

PROVINCIAL MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

**Report of the Market Supplement Review
Committee**

Psychologist

Final Report

August 6, 2002

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Saskatchewan Market Supplement Program is to ensure that Saskatchewan health care employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria to address recruitment/retention pressures.

A temporary market supplement will be an acceptable option only if:

- a) workplace initiatives have not addressed the skill shortage;
- b) labour market data supports a supplement; and,
- c) recruitment/retention is a problem, is affecting service delivery and is well documented.

This report deals with the Market Supplement Review Committee's analysis of the recruitment/retention pressures facing employers with respect to Psychologists.

OVERVIEW

The Market Supplement Review Committee reviewed documentation included in the request for consideration of a market supplement for Psychologists.

Responses were received from 13 health district employers who employ Psychologists as well as from the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan.

Role of Psychologists:

Psychologists work in clinics, correction facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools and universities. They diagnose and provide therapy for psychological and emotional disorders, help clients manage physical illnesses and disorders, consult with other health care professionals, plan and implement research and apply theory relating to behavior and mental process.

The *Saskatchewan Registered Psychologists Act* was enacted in 1962. This stipulated that only those with a doctorate in psychology could call themselves psychologists and engage in private practice. In this *Act* however, there was an exemption from this provision for individuals who were less qualified and who worked for the provincial government and school boards. In 1997, a new *Act* regulating psychologists was passed but not yet enacted. This *Act* will permit the registration of persons with both the Doctorates and Masters and thus remove the exemption clause. The new legislation is in process.

Information regarding budgeted positions and vacancies is provided in the following table:

Psychologist – Table 1

Districts	Number of Budgeted Positions (As of March 1, 2002)		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions (As of March 1, 2002)		% Vacancy	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
North East Health District	1	0	0	0		
Moose Jaw Thunder Creek	3	0	0	0		
Lloydminster Health District	2	0	*1	0	50%	
South East Health District	2	0	0	0		
Mamawetan Churchill River Health District	1	0	0	0		
East Central Health District	3	0	2	0	66%	
Saskatoon District Health	32	11	5	1	15.6%	9%
North Central Health District	1	0	1	0	100%	
Prince Albert Health District	7	0	1	0	14.2%	
Battlefords Health District	7	0	0	0		
Midwest Health District	1	0	1	0	100%	
South Central Health District	3	0	**1	0	33%	
Regina Health District	26	-	2	0	7.6%	
TOTAL	89	11	14	1	15.7%	9.1%

*Note: Designates that this vacancy is being replaced by “contract” work.

**Note: Designates a temporary vacancy.

ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as guided by the Provincial Market Supplement Program framework.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS: *(Employers were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages, potential staff short term service delivery impacts, potential long term service delivery impacts and options for alternative service delivery models).*

From the employer responses, it is evident that there are varying degrees of service delivery issues. It was noted by one employer that the Child/Youth area is experiencing the greatest service delivery problems. There has been particular frustration at the lack of resources and services in these areas by the Department of Justice and Department of Social Services who have

to wait long periods for service for their clients. Some employers report hiring less qualified staff such as Social Workers to tend to the caseload, particularly for Child/Youth.

One employer reported waiting lists of approximately 10 days and that children who cannot be assessed at their local school have to travel 2 to 2 ½ hours away for assessment.

Currently, several employers reported that if they are unable to manage the caseload, or a specialized service is required, that they refer to Psychologists in private practice. Referring clients to private practice has become a common means to deal with the growing caseload in some Districts. At least two employers have formal arrangements with private practice Psychologists to alleviate the caseloads.

One employer reported that no service delivery is available to preschool clients until their temporary position is filled.

VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences {i.e., seasonal vacancies; do the vacancies always follow an event; etc.} and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts).*

The provincial vacancy rate for Psychologists is 15.7% for permanent full-time positions and 9.1% for part-time vacancies.

Two employers who has experienced a lack of success in recruiting for an Early Childhood Psychologist has contracted the service for 3 days per month (or approximately .15 FTE).

A northern employer had a vacancy for 3 ½ years prior to November, 2001, and later filled it as a Clinical Supervisor position. Another employer has had a vacancy in a new service program for 2 years. It has never been filled.

One major employer reports that a vacancy typically takes one year to fill.

TURNOVER RATES: *(Employers were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover {loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.).*

The employers have reported a variety of situations resulting in turnover:

- One employer states that Psychologists leave to private practice which offers more flexibility and higher pay.
- Signing and retention bonuses are paid by the Federal Government in Western Canada accordingly: \$12,000 for Ph.D's and \$6,000 for M.A.'s.
- Districts report that Psychologists tend to leave for larger urban centres (such as Edmonton).
- Districts report that Psychologists are leaving for Alberta.

WORKPLACE INITIATIVES: *(Employers were asked to identify workplace initiatives undertaken to address staff shortages, i.e., workload, job redesign, local joint union/management processes, health & safety, etc.).*

Employers have tried a number of creative solutions to ensure that service is delivered as effectively as possible. These are described as follows:

- One District reported that they granted a 6 week paid education leave to an employee to complete a Masters program with a return for service agreement.
- Several Districts have changed the work mix eg. from 1 Psychologist and 1 Social Worker in each program area, to 1 Senior Psychologist and 3 Social Workers.

