



# EVIDENCED-BASED METHODS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH EMPLOYEE RETENTION

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OCTOBER 15, 2024



# PRESENTER INTRODUCTION

Aaron Watts, DBA

he/him/his

- Professional:

- DBA, MA, BSc
- 3 years public health experience, 7 years EMS experience, 2 years healthcare experience
- 8 years of leadership experience, 6 years of experience in adult education and employee training
- ICHD Workforce Development Coordinator since Fall 2022
- Areas of expertise: leadership development, workplace culture, and employee retention



# PRESENTER INTRODUCTION (CONT.)

Aaron Watts, DBA

- Personal:
  - Recently married (October 5<sup>th</sup>)
  - Proud (if slightly scared) cat Dad
  - Live in Flint, MI
  - LGBTQ+
  - Enjoy reading, writing, conducting research, spending time with family and friends, and disc golfing



# PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

- Review and discuss current workforce turnover trends in local public health
- Review and discuss general evidenced-based practices used to reduce workforce turnover
- Discuss the purpose and application of internal research methods used to develop organization-specific workforce retention initiatives

**CAUTION**



# ABOUT INGHAM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

- Ingham County, MI
  - Lansing/East Lansing
- Serving ~285,000 residents
- Rural, urban, and suburban
- 3 main branches
- ~ 345 permanent employees, ~400 total employees



# ICHD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Ultimate goal: To recruit, hire, and retain a diverse, resilient, skilled, and motivated workforce.
  - Not just about employee training
  - Different from HR work
- Workforce Development Coordinator (Fall 2022)
  - WD strategic direction
  - Assessment and evaluation
  - Facilitation and coordination
- Workforce Development Committee (Fall 2022)
  - Collaborative group work and project oversight



# ASPECTS OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT





# DEFINITION: EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

- Employee turnover is the voluntary or involuntary cessation of an employee's employment at an organization
- Voluntary
  - Retirements
  - Choosing to seek employment elsewhere
  - Exiting the workforce for academic or personal reasons
- Involuntary
  - Terminations

