support effective collaboration.[27]

- *Establishing a shared vision for workforce stability across partners*
  RPGs and partners co-create a vision statement that defines workforce stability goals, values, and priorities. This shared understanding fosters alignment and accountability across systems while serving as the foundation of a strong governance structure.

- *Using data to track progress and inform improvements*
  Staff regularly track workforce metrics (e.g., turnover rates, onboarding completion, staff satisfaction). Data dashboards and feedback loops help identify trends and guide adjustments to onboarding, supervision, and retention strategies. These dashboards allow partners to monitor progress, identify gaps, and celebrate successes in real-time. Feedback loops (e.g., post-onboarding surveys, exit interviews, regular staff check-ins) provide qualitative insights into staff experiences and help refine onboarding, supervision, and retention strategies.

## What Can You Do Now? Action Steps

Consider implementing one or more strategies that your agency and collaborative partners can take to meet your unique needs:

*Begin Contingency Planning:* Staff transitions—whether planned or unplanned—require proactive contingency planning to minimize service disruptions and maintain continuity of care.

*Develop Role-Specific Succession Plans:* Creating strategies specific to leadership and frontline positions is especially critical as they reflect the unique responsibilities and influence of each role.

*Create Comprehensive and Effective Onboarding Processes:* Implementing well-developed and structured onboarding processes builds staff confidence, engagement, and retention while helping new hires feel prepared and connected from the start.

*Deliver Cross-System Orientation Based on a Shared Vision for Workforce Stability:* Internal orientation to agency values and external cross-system expectations fosters shared understanding, accountability, and alignment across child welfare, SUD treatment, dependency courts, and other systems.

*Implement Data-Driven Decision-Making:* Build processes and protocols that track turnover rates, onboarding completion, and staff satisfaction to guide improvements and measure success.

## Further Learning & Resources

- NCSACW's *Building Collaborative Capacity Series* provides strategies for states and communities to build cross-system collaborative teams, establish effective communication protocols, and implement practice innovations. The goal is to improve screening, assessment, and engagement for families affected by substance use disorders and involved with child welfare.

  - Module 1: *Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Developing the Structure of Collaborative Teams to Serve Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders*

  - Module 2: *Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Examining Values and Developing Shared Principles and Trust in Collaborative Teams*

  - Module 3: *Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Practice-Level Communication Pathways and Information-Sharing Protocols*

  - Module 4: *Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Administrative-Level Data Sharing to Monitor and Evaluate Program Success*

  - Module 5: *Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing Screening Protocols to Identify Parental Substance Use Disorders and Related Child and Family Needs*

  - Module 6: *Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Establishing Comprehensive Assessment Procedures and Promoting Family Engagement into Services*

  - Module 7: *Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing and Monitoring Joint Case Plans and Promoting Treatment Retention and Positive Family Outcomes*

- *Regional Partnership Grants to Increase the Well-Being of, and to Improve the Permanency Outcomes for, Children Affected by Substance Abuse: Seventh Report to Congress* presents findings from the cross-site evaluation of RPG Round 4 projects that highlight how grantees strengthened interagency collaboration, implemented evidence-based practices, and improved outcomes for children and families affected by substance use.

- *Regional Partnership Grants to Increase the Well-Being of, and to Improve the Permanency Outcomes for, Children Affected by Substance Abuse: Eighth Report to Congress* building on prior evaluations, this report focuses on RPG Rounds 4, 5, and 6, describing how grantees adapted service models, maintained workforce stability, and developed strategies for sustaining services. It underscores how coordinated partnerships and data-informed decision-making play a role in supporting families and enhancing child welfare outcomes.

# APPENDIX A: RPG HIRING PROCESS CHECKLIST

This sample hiring checklist is designed for RPG recipients and their partners and can be tailored to meet program-specific needs. By promoting clarity and consistency, this tool supports workforce stability and retention—critical factors for sustaining service continuity and improving outcomes for families. The steps outlined draw from widely recognized guidance provided by nonprofit human resources organizations, general HR management standards, and established recruitment principles commonly applied in human-services settings. They incorporate themes consistently highlighted in workforce development literature—such as structured interviewing, competency-based selection, clear role definition, and inclusive recruitment—without relying on any single proprietary model.[28]

**1. Define the Need**
☐ Confirm program need, funding source, and whether the role is new or a replacement

**2. Develop or Update the Job Description**
☐ Outline essential duties, required skills, qualifications, and work conditions
☐ Ensure accuracy with legal and licensing requirements
☐ Ensure consistency with RPG Implementation and Evaluation Plan (I&E Plan)

**3. Create a Hiring Plan**
☐ Identify which team members will be involved in the hiring process and their roles
☐ Set timelines, interview stages, and candidate communication expectations

