



Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2013-2017

The Office of Injured Employee Counsel

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APPENDIX E

Workforce Plan

As part of the strategic plan required under Texas Government Code, Section 2056.002, each state agency is required to conduct a strategic staffing analysis and develop a workforce plan according to guidelines developed by the State Auditor. Workforce planning is an organized process for:

- Identifying the number of employees and the types of employee skill sets required to meet agency goals and strategic objectives; and
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- Developing a plan of action to ensure that the appropriate workforce will be available to provide quality services to the citizens of Texas.

I. OVERVIEW

OIEC Mission

To assist, educate, and advocate on behalf of the injured employees of Texas

OIEC Philosophy

The Office of Injured Employee Counsel (OIEC) is committed to protecting the rights of the injured employees of Texas in the workers' compensation system. OIEC provides the highest level of professional, efficient, and effective customer service and maintains a work environment that values a diverse workforce, ethical management practices, teamwork, respect, and dignity.

OIEC Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 -- To assist injured employees in the workers' compensation system and protect their rights.

Objective 1.1 -- To provide assistance to all unrepresented injured employees requesting assistance in each year.

Goal 2 -- To increase injured employee education regarding their rights and responsibilities and refer them to local, state, and federal programs.

Objective 2.1 To increase the knowledge of all injured employees and refer them to local, state, and federal programs each year.

Goal 3 -- To advocate on behalf of injured employees as a class.

Objective 3.1 -- To advocate on behalf of injured employees as a class in judicial, legislative, rulemaking, and administrative processes and ensure injured employee's rights are protected each year.

Core Business Functions

OIEC was established to represent the interests and provide services to all unrepresented injured employees when assistance is requested. OIEC's core business functions include:

- Assisting injured employees in the workers' compensation system by providing free Ombudsman services in DWC's administrative dispute resolution system;
- Educating injured employees about their rights and responsibilities and improving their ability to effectively navigate through the workers' compensation system; and
- Advocating on behalf of injured employees as a class in order to achieve a balanced workers' compensation system and protect their rights.

OIEC also refers injured employees to the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) or other social or regulatory services, such as the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) or licensing boards, to assist injured employees with 1) finding employment, 2) training opportunities, 3) returning to work, 4) filing complaints with appropriate licensing boards or other regulatory agencies, 5) obtaining financial assistance, and 6) reporting alleged administrative violations.

Additionally, OIEC provides outreach presentations, workshops, seminars, speaking engagements, or other forums to workers' compensation system stakeholders regarding OIEC, its role, and its services.

Anticipated Changes to the Mission, Strategies, and Goals Over the Next Five Years

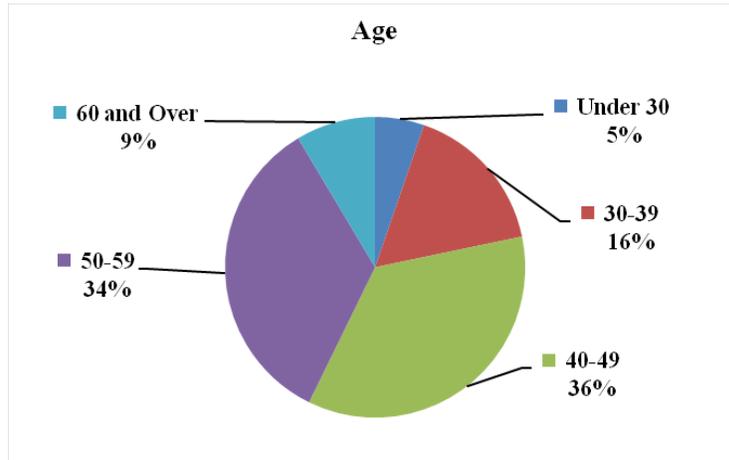
The 2012-2013 budget structure was carefully reviewed and recommendations for changes to the 2014-2015 budget structure were submitted to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) and the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning, and Policy (GOBPP) on April 20, 2012.

Changes to the mission, strategies, and goals for the 2014-2015 biennia are not anticipated at this time.

II. CURRENT WORKFORCE PROFILE (SUPPLY ANALYSIS)

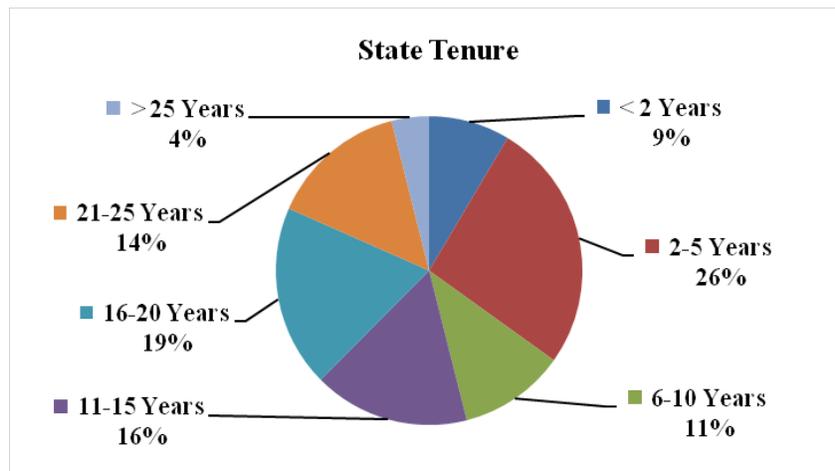
Demographics information, including age, gender, and length of service

Aging Workforce. The average age of an OIEC employee is 47.6. Only five percent of the employees are under the age of 30 while 43 percent of the agency's employees are 50 or older.



Gender of OIEC Employees. According to the Statewide Civilian Workforce Composition, 45 percent of employees in Texas are female. The percent of female employees at OIEC is well above this number at 86 percent.

Average State Tenure. The average State tenure for an OIEC employee is 12.3 years. Almost 60 percent of OIEC employees have at least 10 years of experience and 18 percent have more than 20 years of experience. According to the agency's 2011 Survey of Employee Engagement, 95 percent of OIEC employees see themselves working for this agency in one year. OIEC believes that is a good indicator of how well the organization is doing at retaining its employees. Additional information regarding the survey can be found in Appendix F.

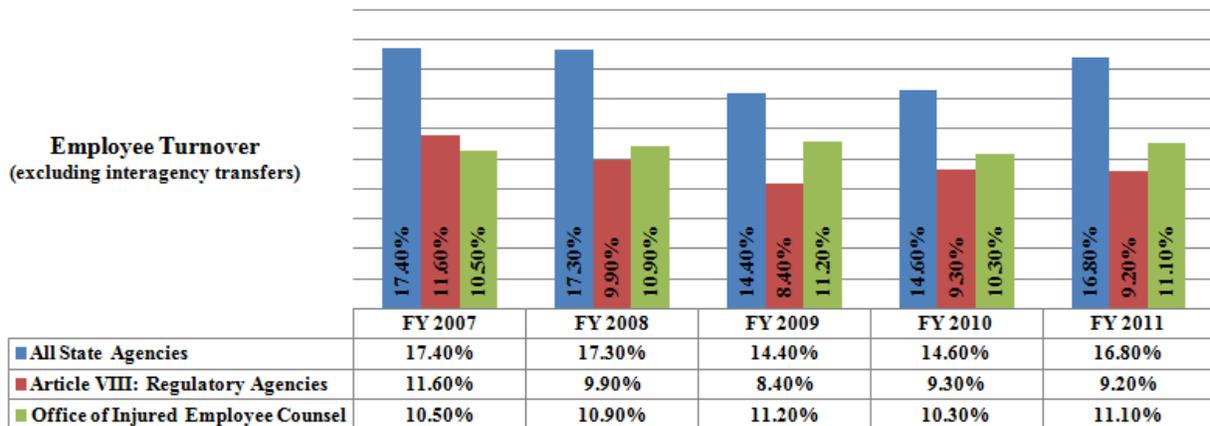


Ethnicity. OIEC’s percentage of Hispanic employees is well above the Statewide Civilian Workforce Composition with 54 percent Hispanics. The Statewide Composition of the Hispanic Workforce is made up of 35 percent Hispanics. OIEC’s percentage of Black employees is slightly below the Statewide Composition (11 percent) at 10 percent. The Statewide Composition of the Anglo Workforce is 53 percent and OIEC’s percentage is 36 percent.

