

# Staff Turnover Survey

Summary Report on Staff Stability Data Reported in NCI  
Phases V, VI & VII



A Collaboration of the  
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities  
Services and the Human Services Research Institute

**HUMAN SERVICES RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

2336 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02140

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS  
OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES**

113 Oronoco Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

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## Background

In December 1996, the NASDDDS Board of Directors launched the National Core Indicators (NCI). The aim of NCI is to support state developmental disabilities authorities (SDDAs) in developing and implementing performance/outcome indicators and related data collection strategies that will enable them to measure service delivery system performance. The program strives to provide SDDAs with sound tools in support of their efforts to improve system performance and thereby to better serve people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and their families. The Association's active sponsorship of NCI facilitates states pooling their knowledge, expertise and resources in this endeavor.

NCI Phase I began in January 1997. In August 1997, the Phase I Steering Committee selected a candidate set of 61 performance/outcome indicators in order to test their utility/feasibility. Six states agreed to conduct a field test of these indicators, including administering the consumer and family surveys and compiling other data. Field test data were transmitted to NCI staff during the summer of 1998. The results were compiled, analyzed and reported to participating states in September 1998.

NCI Phase II was launched in January 1999. Phase II data collection wrapped up in June 2000 and set the stage for continuation and further expansion of the project. During Phase II, the Phase I indicators were revised and data collection tools and methods were improved. The revised indicator set consists of 60 performance and outcome indicators. Going forward, NCI expanded its scope to include services for children with developmental disabilities and their families, continued to develop and refine the indicators, and recruited additional states to participate in the project. Phase II data is considered baseline project data. Technical reports and other selected documents are available online at <http://www.hsri.org/nci>.

At the time of this writing, 24 states and one sub-state entity are actively participating in NCI. State participation is entirely voluntary.

This report summarizes staff stability data collected by states via provider surveys. Data reported herein represent three annual reporting periods. Since states generally report these data from the preceding year, these figures represent the following years: **FY2002 (reported in Phase V), FY2003 (reported in Phase VI) and FY2004 (reported in Phase VII).**

## Introduction

Five states participating in Phase V of NCI collected performance indicator data through provider surveys. These states include: Indiana, South Carolina, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. The following year six states submitted these data: Alabama, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming. And during Phase VII four states submitted these data: Vermont, South Carolina, Washington and Wyoming. This report summarizes provider survey data related to indicators of staff stability.

The purpose of this report is:

- ♦ to summarize the methods used to collect and report provider survey data;

- to present results by state and in aggregate; and
- to present results by indicator

In general, the provider survey asks agencies to supply information at the “person-level.” This means that providers fill out a spreadsheet with each line representing one consumer (or one staff member, for the stability data). The state, in turn, reports “provider-level” data to the national project, meaning that each line on their spreadsheet represents totals for one provider. Thus, **state by state** results represent the **average figures across all providers** who (1) answered the survey in that state and (2) supplied both the appropriate numerator and denominator for that specific indicator. (Please note that in the data tables below, the N's vary depending on how many providers supplied information for a particular indicator.) **Aggregate** results are computed by using the **totals across all providers who answered the survey in all states**. These non-weighted, absolute values provide the numerator and denominator for the aggregate indicators. **In the tables and charts below, the aggregate results are labeled “Sample Avg.”**

## Direct Contact Staff Turnover, Length of Employment, and Vacancy Rates

### Indicators

Data compiled by NCI states enables the calculation of direct contact staff turnover rates, vacancy rates, and employment stability (length of employment). These are three different ways to measure concerns about workforce stability. The results of each measure are not directly linked to one another.

*Concern: Direct contact staff turnover ratios and absentee rates are low enough to maintain continuity of supports and efficient use of resources.*

#### Indicators:

- The crude separation rate, defined as the proportion of direct contact staff separated in the past year.
- The average length of service for all direct contact staff who separated in the past year, and for all currently employed direct contact staff.
- The vacancy rate, defined as the proportion of direct contact positions that were vacant as of a specified date.

With respect to direct contact staff stability, state developmental disabilities authorities have expressed that the most critical area of concern lies in the arena of residential services and supports. Thus, NCI states are asked to collect staff stability data from agencies that provide such services. Optionally, states may decide to furnish information on day supports as well. Although

the residential and day results are reported separately, it is important to note that there is some overlap in the results since many agencies submitted both types of data.

Note: For the purposes of this survey, direct contact staff were defined as employees whose primary duties include hands-on, face-to-face contact with consumers. This may exclude psychologists, nurses, and managers whose responsibilities are primarily supervisory in nature.

### Trend Analysis: Phase II, III, IV, V, VI & VII

Figure 1 displays the states that submitted staff stability data for the past six years.

Figure 1. States that Submitted Staff Stability Data in Phases II - VII (representing FY1999-FY2004)

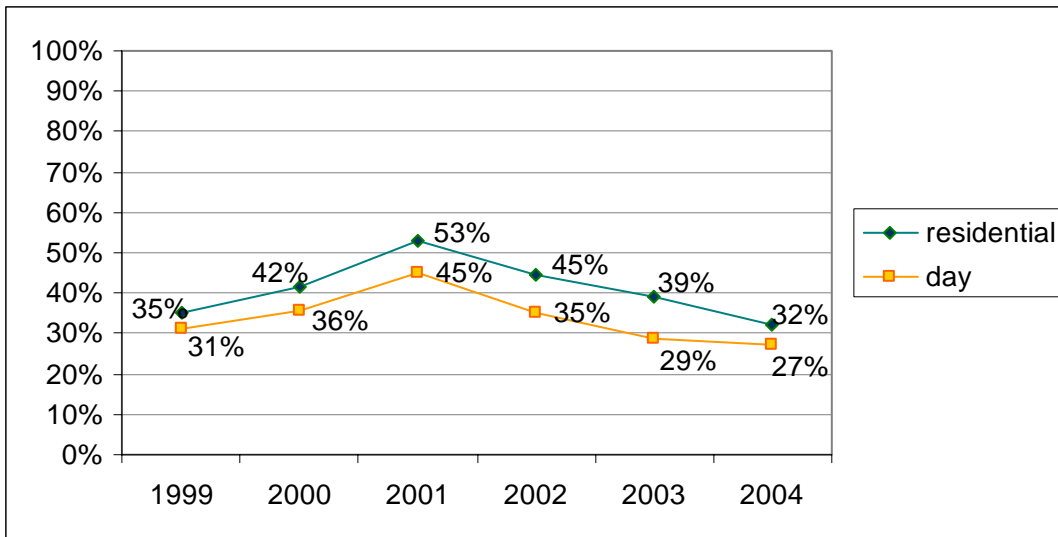
State	Data Collection Period					
	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
AL					X	
RCOC <sup>1</sup>			X			
CT	X					
DE		X				
HI		X	X			
IN			X	X		
MA	X					
NE	X	X				
PA	X					
RI					X	
SC				X	X	X
VT	X	X	X	X	X	X
WA	X		X	X	X	X
WY				X	X	X

Figure 2 displays aggregate direct contact staff turnover rates, based on NCI states reporting data for fiscal years 1999 through 2004. Since fiscal year 2001, the results reveal a decreasing trend in direct contact staff turnover in both residential and day providers, with residential providers consistently reporting higher turnover rates than day providers.

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<sup>1</sup> RCOC stands for the Regional Center of Orange County, California

Figure 2. Aggregate Direct Contact Staff Turnover Rates (FY1999-FY2004)



Figures 3 and 4 present the aggregate full-time and part-time vacancy rates for NCI states reporting in fiscal years 1999 through 2004. The results also show a slight decreasing trend for full-time vacancy rates for residential and day providers. Part-time vacancy rates among residential and day providers, on the other hand, have remained relatively stable, with the exception of a dramatic decrease from 1999 to 2000 among residential providers.

