



HOW TO MAKE THEM *WANT TO STAY*

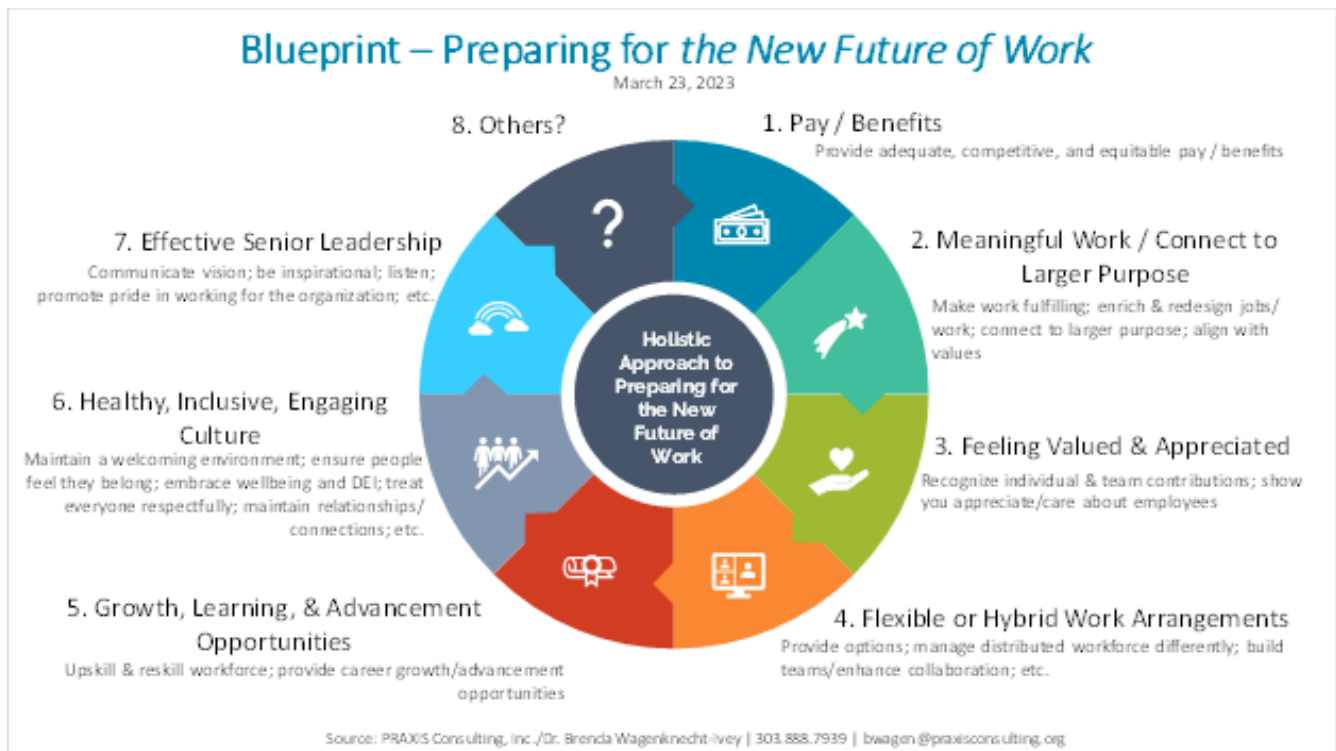
RETENTION WITHIN THE ILLINOIS COURTS

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Introduction

You've hired the best people. You've trained them well, and they are productive members of your team. **Don't stop now - your job is not over yet.** It is your responsibility to also make sure they thrive. The Illinois Courts are full of employees who implore leaders to learn more about employee retention and create environments built on inclusivity, flexibility, growth, creativity, and appreciation.

In this toolkit, you will find resources on research-based ways of how to improve employee retention. You will also see examples where Illinois counties and systems are taking the research and forging new, creative paths toward building and increasing employee engagement and appreciation. It's easy to think retention is a strategy only capable in the private sector where there is more money for employee perks and benefits; however, even counties with little additional funding can find ways to increase employee engagement and create environments where employees feel challenged, valued, and supported.