| EEO Category | Office of Injured Employee Counsel – Workforce Statistics | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| | Black | Hispanic | Anglo | Other | Male | Female |
| Officials, Admin. (A) | 0.00% | 28.57% | 71.43% | 0.00% | 28.57% | 71.43% |
| Professional (P) | 11.43% | 50.48% | 37.14% | 0.95% | 18.10% | 81.90% |
| Technical (T) | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Para-Professional (Q) | 7.50% | 67.50% | 25.00% | 0.00% | 2.50% | 97.50% |
| Admin. Support (C) | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Skilled Crafts (S) | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Service & Maintenance (M) | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| All Categories | 9.87% | 53.95% | 35.53% | 0.66% | 14.47% | 85.53% |

Employee Turnover. OIEC has proven to be relatively successful in retaining employees and limiting the costs associated with employee turnover: recruiting, selecting, orienting, and training new employees, leave payout to departing employees, and lower workplace productivity due to vacancies.

OIEC’s turnover rate (excluding interagency transfers) was 10.3 percent in FY 2010 and 11.1 percent in FY 2011. Below is a table of State turnover rates compared to both Article VIII State agencies and OIEC’s turnover rate for FY 2007 through FY 2011.⁶⁴



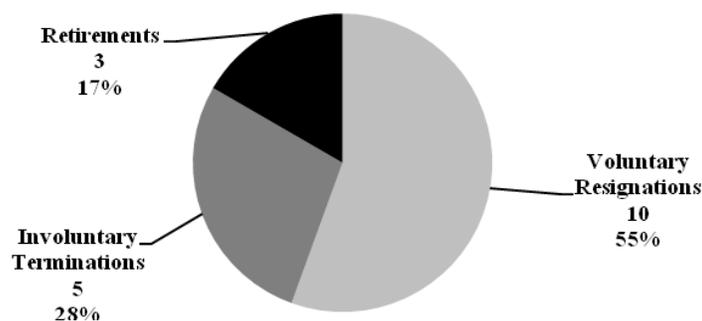
⁶⁴ Source: State Auditor’s Office: *Workforce Summary, December 2010, Report No. 11-702 and An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2011, December 2011, Report No. 12-701.*

Of the employees that left the agency in FY 2011, 58 percent worked within the Ombudsman Program, 37 percent worked in the Customer Service Program, and five percent worked in Administration and Operations Program.

OIEC's most vulnerable program area is the Ombudsman Program. Ombudsmen are required to go through extensive training and obtain an adjuster's license, which according to an August 19, 2011 WorkCompCentral article, makes them targets for companies wanting to hire qualified and trained adjusters.⁶⁵

More than half of employees who leave OIEC resign voluntarily for reasons other than retirement as shown in the chart below. Most cited personal circumstances as the reason for leaving. Agency turnover and reasons for turnover are expected to change markedly within three to six years based on an analysis of employee retirement eligibility.

OIEC Employee Turnover Justification
(based on the average turnover per year
FY 2009 through FY 2011)



Projected Employee Turnover Rate over the Next Five Years

OIEC anticipates that the turnover rate over the next five years is likely to increase due to retirement eligibility.

Employee Retirement. Almost 60 percent of staff has at least 10 years of experience, and 40 percent of agency staff has at least 15 years. More than one-fourth of all agency staff is eligible to retire by December 31, 2015, and 43 percent of staff will be able to retire by the end of 2018.

One-third of OIEC Directors and Supervisors are eligible to retire by December 31, 2015, and 61 percent will be eligible to retire by the end of 2018.

⁶⁵ Source: WorkCompCentral; OIEC Responds to New Law, Planning Needs and Poaching of Staff; August 19, 2011; By Bill Kidd, Central Bureau Chief.

Below is the breakdown of Directors and Supervisors in each program area eligible to retire as of a particular date. Total number of staff is indicated in parentheses.

**Percentage of Directors and Supervisors by Program Area
Eligible to Retire By December 31,**

| | 2015 | 2018 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ombudsman Program (10) | 40% (4) | 80% (8) |
| Customer Service Program (4) | 25% (1) | 25% (1) |
| Administration and Operations (4) | 25% (1) | 75% (3) |

Each of the 20 field offices and the central office are at risk of losing staff and their expertise due to retirement within three to six years. Several offices, including the central office in Austin, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Houston West, Laredo, Lubbock, Lufkin, and Waco have more than 50 percent of staff that can retire within three to six years. The next table cites the percentage of staff eligible to retire at each office by the end of 2015 and 2018 according to data provided by TDI.

**Percentage of Office Staff Eligible to
Retire By December 31,**

| | 2015 | 2018 |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Abilene | 00.0 | 00.0 |
| Amarillo | 00.0 | 33.3 |
| Austin | 16.7 | 16.7 |
| Beaumont | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Central | 23.5 | 64.7 |
| Corpus Christi | 75.0 | 75.0 |
| Dallas | 8.3 | 41.7 |
| Denton | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| El Paso | 28.6 | 57.1 |
| Fort Worth | 40.0 | 46.7 |
| Houston East | 30.0 | 40.0 |
| Houston West | 36.4 | 54.5 |
| Laredo | 33.3 | 66.7 |
| Lubbock | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| Lufkin | 66.7 | 66.7 |
| Midland | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| San Angelo | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| San Antonio | 0.0 | 14.3 |
| Tyler | 25.0 | 37.5 |
| Waco | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| Weslaco | 10.0 | 30.0 |

OIEC conducted an employee survey in May 2011, which indicated that the agency will retain about half of its experienced staff beyond retirement eligibility dates. Of the 136 (86.6 percent) employees who participated in the survey, approximately 40 percent stated they will be eligible to retire within six years. Of these, 52.7 percent stated they plan to retire within six years.

Workforce Skills Critical to the Mission and Goals of the Agency

The agency is staffed with professional, skilled, and well-qualified employees. Maintaining a workforce with particular knowledge and skill sets is critical to the agency's ability to operate effectively and efficiently in achieving its mission and goals. These skill sets include:

- Providing exceptional customer service;
- Interpreting, implementing, and explaining legal/regulatory statutes;
- Providing and applying legal and workers' compensation research and analysis;
- Managing and providing leadership to staff;
- Planning and coordinating outreach efforts to stakeholders;
- Communicating effectively in English and Spanish;
- Recognizing and responding appropriately to mental and emotional stress among customers; and
- Performing audit, quality assurance, and administrative functions.