Figure 3. Full-Time and Part-Time Vacancy Rates for Residential Providers (FY1999-FY2004)

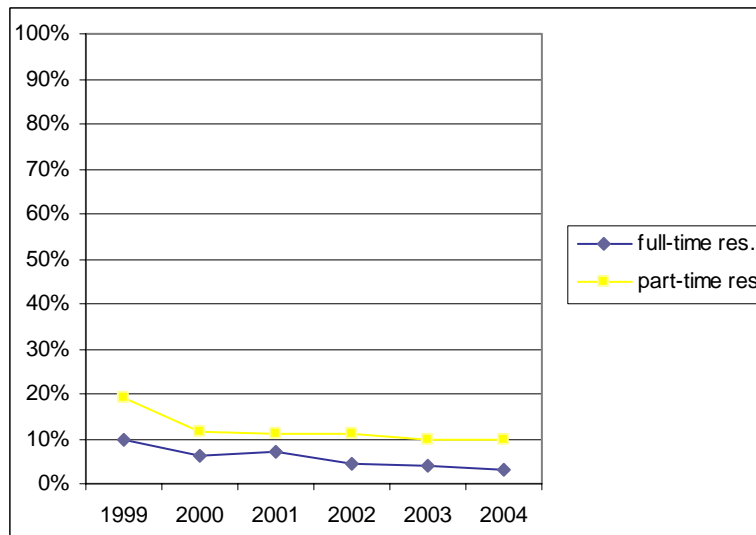
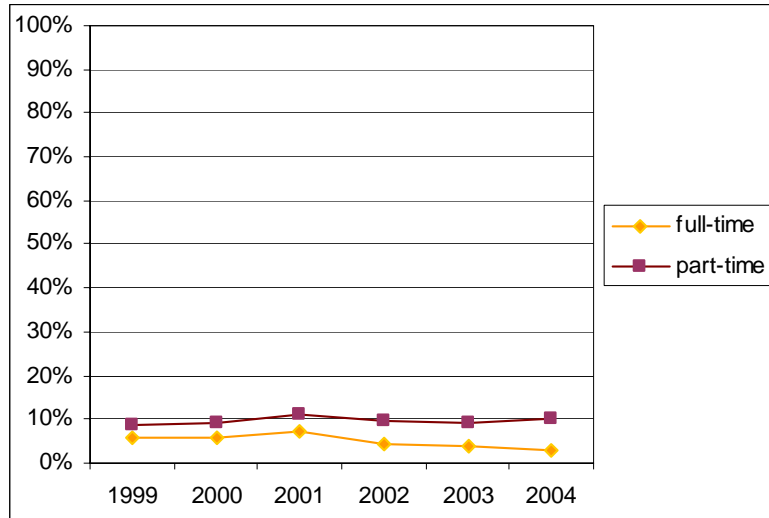


Figure 4. Full-Time and Part-Time Vacancy Rates for Day Providers (FY1999-FY2004)



Figures 5 and 6 present the aggregate results for length of separated staff employment over a five year period (data for fiscal year 1999 could not be compared due to a change in methodology). Since fiscal year 2001, for both residential and day providers, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of staff that left in the past year who were employed for over one year.

Figure 5. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2000-FY2004)

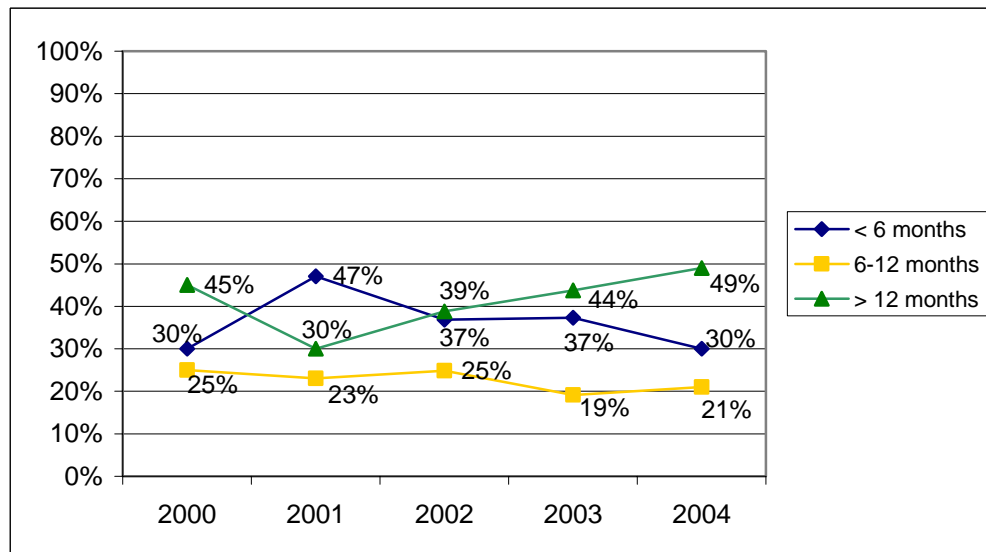
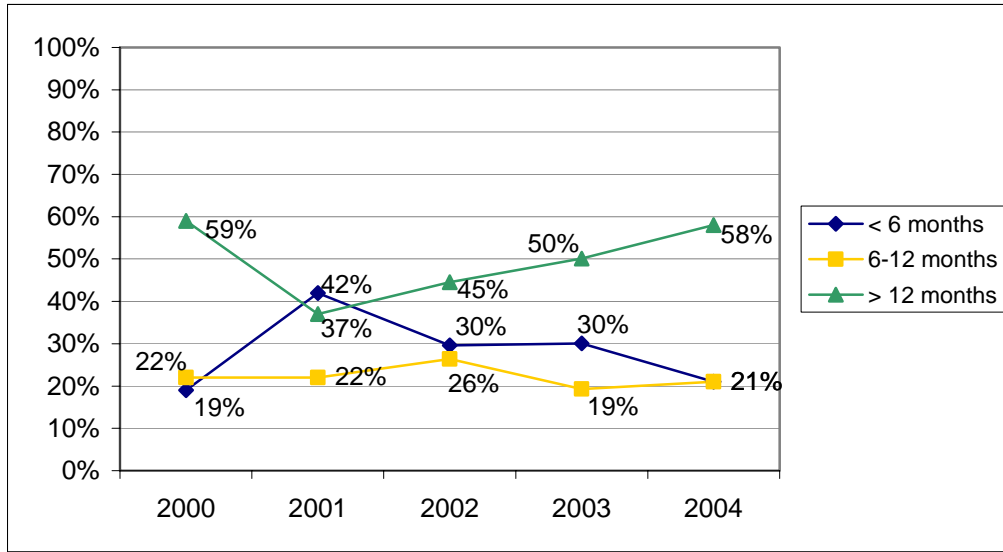


Figure 6. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2000-FY2004)



Figures 7 and 8 present the aggregate length of current staff employment in agencies providing residential supports and day supports for fiscal years 2000 through 2004. The results show an increasing trend in the percentage of current employees who have been working for at least one year and a decrease in the percentage of current employees who have been working less than 6 months and between 6 and 12 months.