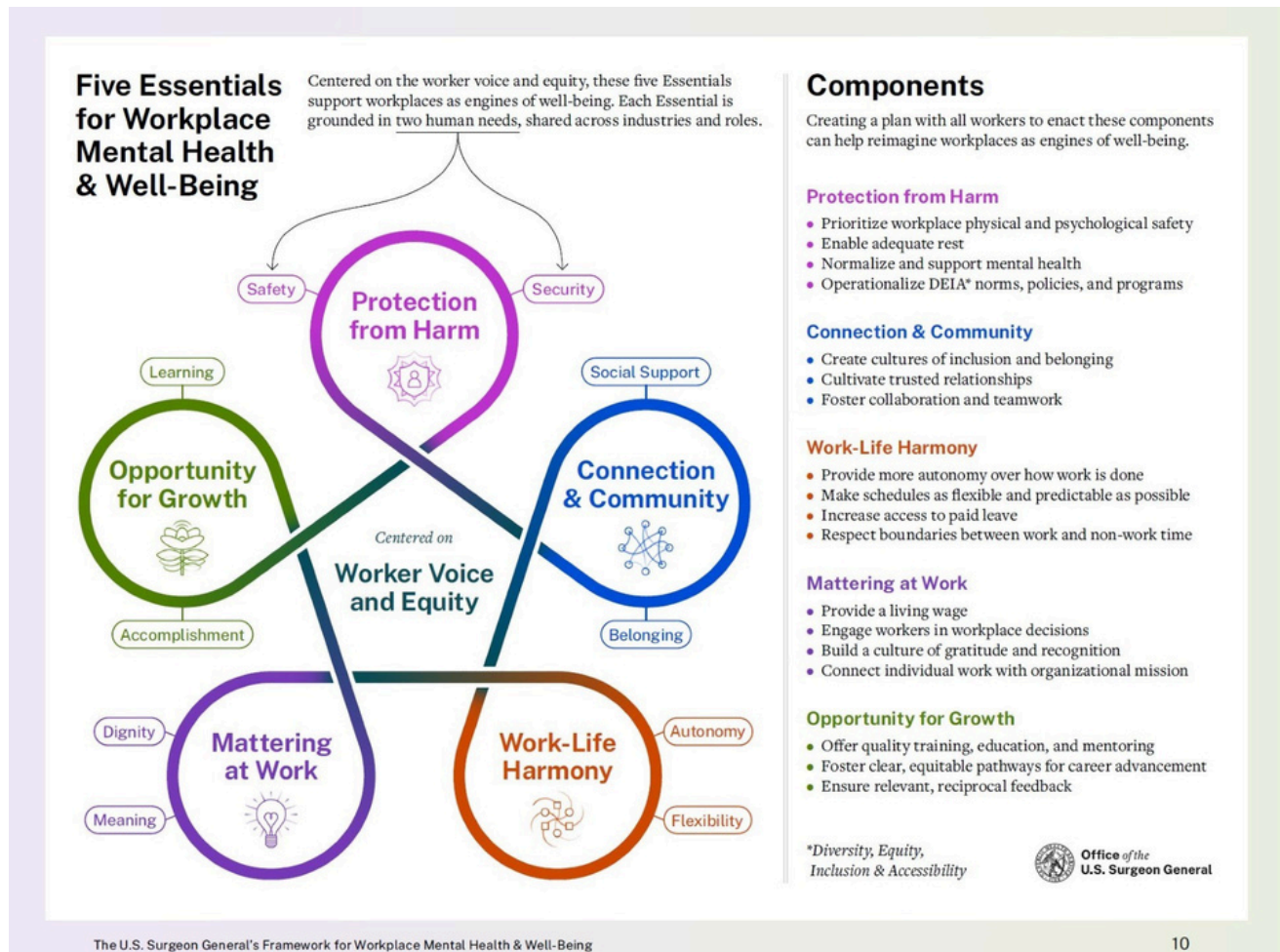
In *The New Future of Work is Now*, Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey presents a map of how leaders can be intentional, inclusive, and engaging to help give employees what they want, which are healthy, inclusive, and engaging work cultures.