III. FUTURE WORKFORCE PROFILE (DEMAND ANALYSIS)

Expected Workforce Changes Driven by Factors such as Changing Missions, Goals, Strategies, Technology, Work, Workloads, and Work Processes

OIEC does not foresee the elimination of any of its responsibilities over the next five-year period nor a change in its mission and goals. However, OIEC has realized an increase in workload; therefore, the agency will request approximately 20 additional FTEs in the FY 2014-2015 Legislative Appropriations Request. These additional Ombudsmen and Customer Service Representatives would help staff OIEC's larger field offices where urban growth and accompanying on-the-job injuries have created a heavier workload. In addition, OIEC must plan for the eventual loss of highly experienced staff due to retirements. OIEC also has seen a trend of declining prevail rates for injured employees due to the ever-increasing evidentiary standard required to prove entitlement to workers' compensation benefits. These factors affect the knowledge, skills, and abilities OIEC needs to continue achieving its mission and goals.

Future Workforce Skills Needed

In addition to the critical skills cited above, OIEC needs staff who can provide medical research and analysis to help OIEC customers prove their entitlement to workers' compensation benefits.

Anticipated Increase or Decrease in the Number of Employees Needed To Do the Work

In response to an increase in workload at the larger field offices, the agency anticipates an increase in approximately 20 FTEs to satisfy the agency's mission and ensure injured employee rights are protected.

Critical Functions that Must Be Performed to Achieve the Strategic Plan

- Customer service functions
- Ombudsman functions
- Legal research and analysis functions
- Medical research and analysis functions
- Workers' compensation research and analysis functions
- Managerial and training functions
- Audit, quality assurance, and administrative functions.

IV. GAP ANALYSIS

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage in Staffing Levels

In response to an increase in workload at the larger field offices, the agency will seek an increase of approximately 20 FTEs in the Customer Service and Ombudsman programs to satisfy the agency's mission and ensure injured employee rights are protected.

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Skills

As experienced staff retires over the next few years, the agency anticipates a greater need for skills in training, mentoring, and transferring knowledge to less-experienced employees in all program areas. In addition, greater skill in medical research and analysis is required to address the trend of declining prevail rates for injured employees due to the ever-increasing evidentiary standard required to prove entitlement to benefits.

V. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Specific Goals to Address Workforce Competence Gaps or Surpluses

Recruitment and Retention. Recruiting and retaining the depth of knowledge and experience necessary to navigate the complexities of the workers' compensation system is a key factor in fulfilling OIEC's mission of assisting, educating, and advocating for Texans who are injured on the job. Therefore, OIEC carefully selects the most qualified applicant for each position. OIEC has been fortunate in the ability to hire and retain strong employees with varied skill sets who can perform in high-stress, demanding situations.

The economy may be one reason for the agency's strong retention record. More individuals have been searching for work since the recession began, and OIEC has been successful in hiring individuals that possess the necessary knowledge, education, and experience that has enabled the agency to continue to provide injured employees excellent assistance. OIEC has been able to keep some of its most knowledgeable and experienced employees even after their retirement eligibility date. Times are hard, and the thought of no longer working, finding another job, or making less money may make people think twice before leaving the agency.

OIEC provides extensive training and development opportunities to assist employees in performing their job to the best of their abilities. OIEC also provides incentives and utilizes various tools to retain its staff, such as the following.

Alternative Work Schedule Program. This program extends the number of hours that agency staff is available to provide services while also providing employees with work-schedule flexibility. Every effort is made to accommodate the needs of individual employees who are working extended or alternate hours; however, in all instances, business necessity is the overriding factor.

The Performance Planning and Development System (PPDS). This evaluation process provides Supervisors the tools to develop an employee's performance, address performance that does not meet expectations, and handle performance problems in a manner that encourages individual responsibility for results. This system also presents an opportunity for the Supervisor and the employee to look to the future and identify opportunities for the employee's growth and development. Regular assessment of performance levels against expectations increases productivity and morale.

Merit Awards. For OIEC employees who meet the criteria for a merit award, OIEC may provide administrative leave for outstanding performance. The total amount of leave granted may not exceed 32 hours per employee during a fiscal year pursuant to the Government Code.

OIEC may also grant merit salary increases and one-time merit payments to eligible classified employees who meet various administrative qualifications and who have exceeded job performance and can demonstrate increased productivity and deliverables.

Sick Leave Pool. The Sick Leave Pool has been established to benefit OIEC employees and their immediate family members who suffer a catastrophic illness or injury. The Pool is intended to provide for the alleviation of a hardship caused to an employee and the employee's immediate family if a catastrophic illness or injury forces the employee to exhaust all leave earned by that employee and to lose compensation from OIEC. The program allows employees to voluntarily contribute sick leave time to the Pool.

OIEC's rule Title 28, Texas Administrative Code § 276.4 was adopted as a result of a requirement of Texas Government Code § 661.002(c). The Government Code requires state agencies to adopt rules relating to the agency's Sick Leave Pool Program. OIEC's Deputy Public Counsel administers this program.

Policy Development Program. OIEC's Policy Development Program was initiated to better communicate and receive ideas from all employees. Recognizing the value and ideas of each employee, this program was designed to serve as a channel of communication for "great ideas." While participation in this program is optional, all OIEC employees are encouraged to submit their ideas on how to improve OIEC, its policies or procedures, or work environment. OIEC's executive management team reviews the ideas or recommendations submitted monthly. Confidentiality of employees who submit policy recommendations is provided to encourage all OIEC employees to participate in providing suggestions to improve or increase the efficiency of the agency and its resources. Since its inception, many ideas have been proposed and implemented. Administrative leave for outstanding performance has been awarded to OIEC staff whose ideas have been implemented.

Return-to-Work Program. The intent of the Return-to-Work Program is to allow employees with injuries or illnesses, both job-related and non-job related, to return to work as quickly as possible in a meaningful and productive capacity. Participation in the program is handled on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the employee's physician. It is the employee's responsibility to make all reasonable effort to return to work at the earliest possible time to full duty or alternatively to a light- or restricted-duty capacity. Public Counsel Darwin, in consultation with the agency's Deputy Public Counsel, personally oversees each employee's return to productive and sustainable work.

Organizational Training and Employee Development. Training is a year-round, continuous requirement for OIEC staff. The many complexities of the workers' compensation system and the agency's core value of providing premier service necessitate ongoing training. Various committees and training activities are discussed below.

The continually evolving nature of workers' compensation law drives agency management to focus on employee training and development opportunities to ensure injured employees are provided competent and effective customer service. As a result of various interpretations of the recent *Crumpp* decision, Public Counsel Darwin developed a new training program and personally trained the Ombudsman Supervisors and Regional Staff Attorneys, who in turn delivered the training to other employees. Public Counsel Darwin monitored those training sessions as they occurred with each team across the State. Additional training is described below.

New Employee Training. All new employees are required to participate in new employee training. Training courses are available on the Intranet and may include a course description page with prerequisite reading, the course itself, and helpful links. Several training modules are available and include the following: Ethics in the Workplace, Employment Law, Computer Security, and Workplace Conduct. The training courses consist of slideshows, videos, or videos with a handout. Some courses include audio. All employees are also required to read the employee manual and take core training offered by OIEC and TDI, such as Ethics, Confidentiality, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and agency-related policy and law training.

