

THE COUNTY OF OTTAWA
HUMAN RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR 2009



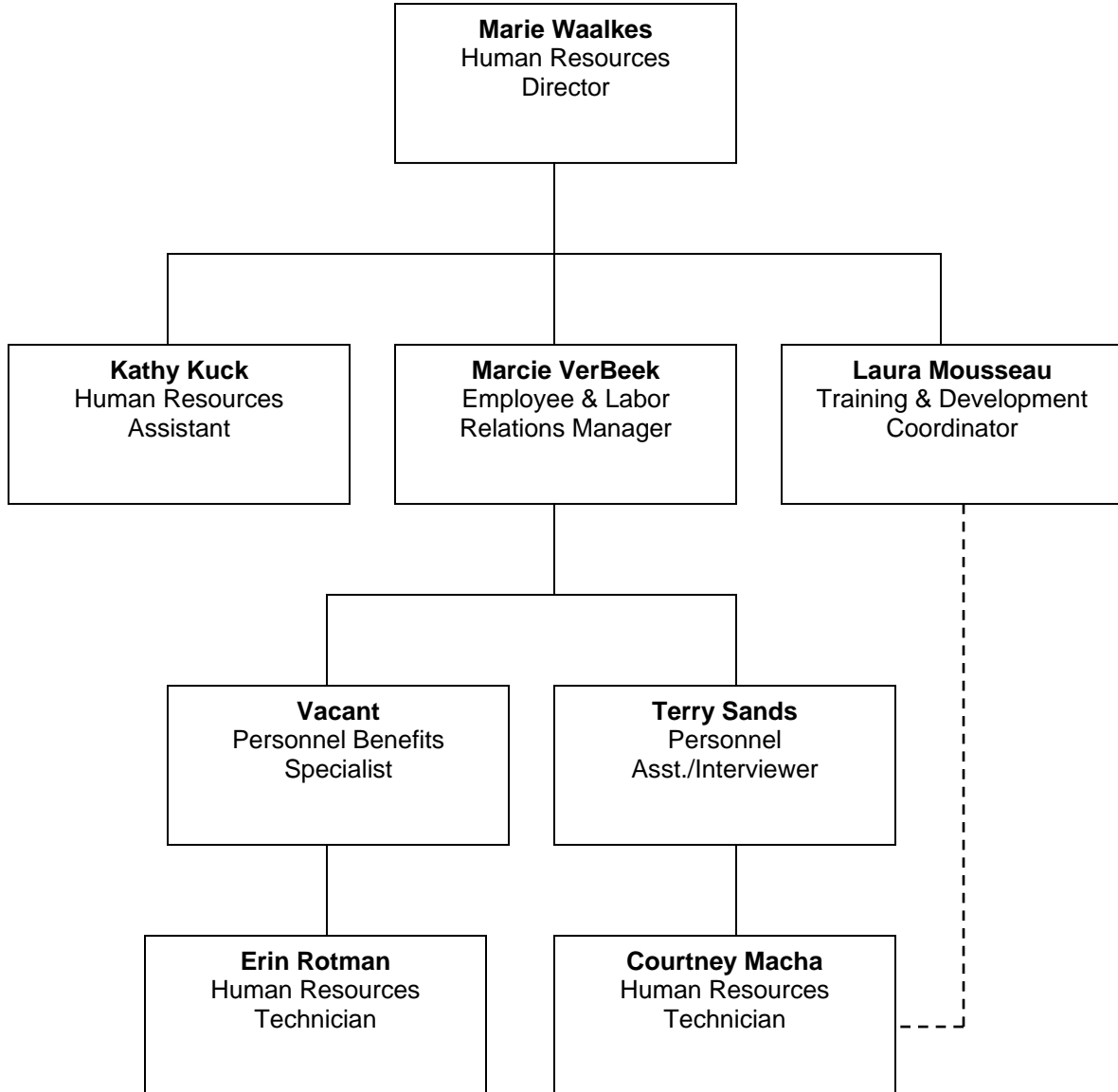
Human Resources Department
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*The activities and programs of this department are brought to you by the members of
the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners*

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Human Resource Department Staff 2009



**2009 HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT'S
ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Mission Statement: The Human Resources Department serves the County of Ottawa by focusing efforts on the County's most valuable asset, it's employees. Human Resources does this through recruitment, hiring and retention of a diverse, qualified workforce. The Human Resources Department provides human resource direction and technical assistance, training and development, equal employment opportunities and employee/labor relation services to the County.