**4. Recruit Strategically**
☐ Post internally and externally using mission-aligned platforms
☐ Advertise across job boards, agency sites, social work networks, and universities
☐ Actively source through outreach, referrals, and professional networks

**5. Screen Applications**
☐ Review resumes using consistent criteria or a rubric, apply standardized screening criteria—such as required skills, certifications, and experience—to efficiently narrow the applicant pool
☐ Conduct brief phone screens to confirm core skills and interest

**6. Conduct Structured Interviews**
☐ Train interviewers to follow consistent, fair practices
☐ Conduct structured trauma-informed in-depth interviews
☐ Use skills tests, written tasks, or presentations
☐ Evaluate empathy, resilience, problem-solving, boundaries, and ethics
☐ Incorporate realistic role-play scenarios for real-time assessment

**7. Assess Skills & Fitness**
☐ Use job-relevant exercises (case scenarios, writing samples, documentation and evaluation tasks)
☐ Confirm alignment with organizational mission and values and with I&E Plan
☐ Prioritize relevant certifications (child welfare, substance use, peer support, trauma-informed care)
☐ Program Competencies: Crisis response, documentation, mandated reporting, safety assessment

**8. Check References & Backgrounds**
☐ Verify past performance with professional references
☐ Complete required background, credential, and compliance checks
☐ Complete enhanced checks: Child/adult protective registries, fingerprinting, license validation, motor vehicle, if required

**9. Make the Offer**
☐ Provide a written offer with salary, schedule, benefits, and contingencies
☐ Communicate promptly with all candidates throughout the process

**10. Onboard Effectively**
☐ Provide orientation, technology access, policies, and required training
☐ Use an established process, such as the *30-60-90 Onboarding Checklist*

# APPENDIX B: RPG 30-60-90 DAY ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

This sample checklist is designed for RPG recipients and their partners. It can be customized to reflect program-specific tasks, milestones, and roles. The checklist, designed to support structured onboarding, promotes cross-system alignment and helps ensure that new staff and partners are equipped to contribute effectively on day 1. By providing clarity, consistency, and early engagement, this tool supports workforce stability and retention—key factors in maintaining service continuity and improving outcomes for families.

## Direct Service Staff

### Days 1–30: Orientation and Learning

Goal: Build foundational understanding of RPG goals, structure, and expectations

☐ Attend orientation on RPG goals, target population, and service delivery model
☐ Review program materials and protocols for service delivery
☐ Meet with supervisor and team to understand role expectations
☐ Shadow experienced staff in service delivery or case coordination
☐ Review documentation procedures and data entry systems
☐ Understand referral processes, communication pathways, and partner agency roles

### Days 31–60: Integration and Practice

Goal: Begin contributing to RPG operations and building relationships

☐ Begin delivering services or coordinating care for families
☐ Document service activities and outcomes accurately
☐ Participate in team meetings and case reviews
☐ Provide feedback on service delivery challenges or gaps
☐ Begin contributing to evaluation activities (e.g., surveys, data collection)

### Days 61–90: Ownership and Contribution

Goal: Take ownership of responsibilities and contribute to strategic goals

☐ Independently manage service delivery responsibilities
☐ Share insights from direct work to inform program improvements
☐ Support onboarding of new staff or interns
☐ Participate in evaluation feedback loops
☐ Contribute to team planning and service refinement

## Leadership

**Days 1–30: Orientation and Learning**

Goal: Establish foundational knowledge of the RPG project, structure, and key relationships

☐ Review original RPG application and Implementation and Evaluation Plan to understand goals, service model, and partner roles

☐ Read the Cooperative Agreement and identify key deliverables and timelines

☐ Review the Evaluation Design and understand performance measures

☐ Notify Funding Agencies (e.g., Children's Bureau) of changes in key personnel

☐ Meet with outgoing leadership (if applicable) for transition planning

☐ Review current budget and fiscal reporting structure

☐ Connect with the Federal Project Officer and Technical Assistance (TA) team to discuss TA needs

☐ Connect with partners to understand collaborative expectations

☐ Review recent Semi-Annual Progress Reports and other required documentation

**Days 31–60: Integration and Practice**

Goal: Begin active participation in program operations and relationship building

☐ Participate in and begin leading RPG partner meetings

☐ Review and contribute to upcoming progress reports

☐ Monitor compliance with federal reporting timelines

☐ Begin reviewing service delivery and evaluation data

☐ Engage with the TA team for support

☐ Begin identifying workforce stability challenges and opportunities

**Days 61–90: Ownership and Contribution**

Goal: Take full ownership of leadership responsibilities and contribute to long-term planning

☐ Continue to coordinate with cross-system partners

☐ Take ownership of federal reporting and communication with Children's Bureau

☐ Monitor progress toward RPG goals and outcomes

☐ Contribute to sustainability planning and future funding strategies

☐ Represent RPG in external meetings

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