Ethics Training and Committee. OIEC is dedicated to operating under the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior. To ensure that every effort is made to achieve this goal, the agency conducts Ethics training and created an Ethics Committee. Ethics training is conducted for new employees and annually thereafter. The Ethics Committee has been vital to the development of our agency's superior reputation for being a professional and ethical organization. Created in June 2008, the OIEC Ethics Committee addresses the ethical questions and issues presented to it by OIEC employees.

The Committee is comprised of a diverse section of OIEC staff, which includes employees from all divisions of the agency who hold both supervisory and non-supervisory positions. The Ethics Committee convenes as necessary to discuss the issues presented to it by OIEC employees, and a quarterly update on the issues is sent to all agency employees.

The agency's Ethics Committee has a revolving membership to ensure its recommendations reflect the agency's high ethical standards and new voices are heard. OIEC's ethics statement is below:

Each OIEC employee has an obligation to maintain high ethical standards in the performance of their work responsibilities and in their personal life, realizing that lapses in such judgment will reflect negatively on OIEC. OIEC employees must seek to enhance and implement ethical values based on established principles of sound reasoning and the highest standards of business conduct.

Ombudsman Training Program. Generally, employees in the Ombudsman Program are hired as Ombudsmen Associates and begin up to a year-long training program at the end of which they will have earned their Workers' Compensation Adjuster's License and will be reclassified as an Ombudsman I. The training program for an Ombudsman Associate consists of up to one year of training divided into two parts. In Part I (26 weeks), the Ombudsman Associates complete new employee orientation courses, classroom studies, customer service training, and observation of activities. After completing Part I, the Associates enter Part II of the program. In Part II (also 26 weeks) the Ombudsman Associates begin conducting meetings with unrepresented injured employees in preparation for dispute resolution hearings and assisting in proceedings while being observed and evaluated by their mentor, trainer, and Supervisor of the Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman Associates are required to obtain a Workers' Compensation Adjuster's License before they finish their training program. Upon successful completion of the training program, Ombudsman Associates are eligible for reclassification as an Ombudsman I.

The Ombudsman I must have at least one year of workers' compensation experience as required by Texas Labor Code § 404.152. They participate in proceedings; assist injured employees to obtain supporting documentation and to appropriately and timely exchange evidence; and work closely with the Customer Service Representatives to effectively assist injured employees.

The Ombudsman II is required to have at least two years of Ombudsman I experience. The Ombudsman II must maintain all of the requirements of an Ombudsman I and may be required to assist Ombudsman Supervisors and Associate Directors in the training and mentoring of

Ombudsman Associates and Customer Services Representatives. Each field office has an Ombudsman Lead who serves as a mentor for all staff in their particular field office. They are vital in administrative efforts, such as disaster recovery or staff services coordination.

All Ombudsmen assist with case development when injured employees request assistance. The goal of case development is to resolve the issues before going to an administrative proceeding; therefore, Ombudsmen may become involved in a case before it is scheduled for a dispute proceeding.

Ombudsmen must remain current on continuing education requirements in order to maintain their adjuster's licenses. These credits are offered through the annual agency conference and Practical Skills Training conducted by the agency's Regional Staff Attorneys (RSAs). Training is also provided through monthly teleconferences.

Additional information regarding the Ombudsman training program and continuing education can be found in Title 28, Texas Administrative Code § 276.10.

Practical Skills Training Program. The Practical Skills Training Program is designed to help Ombudsmen refine their skills in assisting injured employees in proceedings before DWC and to ensure injured employees' rights are protected.

Three different Practical Skills Training courses are offered by RSAs each year. The training is delivered in regional locations across the State, and the Ombudsmen receive continuing education credits for participating in the training, which helps them fulfill the requirements for maintaining their legally required Workers' Compensation Adjuster's License.

The courses are designed to give practical, useful information to the Ombudsmen, which they can immediately implement into the performance of their job duties. There is a lecture and discussion component at each training session. In addition, written material is prepared to provide more detailed resource material than can be presented in a lecture. The written materials from each Practical Skills Training are posted on OIEC's Intranet for future reference. Finally, each Practical Skills Training includes some practical application of the material to test the participants' knowledge of the subject matter covered in the training. Those exercises provide an excellent opportunity to provide feedback from the trainer and for the participants to learn from each other, determine best practices and strategies, and learn more about the workers' compensation and insurance laws.

Practical Skills Training topics that have been conducted include the following:

- Direct Examination and Cross Examination (October 2006);
- Direct Examination and Cross Examination of Expert Witnesses (March 2007);
- Discovery Tools, Objections and Responses (November 2007);
- Pre-Hearing Dispute Resolution: Case Management, Assessment and Development (March 2008);
- Advanced Case Development and Formulation of Oral and Written Arguments (May 2008);

- Occupational Disease and Repetitive Trauma Injuries (April 2009);
- Formulation of Arguments to Assist Injured Employees Through the Medical Dispute Resolution Process (August 2009);
- Effectively Questioning Physicians on Medico-Legal Issues (April 2010);
- Case Assessment and Development to Address Producing Cause and Sole Cause (October 2010);
- Causation in Light of Transcontinental Ins. Co. v. Crump and Tips for Effective Cross-Examination of Carrier's Expert (July 2011);
- Writing Effective Appeals (February 2012); and
- Medical Dispute Resolution (April 2012).

Additional Practical Skills Training topics in the future will include new Medical Dispute Resolution rules, causation, presumptions, and medical Contested Case Hearings based on Public Counsel's position papers.

Customer Service Representative (CSR) Training. A comprehensive training program is provided to each CSR to enable them to respond accurately and promptly to injured employees' questions.

Newly revised training manuals with copies of the Workers' Compensation Act and Rules are provided to each CSR with the requirement that they be conversant with the information contained therein. Training requirements include completing the OIEC Core Training, workers' compensation modules; customer service training; computer, telephone, and soft-skills training; and early intervention, administrative training. Ongoing education includes regular review of the agency website and links, and attendance at the various teleconference training sessions. A monthly review of Appeals Panel decisions is also required as the decisions provide interpretations of the Act and Rules and procedural clarifications.

Before being assigned to providing customer service to injured employees, CSRs are required to observe interaction between injured employees and Ombudsmen. In addition, new CSRs choose or are assigned a more senior CSR and an Ombudsman Lead (field office team leader) as a mentor for guidance and advice. They are also required to observe dispute resolution proceedings, preparation appointments, Benefit Review Conferences, and Contested Case Hearings. Training exercises are given that are designed to help CSRs determine the questions to ask injured employees and the information that should be provided based upon the injured employee's needs. This extensive training is designed to produce employees who are well-equipped to provide exceptional customer service.

The agency's Customer Service Program provides advocacy, assistance, and education about the workers' compensation system while DWC staff processes official and regulatory actions.

Old Law Training. Although the majority of workers' compensation claims involves injuries that have occurred after the workers' compensation system reform, there are still claims in the system that occurred prior to 1991, and are referred to as "Old Law" claims. If "settlements" were negotiated in the Old Law cases that resulted in lifetime medical benefits and a dispute

occurs, OIEC may receive a request from the injured employee to assist in the resolution of the injured employee's medical dispute. Although Old Law disputes do not arise frequently, it is imperative that OIEC staff is knowledgeable about how to assist an injured employee in these disputes. This bench strength is difficult to monitor given the agency's rate of retirements and growing complexity in the law.