Introduction:

The current Human Resources staff is responsible for providing the delivery of a full service Human Resources program to and for the County's existing departments and staff. This is no small undertaking considering that the County's work force has 888 benefited full-time and part-time employees, and 261 temporary employees comprised of eight different collective bargaining units, non-represented employee groups and unclassified staff.

The following is a list of functions currently being provided by the Human Resources Department: (The list is not in any order of importance.)

- (1) Employee Selection
 - a. On-Line Application
 - b. Applicant/Employee Development Tool
- (2) Exit Interviews
- (3) Employee Training and Development
 - a. GOLD (Growth Opportunities in Learning and Development)
 - b. Leadership Development
 - c. New Employee Orientation
 - d. Compliance Training
- (4) Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- (5) Labor Relations
 - a. Grievances
 - b. Grievance Discipline Data Base
 - c. Contract Negotiations
 - d. Contract Administration
- (6) Equal Employment Opportunity
- (7) Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- (8) Benefits Administration
 - a. Health Insurance
 - b. Dental Insurance
 - c. Vision Insurance
 - d. Tuition Reimbursement
 - e. 457 Deferred Compensation Plan
 - f. Workers Compensation
 - g. MERS
 - h. Life Insurance
 - i. Salary Wage Continuation (STD/LTD)
 - j. Family Medical Leave Act
 - k. Employee Wellness Program
- (9) Employee Recognition
- (10) Wage Evaluation & Classification Study
- (11) Unemployment Insurance

Many of the functions of the department are difficult to quantify. For instance, within the function of Benefits Administration the department answers numerous employee questions during the course of a year amounting to a significant expenditure of time. However, it is not feasible to keep detailed statistics regarding the numbers, duration or subject matter of such calls. Several functions are more easily quantifiable and are given in the remainder of this report. Following are highlights of the activities in many of the major Human Resources Department's functions for 2009.

Employee Selection:

The advertising of positions and the receipt of all employment applications is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department. A very detailed procedure for the various departments to follow in the hiring process was developed by the Human Resources Department and is outlined in Policy HR-04 Employee Selection Policy. Human Resources monitors and assures that selection policies and procedures are being followed by the individual departments. In 2008, the On-Line Application process was developed to streamline the application/interviewing/hiring process. Currently, the Human Resources Generalist arranges and coordinates the employee selection process with the help of a Human Resources Technician. In 2009, Human Resources maintained the "Job Hotline" (704 hits), an automated phone answering system through which callers can learn details about vacant County positions. Given the on-line application process and County website, the Job Hotline will be eliminated in 2010.

In response to eighty-one (81) positions posted by the County in 2009, five thousand twenty-two (5022) applications were received and screened. These numbers represent a decrease of fifty-four (54) positions posted and one thousand ninety-four (1094) more applications received. In 2009, the department conducted three hundred eighty-eight (388) employment interviews resulting in the hiring of one hundred (100) employees. Of those one hundred (100) hires, thirty (30) were promotions or transfers of existing employees and seventy (70) were new (external) hires.

In 2009, Human Resources worked closely with WebTecs and the County IT Department to implement the on-line employment application system, which was designed and developed in 2008. The system was developed in response to an identified need to modernize and streamline the county's hiring and application process. The on-line system was developed for general county employment applications and, in addition, special supplemental applications were designed and implemented for the Parks & Recreation Department and the Sheriff's Office. The on-line application system saves paper, makes applications readily available to department hiring managers, and stores hiring statistics for reporting purposes. In 2009, five thousand twenty-two (5,022) applicants applied for county jobs using the on-line system. As a component of the new application system, emails and letters are generated automatically to the applicants informing them of our receipt of their application, thereby providing a timely response to everyone who applies for a job with the County. As a result of the success of the on-line application process, in 2009 work began on two additional major initiatives, an electronic hiring packet and an on-line Board appointment application system. The electronic hiring packet will achieve a paperless concept to activate a new employee or transition a current employee. The on-line Board application process was developed to automate the application for Board appointments and maintain electronic storage of historical data.

Applicant Testing:

The HR department provides a variety of computerized assessment tools to assist hiring managers in screening qualified applicants. A new testing system was implemented in 2009 that will test candidates in a variety of specific software programs (Word, Excel, etc.), as well as skills such as spelling, grammar, reading comprehension, math, data entry and typing.

Exit Interviews:

In addition to conducting employment interviews the Human Resources Department also conducts an extensive exit interview process. Exit interviews are conducted in an effort to gain information that will result in better selection and training practices, improve working conditions, enhance supervision, and in general, further public relations by having the employee leave with a positive view of the employer. The exit interview can also be used to identify possible salary and benefit deficiencies, EEO violations, and other areas of potential legal liability.