Figure 7. Length of Current Staff Employment Agencies Providing Residential Services (FY2000-FY2004)

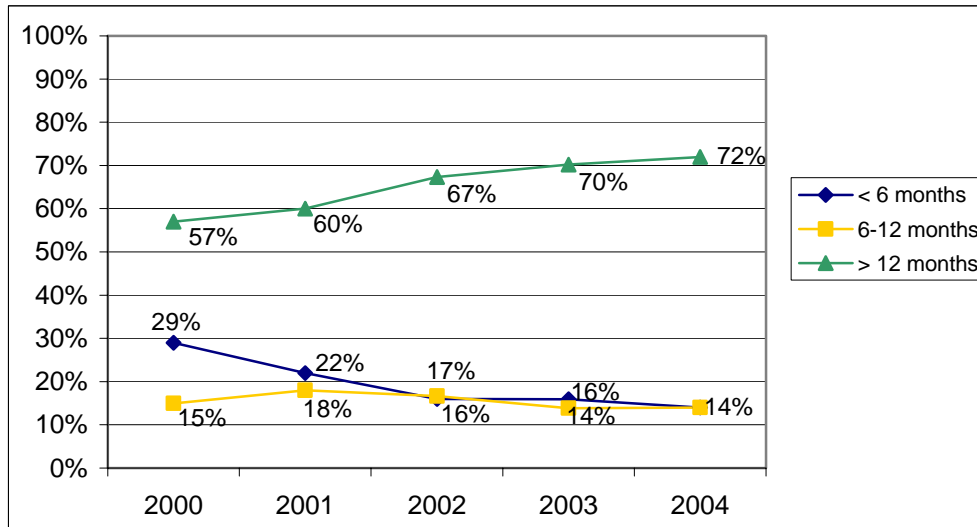
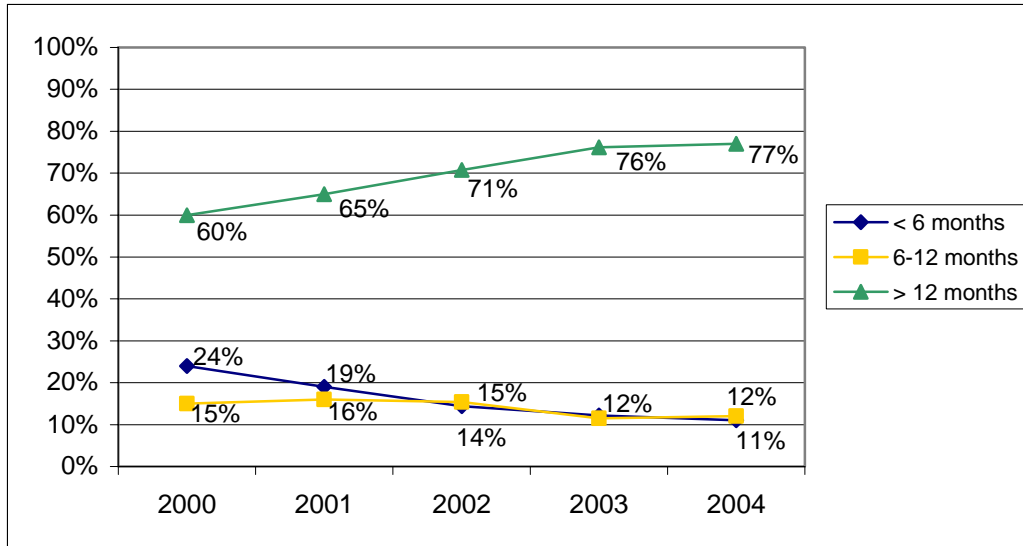


Figure 8. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Services (FY2000-FY2004)



### Methods and Results: FY2002

The configuration of provider agencies represented varies by state. Basic profiles of the providers surveyed in each state are presented below.

#### Indiana:

- 62% (24 out of 39) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 109 (range of 4 to 283) individuals in residential services, and an average of 211 (range of 1 to 1116) individuals in day supports.
- 32% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 30 hours per week, and another 24% use 32 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 35, 36, 37, and 40 hours per week.

#### South Carolina:

- 60% (34 out of 57) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 110 (range of 8 to 625) individuals in residential services, and an average of 177 (range of 16 to 711) individuals in day supports.
- 44% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 30 hours per week, and another 38% use 40 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 32, 35, 36.5, 37, and 37.5 hours per week.

#### Vermont:

- Only those agencies providing day supports were surveyed. A total of 15 day support providers are included in the results. Vermont did indicate that the day support data is

underreported, as it only includes agency staff and NOT contracted and sub-contracted day support workers, of which there are many.

- Agencies reporting serve an average of 97 (range of 13 to 201) individuals in day supports.
- Most agencies reporting (77%) define “full-time” as 35 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 30, 32, 35, and 37.5 hours per week.

Washington:

- 15% (54 out of 356) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- These agencies serve an average of 25 (range of 0 to 132) individuals in residential services, and an average of 59 (range of 0 to 600) individuals in day supports.
- Agencies reported data by full-time equivalent positions, which include both full-time and part-time workers. Therefore, there is no specific data for “part-time” positions when calculating vacancy rates.

Wyoming:

- 100% (15) of agencies surveyed provide both residential and day services.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 48 (range of 3 to 125) individuals in residential services, and an average of 56 (range of 10 to 162) individuals in day supports.
- A majority of agencies reporting (53%) define “full-time” as 40 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 30, 32, 35, and 36 hours per week.

### ***Turnover Rates***

Turnover rates for each agency were calculated based on the number of direct support staff (regardless of whether they were full- or part-time employees) who left the agency during the previous twelve months for any reason, divided by the total number of direct support staff who were on the agency’s payroll as of the end of June 2002. Unless otherwise noted, all data were compiled using provider surveys.

It is important to note that the high rate of turnover (90%) in Wyoming was due in part to one of the small number of providers having a turnover rate of 315%. Not including Wyoming, the turnover rates ranged from 23% to 45%.

Figure 9. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2002)

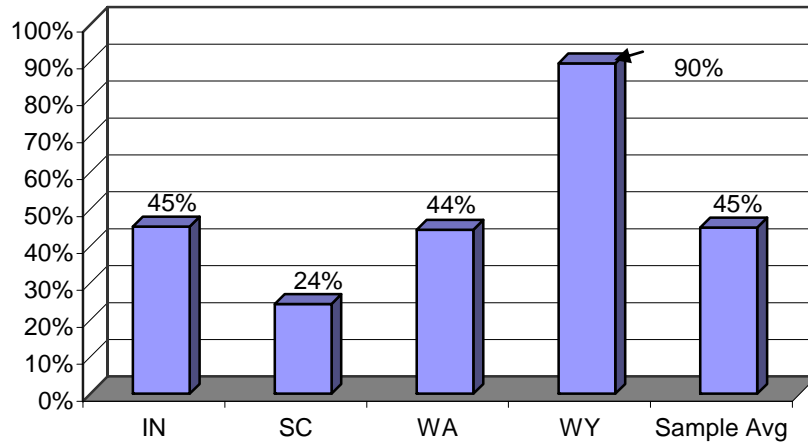
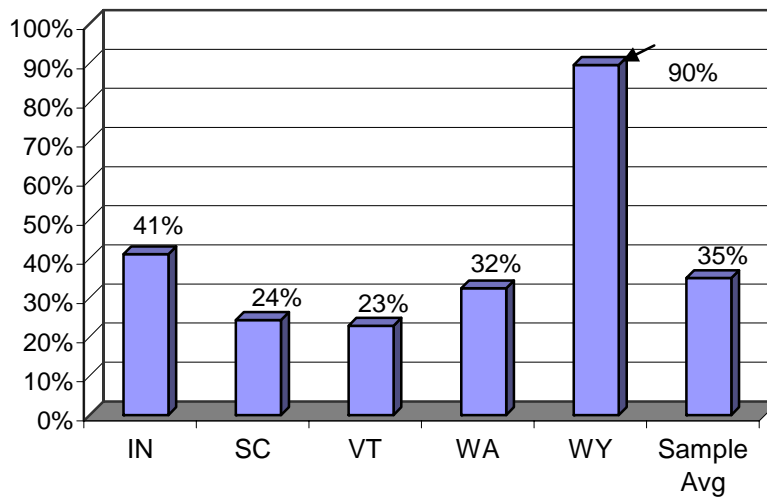


Figure 10. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2002)



### ***Length of Employment***

Length of employment of current and “separated” staff (staff who left in the past year) was calculated as follows. For each current employee, the agency determined how many months the person had been employed in a direct support capacity (of any type) on a continuous basis. The aggregate or total number of months of employment for all current employees was reported on the provider survey. The average length of employment was computed by dividing the aggregate number of months of employment by the total number of direct support staff on the agency’s payroll at the end of June 2002. For staff who left in the past year, agencies reported the number of months they had been employed up until the point they left the agency, and their average length of employment was calculated by dividing the total number of months of employment by the number of separated staff.