A training presentation for the Ombudsman and Customer Service Programs on how to obtain, provide, and review information regarding Old Law cases was conducted in 2010 and 2011. The presentation focused on providing preliminary Old Law assistance and assistance to injured employees with pre-hearing conferences.

Mental Health First Aid Training. The agency is training all staff in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to give OIEC employees the knowledge and tools to assist a customer who may be in emotional or mental distress. MHFA is a public education program, coordinated by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, which introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. MHFA is a 12-hour course which uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis, select interventions and provide initial help, and connect persons to professional, peer, social, and self-help care.

OIEC's Deputy Public Counsel/Chief of Staff and Associate Director of Communications and Outreach received Instructor Certification in order to teach the MHFA course to all OIEC employees. Half of the agency was trained in 2011 as Mental Health First Aiders, and the remaining agency employees will be trained in 2012. OIEC management is ensuring all agency employees are prepared to act in the event of a psychiatric emergency, understand how to interact with a person in crisis, how to protect themselves, and how to connect the person with professional help. Ultimately, the training allows OIEC to better serve its customers and the human condition.

Teleconferences. Teleconferences are held to ensure OIEC staff in the field and central office stays informed of necessary information to continue to effectively serve the injured employees of Texas. Teleconferences may be held for specific agency functions, such as Ombudsmen or Customer Service Representatives, or for the agency as a whole. RSAs may make presentations on legal issues or presentations may be made by OIEC staff on new legislation, policies, and procedures. Agency staff also has the opportunity to request particular topics be included in the teleconferences via the agency Policy Development Program.

OIEC Conferences. Three in-person meetings are held for staff each year, if budget permits. Below is a summary of each type.

- *OIEC's Annual Conference:* OIEC's annual conference is held in June for all OIEC staff to come together in one place. The conference generally lasts over a three-day period to allow for travel during work hours. Since OIEC staff is located throughout Texas, the conference provides an opportunity to get to know each other - providing a face with a

name, building OIEC's network, and increasing agency relations to overcome geographical barriers among OIEC's 20 locations and central office.

Training sessions promote teamwork and ethics as well as provide information about aspects of the agency that staff may not be familiar with. Breakout sessions address a variety of topics, including current legislative activities, changes in workers' compensation laws and rules, and new agency policies and procedures. Information presented at the conference is designed to enhance the skills of staff and increase communication within the agency in order to provide excellent service to the injured employees of Texas. Additionally, the conference provides continuing education credits to help Ombudsmen and other OIEC staff satisfy the requirements for maintaining their Workers' Compensation Adjuster's License and for OIEC attorneys to obtain continuing legal education credits.

- *OIEC Leadership Meeting:* OIEC holds an annual meeting where management employees meet for training, issue discussion, strategic planning, and employee development. The meeting provides an opportunity for management of all of the program areas of the agency (Customer Service, Ombudsman, and Administration and Operations) to come together and focus efforts on improving communication and the quality of the service provided to the injured employees of Texas.
- *Legal Services Planning and Debriefing Session:* OIEC periodically hosts an in-person meeting for agency attorneys to discuss legal issues in the workers' compensation system and plan legal training for the Ombudsman Program. The meeting also provides an opportunity for candid discussion about how effectively the agency is serving its mission to assist, educate, and advocate on behalf of the injured employees of Texas.

Emergency Preparedness, Risk Management, and Continuity Plan Training. OIEC conducts periodic training regarding emergency preparedness, risk management, and the agency's Continuity Plan to ensure staff understands what to do in case of emergencies to circumvent any confusion or adversity resulting from possible disasters. The agency periodically runs drills regarding procedures for handling situations with a potentially threatening injured employee, disaster drills for the Coastal field offices in preparation for the hurricane season, or other various safety drills and tests.

Other Training. Additional training that staff periodically attends includes Employment Law, and SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) training.

Training is one of the most important aspects of the agency and is ultimately beneficial to the injured employees in Texas. Although the agency makes every effort to retain its outstanding staff, the agency's focus on employee development ultimately enables OIEC staff to be extremely competitive in higher-paying job classifications or in the same work in the private sector.

Succession Planning. The process of succession planning, a component of OIEC’s strategic and workforce plans, is preparing the agency for the risks associated with loss of knowledge that is critical to achieve its mission. OIEC is doing so by identifying, developing, and transferring knowledge to employees who become highly qualified and capable of filling key positions or perform crucial functions as individuals leave the agency.

The scope of OIEC’s succession planning includes identifying and developing key talent within the agency for Director, Associate Director, and Supervisor positions in the Ombudsman and Customer Service programs and Administration and Operations, which includes the Legal Services, Communications and Outreach Services, and Operations sections.

A copy of OIEC’s Succession Plan is attached in Appendix H.

APPENDIX H

*Office of Injured Employee Counsel
Succession Plan*

February 2012

Office of Injured Employee Counsel Succession Plan

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Executive Summary

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. — Benjamin Franklin

The Office of Injured Employee Counsel (OIEC) has a weighty responsibility – to assist hard-working Texans who likely are in pain and may be frustrated by the complexities of the workers' compensation system. The core of the agency, the Ombudsmen, must know the law, understand aspects of health care, and have the heart of a social worker. The Ombudsmen and Customer Service Representatives also must be educators, able to patiently explain laws, rules, processes, and procedures so that injured employees and their families can make informed decisions about pursuing their claims.

OIEC's overall strength in serving injured employees resides in the knowledge and experience its staff possesses. The young state agency, which began operating in 2006, has a staff of 152 (as of January 1, 2012) with a combined 2,100 years of workers' compensation experience, or an average of 13 years per staff member. This strength soon will be at risk as experienced staff becomes eligible for retirement.

Much of the impetus for formal succession planning at OIEC is the potential for high employee turnover and loss of critical knowledge and experience due to retirements. However, the process exists to preserve continuity in services regardless of the reason for the vacancy – resignation, transfer, termination, death, disability, or retirement. Life can bring sudden changes so even young leaders need to build bench strength, employees who are prepared to perform crucial functions or step into key positions, in case something unexpected happens.

The process of succession planning, a component of OIEC's strategic and workforce plans, is preparing the agency for the risks associated with loss of knowledge that is critical to achieve its mission. OIEC is doing so by identifying, developing, and transferring knowledge to employees who become highly qualified and capable of filling key positions or performing crucial functions as individuals leave the agency.

The scope of OIEC's succession planning includes identifying key talent within the agency for Director, Associate Director, and Supervisor positions in the Ombudsman and Customer Service programs and Administration and Operations, which includes the Legal Services, Communications and Outreach Services, and Operations sections⁶⁶. In this first phase of the planning process, staff:

- Researched best practices in succession planning with a literature review and interviews with agencies in Texas and other states. Most agencies contacted have had limited success in developing formal succession plans.
- Assessed the risk of employee turnover. Employees were surveyed about their retirement plans to determine when to expect gaps in staffing, where the gaps will occur by program and location, and the implications for OIEC's ability to provide effective services and achieve its

⁶⁶ This first phase of succession planning excludes four leadership positions: the Public Counsel, who is appointed by the Governor, the Deputy Public Counsel/Chief of Staff, the new Director of Administration and Operations position, and the Internal Auditor, a position that likely will be filled externally due to its unique requirements.

mission over the long term. Staff also considered the risk to OIEC's services for reasons other than retirements, such as salary limitations and office closures.