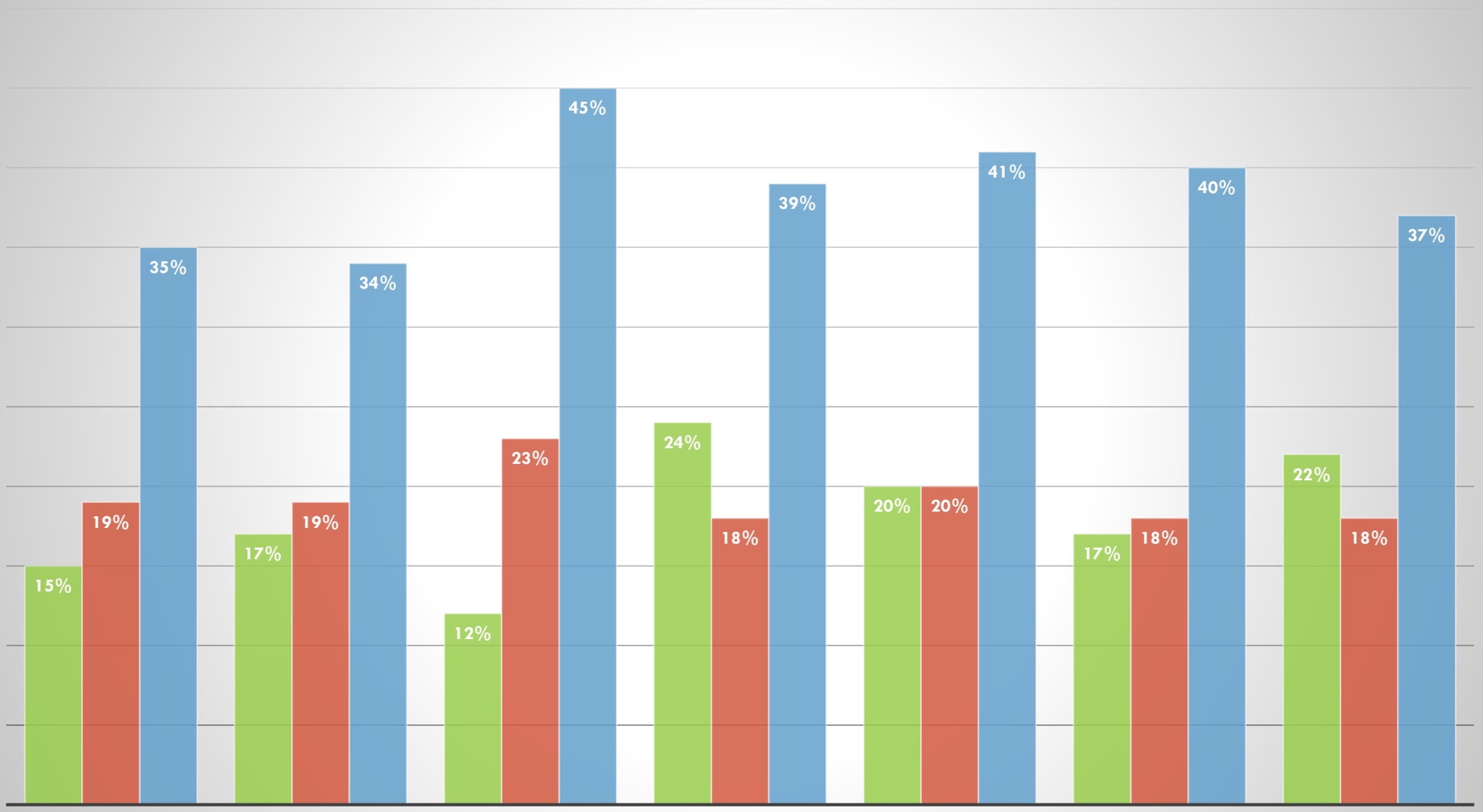
# THE PROBLEM

Workforce turnover rates in local public health remain unsustainably high

- External factors:
  - Rapid changes to the work environment
  - Significant leadership changeover
  - Increased emphasis on employee health and wellbeing
  - Differing expectations of younger employee generations




# ICHD Turnover Comparison



■ ICHD ■ State/Local Government ■ Healthcare and Social Assistance

## MYTH OR REALITY?

“Employee turnover in non-public health wasn’t a problem before the COVID-19 pandemic”

