

PHASE VI  
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE  
EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE



Division of Program Development & Evaluation  
RESEARCH AND REPORTING UNIT

November, 1979

Report No. 79103

64501

NCJER

JAN 31 1980

ACQUISITIONS

This report was prepared by Lisa Jones, Research Analyst.  
Inquiries concerning the report should be directed to the  
Research and Reporting Unit.

Thomas R. Foster, Manager  
Research and Reporting Unit

Statistical Analysis of the  
Exit Interviews Phase VI

Introduction

In 1976, the Department of Corrections instituted a procedure for obtaining information from individuals terminating employment with the Department (Form P-17, Exit Interview Questionnaire). Since that time five (5) analyses have been conducted by the Research and Reporting Unit. The present report attempts to update the previous publications by reporting on the data gathered between July 1, 1978 and June 30, 1979, (Phase VI, Report 79103).

However, this analysis is different for two reasons. First, the time frame covers one fiscal year rather than the six (6) to eight (8) months used previously. The utilization of this time period hopefully will increase the amount of data in each period as well as facilitate annual comparisons. Second, this exit interview analysis is the first to be completed since reorganization, thus some of the previous coding categories are now obsolete. Changes were made to adjust to the new categories. Consequently, the one (1) year time frame coupled with the changes during reorganization suggest that Phase VI should be viewed apart from the other exit interview analyses and hopefully, Phase VI will set a precedent for annual comparisons. Nonetheless, since annual comparisons are impossible at this time, references will be made to previous analyses in order to summarize trends.

The format of this report will be an analysis of the frequency distributions. Then, to ascertain how much variation there is within the department, several variables will be analyzed according to division and position. Finally, conclusions and recommendations will be made.

### Sample

The sample can most adequately be described as a non-random, sub-sample of all former employees terminating their employment during the fiscal year 1979. Of the 1,112 employees that left employment with the Department, only 259 completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 23%. Thus, due to the low response rate, caution must be taken in generalizing the conclusions of this study to all separated employees. Many factors could contribute to this low response rate. These issues will be addressed in the conclusion of this paper.

### Findings

#### Division, Location, and Position of Employment

Since reorganization, there are five (5) major divisions in the Department of Corrections, only three (3) of these divisions participated in the exit interviews. The majority of the responses, 64%, came from Institutional Services,\* while 33% came from the Division of Community and Prevention Services,\*\* and 3% came from the Division of Program Development and Evaluation.

\* Includes Adult Services and Youth Services

\*\* Includes Probation and Parole

(3)

Those facilities or units who contributed at least 5% to the sample included:

---

---

<u>Facility or Unit</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
Probation and Parole	10.8
Court Services	16.6
Powhatan	5.8
Bon Air	6.2
VA Corr Center for Women	6.9
Southampton - Annex	11.2
Reception and Diagnostic	5.4

---

There appears to be a larger number of various units which are contributing to the Exit Interview Report than in previous phases.

In terms of position within the agency, half (51%) of the responses came from correctional officers, 17% from court service, 15% from administration, 10% from the combined group of care and custody of inmates, building and grounds, education, vocation, recreation, food and medical, 4% from counseling and treatment and 1% from field service.

#### Months Employed

Of the respondents, 90% worked for the Department six (6) years or less, with 74% working for the Department 3 years or less, and 33% working for less than one (1) year. Five percent of the sample worked for the Department 10 years or more. The average length of stay was 31 months, a little over two and a half years.

(4)

The average time in the present position before ending employment was 25 months, just over two years. Eighty percent left with less than three years and forty percent left with less than one year in that position.

---

---

<u>Months Employed</u>	<u>Phase</u>					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Average months with Department	27	28	25	26	32	31
Average months in present position	20	19	19	20	24	25

---

Thus, it appears, as has been the case in other phases, that the individual changes positions at least once while with the department and that the initial change occurs about 6 months after employment.

Even though the average length of time of employment dropped by one month from Phase V, it was still greater than those in Phases I-IV. The average length of time in present position is greater than in the other phases.

