

**Exit Survey Report 2003
Newfoundland and Labrador**

August 2003

Prepared by:

**Kerrie Cochrane
Student Employee
Health and Community Services Human Resource Planning Unit**

Acknowledgements

Members of the Health and Community Services Human Resource Planning Unit wish to acknowledge the assistance of the following organizations, without which this report would not have been possible:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards
- Capital Health (Nova Scotia)
- Atlantic Health Sciences Corporation-Regional Authority Two (New Brunswick)
- Northern Health Authority (British Columbia)
- Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board (Northwest Territories)
- Mount Sinai Hospital (Ontario)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The objectives of this report are to investigate the frequency and the process by which exit surveys are administered by health and community services boards in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to provide a standard exit survey template. In their final report of July 2003, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health and Community Services Planning Steering Committee recommended “Health boards implement a standard exit survey to capture information on reasons why employees leave health boards” (Recommendation number 23). Identifying these reasons will help health boards focus on issues within their control, leading to improved retention, and reduced turnover, of its employees.

In fiscal year 2000, employee turnover was the highest for allied health groups. Groups to highlight were those having over 15 per cent turnover including radiation therapists, audiologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and respiratory therapists. Given challenges facing the recruitment and retention of pharmacists in the province, their turnover rate of 14 per cent is also of concern. Reducing turnover has a significant impact on supply requirements for health professionals and reduces all costs and effort associated with recruitment, hiring, and orientation. It also establishes stability for the provision of health services and may improve morale and employee attitudes towards an organization.

This report is provided as encouragement for health boards to develop and implement an exit survey if they do not currently administer one, or to possibly improve current survey tools. This report covers the following areas:

- Limitations of the report;
- Environmental scan including multi-jurisdictional, cross industry, and provincial health system;
- Exit survey issues including confidentiality, process, and time and effort;
- Recommendations and concluding thoughts on exit surveys;
- A sample exit survey template.

1.2. Limitations of the Report

A limited number of examples were collected from other provinces. The participating regions included Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Columbia, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories. Consultation occurred with all health boards but was limited in scope. Further discussions on the merits of exits survey and their implementation are required between health boards. The template provided in this report is an example only, and further revisions and testing of the survey should take place before any efforts to implement are attempted.

2. Environmental Scan

Exit surveys are tools that can be used by various organizations and corporations as a means of measuring organizational flaws as well as employee opinions of the organization. (Giacalone, R. A, Knouse, S. B., & Montagliani, A., 1997, & Burke, S., e-mail communication, July 11, 2003). This measurement in turn can be useful in assisting the employer in remedying shortcomings found within the organization. Exit surveys are important tools that should become part of provincial and internal human resource planning, to identify and act on issues within the control of the employers to reduce turnover.

2.1. Multi-jurisdictional, Cross-Industry Scan

Samples of exit surveys were obtained from organizations in the United States and Canada. Most sources used for this report came from Canada. The samples from the United States were used mainly to compare how much of a variety exists amongst exit surveys. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Columbia, Ontario, and The Northwest Territories were among the provinces where samples were provided. In Nova Scotia, Capital Health was contacted. Capital Health uses exit interviews that are conducted via telephone. Participants (departed employees) are selected randomly as Capital Health employs over 9,000 individuals (Gallagher, H. e-mail communication July 18, 2003).

Atlantic Health Sciences Corporation of New Brunswick was contacted. Exit interviews are the predominant practice within that organization. A Human Resources Officer is the interviewer and when interviews are not feasible either a self-addressed stamped envelope with the interview questionnaire is given to the employee or questionnaires are mailed to the departed employee. NHA was contacted in British Columbia. This authority includes 16 health boards and is covers over half of British Columbia's geographic region (Webster, M. e-mail communication, July 18, 2003). NHA supplies its regional managers with an exit survey and interview template that can be altered by the various managers (Webster, M. e-mail communication, July 18, 2003). The Human Resources Department carries out implementation.