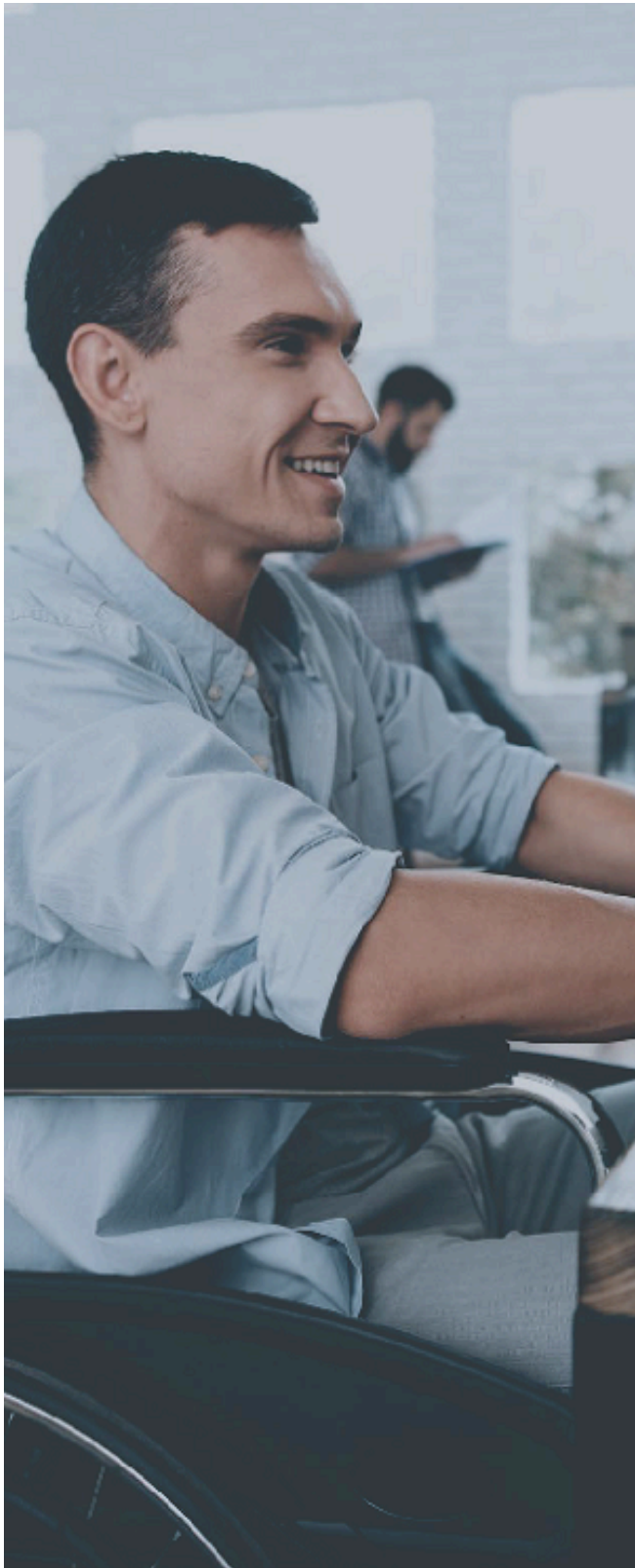
The following can be found in Price Waterhouse Coopers' 2022 **The guide to employee experience: Six key drivers to turnover and engagement.**