#### Working Conditions

In congruence with Phases I through V, approximately two-thirds of the respondents in Phase VI felt their working conditions were either "excellent" or "good." About 7% reported their working conditions to be poor. In sum, it appears that most workers in Phase VI perceived their physical working conditions as satisfactory.

Communications

Responses concerning the quality of communication are illustrated in the following table. To allow a more interpretable format, responses have been collapsed into the categories favorable (excellent or good) and unfavorable (fair or poor). See the appendix for responses to the original categories.

---



---

<u>Communications</u>	Percentage of Responses	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	64	35*
Orientation to the Department	68	30
Specific Knowledge of the job	74	24
Communications with Supervisor	71	28

\* "No response" answers comprise the remainder of the percentages.

---

The area of communication which had the largest percentage of unfavorable responses was "policies, procedures, and guidelines." The most favorable area of communication concerned "specific knowledge of the job" followed by "communication with the supervisor." Overall, separated employees seem to have been satisfied with the amount of communication.

Rate of Pay and Employee Benefits

The following table displays the separated employees' feelings with regard to pay and employee benefits.

---

<u>Pay and Benefits</u>	Percentage of Respondents	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Rate of Pay	40	58
Paid Holidays	88	10
Annual Leave	90	9
Retirement Plan	77	19
Tuition Reimbursement	53	11
Life Insurance	78	15
Health Insurance	83	14
Sick Leave	92	6

---

The category of Pay and Benefits receiving, by far, the largest amount of negative response is "rate of pay." This percentage is comparable to that found during Phase V which had been the highest percentage of unfavorable answers up until that time. Furthermore, this category typically receives the largest amount of unfavorable responses. The "retirement plan" had the next largest amount of negative responses. On the other hand, employees favorably viewed "sick leave", "annual leave", and "paid holiday".

#### Rate of Pay by Division and Position

In order to determine if there was a variation as to how the different divisions felt concerning "rate of pay", "rate of pay" was crosstabulated with division and position within the

(7)

agency. In terms of division within the Department, of the 162 respondents in the Institutional Services, 54% felt the pay was unfavorable, while 66% of the 86 respondents in the Division of Community and Prevention Services felt it was unfavorable, and 66% of the 6 respondents from Division of Program Development and Evaluation felt it was unfavorable. When position is taken in account, the unfavorable responses were from 58% of the 129 correctional officers, 48% of the 39 administrative respondents, 49% of the 26 care and custody, building and grounds, education, vocation, and recreation, food and medicine respondents, 72% of the 11 counseling and testing respondents, and 68% of the court service respondents. In sum, the most vocal divisions about the unfavorable rate of pay were the Division of Community and Preventive Services and Program Development and Evaluation. The most vocal position was counseling and testing.

Supervision

The responses to the questions about supervisors can be seen in the table below.

<u>Supervision</u>	Percentage of Respondents	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Fair and equal treatment	78	23
Follows policies and practices	81	18
Communicates with subordinates	74	26
Resolves grievances and problems	71	29
Develops cooperation	72	27

Supervisors were seen by terminating employees as fair and equal in their treatment and following policies and practices. Items that separated employees felt the most unfavorable about were supervisors' resolutions of grievances and development of cooperation.

#### Supervision by Division and Position

In response to the question about supervisors resolving grievances, the Division of Community and Prevention Services had the largest negative response of all the Divisions, while the correctional officers and the group consisting of care and custody, building and grounds, education, vocation, recreation, food and medicine had the largest negative responses of all the positions with the agencies. In terms of supervisors developing cooperation, Institutional Services had the most unfavorable

responses among the divisions. Among the positions, correctional officers felt the most unfavorable about their supervisors' efforts to develop cooperation.