Mount Sinai Hospital in Ontario, provided an exit questionnaire. When an employee of Mount Sinai Hospital resigns, the Human Resources Department sends the exit questionnaire to the individual's home address along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (Cheuy, D. e-mail communication, August 5, 2003). Mount Sinai Hospital's Human Resources Department tested their survey with departed employees from May 1, 2002 and August 31, 2002 (Cheuy, D, e-mail communication, August 5, 2003). Their response rate was and continues to be 36% and data was and continues to be summarized quarterly for senior management to review (Cheuy, D. e-mail communication, August 5, 2003).

In the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board was contacted. Within this organization the Human Resources Officer or an outside party generally conducts the exit survey depending on the departing employees comfort level.

Healthcare organizations in Canada that have and/or use exit surveys seem to have a similar template style. Most have similar demographic information such as age group, length of employment, job title, gender, and sometimes race and or ethnicity. Common themes that are addressed in exit surveys are financial concerns, workload and scheduling, work climate, relationships with superiors and colleagues, as well as intra and interpersonal concerns (Burke, S. e-mail communication, July 11, 2003, & templates received). More general templates and templates retrieved by other jurisdictions?? tended to have some of the same attributes. Style and amount of questions depended mostly on the profession. Samples taken from the University of Utah and the South Texas Community College, addressing faculty members, tended to be four pages in length and adhered to the above-mentioned themes. A copy of the United States Department of Health and Human Services exit survey was obtained via their website. This exit survey was similar to the one provided by Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board as questions were grouped under sections (For example, compensation, workload, etc.).

Table 1. Canadian Health Authorities Exit Surveys

Source	Length (pages)	Methods
Capital Health (NS)	4	Phone Interview
NHA (BC)	2	In Person Interview or Mailed Questionnaire
AHSC (NB)	2	In Person Interview or Survey
YHSSB (NWT)	9	In Person Questionnaire
Mount Sinai Hospital (ON)	2	Mailed Questionnaire

2.2. Provincial Health System

Within Newfoundland and Labrador the response rate was perfect—all boards responded. Summarized in the table below is categorical information concerning exit surveys across the province:

Table 2: Provincial Health Boards Exit Survey Status

Number of Health Boards and Corporations in NF & Lab.	Number of Boards With Exit Surveys or Interviews	Number of Boards in the Development Stage	Number of Boards That Use Exit surveys or Interviews	Number of Boards Interested
14	7	3	6	14

Out of all of the boards that responded within Newfoundland and Labrador 50% have an exit survey or interview, 21% are in the stages of developing one, 42% currently use exit surveys or interviews. Every health board and corporation contacted in the province showed interest in exit surveys and in this report. The samples from Health Boards were varied. Some were mainly instruments for interview purposes containing only open-ended question items. Others had a mixture of likert-type (i.e. scorable) as well as open-ended questions.

3. Issues Surrounding Exit Surveys

3.1. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an extremely important factor when considering exit surveys. Exit surveys request personal information concerning an individual's previous place of employment. A respondent for this type of survey may be wary about expressing his or her true opinions about the organization because of fear of some sort of negative repercussions (Burke, S... & www.uncc/ragiaical/exitframes.html). To ensure confidentiality, an individual should not be asked to provide any information that will make him or herself identifiable to the organization. Therefore, someone neutrally associated with both the organization and the respondent should administer the exit survey.

3.2. Implementation/Process

There are a number of ways to implement exit surveys, for instance, by phone, in person, and via mail or Internet. To help eliminate instances of bias it has been recommended that organizations either do a follow up survey or provide the survey on a website (www.uncc/ragiaical/exitframes.html). It has been highly recommended by a number of sources, as well, that a neutral party administer the exit survey, to help avoid any type of bias (Giacalone, R. A, Knouse, S. B., & Montagliani, A., 1997, Burke, S., e-mail communication, July 11, 2003, & www.uncc/ragiaical/exitframes.html). Feedback from provincial and other health jurisdictions suggest that the Human Resources Department be responsible for administering the exit survey. Generally the Human Resources Department would have access to employee information, so in turn this department could readily fill out the demographic information needed on the survey i.e. (See Appendix A). It has been recognized that not every Human Resources Department will always remain neutral, however, as with most processes, flaws will be evident. Nova Scotia has chosen to select a random sample and contact participants via telephone.