In 2009, sixty-six (66) full and part-time employees, inclusive of twenty-five (25) retirees and nineteen (19) laid-off employees, separated from County employment. The turnover rate for full and part-time employees was 5.29% in 2009. This is a decrease in turnover from 8.73% in 2008. Ottawa County continues to represent stability as an employer to our labor force.

Employee Training Activities for 2009:



In early 2008 Ottawa County began the **GOLD** (Growth Opportunities in Learning and Development) Standard Training Programs. These programs were in direct response to employee surveys regarding the need for solid, meaningful professional development and training opportunities for our employees. The GOLD Standard Training is based upon the theory that employee training and development leads to increased knowledge and skills, increased employee engagement, and increased productivity, ultimately resulting in organizational improvement.

A Training Task Force was formed with representation from all areas of the county structure to assist in designing, evaluating and marketing the new training program. This group continued to meet throughout 2009 to provide ongoing ideas and training needs, attend training sessions to assist in evaluating courses and instructors, and to continually relay training information to their staff members.

One of the first goals of the program was to create a leadership development program. Four (4) groups of Ottawa County employees had completed the GOLD Standard Leaders program at the end of 2009. This is a three (3) month program including learning sessions and discussion groups centered around key skills identified for Ottawa County leaders. We have made ongoing adjustments to the training throughout the course, including adding more specific Ottawa County case studies and condensing the timeframe to allow for better continuity. 2009 also brought about the development of GOLD Leaders Level II roundtables on topics such as discipline and documentation, mentoring, and performance evaluations.

Updated New Employee Orientation began in the Spring of 2009. After extensive input from new employees and the Training Taskforce, a revised full-day format was developed and implemented. We have created a more positive introductory experience to employment at Ottawa County providing new employees with information on the organization and its structure, critical policies and procedures, essential and mandatory training, more hands-on and interactive technology training, and a thorough discussion of employee benefits. By working with hiring managers, we have also created a three level agenda (four (4) hours, six (6) hours, or eight (8) hours) allowing greater flexibility for part-time, non-benefitted, seasonal, and temporary employees. These orientation sessions are currently being offered twice a month, allowing

departments the option of starting employees on the day of orientation or having them begin work and attend the next available orientation session. There has been significant positive feedback about this greater flexibility in start date options.

One of the greatest achievements of the GOLD Standard Employee training program this year has been the success of our Spanish language classes, developed to better serve the increasing Hispanic population of Ottawa County. Through a partnership with Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, more than one hundred fifty (150) employees from all areas of County government have participated in our Spanish language program. The class meets weekly in six-week segments, and we have already had students complete all three levels, eighteen (18) full weeks of training. Giving employees a basic understanding of the language, customized vocabulary for their jobs and departments, and simply the confidence to try to communicate more has resulted in a much greater level of service to our Spanish speaking customers.

Quick Facts		
Total GOLD Standard Training Classes	-	275
Total GOLD Standard Leaders	-	95
Number of Unique Employees involved in Training	-	850
Percentage of Total Employees involved in Training	-	72%
Number of Employees involved in Spanish Training	-	150

The GOLD Standard Training program is continually finding ways to create an ongoing culture that promotes personal and professional development for all Ottawa County employees.

Employee Assistance:

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's) are designed to help employees and often their families recognize and overcome personal problems that are interfering with the employee's work performance. EAP's are designed to reach performance problems that cannot be remedied by training, education, or other employer-controlled factors. Examples of the many personal problems that an EAP may deal with are alcohol/drug abuse, emotional problems and marital issues. An effective EAP may help control employee turnover, absenteeism, and other costs associated with personal problems such as health care. Even though the employer pays for the service and may make referrals to the program, all information is held in strict confidence between the employee and the EAP. Ottawa County's EAP provider is the Employee Assistance Center (EAC).

Labor Relations:

In 2009 the Human Resources Department successfully negotiated eight Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA's) which expired at the end of 2008. Seven of the CBA's were negotiated and signed within the first sixty (60) days of 2009, and one was completed within the first ninety (90) days of 2009.

Grievances:

Four grievances, concerning contract interpretation, were filed in 2009. All were resolved at "Step 2" (at Department level) of the Grievance Process.