- Conducted leadership position analyses. Staff reviewed functional job descriptions and job requirements in the Performance Planning and Development System (PPDS) for each Director, Associate Director, and Supervisor and interviewed OIEC leadership to identify critical skills and knowledge (also known as competencies) necessary for success in these positions.
- Discussed bench strength, defined as employees positioned to succeed each Supervisor, Associate Director, and Director.
- Identified gaps in competencies for potential successors and how to bridge them.
- Reviewed training, cross-training, mentoring, and other workforce development practices currently used by Directors and Supervisors and methods that could be used in the future.
- Updated career ladder requirements, including a preference that supervisory job candidates have Team Lead experience.

Staff found in its research that if OIEC acts now, it will have time – three to six years – for training, mentoring, and transferring knowledge before experienced leaders begin to retire in large numbers. The following recommendations would expand succession planning at OIEC to include a more formal system of identifying and developing individuals for greater responsibilities.

Recommendations

1. Appoint a succession planning committee to:
 - Develop succession planning **goals and measures** with responsible parties, and track progress. Some goals and measures are recommended on page 5 of this report.
 - Examine and adopt across-the-board core **competencies** necessary for OIEC leaders to succeed. Incorporate the adopted competencies into the career ladder requirements and Performance Planning and Development System (PPDS). A list of proposed competencies begins on page 10.
 - Create a **Leadership Talent Pool** database that includes assessments of whether the members need more training and development to step up to leadership positions.⁶⁷
 - Build bench strength by ensuring that employees have the **training and development** programs that will help them to develop the competencies needed for their career moves. Suggested training improvements are on page 12.
 - Analyze and report on recommended changes to the OIEC **career ladder**. These recommendations begin on page 12.
 - Oversee the creation of an **Intranet page** for employees who want to compare their skills and abilities with those required for other positions in the agency.
 - Begin a **legacy project** with video or audio recordings of departing staff's key knowledge and documenting his or her contacts, reports, databases, and other resources.
 - **Communicate** succession planning activities to the rest of staff.

⁶⁷ Grooming internal candidates to promote from within gives them an edge but does not guarantee a promotion.

2. During annual performance evaluations, include formal discussions of goal setting and training strategies and design an **individual development plan** for each employee interested in advancement and inclusion in the Leadership Talent Pool. Directors and Supervisors should consider employees not currently at the top of the list but who show promise and a desire to move into leadership positions. Revise Section V of the PPDS form and the Self-Assessment Tool to incorporate the individual development plan.
3. Ensure that all potential candidates are made aware of **job openings** and how to apply for them.
4. Implement **cross training** for Administration and Operations functions.
5. **Review and refresh** the succession plan as needed (at least annually). This will include questions in the biennial Survey of Employee Engagement to help assess the risk from employee turnover.

This report provides more detail on OIEC's mission and the risks to achieving it due to retirements, salary limitations, office closures, and other factors contributing to employee turnover. The report also presents in more detail the agency's current succession planning activities and recommended strategies to address the risk of employee turnover.

Agency Mission, Philosophy, Goals, and Strategies

Mission

To assist, educate, and advocate on behalf of the injured employees of Texas.

Philosophy

The Office of Injured Employee Counsel (OIEC) is committed to protecting the rights of the injured employees of Texas in the workers' compensation system. OIEC provides the highest level of professional, efficient, and effective customer service and maintains a work environment that values a diverse workforce, ethical management practices, teamwork, respect, and dignity.

Goals

Goal 1 – To assist injured employees in the workers' compensation system and protect their rights.

Goal 2 – To increase injured employee education regarding their rights and responsibilities and refer them to local, state, and federal programs.

Goal 3 – To advocate on behalf of injured employees as a class.

Strategies

Strategy 1 – Prepare unrepresented injured employees and assist them in the Texas Department of Insurance's administrative dispute resolution proceedings.

Strategy 2 – Provide injured employees with information about their rights and responsibilities and refer them to local, state, and federal programs offering financial assistance, rehabilitation, work placement, or social services.

Strategy 3 – Advocate on behalf of injured employees as a class in judicial, legislative, rulemaking, and administrative processes, and ensure injured employees' rights are protected.

OIEC Succession Planning Mission, Policy, Goals, and Measures

Mission

- To develop and maintain a workforce that effectively assists, educates, and advocates on behalf of the injured employees of Texas.

Policy

- To train and promote from within whenever possible.
- To help employees develop to their full potential and achieve realistic career goals by offering appropriate training and development opportunities.
- To review and revise the succession plan at least annually or as circumstances change.

Goals

Goal 1 – Avoid disruptions in quality customer service by ensuring a ready supply of internal talent for key positions when they are vacated.

Goal 2 – Partner with veteran staff to train and develop employees who want to take on greater responsibilities in serving injured employees as leaders in the agency.

Goal 3 – Create efficiencies and reallocate funds to pay for training or pay for functions that would improve services to injured employees.

Goal 4 – Help employees find satisfaction in their jobs.

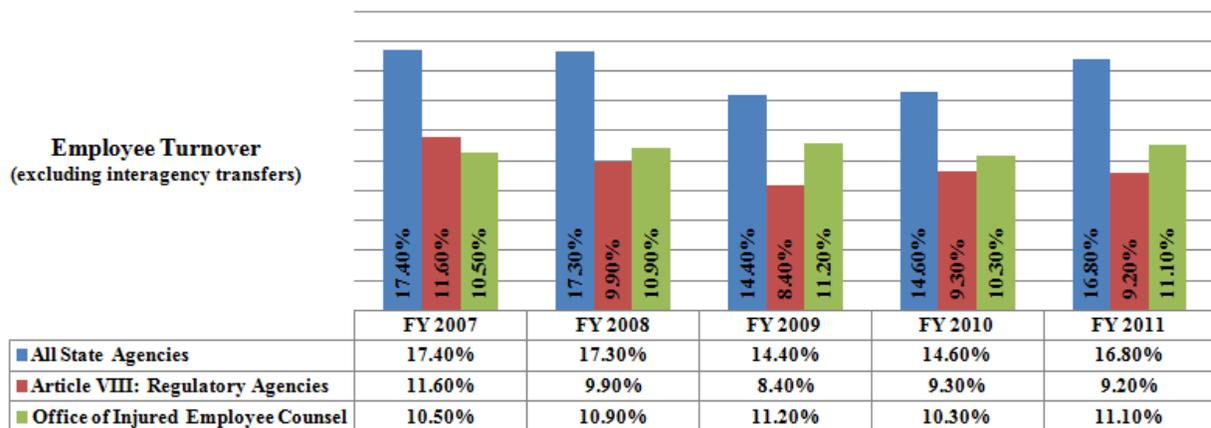
Measures

- Amount of savings achieved by retaining employees.
- Amount of funds reallocated to pay for training employees or improving services.
- Average rate of employee turnover.
- Average amount of time leadership positions remain vacant.
- Percent of executive-level vacancies filled with internal promotions.
- Percent of employees in Leadership Talent Pool.
- Percent of promotions from Leadership Talent Pool.
- Percent of employees satisfied with training and opportunities for advancement.
- Number of training sessions attended by employees.
- Percent of employee-requested training sessions OIEC is able to provide.
- Number and percent of veteran staff (staff with more than five years of experience) who help train and develop less experienced employees.