3.3. Time and Effort

The ideal exit survey should be clear, concise and to the point. Exit surveys are generally no longer than two to three pages. Limiting the survey helps reduce participant fatigue and attrition. An individual may be more likely to respond to a short, understandable survey as opposed to a lengthy one given that there is no reward or motivating factor for participation.

4. Conclusion

The key objectives of this report were to obtain an idea of the types of exit surveys currently used by employers, as well to obtain information on how many Health Boards in Newfoundland and Labrador use them. In turn, the final goal of this report was to provide a framework for research that may uncover the reasons as to why people leave the healthcare profession in Newfoundland and Labrador. Exit surveys are valuable tools for organizations to use. This useful questionnaire can help the organization better understand its employees and better sustain the employees' time with the organization. A regular standardized exit survey may help Newfoundland and Labrador retain its healthcare professionals. The majority of samples that were used to derive the final exit survey template were obtained from the healthcare corporations and boards within Canada. The Newfoundland and Labrador Health and Community Services Human Resources Planning Unit strongly promote the use of exit surveys in the health system. Current retention and recruitment initiatives should intend the focus on why employees leave. Moreover, trying to keep the current workers in the system could cut down on extra expenses. Recruitment can take a lot of time, effort and money.

5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

Health boards collaborate to implement a standard exit survey and process. Collaboration includes 1) Establishing agreement on survey content and a process, 2) Pre-testing the survey in three boards for a minimum of five surveys, 3) Revising survey and/or process, and 4) Implementation in all health boards.

Recommendation 2.

Survey be administered by human resource department staff to all employees leaving the organization including physicians.

Recommendation 3.

Summarize survey results, on a provincial basis, six months after implementation is completed.

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Appendix A: Exit Survey Template

Exit Survey

The following demographic information is to be completed by the HR department of the organization. Exit surveys are tools that are necessary for provincial and internal human resource planning. Information provided on this form should be kept confidential and not shared with any other departments associated with the organization.

Title of position: _____ Length of employment: _____

Age group: 30 & under ___ 31-40 ___ 41-50 ___ 51-60 ___ 61 & above ___

Gender: _____ How did they leave (circle one)? Voluntarily Involuntarily

This next section is to be completed by the departing employee either in person or at a later date that is more convenient. Participation is voluntary. Please remember this information is collected to investigate why people leave this organization. The main goal is to improve the state of this work environment. Thank-you for your input. The information you provide will be used for planning purposes only and results will be anonymous.

1) What was/were your main reason/reasons for leaving?

(If you choose more than one reason please put a star * by the most important reason)

- Retirement
- Spouse Related
- To Look After family
- Personal Health-Fear of Problems or Poor Health
- Insufficient Salary
- Better Job Opportunity
- Educational Opportunities
- Lack of Recreational Resources Within Community (i.e. Theatre)
- Lack of Support From Organization
 - Inadequate Equipment/technology
 - Poor Management
 - Coworker Related Issues
- Benefits
- Sole Practice Environment
- Weather
- Broaden Professional Experience
- Workload
- Stress-related
- Layoff
- Other (Please Specify): _____

2) Circle the appropriate hours of work and employment contract you had:

- | Hours of Work | Employment Contract |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Casual |

For the following statements please choose the number that corresponds closest with your views: **1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree**. If either of the following statements influenced your decision to leave place **Y=yes or N=No** in the box provided.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| 3) I felt I was adequately trained for my previous position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4) I felt I was an asset to the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5) I only worked the hours allotted/
defined by my position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6) My workload was reasonable and manageable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7) I was not afraid of losing my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8) My supervisor: | | | | | | |
| i) Gave me prompt feedback
regarding my job performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) Treated all employees equally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| iii) Was responsive to employee
complaints and concerns. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9) My co-workers and I had an excellent work
relationship. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10) My co-workers: | | | | | | |
| i) Communicated effectively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) Provided adequate support | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11) I enjoyed living in the community/city where
I worked. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) The people were friendly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) Resources were plentiful (home
supplies and recreational activities) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