Benefits Administration:

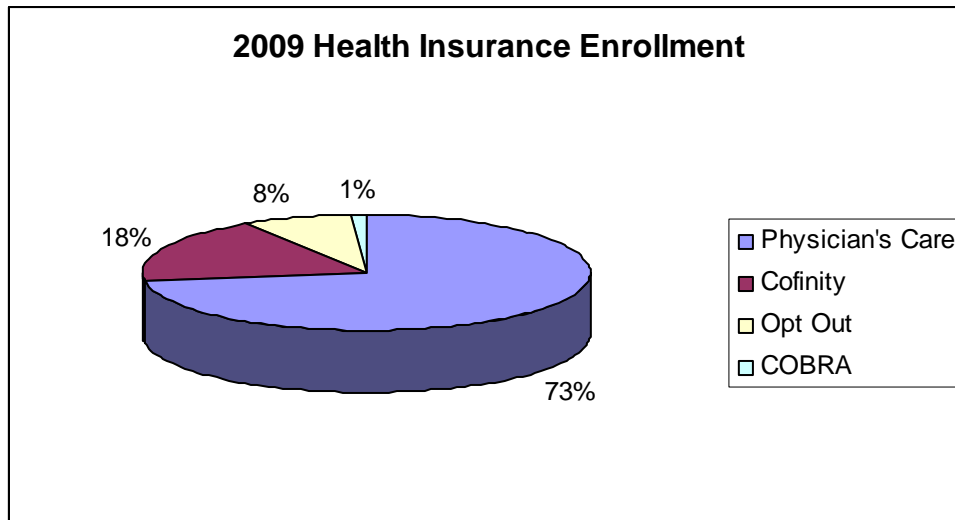
In 2009, the average number of active employees enrolled in the County Health Plan was 835. There are fifty (50) retirees enrolled under the age of 65 and nine (9) over the age of 65 in our health plan. There were eleven (11) people on COBRA.

The County's cafeteria/flexible benefits style health plan went into effect in 1997. The Ottawa County Health Plan consists of two managed care "network" plans. The plan is designed to offer greater flexibility of benefits to employees while taking advantage of discounts on the cost of medical services provided to employees. Additionally the County offers an upgraded dental program. In 2009, 595 employees participated in this enhanced dental program.

There was one significant health insurance change in 2009. In October, Ottawa County changed its pharmacy benefits manager from Caremark to Navitus. This change is expected to lower prescription costs due to a more transparent system.

Through the use of Section 125 Flexible Spending Accounts, three hundred sixteen (316) participants are enrolled in the medical flex spending, which reflects an increase of six (6) participants, and thirty-five (35) participants are enrolled in dependent care, which reflects an increase of seven (7) participants. Automatic withdrawal for premium payment of retiree health was introduced in 2000 and currently 97% percent of the retirees utilize this service.

Below is a summary of current health plan enrollment.



In 2009, thirty-one (31) employees participated in the Tuition Reimbursement Program, completing one hundred and five (105) classes at a cost of \$112,038.47. This is \$31,511.91 more than the 2008 reimbursement costs.

Employee Recognition:

Since 1988 the County has conducted an employee recognition program that consists of an annual Service Awards Banquet held each year in January. In 2009, the switch was made to hold the banquet in October for more favorable weather. The banquet recognizes employees who have reached employment milestones of five (5), ten (10), fifteen (15), twenty (20), etc. years with the County.

On January 15, 2009, two hundred (200) people attended the Service Awards Banquet honoring one hundred twenty-three (123) award recipients and eighteen (18) retirees from January 1 to December 31, 2008. The total cost for the banquet was \$17,853.21. Also throughout the year seventy-five (75) lapel pins were distributed recognizing the employment milestones of 10 years and more.

On October 14, 2009, two hundred and four (204) people attended the Service Awards Banquet honoring one hundred thirty-four (134) award recipients and fifteen (15) retirees from January 1 to September 30, 2009. The total cost for the banquet was \$20,071.57.

Wage & Classification Study:

In 2009, Human Resources staff along with members of the Wage Study Evaluation Team and the Wage Study Appeals Team completed the Wage and Classification Study which began in 2008. A significant amount of time and work went into facilitating the Evaluation Team and the Appeals Team to conclude the study. This involved the evaluation of seven hundred and sixteen (716) individual positions for two hundred thirty-one (231) classifications, and the creation of two hundred eighty-six (286) new job descriptions. In addition, individuals had the ability to appeal the decision of their evaluations, which resulted in fifty-four (54) appeals affecting sixty-eight (68) employees. A final report was provided to, and approved by, the Board of Commissioners in December 2009.