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DHHS OADS

Good Morning,

My name is Kathy and I have been a crisis worker for 19 years. I am 55 years old and will have acquired my 25 years of state service in the year 2027 which will also put me at retirement age. I enjoy my job and find it very rewarding. Six years until retirement. Some days that feels within reach. On days when it is physically or emotionally draining it seems very distant. Crisis workers are often in stressful and at times dangerous situations. We do not have the benefit of police escort when we respond to a situation in the community. At times the clients we provide 24/7 care for in our crisis homes can be challenging both physically and emotionally. There is risk of injury and burn out.

The role of the crisis worker often puts a lot of demand on the human body both physically and mentally. Crisis workers may have to physically use restraint to maintain the safety of the client and others. In the past we have had a client that required several restraints a day to manage self-harm. This required the crisis worker to be in the same position for up to 15 minutes at a time putting strain on several areas of the body, e.g. back, legs, knees, neck and arms. Crisis workers often need to help clients with their hygiene and do not have the benefit of lifts or other equipment typically used to assist clients with mobility issues. Again, this puts many demands on the human body. As we age our muscles lose endurance and flexibility which can affect coordination, stability, and balance. We lose fluid in our joints usually in the shoulder and our hips/knees lose cartilage. All of the above increases the risk of injury. I believe that the next generation of crisis workers should be granted the ability to retire at 55 years of age with 25 years dedicated to state service due to the toll it takes on an individual's health and general well-being.

Kathy Wardwell, Crisis Worker