OIEC Mission’s Long-term Risk to Employee Turnover

Overview

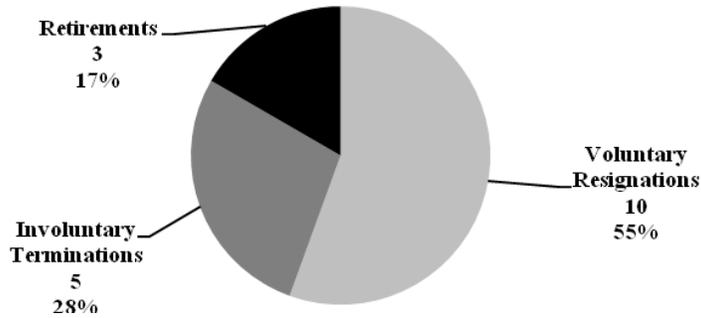
OIEC is relatively successful in retaining employees and limiting the costs associated with employee turnover: recruiting, selecting, orienting, and training new employees, leave payout to departing employees, and lower workplace productivity due to vacancies. The agency’s 10.3 percent employee turnover rate in fiscal year (FY) 2010 was about 30 percent lower than the combined state-agency rate of 14.6 percent, as shown in the table below. (Source: State Auditor’s Office Workforce Summary, December 2010, Report No. 11-702) Data kept by OIEC indicate a 12 percent turnover rate in FY 2011.



The section most vulnerable to employee turnover is the Ombudsman Program. Of the 18 employees who left OIEC in FY 2011, 58 percent worked in the Ombudsman Program, 37 percent in Customer Service, and 5 percent in Legal Services and Administration and Operations. Losing Ombudsmen is costly to the agency, which invests about a year of supervisory time and \$40,000 in training, materials, and licensing for each apprentice (Ombudsman Associate).

More than half of employees who leave OIEC resign voluntarily for reasons other than retirement, as shown in the next chart. Most cited personal circumstances as the reason for leaving. That is expected to change markedly within three to six years, based on an analysis of employee retirement eligibility and a survey of employee retirement plans.

**OIEC Employee Turnover Justification
(based on the average turnover per year
FY 2009 through FY 2011)**



Retirement Eligibility

OIEC’s dedicated staff has over 2,100 years of combined workers’ compensation experience. More than two-thirds of staff has at least 10 years of experience and half has at least 15 years. Retaining this depth of knowledge and experience with the complexities of the workers’ compensation system is a key factor in fulfilling OIEC’s mission of assisting, educating, and advocating for Texans who are injured on the job. Therefore, OIEC gauged the risks from retirements, particularly among Directors and Supervisors, beginning with a look at earliest retirement eligibility dates.

About one-fourth of all staff (152 were employed as of January 1, 2012) and more than 26 percent of Directors and Supervisors are eligible to retire within three years. Within six years, 42 percent of Directors and Supervisors will be eligible to retire. Here is the breakdown by program area. Number of staff is indicated in parentheses.

**Percentage of Directors and Supervisors
Eligible to Retire By December 31,
(Within each program area)**

| | 2015 | 2018 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ombudsman Program (10) | 30% | 70% |
| Customer Service Program (4) | 50% | 50% |
| Legal Services (2) | 50% | 100% |
| Administration & Operations (3) | 0% | 33% |

Each of the 20 field offices and the Central Office are at risk of losing staff to retirement within three to six years. Several offices — including Amarillo, Central, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston West, Laredo, Lubbock, Lufkin, and Waco — could lose to retirement more than 50 percent of staff within that time frame. The next table cites the percentage of staff eligible to

retire at each office by the end of 2015 and 2018, according to data provided by the Texas Department of Insurance.

Percentage of Office Staff Eligible to Retire By December 31,

| | 2015 | 2018 |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Abilene | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| Amarillo | 66.7 | 100. ^ |
| Austin | 16.7 | 16.7 |
| Beaumont | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Central | 27.8 | 66.7 |
| Corpus Christi | 80.0 | 80.0 |
| Dallas | 7.1 | 35.7 |
| Denton | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| El Paso | 28.6 | 57.1 |
| Fort Worth | 50.0 | 56.3 |
| Houston East | 25.0 | 41.7 |
| Houston West | 41.7 | 58.3 |
| Laredo | 33.3 | 66.7 |
| Lubbock | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| Lufkin | 66.7 | 66.7 |
| Midland | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| San Angelo | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| San Antonio | 0.0 | 15.4 |
| Tyler | 28.6 | 42.9 |
| Waco | 40.0 | 60.0 |
| Weslaco | 11.1 | 33.3 |

Retirement Plan Survey

An employee survey conducted in May 2011 indicates that OIEC will retain about half of its veteran staff beyond retirement eligibility dates. Of the 136 (86.6 percent) employees who participated in the survey, about 40 percent stated they will be eligible to retire within six years. Of these, 52.7 percent stated they plan to retire within six years. Here is a breakdown by program.

- **Ombudsman Program (76 respondents)**
 - 33 (43.4 percent) of 76 are eligible for retirement in the next six years
 - 16 (48.5 percent) of 33 will retire in the next six years

- 3 (18.8 percent) of 16 will retire in the next 12 months
 - 3 (18.8 percent) of 16 will retire in 1 to 2 years
 - 3 (18.8 percent) of 16 will retire in 3 to 4 years
 - 7 (43.8 percent) of 16 will retire in 5 to 6 years
- **Customer Service Program (41 respondents)**
 - 16 (39.0 percent) of 41 are eligible for retirement in the next six years
 - 10 (62.5 percent) of 16 will retire in the next six years
 - 2 (20.0 percent) of 10 will retire in the next 12 months
 - 1 (10.0 percent) of 10 will retire in 1 to 2 years
 - 6 (60.0 percent) of 10 will retire in 3 to 4 years
 - 1 (10.0 percent) of 10 will retire in 5 to 6 years
- **Legal Services (8 respondents)**
 - 2 (25.0 percent) of eight are eligible for retirement in the next six years
 - 1 (50.0 percent) of 2 will retire in the next six years
 - 1 (100.0 percent) of 1 will retire in 3 to 4 years
- **Administration and Operations (11 respondents)**
 - 4 (36.4 percent) of 11 are eligible for retirement in the next six years
 - 2 (50.0 percent) of 4 will retire in the next six years
 - 2 (100.0 percent) of 4 will retire in 5 to 6 years

Salary Limitations

OIEC’s average annual salary in FY 2010 was \$39,584, about the same as the statewide average, according to a State Auditor’s Office Workforce Summary report. However, an entry-level employee (Customer Service Representative III) earned \$29,145, a wage rate that limits the skill sets the agency can attract. An Ombudsman I made \$36,764 and an Ombudsman II made \$42,000. Although employees who have left OIEC voluntarily have not cited pay dissatisfaction as the reason for resigning, the Survey of Employee Engagement indicates “fair pay” as an area needing improvement. OIEC executive management agrees and is especially concerned that Ombudsmen could become targets of private-sector recruitment efforts. However, State agencies must adhere to the State Job Classification and Salary Schedule in the General Appropriations Act. Also, OIEC management — sensitive to the perception that Ombudsmen compete with attorneys in private practice for workers’ compensation claimants — must keep salaries below what attorneys could expect in the public sector. (Note: Ombudsmen assist claimants; they do not represent them.) Nonetheless, management is evaluating salaries throughout the agency with the goal of eliminating inequities and improving OIEC’s ability to attract and keep capable employees.

