

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

At the May 19th Human Resources Community Meeting, Theresa Davis, HR Manager for Advantage Behavioral Health Systems (ABHS), accepted the Commissioner's Recognition Award for outstanding performance in the Compensation Management module of the FY 2015 Human Resources Audit. Below, Theresa shares insight into the approach ABHS uses to have a successful compensation program.

Headquartered in Athens, ABHS provides person-centered, community based services and treatment in 10 counties to individuals and families who are experiencing mental illness, developmental disabilities, and/or addictive diseases. ABHS recognizes a positive correlation between employee morale and service excellence. Therefore, they strive to provide a positive work environment where employees recognize that they receive fair and equitable pay.

Ms. Davis, who joined ABHS as HR Manager in 2014, has 19 years of diversified Human Resources experience, 13 of those with the State of Georgia. She explains one of her roles in the compensation process is ensuring equity among similarly situated employees in similar positions. She pays close attention to position actions, such as allocations and reallocations, and makes sure employee pay is consistent with the Statewide Salary Plan pay grade for the job title and assigned duties. She further documents justification for all salary decisions.

Ms. Davis says that a well-formulated compensation management process drives enthusiasm and motivation among employees. "It is fair and consistent and can be seen as based on a salary plan and not on a number out of the air." She emphasizes maintaining parity. Any deviation is based on relevant experience and education. Although salaries for certain positions may be lower than the marketplace, ABHS has transparency as to what opportunities are available for employees. Ms. Davis explains, "Advantage beefs up what we offer" by emphasizing benefits, such as 401K's and educational incentive for improving skills and abilities. For example, if a counselor obtains a certification in addiction counseling while employed, the employee would receive a 5% pay increase. She proudly emphasizes, "Invest in yourself, and receive compensation for investment."

When rehiring a State retiree, Ms. Davis always reviews policy and then talks with the employee regarding retirement needs. She determines pay by what job functions the retiree will be performing. If it is the same job held before retirement, then she would not pay more than the hourly rate the employee previously earned. If the retiree returns to a different job than formerly held, ABHS pays based on the equivalent hourly pay rate of a newly hired employee with similar qualifications for the same job; however, relevant experience and education may allow an increase above the minimum for that position. All retirees must complete the applicable waiting period before returning to work. Then, Ms. Davis monitors the retirees' hours to stay within

1,040 hours a year. Any work beyond this threshold would result in the loss of the retiree's pension payments for the remainder of the calendar year.

Because some of the staff work 12-hour shifts, they are provided on State holidays eight (8) hours of approved leave and, per policy, make up the four (4)-hour difference by working those hours during the same week or using annual leave or other available paid/unpaid time off. During this winter's severe weather conditions, per the State's Inclement Weather and Emergency Closure policy, eligible employees were given paid time off and were not subject to pay reduction for work time lost.

As a Model agency in compensation, Ms. Davis advises, "Work with transparency, operate with integrity, have no secrets of how salaries come about, have an open door, and talk to employees."