#### Reason for Leaving

Subjects were asked to indicate those factors which influenced their decision to leave the Department of Corrections. The results as well as comparisons with the other five phases were as follows:

---



---

<u>Reason for Leaving</u>	Percentage of Responses					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Better Job Opportunity	40	38	41	41	47	45
Salary	21	23	29	30	36	35
Lack of Advancement Opportunity	27	25	29	27	37	30
Family Circumstances	27	29	26	25	20	16
Type of Work	22	21	16	18	18	15
Supervision	16	16	18	18	22	18
Return to School	13	14	14	13	12	14
Communting Distance	10	14	12	11	16	10
Illness - Physical Condition	11	8	11	9	10	6
Self-Employment	2	3	3	3	5	6
Terminated or Resigned	3	3	3	3	1	3

---

The most commonly cited reasons for leaving during Phase VI were "better job opportunity," "salary" and "lack of advancement opportunity." These three factors have been consistently chosen as influencing termination throughout all phases of the exit interview analysis.

### Reasons for Leaving by Division and Position

When broken down by division, the group that indicated the most that "better job opportunity" was a factor in their leaving was the Division of Program Development and Evaluation. Likewise, the Division of Program Development and Evaluation more frequently than other Divisions cited "lack of advancement opportunity" and "salary" as a factor in their termination with the Department of Corrections.

When position within the agency is considered, the Court Service Units were the most likely to state "better job opportunity" as a reason for leaving, while counseling and testing indicated "lack of advance opportunity" and "salary" as reasons for their leaving the Department of Corrections.

### Working Environment

Respondents were asked to rate their jobs or departments according to the following items:

---

<u>Working Environment</u>	Percentage of Responses	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
On-the-job-training	68	29
Equipment Provided	66	30
Friendliness and Cooperation of Fellow Employees	83	16
Cooperation within the Department of Corrections	63	32
Cooperation with other Departments	63	25

---

"Friendliness and cooperation of fellow employees" ranked highest among the items perceived as favorable. In contrast, "cooperation within the Department of Corrections" and "equipment provided" ranked highest among the unfavorable responses. Thus, one might infer that "cooperation within the Department" might be an area for improvement.

#### Workload

Almost three-fourths of the separated employees felt their workload was either "about right" (39%) or "varied" (38%) while 17% thought it was "too great" and 5% thought it was "too light."

#### Recommendations for Working for the Department of Corrections

Most separated employees would recommend working for the Department of Corrections. Thirty-nine percent reported they would definitely recommend the Department, while half (51%) stated that they would recommend working for the Department with reservations. A few (9%) said they would not recommend working for the Department of Corrections. This is a six percent decrease from Phase V, thus, marking a decline in negative responses.

#### Job Title

When divided by job titles, the largest percentage of questionnaire responses comes from Correctional Officers. The next largest percentage is from the Training School Project Supervisors, followed by Probation and Parole Officers and Probation Counselors I.

The clerical category also contributed a substantial amount to the responses.

The following table illustrates the job titles that contributed over 5% of the responses.

---

<u>Job Title</u>	Frequency	Percentage
Corrections Officer	59	22.8
Training School Project Supervisor	27	10.4
Probation and Parole Officer	16	6.2
Clerk Steno B	16	6.2
Probation Counselor I	16	6.2

---

With the exception of Clerk Steno B, these categories are similar to those reported in the other five phases. Thus, it appears that these areas may be particularly vulnerable to staff turnover.

### Conclusions

Again, this report yielded a favorable attitude toward the Department of Corrections. Responses did not differ drastically from those in previous phases. However, some general conclusions might be noted.

1. Only three of the Divisions contributed responses to the exit interview analysis.
2. Rate of pay was seen as the most unfavorable aspect of employee benefits.

3. The most predominant reasons for ending employment with the Department were (a) better job opportunity (b) salary and (c) lack of advancement opportunity.
4. The positions of Corrections Officer, Training School Project Supervisor, Probation and Parole - Court Service Counselor I, and Probation/Parole Officer appear the most vulnerable to staff turnover.

