

Workplace Climate &  
Performance and Quality Improvement  
In Maine Child Welfare

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## Abstract

There is increasing evidence that workplace climate is connected to such factors as continuous quality improvement, good supervision for frontline staff, opportunities for staff to have input into policies and procedures, a strong evaluation process, and a strong and effective system of communication with a vibrant team building initiative, among other things.

In 2007, the Maine Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Division of Child Welfare, established a system of Performance and Quality Improvement Committees (PQI) to address issues of continuous quality improvement and to give workers at all levels an opportunity to have their voices heard. Also in 2007 supervisors began reviewing cases for quality purposes, augmenting the established review process with staff receiving feedback about specific issues.

In November 2007 and again in July 2008, staff members at all levels were surveyed regarding perceptions and beliefs surrounding the PQI Committee process. PQI Committee meetings in each district were also observed to gain information on how the PQI Committee process was working for each district. The data from these surveys and the report of the PQI Committee visits are contained in this paper.

Observation of the various PQI Committees found wide differences in their stages of development. There were also differences among the Districts as to staff attitudes about the PQI Committee Process. In general, many of the survey respondents remained neutral regarding the process, with caseworkers being more neutral (having a lower approval composite rating) than supervisors. Caseworkers were far less positive about the process than supervisors. The Central Office District (District 9) responses had the highest approval composite rating. Some districts varied in their responses between the first and second surveys, either more positively or more negatively. Staff was generally positive about the implementation of the PQI Committee Process in each district, but did not believe that the process would necessarily lead to greater staff recruitment and retention, to positive change, to better decision-making, or to important changes in the workplace.

Observations of the PQI Committees in each district revealed additional issues. Some staff was resentful of the time required to be part of a PQI Committee, or the manner that people were chosen for the committees. Also, staff expressed beliefs that the PQI Committees lacked authority or the support of district supervisory staff. Some staff also had unclear expectations of how the PQI Committee could affect office issues, or how the basic premise of PQI was supposed to work (the continuous feedback loop). Mostly, staff reserved judgment about PQI, however, expressed skepticism about its effectiveness, after not seeing results or responses to suggestions in a timely manner.

## Introduction

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Division of Child Welfare decided in 2007 to implement the PQI Committee Process in all of the District offices throughout the state, including Central Office administration. The concept of PQI (Performance and Quality Improvement) is from the work of Dr. Fotena Zirps, and has been instrumental in developing quality child welfare agencies throughout the country. This concept is a key component of accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA), an accrediting body for child welfare organizations, both public and private. When OCFS - Child Welfare commenced the accreditation process through COA, program improvements to improve performance on the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in Maine were also being implemented simultaneously.

After considerable time and effort at all levels of DHHS, the COA accreditation project was discontinued in March 2008 to concentrate staff efforts on the upcoming Federal review. By the time the decision was made to discontinue the COA accreditation process, PQI Committees were already established and operating in all Districts. Like many of the changes made in policy and practice during this time, PQI Committees were implemented to meet COA standards. However, OCFS management made the decision to continue with the PQI Committee Process despite withdrawing from the accreditation process.

Research conducted by the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) in 2007 and 2008 was initiated to determine the level of workforce commitment to the PQI Committee Process, how effective staff believed the PQI Committee Process would be in solving issues and improving workplace climate, and whether the process would impact workforce recruitment and retention efforts by the Department.

## Literature Review

A review of pertinent literature reveals a considerable body of work about workplace climate. Workplace climate and culture are not the same, but both significantly impact work attitudes (Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006). Workplace climate is the psychological impact of the work environment on the individual worker (Yoo & Brooks, 2005), whereas workplace culture is the organization's behavioral expectations of employees and the way things are done (Glisson, Dukes, & Green, 2006; Glisson & James, 1992). Organizational culture is more difficult and slower to change than organizational climate (Hemmelgarn, Glisson, & James, 2006; Glisson, Dukes, & Green, 2006). Workplace climate is closely related to job satisfaction among staff, particularly in public children's service organizations (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998). Glisson, Dukes, & Green (2006) found that, "Culture and climate affect employee turnover, service provider attitudes toward their work, service quality, and service outcomes." (p. 856). Likewise, if an organization does not have a supportive culture this negatively affects not only job satisfaction, but also individual well being, organizational commitment, and often results in staff intending to leave (MorBarak, Levin, & Lane, 2006). As stated by Ellett (2000), "There is a significant positive relationship between caseworkers' intent to remain on the job and the organizational culture..." (as found in Bernotavicz & Dickinson, 2007, p. 8).

Ellet conversely notes that positive organizational culture increases the likelihood of retaining skilled workers. Alwon & Reitz (2005) also note the relationship of organizational culture and staff recruitment.

“...agencies that create positive, productive working environments develop reputations that greatly enhance their ability to recruit new employees.” (Alwon & Reitz, 2005, p. 2)

Workplace climate is connected to several factors found in vital and successful

“(Workplace) climate plays a particularly important role in the performance of public service organizations.” (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998, p. 404)

organizations, including: continuous workplace improvements (quality improvement), developing a learning organization, strong supervisory and leadership skills, strong communication and team building skills, allowing a larger range of work responsibilities for staff, and a strong evaluation process. Some of the effects of a good workplace environment include a high retention rate among staff, a committed workforce, better quality, and positive outcomes for children and families. Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) found that organizational climate has a positive effect on both process and results. However, Morbarak et al (2006) in their research noted that a non-supportive climate negatively effects individual well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, resulting in staff intending to leave.

“(Workplace) climate plays a particularly important role in the performance of public service organizations.” (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998, p. 404)

Glisson & Hemmelgarn (1998) found that creating a positive climate could be more effective in providing successful services to clients than focusing on increasing the actual services. This effect of positive climate on successful outcomes for clients is also echoed by Strolin, McCarthy, Lawson, Smith, Caringi & Bronstein (no date).

“...organizational climate predicts quality practice.” (Strolin et al, p.16)

In developing the concept of continuous quality improvement, Dr. Fotena Zirps (2003) noted that organizations need to develop more than just the quality assurance that most

Quality Improvement should be part of everyone’s job description. (Zirps, 2003)

agencies incorporate as part of their organizational culture. According to Dr. Zirps (2003), quality improvement involves, “actions taken that lead to incremental improvements in the provision of services... These actions are usually conceptualized and implemented by staff.” Dr. Zirps considers some of the prerequisites of good quality as being: full inclusion of the client, partnering with the client, obtaining client input and feedback, recognizing client strengths, and providing appropriate services that can lead to good outcomes for clients. Dr. Zirps believes that quality improvement includes looking at processes and programs and removing barriers to doing the work, and making ongoing small improvements (continuous quality improvement). Dr. Zirps challenges child welfare staff with the question:

“Are your agency’s services good enough for your own family?”  
(Zirps, 2003, p.10)

Through the PQI process, Dr. Zirps envisions that healthy organizational change will occur. Cahill, Landsbergis & Schnall (1995) felt that healthy organizational change can include: increasing employees’ autonomy and control, increasing skill levels of employees, providing a reasonable level of job demands, improving personal coping skills of employees, and making sure that implemented changes do no harm (with special consideration to any unintended consequences).

Support for a PQI process also is found in the research of Robison (2006) who felt that, “Routinely collecting information from frontline staff and supervisors helps administrators monitor the work environment and worker satisfaction, identify factors that contribute to staff turnover, and pinpoint problem units or supervisors.” (p. 5). By collecting this data, Robison further felt that staff and management would become partners and teammates working toward the same results. In addition, removing barriers between direct service staff and management can help strengthen the agency and improve outcomes for children and families.