- A larger urban employer developed a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Psychologists. Some of their efforts include: gaining funding for Clinical Health Psychology Pre-Doctoral Internships; and, developing a Post-Doctoral Internship for Forensic Psychology as means to attract potential Psychologists.
- One District provides a flexible arrangement where 2 Psychologists job share 1 position and leaves of absence are also granted to employees who wish to take specialty training. Other initiatives include communication meetings to discuss concerns, ideas or initiatives that Psychologists are interested in.
- To assist with the workload, two employers have hired Psychometricians until they complete their Masters degree requirements in order to be qualified as a Psychologist.

RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc., as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts).*

As explained in the Overview section, changes are expected with respect to the licensure of Psychologists. These changes may effect qualifications and/or standards and scope of practice, although there will be clearly defined processes for “grandparenting”.

Many Psychologists are attracted to larger centres where they can practice the area of specialty that they choose. Some employers have hired candidates who are currently enrolled within the Masters Program and hope they will retain the candidates once they become fully qualified as Masters level Psychologists.

Some Districts have offered financial incentives such as relocation expenses of up to \$3,000 and one employer reports that they provide a recruitment bonus.

Other recruitment activities include extensive advertising in professional journals, national websites, as well as initiating and maintaining contacts and liaisons with universities across Canada.

The Psychologist profession has been recognized by the Saskatchewan Health Department as a difficult to recruit position. Various options are being considered by Health in addressing recruiting issues. As such, one employer has developed and submitted a proposal to Saskatchewan Health to expand Pre-Doctoral Internships in rural Saskatchewan.

Another initiative by an employer is to develop a Post-doctoral Internship for Forensic Psychology as a way to attract potential Psychologists to mental health.

Due to the changes in the *Act*, a large urban employer has moved their clinical focus to the Ph.D Level, thus the M.A. level graduating from the University of Regina has no/limited clinical training and are therefore not viable candidates for employment.

One employer was successful in contacting PhD Psychologists who were trained at the University of Saskatchewan and had moved elsewhere to complete their one year pre-doctoral internships. One of these candidates was recruited in 2001/2002.

SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS: *(Employers were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons).*

Some employers reported losing employees to the private sector where the income potential is higher. One employer reported that some clinics offer between \$100 - \$150 per clinical hour. Also, the wage rates in other provinces are higher, especially Alberta and Manitoba.

One employer reported that many Psychologists are not willing to wait for wages to “catch up” in Saskatchewan.

One employer reported that First Nations employers pay higher rates of pay. First Nations employers are non unionized.

One employer reported that the Department of Education wage rates are higher.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES: *(The magnitude and timing of any market adjustment will be subject to the availability of existing resources. Please make any comments as to the impact of addressing this staff shortage if resources are not available in the short term).*

At present, some services to children and to high risk offenders may not be provided directly by employers. Frustration occurs in the Court, Education and Social Service systems, who rely on health districts provision of service. Increased turnover and vacancy rates may further impact clinical services, reduce hours of service and increase potential for overtime.

In order to cope with the pressures felt by waiting lists and inability to deliver service, many Districts are utilizing the services of private clinics. It should be noted that this is a very expensive option however, in many instances, the service is provided. Some of the smaller Districts have been questioning whether even to attempt to provide this service if private practice options are available.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Considering all the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee makes the following conclusions:

1. The Market Supplement Review Committee recognizes the relatively high vacancy rate amongst employers as well as the national shortage of Psychologists across Canada. The salary market conditions for this occupation suggest that also there is a disparity of rates between Saskatchewan Psychologists and those in other provinces. Within Saskatchewan, those who choose to work in private practice have greater earning potential than those employed by the Health Districts.
2. A primary factor for the Committee in reaching its decisions is that most service delivery needs appear to be managed, although there is a need in some specialty disciplines. Referring clients to private practice has in some cases, helped to alleviate service delivery issues. Although private practice is outside the realm of the Health Districts, the service is being provided but at a higher cost.

3. Also, there are situations where the vacancy rate is zero, and employers are still experiencing waiting lists.
4. Workplace initiatives that employers have attempted have not necessarily been exhaustive. Although the workplace initiatives of some employers has been extensive, the Committee has assessed that in some cases, more could be initiated in this area.

Considering all the labour market criteria defined by the market supplement framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee recommends:

1. A temporary market supplement for the Psychologist classification not be implemented at this time.
2. SAHO Labour Relations assess the current practices with respect to this classification, and work to standardize those practices.

Market Supplement Consideration Request – Psychologist

Employer Respondents

1. North East Health District
2. Moose Jaw Thunder Creek Health District
3. Lloydminster Health District
4. South East Health District
5. Mamawetin Churchill River Health District
6. East Central Health District
7. Saskatoon District Health
8. North Central Health District
9. Prince Albert Health District
10. Battlefords Health District
11. Midwest Health District
12. South Central Health District
13. Regina Health District