Figure 11. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2002)

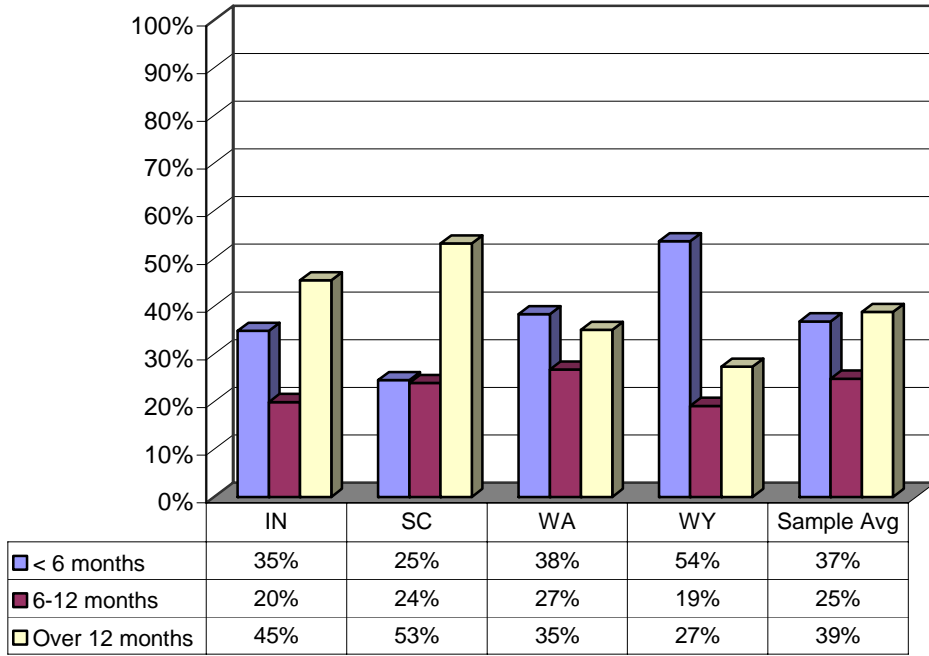


Figure 12. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2002)

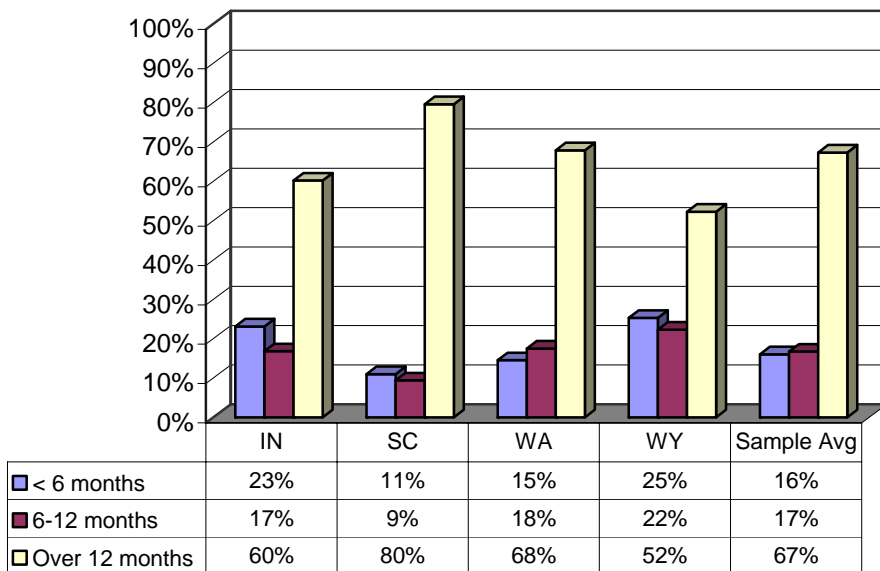


Figure 13. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2002)

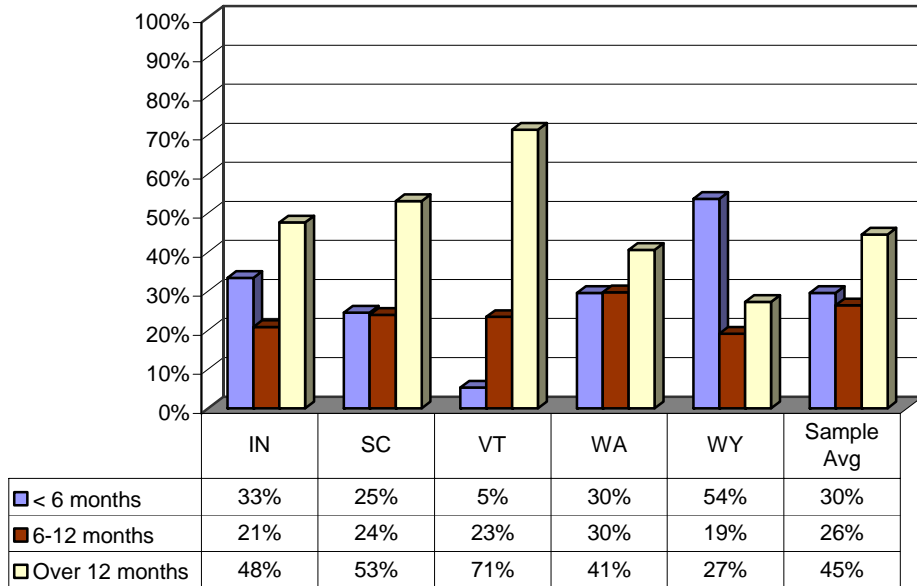
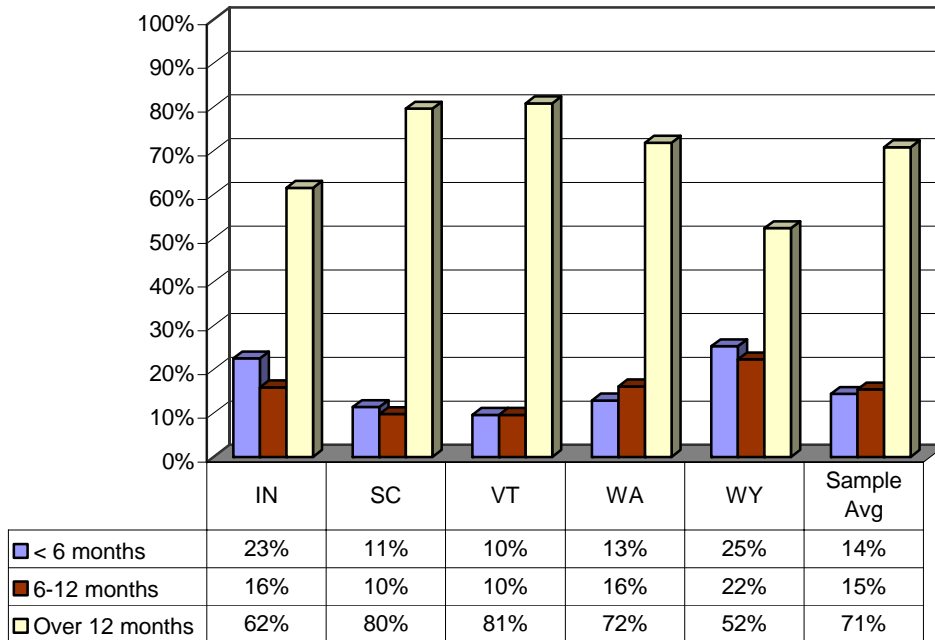