Another factor influenced by workplace climate is whether an organization is creating an opportunity for its employees to learn. Austin and Hopkins (2004) found that if

“Successful organizations ...routinely create new knowledge, disperse it throughout the organization, and incorporate it in new practices and services.”  
(Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p.4)

organizations create a learning culture, they would be more successful. They envisioned an organization where “daily activities are viewed as learning and growth opportunities for continued improvement.” (p.4). The authors felt that a learning culture could be created even though sharing information might not be fully collaborative. Learning organizations would be proficient at gathering knowledge and then disseminating it to their workforce to modify practice. In her chapter on promoting a learning culture,” (Rodriquez in Austin &

Hopkins, 2004) advances the idea that leadership plays a key role in enabling the employee and in promoting the learning culture. Leadership develops a shared vision that influences systems thinking by creating mental models leading to personal mastery through team learning.

Yoo & Brooks (2005) found that management has a responsibility to create and maintain a good working environment, as they set the tone for the workplace. By setting

a positive tone, management is helping to meet the goal of providing effective services, which is the ultimate purpose of good management practice. Aarons and Sawitzky (2006) also found that effective leadership can play a key role in the success of any climate/cultural change initiatives.

Poor workplace climate can also be affected by organizational constraints (Wagner, van Reyk, Spence, 2001), but this can be balanced by strong team identification, and skill variety and role ambiguity (Glisson & Durick, 1998). Workplace stress can be relieved by reducing unhealthy stressors, by giving employees a sense of control and connectedness where they have a sense of support and security, where they are challenged and motivated, and where they can work at a reasonable pace (Cahill et al, 1995). Job autonomy builds trust with employees (Levin, 2005), and therefore can also affect workplace climate (Stalker et al, 2007). Excessive policy changes and paperwork can be sources of job dissatisfaction. Higher levels of self-efficacy equal higher levels of innovation and skill relating to positive change (Yoo, Brooks, Patti, 2007).

“People who are satisfied with their jobs perform better and stay longer.” (Krueger, 1996, p. 27)

The evaluation process can also be related to workplace climate. Bernotavicz and Dickinson (2007) in their training curriculum encourage supervisors to use the 360 degree evaluation approach, meaning ask everyone involved for their feedback, including service providers and clients. This is also supported by Latting and Becky, who encourage an after action review: to help staff learn from the experience. If an action is unsuccessful, staff should immediately issue an apology to those impacted. Lawson (2006) encourages the use of the no-blame approach, which is strengths-based, solution-focused, and visionary toward higher ideals and better practices. This in turn builds relationships. Glisson, Dukes, Green (2006) utilize the ARC system: Availability, Responsiveness, and Continuity. The three stages of the ARC strategy include supporting organizational leadership, building teamwork, and using continuous quality improvement to create innovation. ARC’s principles are that it is mission driven, results oriented, improvement directed, relationship centered, and participation based.

Extensive recent research also exists for comparing outcomes for children and families

“...positive climates reflect work environments that complement and encourage the type of activities that lead to success.” (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998, p. 416)

and workplace climate in agencies. According to Glisson & Hemmelgarn (1998) agencies that serve children are more likely to see improved psychosocial functioning in their clients, more continuity of services, and more effective services if the organization has a positive work climate. The authors also noted, “...the effectiveness of services depends heavily on the relationships formed between service providers and the people who receive the services...” (p. 404). The authors outline the connection to better services as follows:

“Successful outcomes require caseworkers to be responsive to unexpected problems and individualized needs, tenacious in navigating the complex bureaucratic maze of state and

federal regulations, and able to form personal relationships that win trust and confidence of a variety of children and families...caseworkers must be viewed by the children and families they serve as both responsive and available...This requires that caseworkers react in a timely and supportive manner to what these children say and do, and that their interactions with children and families be ... predictable, appropriate, and welcomed over an extended period of time to establish a pattern on which the children and families can depend and anticipate. This is most likely to occur when caseworkers agree on their roles, are satisfied with their jobs, cooperate with each other, and personalize their work.” (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, p. 404).

Glisson and Hemmelgarn also found whether caseworkers can improve children's psychosocial functioning depends on whether they can respond effectively to each child's unique needs, to unexpected problems and their ability to navigate occupational “hurdles to achieve the best placement and services for each child.” (p. 416). The authors go on to state that this is not just about creating better services, because better services do not necessarily mean more positive outcomes for each child and an increase in the child's level of functioning. Increasing services and providing successful services is not the same thing. Furthermore, the authors found that children's functioning did not necessarily improve from the quality of services provided, but did improve significantly for children served by offices with more positive work climates.

In their 2005 article, *Empty Chairs*, Alwon and Reitz discuss the five inter-related themes present in child welfare that, if implemented, would result in higher retention of caseworkers. First, employees must be connected and committed to the unifying mission of the organization, and employers must capture the hearts of their staff so they view work as more than just a job. In order to accomplish this, the vision and mission statements must be compelling and focused, consistently communicated, guide all policy and decisions, and performance that exemplifies the mission should be celebrated on all levels. Second, open and honest two-way communication needs to exist, where agencies don't just listen, but act as well. Third, the organization needs to emphasize relationships and teamwork by eliminating unnecessary layers of management and committing the agency to the inverted pyramid, where supervisors and managers serve frontline workers. Fourth, there should be a strong emphasis on learning, innovation, and development, where time and money are committed to the increased education of staff. Fifth, employees should be free to make decisions and take action without bureaucratic intervention. Employees should be trusted to act. These are factors that not only contribute to workforce retention but to workplace climate as well.

In an effort to positively influence workplace climate and give workers a stronger voice in decision making within the agency, PQI Committees were initiated to provide a mechanism to achieve these goals. The research on the effectiveness of the PQI Committees in the various districts in Maine and the beliefs of the workers are the content of this report.

## Research Methodology

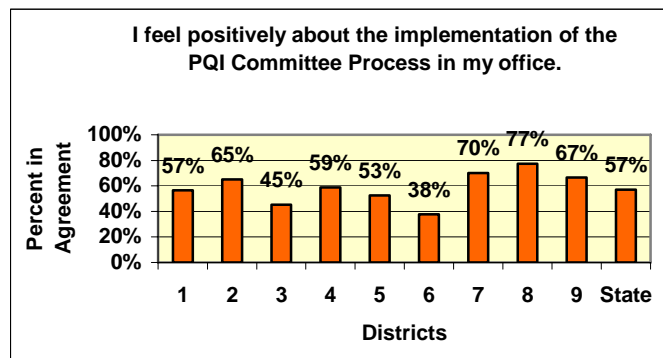
In November 2007, a survey was sent to all District and Central Office staff through e-mail using the Survey Monkey program. The purpose of the survey was to gain information about staff knowledge and perceptions regarding the Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) Committees that were being established in the districts. All levels of staff were surveyed including administrative (clerical) staff and management. Demographic questions were structured so that staff responses could remain as anonymous as possible. The survey questions are included as Appendix A.

This survey was then repeated in July 2008, again through the Survey Monkey program to determine any shift in opinion regarding the PQI Committee Process since its implementation.

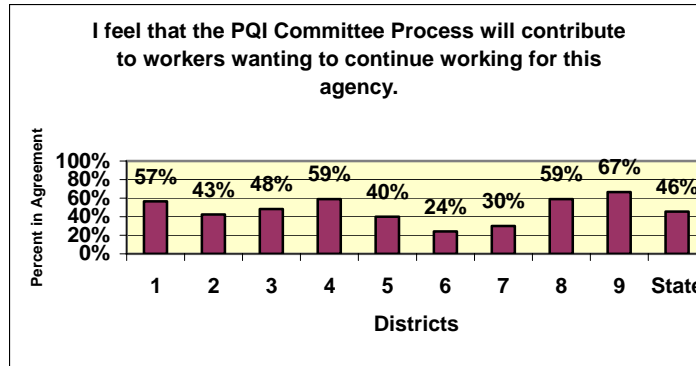
### Findings - Survey 1

The survey results were then tabulated through the Survey Monkey program. For the first survey, a total of 259 staff members started the survey and 84.6% of those completed the entire survey. The majority of those who responded were caseworkers (53.7%) with four or more years of experience in Child Welfare (74.7%). All district offices were represented with the largest number of responses coming from the Portland office (15.7%), followed by Bangor (14.5%), Augusta (13.7%), Lewiston (12.5%), and Central Office (11.0%). Over one half (52.8%) of those who responded hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than social work.

