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JUVENILE JUSTICE FRONTLINE WORKER TURNOVER IN A PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

A Dissertation

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Private nonprofit juvenile justice organizations are facing a workforce crisis because of the high turnover of their frontline staff. Since frontline workers have a direct impact on youth and families in the juvenile justice system, their stability in agencies is critical for achieving good outcomes. Yet researchers have conducted few studies to understand turnover in the field of juvenile justice, particularly with private nonprofit agencies. This study provides a unique, in-depth, longitudinal, quantitative examination of a single private nonprofit agency’s frontline worker turnover in the agency’s units that work predominantly with juvenile justice youth. The study’s key contribution is examining the complex factors affecting the dependent variable, the timing of exits from a single organization. Longitudinal data available from the organization were used to analyze secondary data for the entire population of 1,212 frontline juvenile justice staff who worked for Adelphoi Village over a nine-year period between 2001 and 2009. The study used logistic regression methods to explore the effects of individual, organizational, and external factors, as well as the interaction of characteristics, on the timing of employees’ exits from the agency. Statistically significant effects on turnover were found with unemployment rates for the three categories of the dependent variable: employee exits at 90 days or less,
between 91 and 180 days, and between 181 and 365 days. The results of this study have implications for future research and policy.