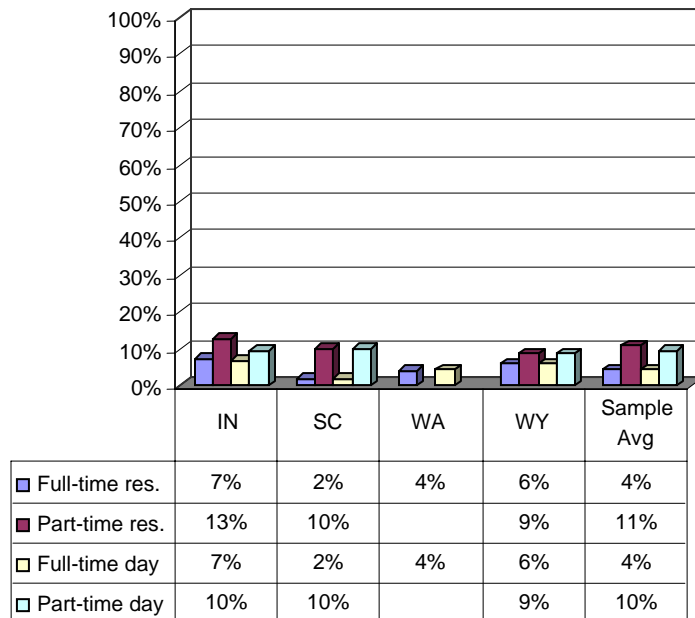
Figure 14. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2002)



## Vacancy Rates

Agencies reported the number of full-time direct support staff positions and part time direct support staff positions on their payroll as of June 2002. They also indicated the number of vacant full-time and part-time positions as of June 2002. Vacancy rates are computed by dividing the number of vacant positions by the total number of positions.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 15. Vacancy Rates (FY2002)



## Methods and Results: FY2003

The configuration of provider agencies represented varies by state. Basic profiles of the providers surveyed in each state are presented below.

### Alabama:

- 54% (23 out of 43) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 43 (range of 1 to 524) individuals in residential services, and an average of 81 (range of 1 to 458) individuals in day supports.
- 42% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 40 hours per week, and another 26% use 30 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 25, 32, 35, and 37.5 hours per week.

### Rhode Island:

<sup>2</sup> Washington State’s “full-time” figures include both full- and part-time employees.

- 94% (15 out of 16) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 76 (range of 15 to 172) individuals in residential services, and an average of 107 (range of 12 to 342) individuals in day supports.
- 38% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 35 hours per week, and another 31% use 30 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 24, 32, and 36 hours per week.

#### South Carolina:

- 95% (35 out of 37) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 146 (range of 29 to 378) individuals in day supports.
- 44% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 40 hours per week, and another 38% use 30 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 32, 33, and 37.5 hours per week.

#### Vermont:

- Only those agencies providing day supports were surveyed. A total of 15 day support providers are included in the results. Vermont did indicate that the day support data is underreported, as it only includes agency staff and NOT contracted and sub-contracted day support workers, of which there are many
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 108 (range of 1 to 187) individuals in day supports.
- Most agencies reporting (87%) define “full-time” as 35 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 30, and 37.5 hours per week.

#### Washington:

- 18% (46 out of 261) of agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- These agencies serve an average of 28 (range of 0 to 150) individuals in residential services, and an average of 57 (range of 1 to 455) individuals in day supports
- Most agencies reported data by full-time equivalent positions, which include both full-time and part-time workers.

#### Wyoming:

- 100% (10) of the agencies surveyed provide both residential and day services.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 48 (range of 6 to 111) individuals in residential services, and an average of 51 (range of 6 to 152) individuals in day supports.
- 30% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 40 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 30, 32, 35, and 36 hours per week.

## Turnover Rates

Figure 15. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2003)

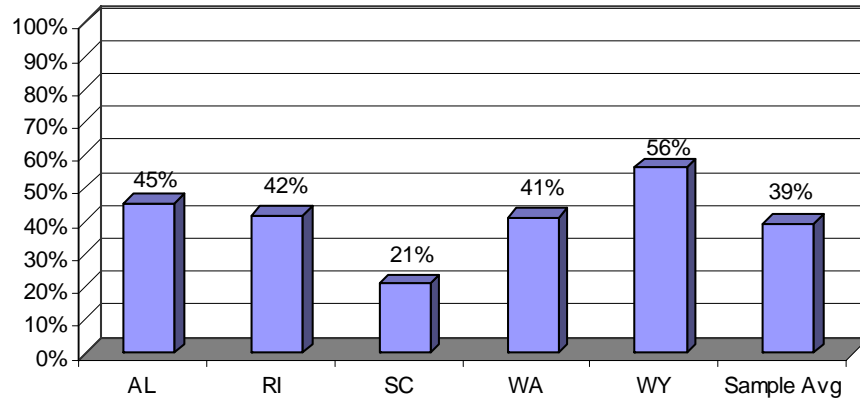
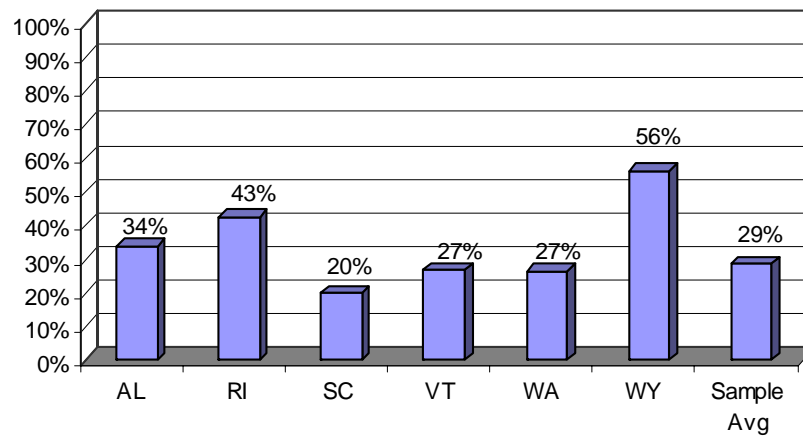


Figure 16. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2003)



## Length of Employment

Figure 17. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2003)