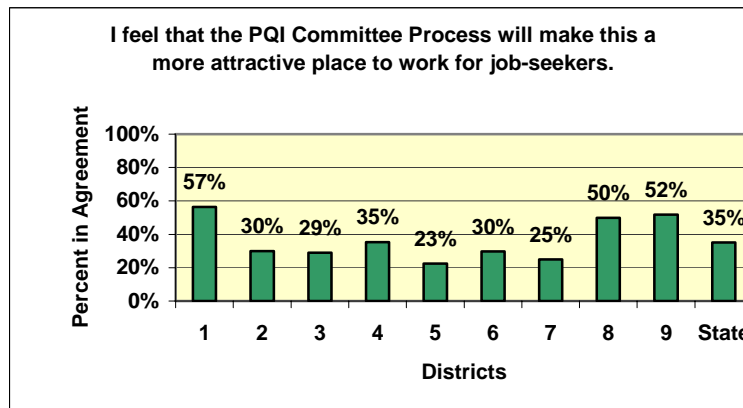
The majority of respondents (59.2%) feel positively about the implementation of the PQI Committee Process in their offices, with 28.4% remaining "Neutral" on the issue.



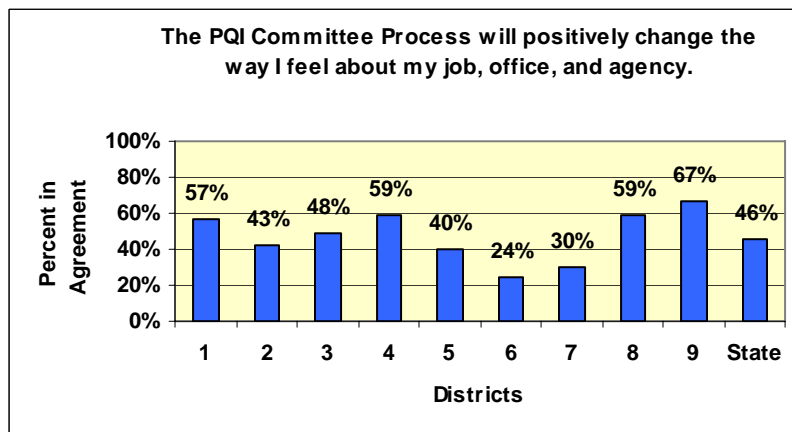
Regarding their attitudes toward the PQI Committee Process and its effectiveness, 96 respondents (39.2%) "Agree" that the process would contribute to workers wanting to continue working for the agency. However, 65 (26.5%) of the respondents were "Neutral."



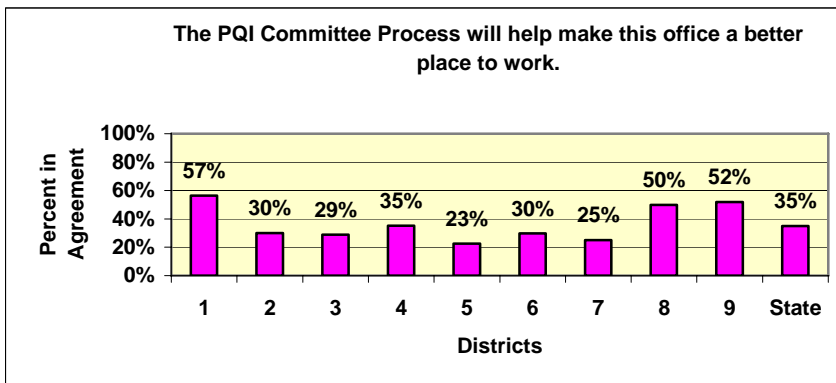
Thirty-two percent (78) of respondents felt that the PQI Committee Process made the agency a more attractive place to work for job-seekers, but 84 (34.4%) were “Neutral.”



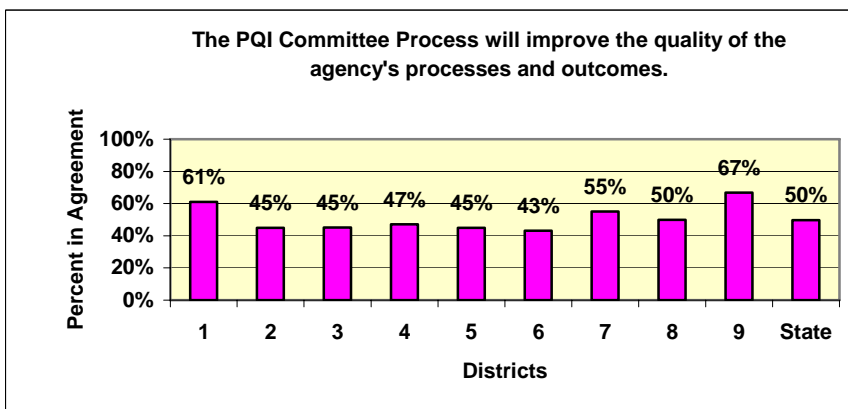
Ninety (36.7%) respondents were also “Neutral” about whether the PQI Committee Process will positively change how they feel about their jobs and the agency, while 67 (27.3%) respondents “Agree” that it will be a positive change.



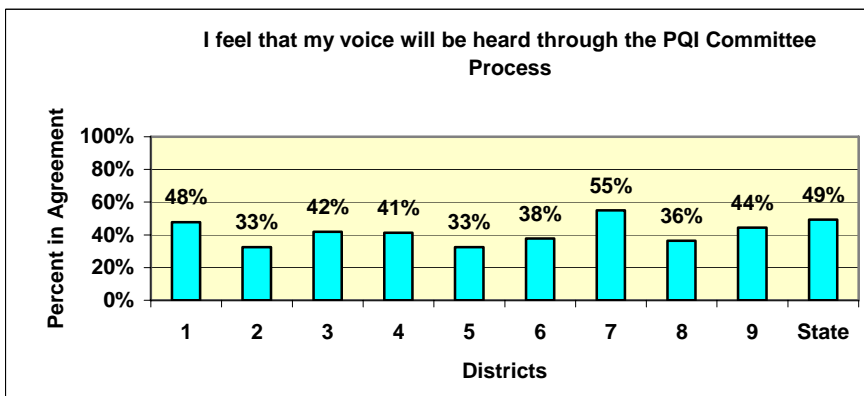
Eighty-three (34.6%) respondents “Agree” that the PQI Committee Process will make the office a better place to work, and 73 respondents (30.4%) were “Neutral.”



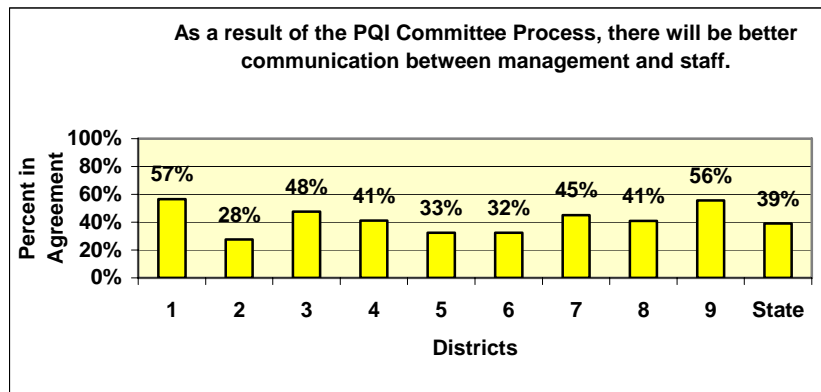
Ninety-seven (40.4%) respondents “Agree” that PQI Committees will improve the quality of the work with the agency, and 61 respondents were “Neutral.”