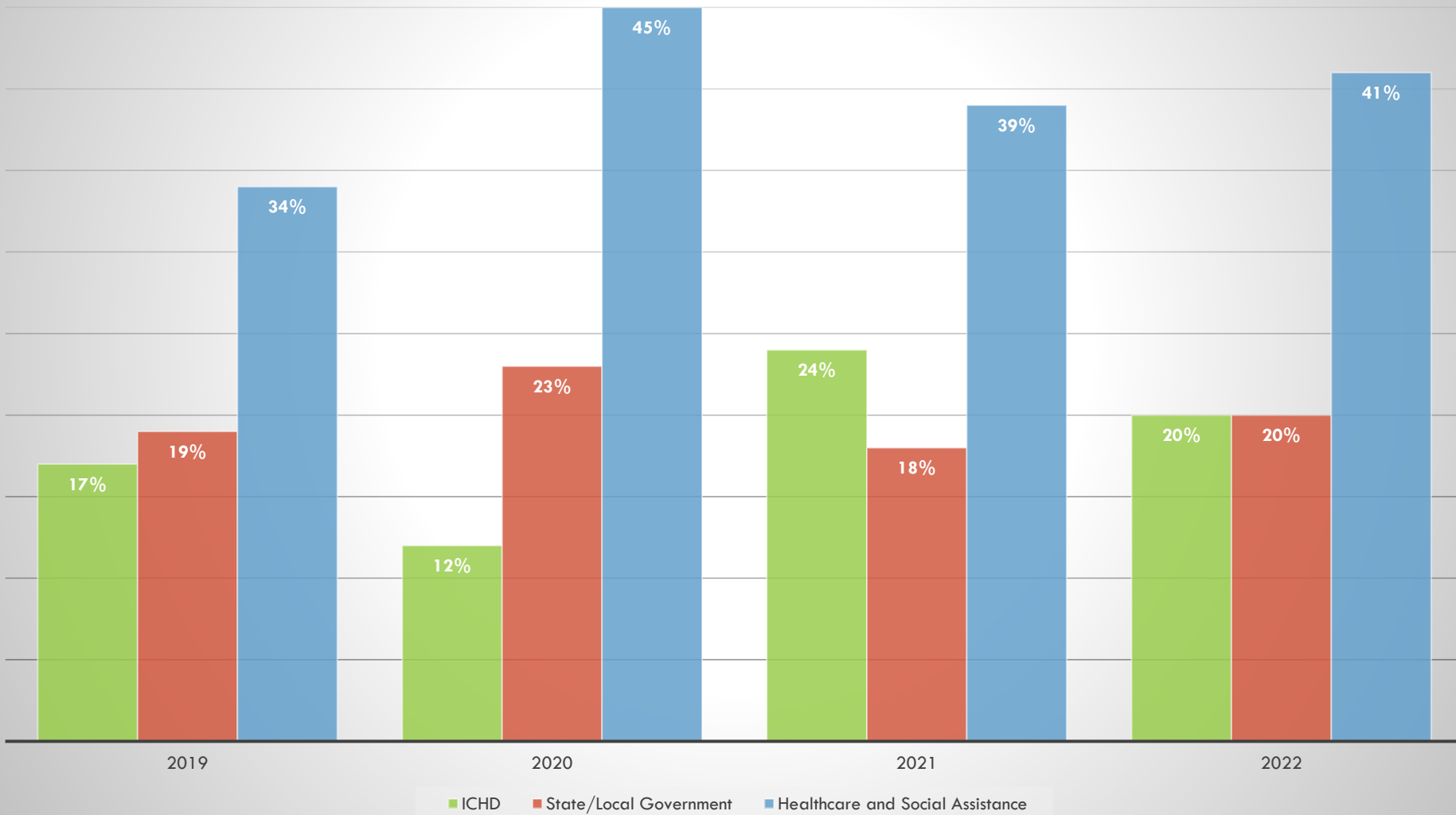


## MYTH OR REALITY?

“The high employee turnover rates seen in local public health since 2019 were caused exclusively by the COVID-19 pandemic”



## COVID-19 Turnover Comparison



## MYTH OR REALITY?

“By far, the **factor** of employee turnover is **pay**.”



# WHY NOT PAY?

- Evidence does not concretely support that increased pay (above market rates) attributes to increased retention rates
- Most employees are willing to work for organizations with lower than desirable pay if they are supported by their leaders and organizations
- In service industries, employees tend to be more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically
- The magic number
- Pay as a scapegoat
- Caveats





# TOP CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

- Leadership
  - Lack of leadership training, development, and standards
  - Ineffective leadership skills and strategies
  - Ineffective leader/follower relationships
  - Leadership degrees of separation
- Workplace culture
  - Negative and/or ineffective peer-to-peer relationships
  - Ineffective communication
  - Barriers to employee wellness
  - Lack of employee appreciation and recognition



# TOP CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER (CONT.)

- Employee benefits and compensation
  - Minimal paid time off
  - Lacking retirement packages
  - Lacking healthcare benefits
  - Inflexible working schedules
  - Non-competitive pay



Participant	Leadership %	Pay/Benefits %	Org./Structural Barriers %
P1	100%	0%	0%
P2	60%	40%	0%
P3	60%	20%	20%
P4	N/A	N/A	N/A
P5	80%	20%	0%
P6	100%	0%	0%
P7	33%	33%	33%
P8	40%	50%	10%
P9	100%	0%	0%
P10	100%	0%	0%
P11	100%	0%	0%
P12	80%	10%	10%
Average:	77%	16%	7%

# IMPROVING RETENTION: LEADERSHIP

- Leadership training, development, and standards
  - Develop and live by core standards
  - Mentorship and succession planning
  - Initial and continuous leadership training
- Leadership skills and strategies
  - 7 dimensions of leadership intelligence
  - Accountability and ownership
- Availability and presence
  - Be available “Have open doors...”
  - Be present “...and walk the floors”



# IMPROVING RETENTION: LEADERSHIP (CONT.)

- Leader/follower relationships
  - Authenticity
  - Inclusivity
  - Trust and respect
  - Communication
- Degrees of separation
  - Communication
  - Feedback
  - Awareness and acceptance



# IMPROVING RETENTION: WORKPLACE CULTURE

- Peer-to-peer relationships, mutual respect and trust, effective communication
  - Clear standards and expectations
  - Vulnerability and conflict resolution
  - Unity, fellowship & teambuilding events
- Employee Wellness
  - Employee benefits
  - Leadership support
- Employee Appreciation and Recognition
  - Thank you's
  - Spotlight programs
  - Career advancement



# IMPROVING RETENTION: EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- Paid time off
  - Unlimited, or at least 220 total annual hours (at least 120 vacation)
  - No tiered earning rates based on longevity
  - Paid parental leave, community service leave, and professional development leave
- Adequate retirement packages
- Adequate healthcare benefits



# IMPROVING RETENTION: EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (CONT.)

- Flexible working schedules
- Competitive pay
  - Based off required skills and capabilities needed for position
  - Every position within 5-7% of market rate
  - Adjusts to current living conditions





# WHAT WILL WORK FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

How do you know?

## Assessments!!





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QUESTIONS?



# THANK YOU!!

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