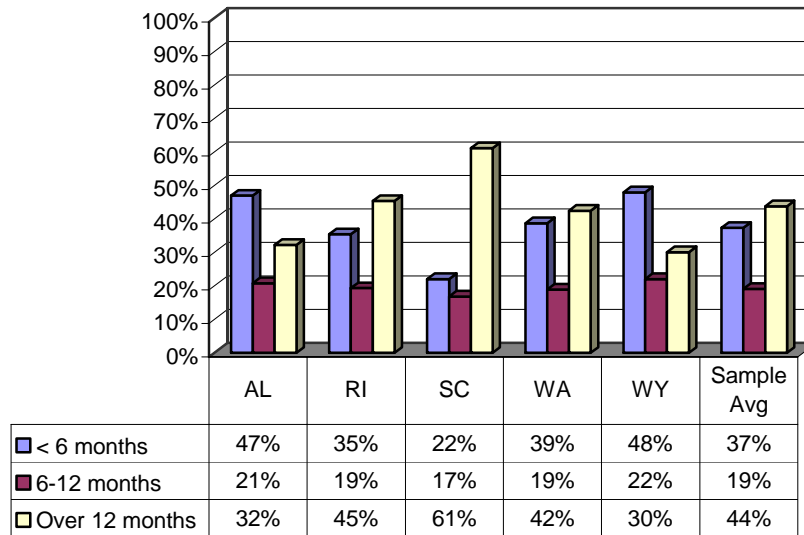


Figure 18. Length of Employment in of Current Staff in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2003)

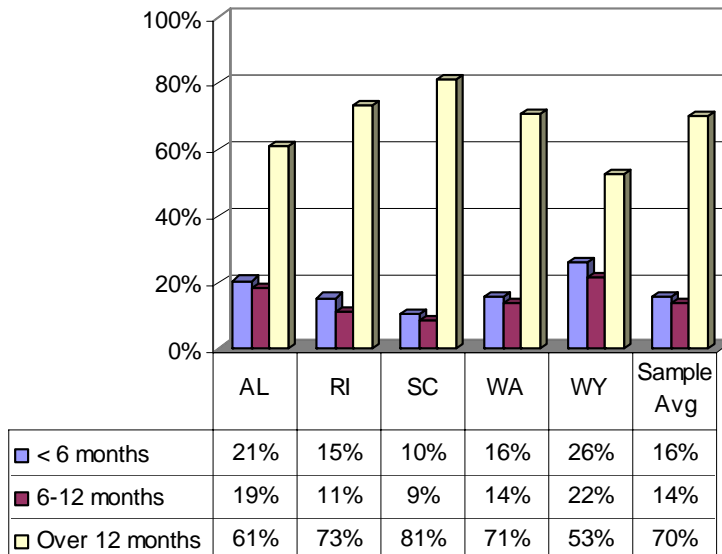


Figure 19. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2003)

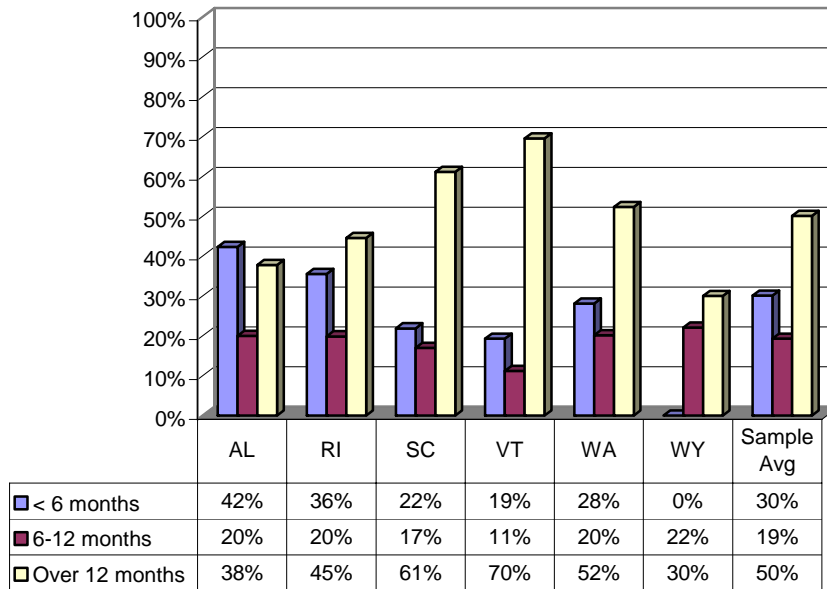
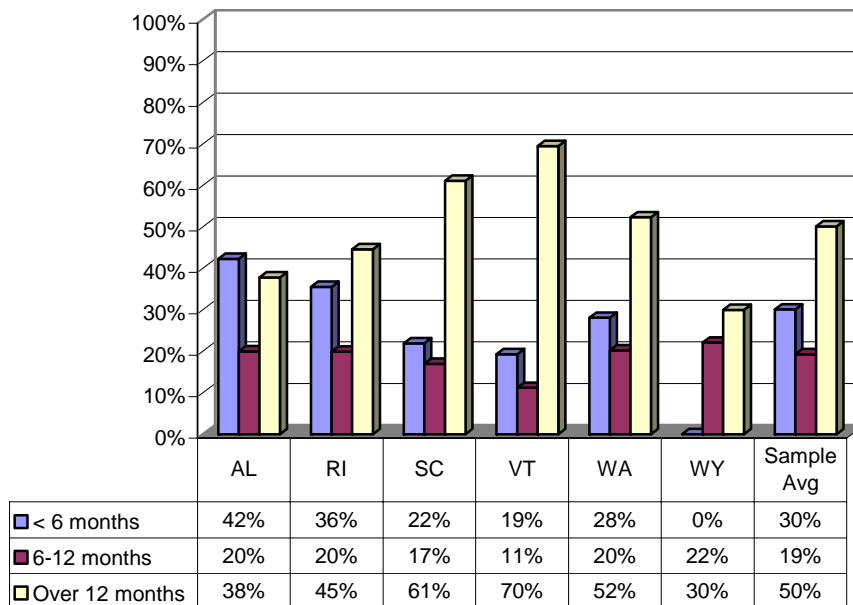
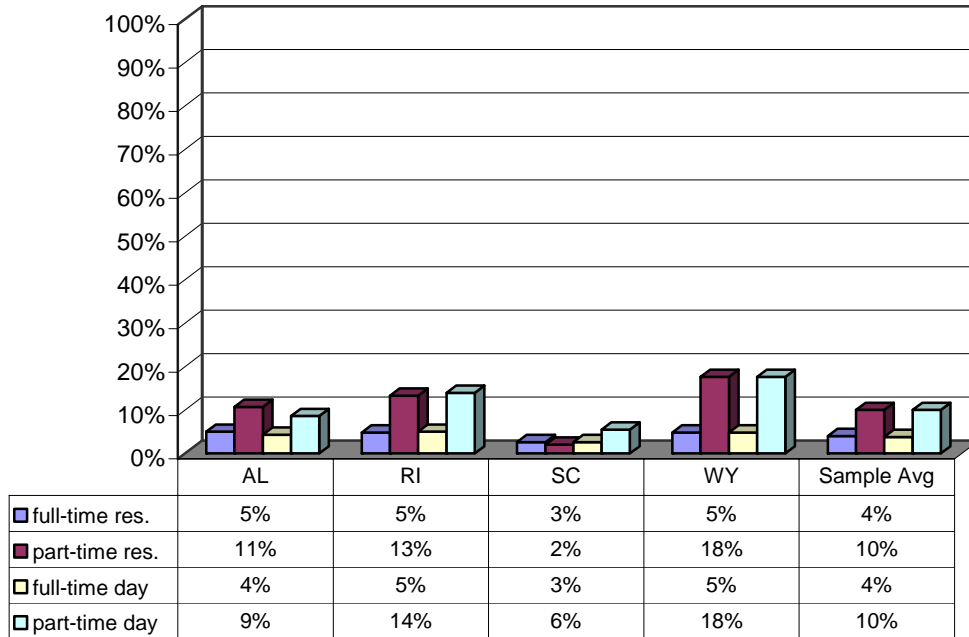


Figure 20. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2003)



## Vacancy Rates

Figure 21. Vacancy Rates (FY2003)



### Methods and Results: FY2004

The configuration of provider agencies represented varies by state. Basic profiles of the providers surveyed in each state are presented below.