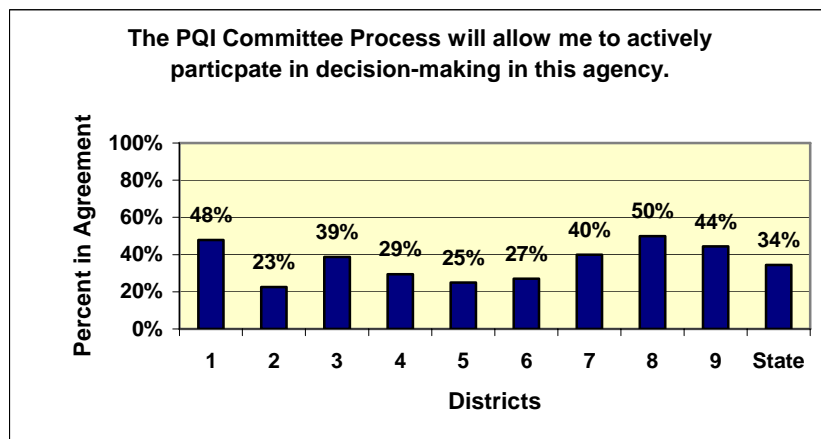
In regard to whether respondents thought their voices would be heard through the process, 81 (34.0%) “Agree” and 63 (26.5%) were “Neutral.”



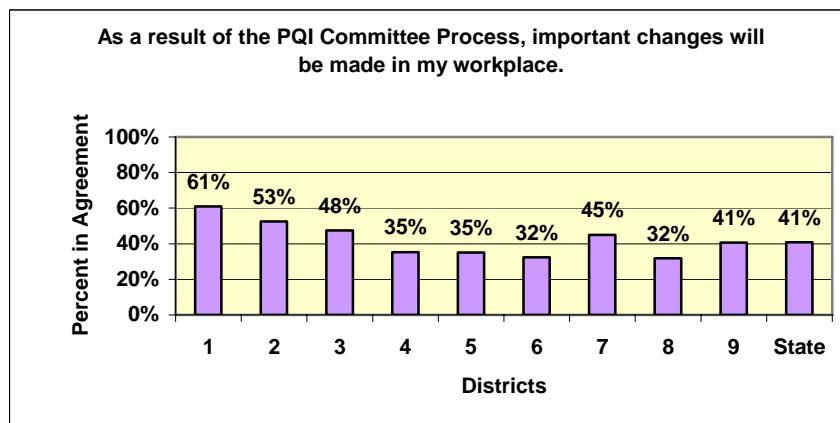
However, when considering communication between staff and management, 75 (31.5%) respondents “Agree” it will be better, while 54 (22.7%) were “Neutral.”



Seventy-five respondents (31.6%) “Agree” that they will be more active in the **decision-making process** with PQI Committees, and 61 (25.7%) respondents were “Neutral.”

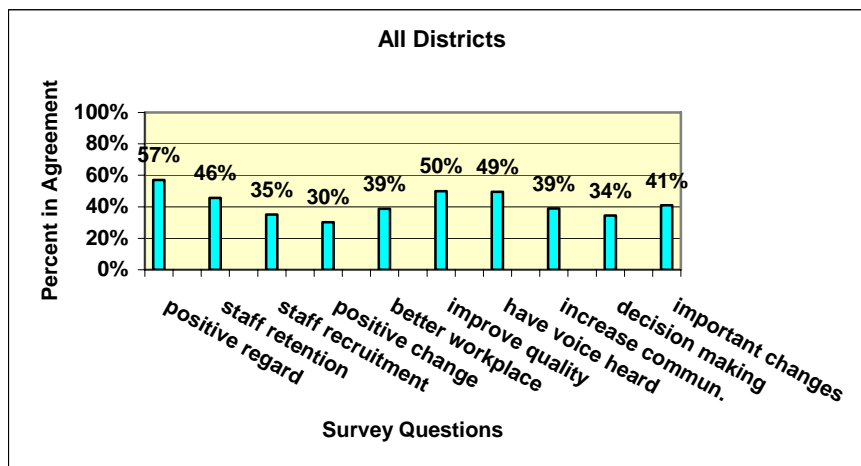


Ninety-two respondents (38.7%) “Agree” that the PQI Committee Process will create **important changes in** the workplace, and 65 respondents (27.3%) were “Neutral.”



## Summary of Survey 1

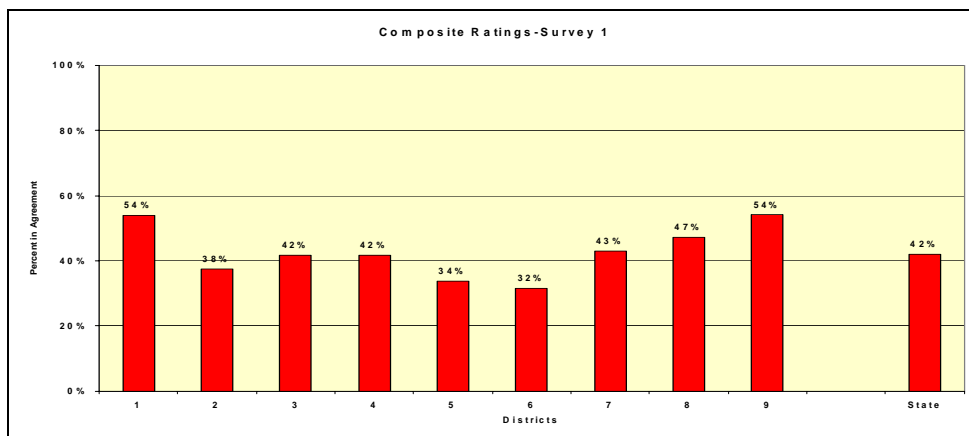
In general, the responses to the PQI Survey, which account for nearly 50% of the staff polled, indicate a positive regard for the PQI Committee Process, but also high responses to the “Neutral” categories for many items queried. Results were very similar across all Districts, with results being more positive in Districts with established PQI Committees. Level of education and length of time with the Department did not seem to affect the responses.



In analyzing these responses, it becomes clear that only 25% or less (“Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” combined) of those who responded feel negatively about the PQI Committee Process. Approximately 10-15% of respondents typically answered, “Don’t Know/Decline to Answer” to most questions, with another 20% skipping questions. For most questions, those choosing to answer “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” comprise a plurality (if not a majority) of the responses.

Only the question about whether the PQI Committee Process would positively change the way respondents feel about their job and agency had its largest percentage answer as “Neutral,” rather than expressing either positive or negative sentiments. The largest number of positive responses was regarding the broad question on feeling positively about the implementation of the PQI Committee Process, and the question on whether the process would improve the quality of the agency’s outcomes. The strongest negative responses came on the questions asking whether there would be better communication, and whether PQI would allow for more participation in decision-making with 23.1% and 24.5% combined “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses to those questions respectively.

A composite rating score was given to each district, and to caseworkers and supervisors as a group based on an average percentage of positive responses to the 10 questions in the survey. Overall, the score for all the responses to the survey was a 42% positive response rate. Those districts scoring over 50% for their composite rating were Districts 1 (53.92%) and 9 (54.08%). Supervisors also scored over 50% with a 54.16% positive composite rating score.