Field Office Closures

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI-DWC) provides office space for OIEC and, as leases near expiration, assesses whether to keep field offices open. TDI-DWC has closed the Wichita Falls and Victoria field offices and the Missouri City Satellite Office over the past few years and has decided to close the Bryan Field Office on June 1, 2012. The majority of OIEC employees in Victoria and Missouri City were able to transfer to other field offices, but the two Wichita Falls employees declined to transfer to Dallas due to the distance and resigned. If additional offices are closed, more jobs could be lost and OIEC services may suffer. Shortage of space may limit how many displaced staff can be accommodated at other field offices. Uncertainty over office closures affects staff and services as executive management must decide whether to fill vacancies at offices nearing their lease expiration dates.

Strategies to Reduce Risks from Employee Turnover

Although mass retirements of veteran staff do not appear to pose an immediate threat to director and supervisory positions, OIEC needs to prepare employees now to lead the agency as successfully as those they will succeed. To gain insight on how to retain and prepare future OIEC leaders, staff worked with current organizational leaders to analyze their positions, identify required job functions and competencies, and assess bench strength. Competencies were defined as the skills, abilities, and characteristics required for exemplary performance and success in each leadership position. Bench strength was defined as the person or persons in the agency who could step into the leadership position and succeed.

Interviews with leadership indicated that revisions to the career ladder procedure and training and development programs would help OIEC retain employees and prepare them for leadership.

Across-the-Board Leadership Competencies for Committee Consideration

The managerial, interpersonal, and technical competencies and other requirements identified in the leadership analysis that are applicable across the board to each leadership position are listed below. The Succession Planning Committee will consider leadership competencies and adopt those that are core, or most crucial, to the agency's success at achieving its mission.⁶⁸ The adopted competencies will be incorporated into the OIEC career ladder requirements and PPDS and will help shape training opportunities for current and potential leaders.

Managerial competencies

- Strategic planning
- Change management: Ability to communicate, motivate, and inspire enthusiasm for change
- Employee development

⁶⁸ The committee could consider other competency models, such as the federal government's Executive Core Qualifications (<http://www.opm.gov/ses/recruitment/ecq.asp>).

- Creative thinking
- Persistence
- Activator: Marketing the agency mission
- Maturity
- Knowledge and application of employment law
- Ability to inspire a strong sense of ownership
- Ability to make decisions without reacting impulsively
- Conflict resolution
- Team leadership/team building
- Organization
- Deal with employees in a fair and impartial way
- Promote employees' confidence in their abilities
- Maintain confidentiality
- Formulate solutions to improve performance of individual employees, teams, and OIEC overall
- Understanding of how a program's performance affects the agency as a whole

Interpersonal competencies

- Customer service
- Negotiation/mediation
- External relations
- Passion for the work
- Collaboration/teamwork
- Active listening/empathy
- Effective oral and written communication in English and Spanish
- Open-mindedness

Technical competencies

- Problem solving and decision making
- Knowledge of administrative law
- Skill in applying and explaining workers' compensation laws and OIEC rules and procedures
- Keeping up to date on new technology
- Clear and concise writing
- Budgeting
- Process improvement
- Knowledge of state and federal labor laws and regulations
- Ability to extract and analyze data

Other leadership position requirements/preferences

- Workers' compensation insurance adjuster's license
- Graduation from accredited four-year college or university or veteran's status (for individuals with fewer than five years of workers' compensation experience)
- Community service

- Experience on a board of directors
- Location in Austin (for Directors)
- Frequent travel

Career Ladder

The OIEC career ladder is not traditional; except for Ombudsman Associates, employees are not automatically promoted when they become qualified. They must compete for promotion when a position opens. Therefore, some employees perform at the same level of responsibility and competency as their peers but for less compensation, which can affect motivation. Unless the two supervisory positions open, Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) can move up the career ladder and earn more money only by transferring into the Ombudsman Program.

The career ladder should be a tool for employees and their supervisors to design, plan, and direct employee professional development and career management decisions. Employees should be able to readily identify the skills required to move to a specific position within the agency, including lateral moves. Improvements suggested by leadership include:

- Create CSR IV positions to better compensate qualified Team Leads for their added responsibilities and to provide an alternative promotional opportunity for CSRs who prefer to stay with the Customer Service program.
- Add a third Customer Service Supervisor position to improve oversight of field offices and provide more opportunity for advancement.
- Add a second Customer Service Associate Director position to improve program planning and training and provide more opportunity for advancement.
- Make Team Lead experience a preference for promotion to Supervisor in the Ombudsman and Customer Service programs.
- Define Team Lead responsibilities and include them in the PPDS.
- Develop an Intranet page for employees to learn about their options in the career ladder and any other positions in the agency they may be interested in.

Training and Development

OIEC provides on-the-job training opportunities to its employees and sends them to classes as funds are available. Directors and Supervisors suggested improvements to leadership training and development to improve OIEC's bench strength:

- Create a Leadership Talent Pool⁶⁹ database with assessments of whether the participants need more training and development to close gaps in competencies and step up to leadership positions. Include target completion dates, responsible parties, and required resources.
- Design a development plan for each employee interested in advancement and/or inclusion in the Leadership Talent Pool, basing the plan on leadership competencies. Revise Section V of

⁶⁹ The Leadership Talent Pool would be a group of individuals whose growth the agency wants to accelerate. No promotion promises would be made, but the agency would commit to preparing them for higher levels of responsibilities.

the PPDS form and the Self-Assessment Tool and use them to incorporate the individual development plan.

- Allow Team Leads to attend Supervisor team meetings and Supervisors to attend Directors meetings on a rotating basis.
- Begin a legacy project to capture knowledge of retirees and other departing staff through documentation/video, including contacts, networks, location of documents, best practices, and other resources.
- Provide new CSRs with more in-person training by their Team Lead, Supervisor, and Associate Director, in addition to the standard of independent study and telephone interaction.
- Give CSRs more time off the telephone queue to participate in training and development.
- Train Ombudsman Associates in the Customer Service Program for the first six months before they begin Ombudsman training.
- Form focus groups consisting of Ombudsmen Team Leads, Supervisors, and CSRs to work together on an issue or task.

Leadership Talent Pool

The succession planning process thus far has identified all Director, Associate Director, and Supervisor positions as mission critical for one or more of the following reasons:

- Key contributor to mission
- Performs vital function that would stop if the position were left vacant
- Requires specialized skill sets that are difficult to replace
- Geographic – only one of its kind at a particular location/necessary at that location
- Potential high turnover job class due to retirements or other reasons

Some organizations have found that developing a pool of leadership candidates, as opposed to one-to-one replacement mapping, strengthens their ability to meet succession needs as well as improving performance of the organization as a whole. These organizations have developed a profile of successful leadership and developed a pool of leaders who meet this profile and have a range of functional and technical skills. The OIEC succession planning committee could consider the merits of this approach when deciding whether to create a Leadership Talent Pool. The participants could be tracked in a database with an assessment of their strengths, gaps in competencies, and strategies to bridge the gaps. The Leadership Talent Pool database would be regularly monitored and updated to reflect the participants' development of leadership competencies.