#### South Carolina:

- 100% (36) of the agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 94 (range of 8 to 569) individuals in residential services, and an average of 164 (range of 0 to 677) individuals in day supports.
- 46% of agencies reporting define “full-time” as 30 hours per week, and another 38% use 40 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 32, 34 and 38 hours per week.

#### Vermont:

- 100% (16) of the agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports. Vermont did state that this data is an undercount as it does not include the majority of home support workers who are contracted.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 91 (range of 0 to 144) individuals in residential services, and an average of 97 (range of 6 to 201) individuals in day supports.

- Most agencies reporting (87%) define “full-time” as 35 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 30 and 38 hours per week.

Washington:

- 18% (48 of 263) of the agencies reporting provide both residential and day supports.
- These agencies serve an average of 23 (range of 0 to 124) individuals in residential services, and an average of 56 (range of 0 to 450) individuals in day supports
- Most agencies reported data by full-time equivalent positions, which include both full-time and part-time workers.

Wyoming:

- 100% (8) of the agencies surveyed provide both residential and day services.
- Agencies reporting serve an average of 70 (range of 25 to 108) individuals in residential services, and an average of 78 (range of 21 to 151) individuals in day supports.
- Most agencies reporting (56%) define “full-time” as 40 hours per week. Other definitions reported include: 32, 35, and 36 hours per week.

**Turnover Rates**

Figure 22. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2004)

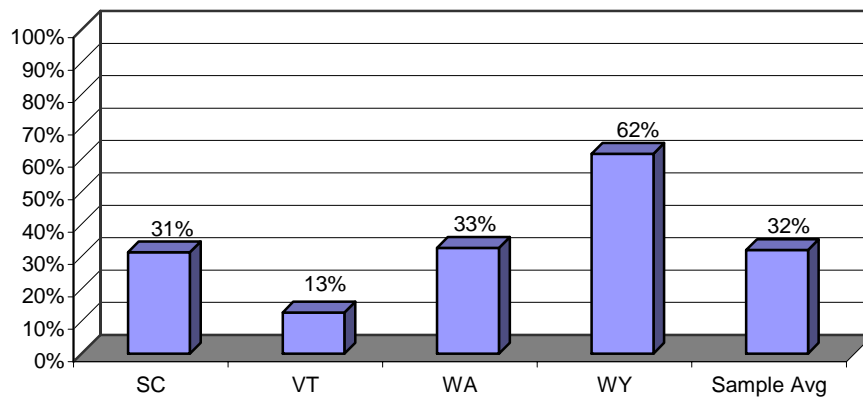
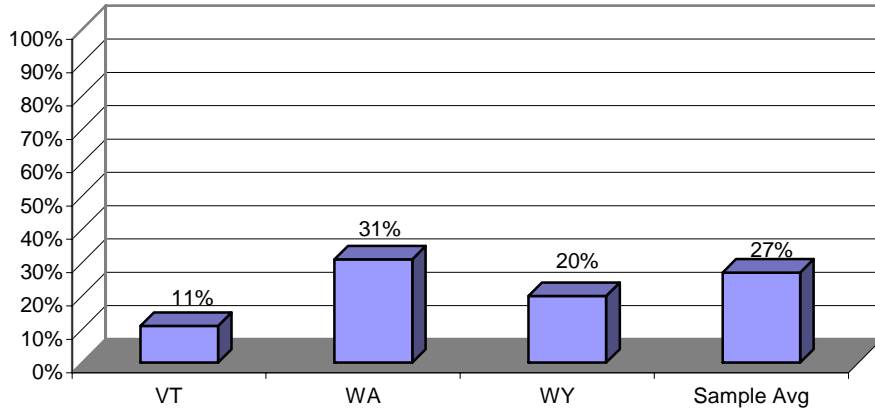


Figure 23. Turnover Rates in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2004)



### *Length of Employment*

Figure 24. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2004)

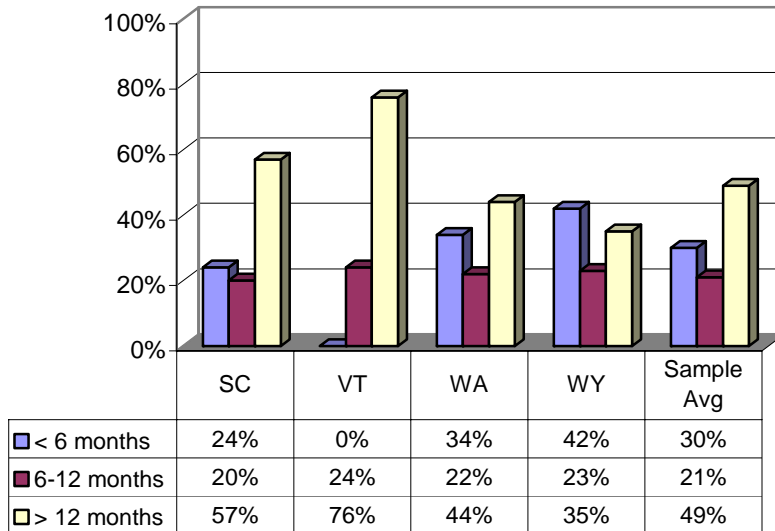


Figure 25. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Residential Supports (FY2004)

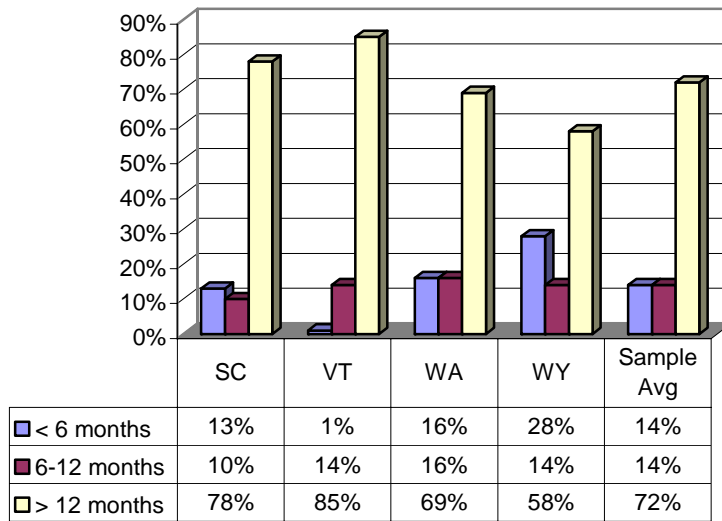


Figure 26. Length of Separated Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2004)