For results by Districts, see Appendix B.

### Summary of PQI Committee Site Visits

By the end of 2007, several PQI committees in the local district offices were up and running. The following summaries of the meetings are based on observations of these meetings, communications with the PQI specialists for each district, and from written materials provided. In 2007, five PQI Committee meetings for the following districts were observed: District IV (Rockland), District I (Biddeford), District II (Portland), District VII (Machias), and District V (Augusta). The remaining districts' PQI Committee meetings were observed in 2008, since some districts had difficulty scheduling their meetings and/or postponed the start of PQI Committees in their districts. Due to other commitments, conflicting schedules, and poor weather conditions, no meetings were observed in January or February. District VI (Bangor), District III (Lewiston), and District V (Skowhegan) were all observed in March. Committees meetings in District IX (Central Office) and District VIII (Caribou) were observed in April and May respectively.

Committees were observed and assessed in several areas: Strengths, challenges, current stage of group development, any evidence of preparation time prior to meeting, support/training needs identified, ground rules and norms of the group that were evident, accountability for assigned tasks, and the coordinator's role. For the stage of group development, Tuchman's stages of group development (1965) were used to assess each district since this model offers that clearest and simplest explanation of group development.

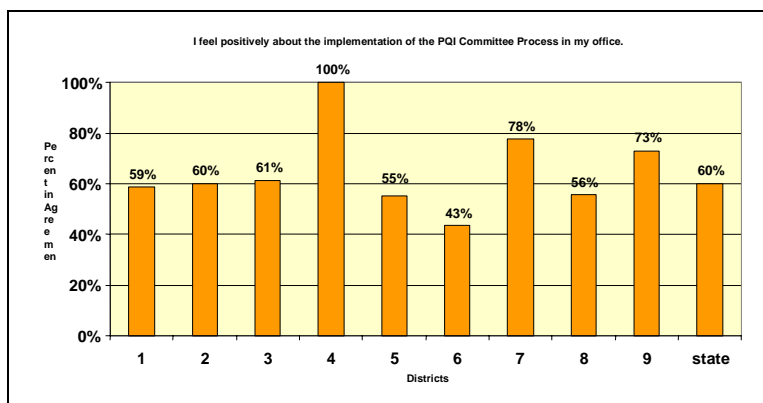
Overall, the various PQI Committees throughout the state are well on their way to becoming viable entities, up and running, producing results, and seen as a vehicle for improvement in the districts. Most people involved in the process throughout the state appeared to be very committed to it and, for the most part, enjoyed the support of management in the local districts. While each district had struggles with various issues involving PQI, most districts had similar issues: How are members of the committee be held accountable so that the committee can continue to function in a productive manner; how can the committee be representative of all staff; how do larger, more systemic issues

get handled; how do members stay in their committee roles for the meetings, but then resume regular work roles at the meetings' conclusion; how do members leaving the committee get replaced? Presumably, these finer points of how PQI Committee meetings are best run will get developed and further refined in the future, as the Committees mature and grow through the successive stages of development. Although each committee seems reflective of the culture of its District, each committee is also similar to its counterpart committees throughout the state. All committees struggle with many of the same problems: member attendance and commitment, agenda development and buy-in, and follow through with assigned tasks on all levels. The larger issues may take longer to change, but now the districts have a mechanism for doing so in the PQI District Committees.

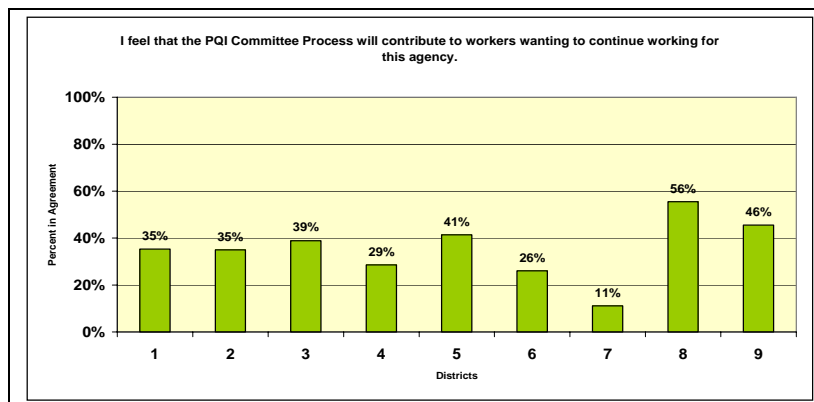
### Findings – July 2008 Survey

In July 2008, the survey was re-administered through the Survey Monkey program. For this second survey a total of 145 people responded, with 93.7% of those responding completing the multiple-choice part of the survey. Respondents included representatives from each of the professional groups and from all districts. Of those responding, 59.3% were caseworkers, with 16% (23) of respondents coming from Districts 5 (Augusta) and 6 (Bangor) each, and from District 2 (Portland) with 14.6% (21). Eighty per cent of the respondents had worked for the Department for more than four years with 49.7% of respondents holding a bachelor's degree in an area other than social work.

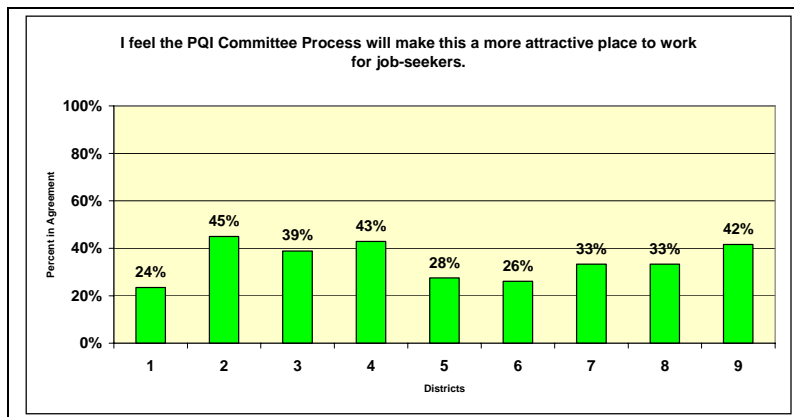
In response to the question, "I feel positively about the implementation of the PQI Committee Process in my office," a majority of respondents (59.9%, 85) agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Of the responses, only 28.9% were "Neutral," and a combined 6.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Seven per cent answered "Don't know/Decline to Answer." Three respondents skipped the question.



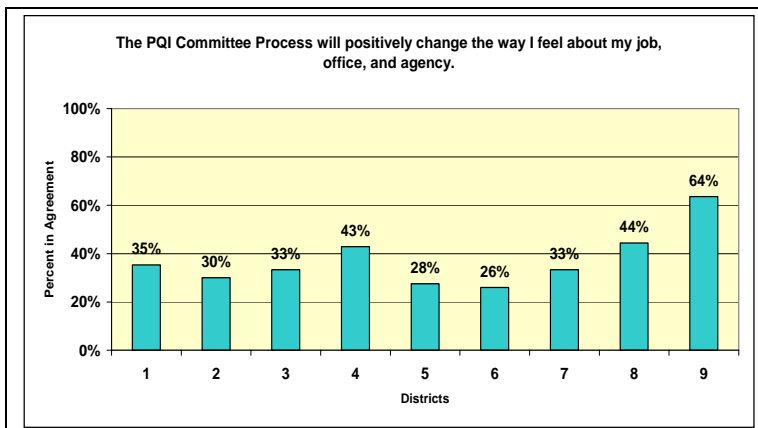
In answer to the retention question, "I feel the PQI Committee Process will contribute to workers wanting to continue working for this agency," 35.9% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 38% were neutral, and a combined 18.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven people answered don't know/decline to answer, and three people skipped the question.