#### Recommendations

The original purpose of the Exit Interview has been to produce a device that would reflect separated employee's opinions concerning their employment at the Department of Corrections. It was hoped that this data, in turn, would be used to review and adjust policies to provide the best working situation for the Department's employees. However, the problematic nature of the survey has hindered the fulfillment of the original goal. First, the exceedingly low response rate makes generalization difficult. Numerous factors could contribute to the low response rate. Such factors might include the lack of uniformity in administering the questionnaire and the employee's fear of lack of anonymity in the study. Similarly, the absence of anonymity could create a bias in the responses, the second problem with the study. Individuals may not want to disclose any negative feelings for fear of jeopardizing their future.

Several recommendations have been suggested to help alleviate some of these problems.

1. The measurement instrument should be re-examined to ascertain whether it is measuring what it proposes to be measuring.
2. An effort should be made to encourage units to participate in the exit interview process. Perhaps, the individuals in charge of each unit should be contacted and reminded of the exit interview process.
3. A similar survey should be administered to currently employed individuals to further realize the needs of The Department.
4. Finally, omit the name of the respondent from the exit interview to better insure anonymity.

/dmg

APPENDIX

## INTERVIEWING QUESTIONNAIRE

Data in percentage form

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF INTERVIEW \_\_\_\_\_

1. In what institution or bureau were you employed? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you worked for the Department of Corrections? \_\_\_\_\_

2a. How long have you been in your present position? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe your job duties \_\_\_\_\_

How were the physical working conditions in the department in which you worked?

Excellent 12.9 Good 55.9 Fair 24.6 Poor 6.6 No Response 1.2

With what specific conditions, if any, were you dissatisfied? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Was your job explained to you correctly before you were employed? Yes 86.9 No 13.1 No Response 2.7

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate communications in the following area:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	12.8	51.4	26.8	8.2	.8
General Orientation to the Department	17.1	51.0	24.5	6.2	1.2
Specific knowledge of your job	21.4	52.5	21.0	3.1	1.9
Between you and your supervisor	32.2	38.4	17.6	10.6	1.2

7. How did you feel about your rate of pay and the employee benefits by the Department of Corrections?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Rate of pay for your job	5.9	34.6	41.7	16.5	1.2
Paid holidays	31.0	57.3	7.1	3.1	1.6
Annual leave	29.4	60.8	6.3	2.4	1.2
Retirement Plan	24.3	52.2	12.7	6.0	4.8
Tuition Reimbursement	13.3	39.4	6.2	5.3	35.8
Life Insurance	23.4	54.8	11.9	2.8	7.1
Health Insurance	27.0	56.0	9.5	4.8	2.8
Sick Leave	30.4	62.0	5.2	1.6	.4

9. How would you rate your supervisor in the following areas:

	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	No Response ( )
Demonstrates fair & equal treatment	51.2	26.2	18.8	3.7	
Follows policies & practices	53.6	28.2	14.7	3.6	2.7
Communicates well with subordinates	43.0	31.1	21.1	4.8	3.1
Resolves complaints, grievances and problems	42.2	28.7	21.9	7.2	3.1
Develops cooperation	45.1	27.7	18.6	8.7	2.3

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Was your decision to leave the Department of Corrections influenced by any of the following? (Please check all those applicable)

Illness or physical conditions	5.8	Type of Work	15.1
Family circumstances	16.2	Return to School	13.5
Better job opportunity	45.2	Commuting distance	10.0
Lack of opportunity for advancement	30.9	Supervision	18.1
Self Employment	5.8	Terminated or Asked to Resign	3.1
Salary	35.1	(Please Specify) _____	

11. How would you rate the following?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
On-the-job training	19.0	49.2	19.4	10.3	2.0
Equipment provided	12.8	53.6	22.0	8.0	3.6
Friendliness and cooperation of fellow employees	38.1	45.2	12.3	3.6	.8
Cooperation with other departments	15.2	48.0	27.6	4.4	4.8
Cooperation within the Department of Corrections	14.0	49.8	20.6	4.9	10.7

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

12. Was your workload usually:

Too great	17.1	About right	39.2	Varied but all right	38.3
Too light	5.4				



**END**