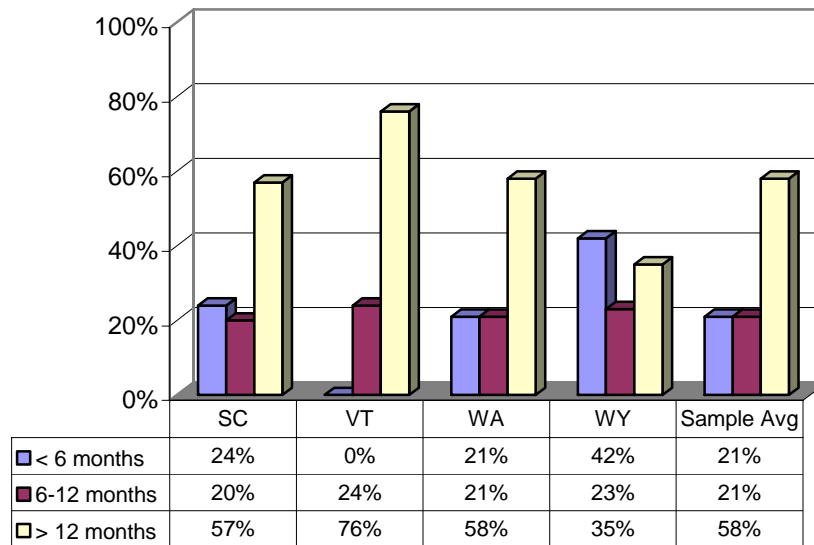
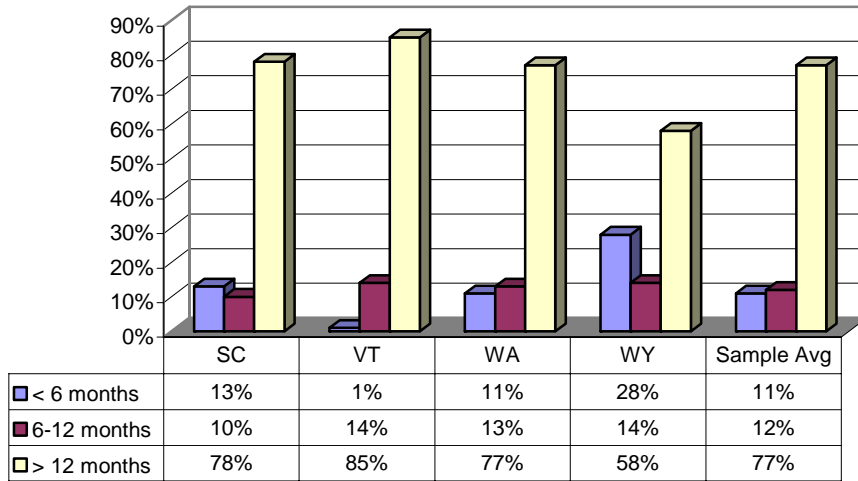
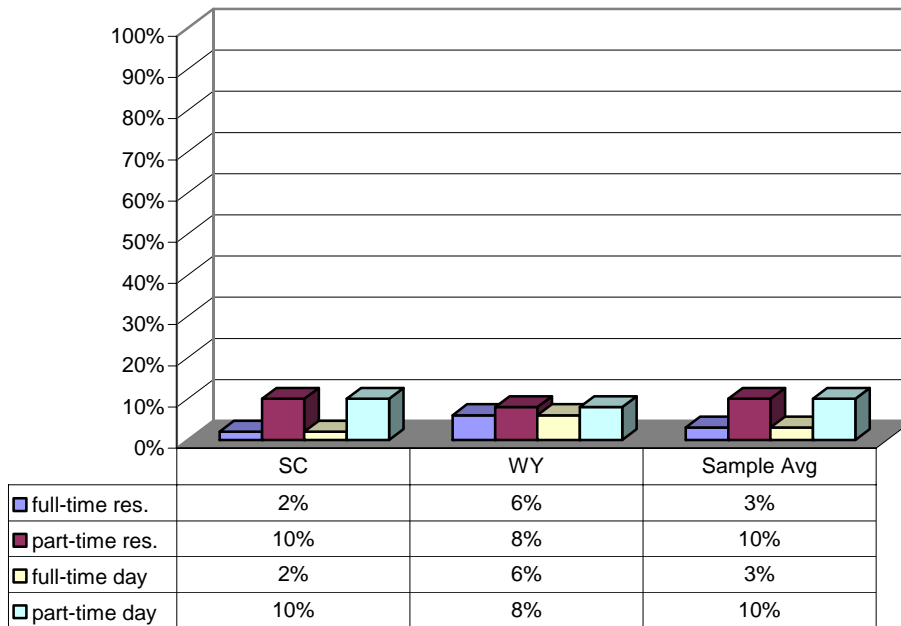


Figure 27. Length of Current Staff Employment in Agencies Providing Day Supports (FY2004)



## Vacancy Rates

Figure 28. Vacancy Rates (FY2004)



## Recommendations/Observations

Recruiting and retaining qualified support workers are critical concerns for providers and for state agencies that oversee the provision of services and supports to adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Trend data on indicators of staff turnover can provide valuable evidence for states seeking to build capacity of an increasingly difficult to find pool of competent direct support workers, through wage increases, certification programs, and other strategies. While these indicators do shed light on recent trends and state system performance, three caveats should be taken into consideration when reviewing the results in this report:

- First, the majority of providers who provided data for this report are from one state (WA). Therefore, the aggregated totals (or “sample averages”) are very similar in most categories to the WA totals.
- Second, from 2002-2004, there were only 4-6 states annually submitting data on these indicators, and the specific states were different from year to year, making it problematic to draw conclusions nationally and across time.
- Third, these figures only represent workers who are employed by provider agencies. They do not include workers who are directly hired or contracted by individuals and families, a trend that is becoming more and more common across the country.

Further discussion is needed at the next Steering Committee meeting to discuss recommendations for addressing the issues noted above, e.g., should we “weight” the overall averages, how can we make it easier for more states to participate and to do so regularly, and how can we best collect information about staffing issues from the perspectives of individuals and families who hire their own support workers.

With these caveats in mind, overall observations include:

- Since fiscal year 2001, there has been a decreasing trend in direct contact staff turnover in both residential and day providers.
- Turnover is lower in day support programs than in residential programs.
- Since fiscal year 2000, there has been a significant increase in current staff working with the provider for over a year, while during the same period, there has been a decrease in current staff working with the provider for less than 6 months.
- The majority of staff who left within the past year had been employed with that provider for over a year.
- Full-time vacancy rates are very similar for day and residential providers.
- Part-time position vacancies appear to be much higher than full-time position vacancies, for both residential and day support programs.

No current data were available on national surveys pertaining to staff turnover, length of employment, or vacancy rates. However, there is relevant state and local research that could

facilitate discussion in relation to the findings in this report. One example is a study conducted by the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities in conjunction with several other organizations and agencies. The 2-year intervention study that looked at, among other things, turnover rates of Direct Support Professionals. They found a decline in turnover rates similar to this report's findings. Improved retention was attributed to the following factors: 1) frontline managers and supervisors gaining the skills to provide adequate training to DSPs, 2) frontline managers and supervisors making system changes within their organizations, 3) DSP organizations being created that actively recruit DSPs to join, 4) a plan created to advocate for higher DSP pay and better benefits, and 5) a proclamation by the governor drawing attention to DSPs.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that similar efforts in other states have contributed to a reduction in turnover rates, however, general economic factors such trends in unemployment rates may also be related.

One of the most difficult aspects of collecting this type of data is ensuring consistency of information, not only across states but also across provider agencies. The NCI has worked hard to establish comparable definitions and measures for the purposes of benchmarking performance data and making cross-state comparisons. In order to improve the validity and reliability of the information obtained, it is recommended that an additional line of instructions be added to the survey tool itself, to ensure that providers completing the form verify total numbers of current staff prior to submitting the survey. Additionally, it is also recommended to discuss using different tools to collect this information (i.e. – on-line surveys) in order to ensure consistency.

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<sup>3</sup> *Final Report - Kansans Mobilizing for Direct Support Workforce Change: A Statewide Workforce Development Initiative to Resolve the Direct Support Workforce Crisis*, available at: <http://rtc.umn.edu/main>