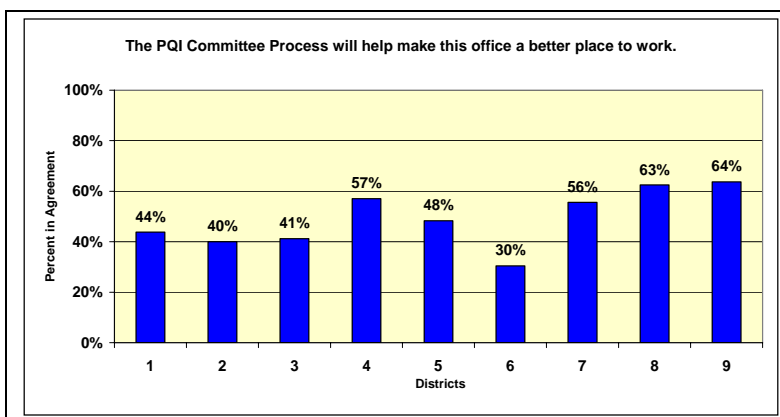
The next question, the recruitment question, “I feel that the PQI Committee Process will make this a more attractive place to work for job-seekers,” 33.6% agreed or strongly agreed, 37.8% were neutral, and 21.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Ten people (7%) answered don’t know/decline to answer, while two people skipped the question.



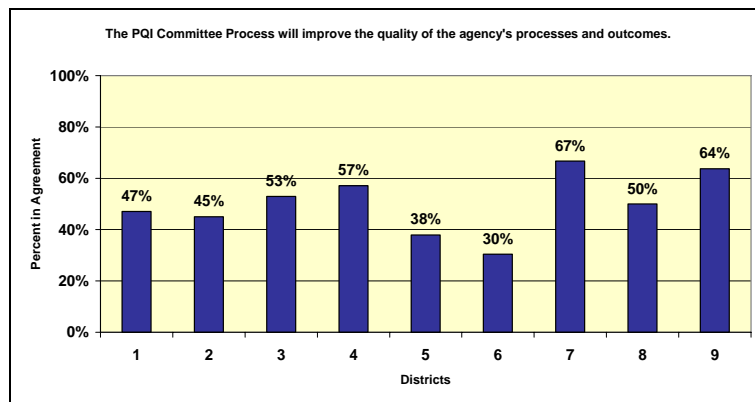
In answer to the question about positive change, 34.5% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, 34.5% were neutral, and a total of 23.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven people (7.7%) didn’t know/declined to answer and three people skipped the question.



A total of 45.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The PQI Committee Process will help make this office a better place to work.” Those giving a neutral response were 33.3% of the total, and those disagreeing or strongly disagreeing were a total of 13%. Eleven people (8%) answered don’t know/decline to answer and seven people skipped the question.

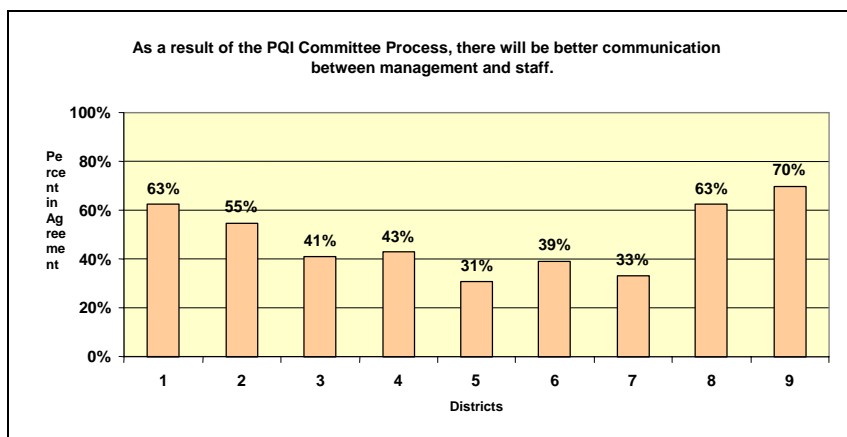


The next statement (“The PQI Committee Process will improve the quality of the agency’s processes and outcomes.”), 46.7% either agree or strongly agreed with the statement, while 32.4% were neutral, and a total of 13% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven people (7.9%) answered don’t know/decline to answer, and six people skipped the question.

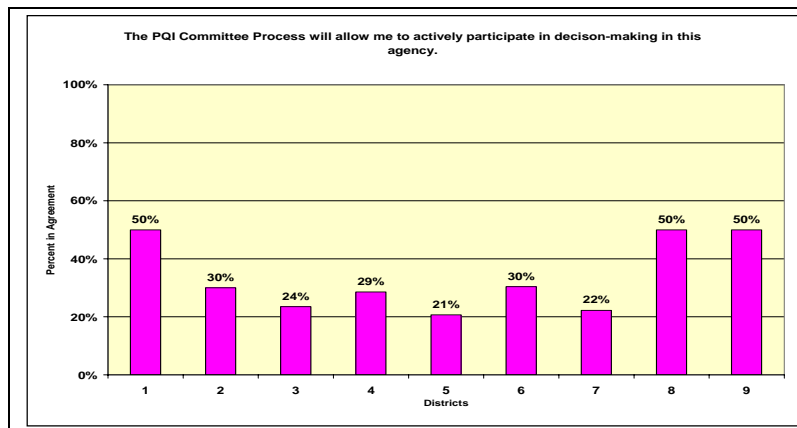


The most positive response came to the statement, “I feel that my voice will be heard through the PQI Committee Process.” A combined total of 47.5% either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, while 32.4% were neutral, and a total of 10.1% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only six people (4.3%) answered don’t know/decline to answer, and another six people skipped the question.

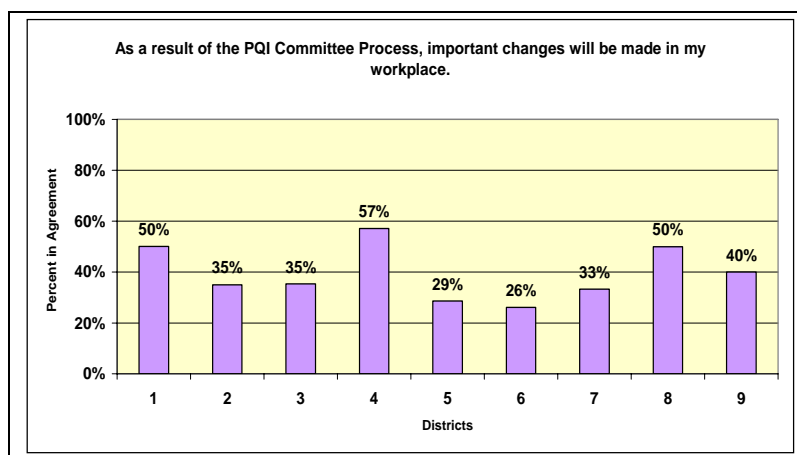
Forty-six per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “As a result of the PQI Committee Process, there will be better communication between management and staff.” Of those responding, 31.4% were neutral, and a total of 17.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seven people (5.1%) answered don’t know/decline to answer, and eighty people skipped the question.



In answer to the statement, “The PQI Committee Process will allow me to actively participate in decision-making in this agency,” 32.1% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 35.8% were neutral, and a combined total of 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seven people answered don’t know/decline to answer and 8 people skipped the question.

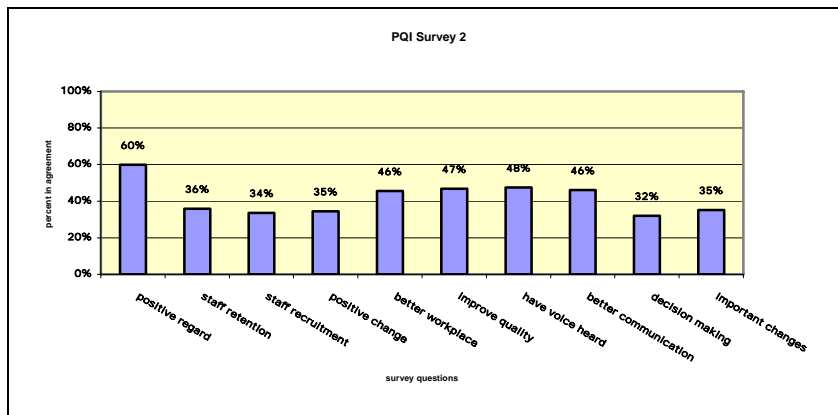


A total of 35.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “As a result of the PQI Committee Process, important changes will be made in my workplace.” However, 39.7% were neutral, and a total of 16.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Twelve people (8.8%) answered don’t know/decline to answer and nine people skipped the question.



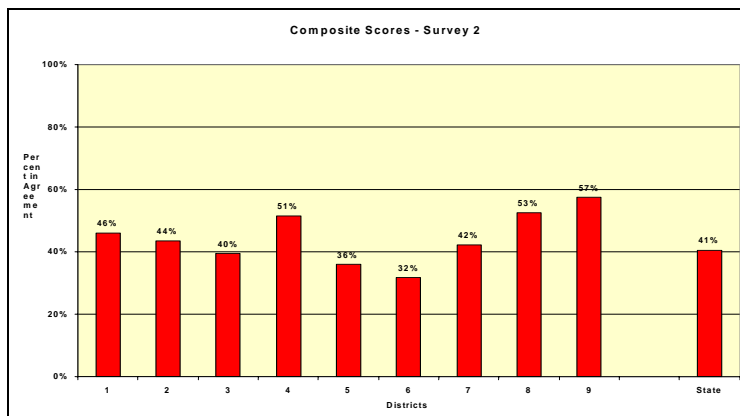
## Summary of Survey 2

The responses to Survey 2 totaled 145, with an average of over 13% of respondents either answering, “Don’t Know/Decline to Answer,” or skipping each question. There were also a large number of “Neutral” responses to some questions, with a plurality answering “Neutral” to questions about staff recruitment (37.8%) and retention (38%), whether PQI Committee Process would positively change how they feel about their jobs (34.5%), whether they would be able to actively participate in decision-making (35.7%), and whether the process would result in important changes to the workplace (39.7%). The only question that received over 50% in positive responses was “I feel positively about the implementation of the PQI Committee Process in my office?” at 59.9%.



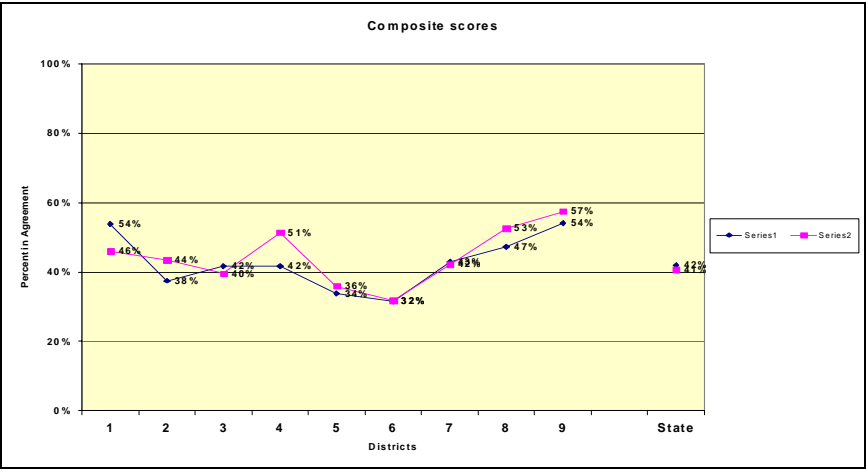
The lowest positive responses were to the question about having an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process (32.1%). Other low responses were about the belief that the process would result in important changes in the workplace (35.2%), about the PQI Committee Process would help with staff recruitment (33.6%) and retention (35.9%), and that the process would result in feeling more positively about the job (34.5%).

Results were similar across districts, with some districts being more positive than others. Districts 4, 8, and 9 were the only ones with above 50% positive composite score rating at 51.44%, 52.62%, and 57.46% respectively. Supervisors and management were considerably more positive than were caseworkers, with composite rating scores of 64.19%, compared to 30.06%. Education and length of time on the job did not seem to affect responses.

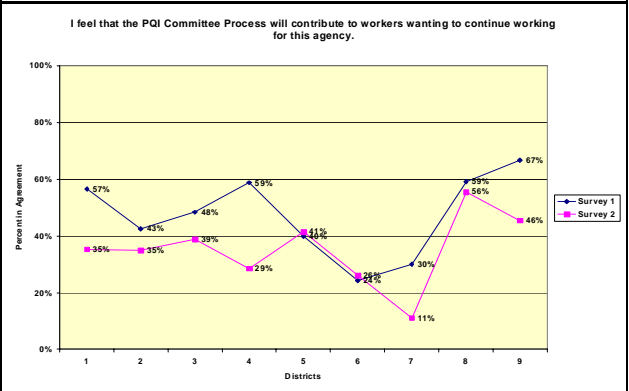
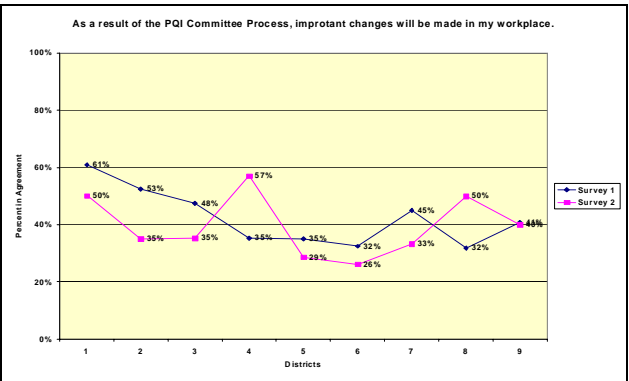


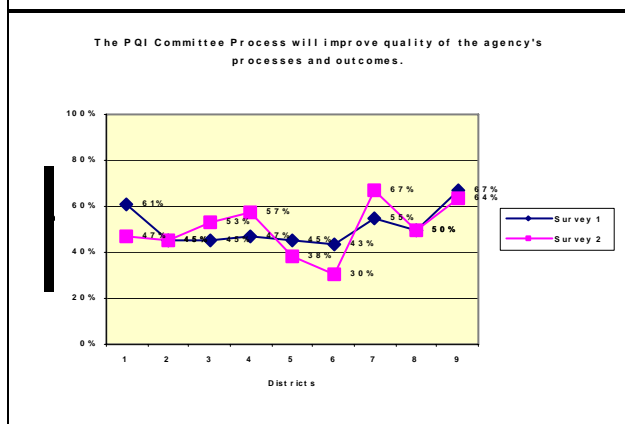
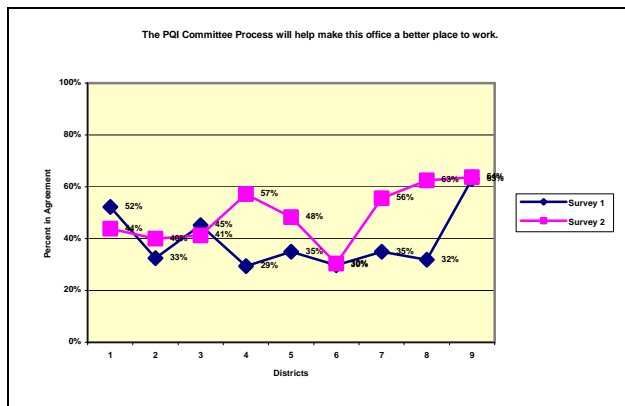
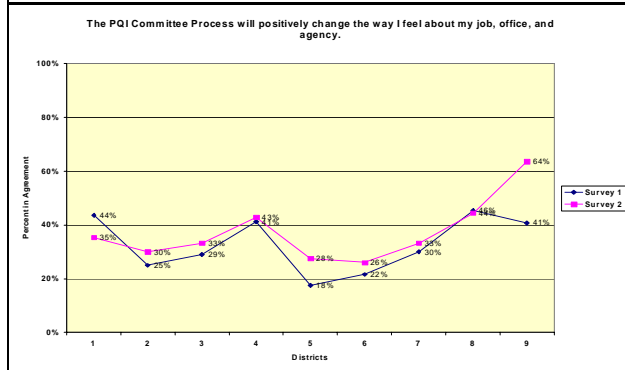
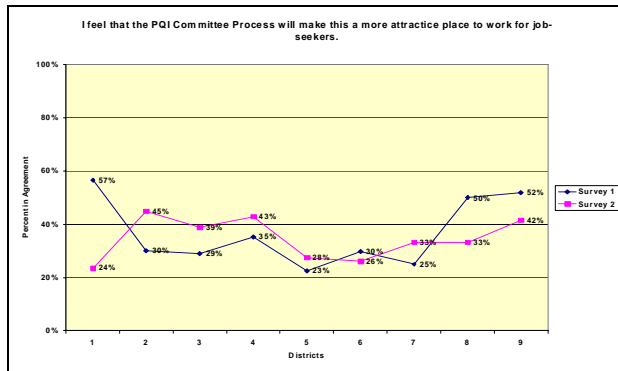
### Comparison and Analysis of Surveys 1 & 2

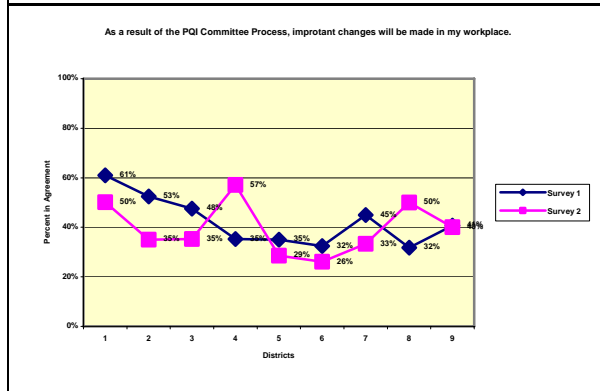
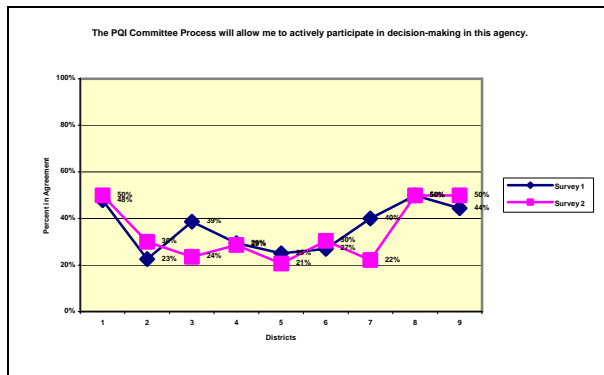
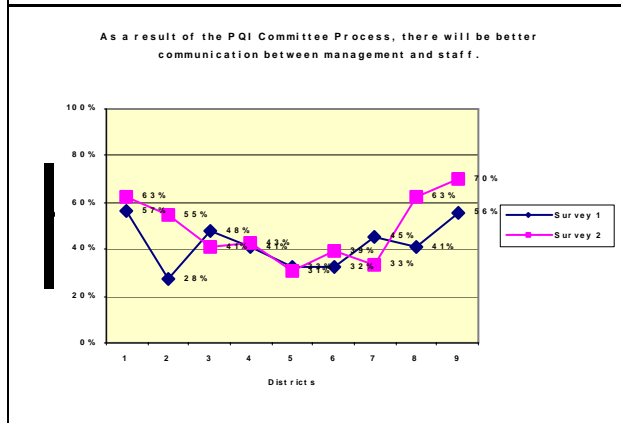
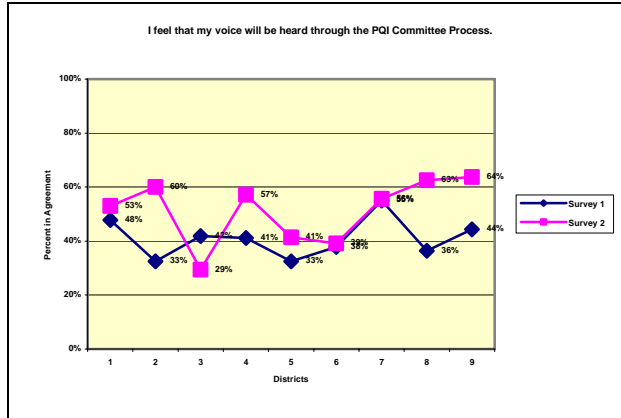
As seen in the graph below, by comparing each district's positive composite rating score, comparisons can be made between the results of the first and second surveys. Districts 1 and 4 experienced higher composite scores in the second survey. The total result statewide composite score reveals just a 1% drop in the composite rating. The positive composite rating score was huge between caseworkers and supervisors, with a gap of over 30 percentage points.



When analyzed by question and by district, the differences become obvious. Below are graphs comparing the two surveys by question and district.







## Discussion and Recommendations

The results of the two surveys indicate a much more positive outlook among supervisors and management than among caseworkers. The difference in the positive responses between the two groups has increased from the first and second services, so that now the composite positive rating scores reflect more than a 34 point spread, compared to a 21 point spread at the time of the first survey. The reason for this spread is two-fold: the positive composite ratings for caseworkers has dropped regarding the PQI Committee Process, while at the same time the same composite rating has increased among supervisors and management. This disparity supports the idea that the PQI Committee Process has been popular with management staff, but line staff remains skeptical, as indicated by a growing number of respondents who were neutral in their answers to several survey questions.

Caseworkers are less positive eight months later that the PQI Committee Process positively influences staff recruitment and retention efforts, decision-making, or that the process will lead to important changes in the workplace. Caseworkers were more positive at the time of the second survey about the process leading to better communication. In contrast, supervisory staff were more positive in the second survey about holding the PQI Committee Process in positive regard, in contributing to greater staff retention and recruitment, in leading to positive change, in creating a better workplace, in allowing voices to be heard, and in leading to important changes in the workplace. In the second survey, supervisors felt that creating better communication and leading to great decision-making ability was about the same.

Overall, the second survey revealed some positive movement among all staff regarding their perceptions of the PQI Committee Process as holding the process in positive regard, creating positive change, creating a better workplace, and allowing for better communication. Staff overall are less convinced that the PQI Committee Process will help with staff retention or will contribute to important changes in the workplace.

The experience of starting the PQI Committee Process may have been difficult for some, as accepted ways of managing and conducting business have altered with the introduction of the PQI Committee Process. If Maine is similar to other states that have gone through the process, it may take a couple of years to see the results. Gradually, staff engagement is expected to increase if staff see positive results and have timely feedback to their questions and proposals. In the meantime, the results of the surveys and the PQI Committee observations, suggest certain recommendations. These recommendations include rapid management response to District Committee suggestions, and a review of the philosophy, benefits, and application of the PQI Committee Process in the State PQI Operational Plan. Additionally, PQI Specialists may learn of some of the issues and struggles of their districts that need to be addressed.

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