Six Drivers of Engagement and Retention

1. The work itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Finding meaning and purpose in the work done every day is the strongest driver of employee engagement. b. Nearly 90% of employees feel it is important that the work they do is meaningful (to them). c. When employees find their work meaningful, inspiring, and enjoyable, they are twice as likely to be engaged and stay at their organization. d. Thus, it is essential to gauge employee sentiment on meaningfulness.
2. Recognition (includes pay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work appreciation and recognition, which include salary/pay, are key drivers of engagement and employees' intent to stay. b. Employees feel less appreciated if their income is below their needs compared to those who feel their income meets or exceeds their needs. c. Pay is one of the most tangible ways to show appreciation, however, it is not the only factor determining employee retention. d. Employees must feel recognized in a way that is personally motivating to them. e. Motivators evolve as employees mature in their careers. Pay, monetary rewards, bonuses, etc. may be motivating early in one's career whereas paid time off, flexible hours, etc. may have a greater impact later in careers.
3. Promising future / career growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employees are looking for clear paths for achieving their career goals; they want opportunities to develop and practice new skills. b. Employees are increasingly valuing career growth; the solution lies with "upskilling/re-skilling" opportunities / investments. c. When employers make investments in upskilling/re-skilling rather than hiring from outside, they signal to employees that they are valued and their potential for growth is recognized. d. Employees who feel they have a promising future are four times more engaged and nearly three times as likely to plan to stay compared to those who don't.
4. Perceptions of senior leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employees are paying close attention to senior leaders. b. They are looking for senior leaders that communicate a vision of the organization's future, one that is motivating to them. c. Employees are looking for leaders who are trustworthy, sincere, inspirational, open to feedback, and share a vision that motivates them.
5. Connection to mission, purpose, and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Many employees are looking for greater purpose in their work and a connection with their personal values. b. This presents an opportunity for organizations to evaluate mission statements and connect them to a broader purpose in a way that elicits pride. c. Employees are two to three times likely to stay, and for five times more engaged, when they feel proud to work at an organization and believe its values are reflected in its decision making.
6. Diverse and inclusive work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Diversity, equity, and inclusion/belonging (DEI/B) efforts are top of mind for most organizations. b. Organizations must intentionally promote an inclusive workplace and garner participation from every employee. Doing so has a positive impact on the work experience of employees in both remote and hybrid environments. c. A commitment to DEI requires active and continuous efforts to: (1) value, and make the most of, an organization's diversity; (2) create a culture that allows employees to feel like they belong – they can bring their whole, authentic self to work; (3) listen to all points of view; and (4) create a safe space to share one's self and thoughts (i.e., create psychological safety, which according to the Center for Creative Leadership, is the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. It's a shared expectation held by members of a work team that teammates will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for sharing ideas, taking risks, or soliciting feedback).

The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for [Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being](#), 2022



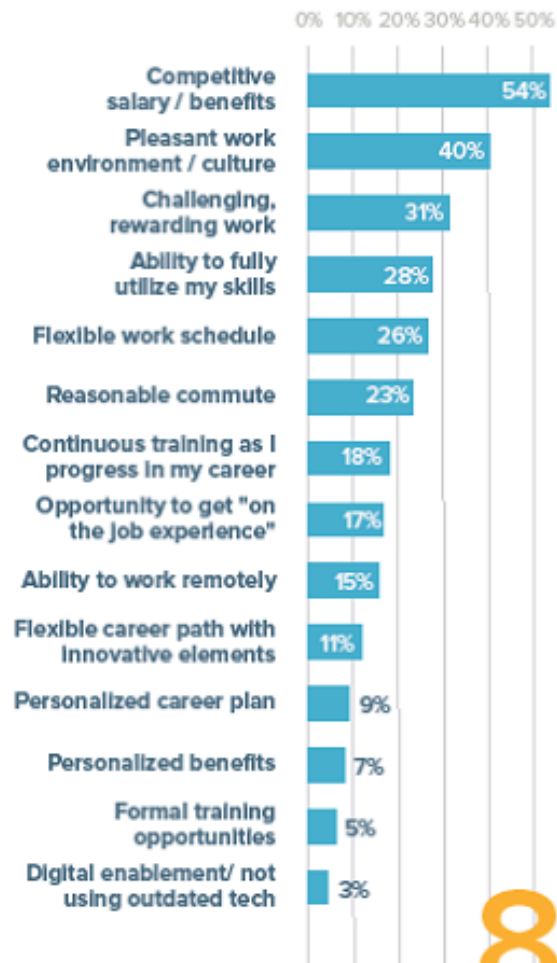


TOP MOTIVATORS FOR EMPLOYEE RETENTION ARE SALARY & WORK ENVIRONMENT

The top motivator for employees to stay at a job is a competitive salary and benefits plan (54%), followed by a pleasing work environment and supportive work culture (40%), and the ability to do challenging, rewarding work (31%).

Figure 14

Motivators to Stay at a Job (Top 3)



8

Workplace Culture

Courts being led by the judiciary have a hierarchy in local government that runs parallel to other county entities, which makes work culture a difficult thing to think one individual can impact; however, all change starts with one step, by one person.

Some counties in Illinois are led by one Chief Judge of the Circuit Court, which only includes the one county. Other counties are in a Judicial Circuit where there are multiple counties, and Presiding Judges have significant impact on the work culture within the county. Additionally, within each county, there is a work culture across the entire Court system, and there are work cultures within departments. Within the same county, one department may have a very different culture than a different department in the same courthouse.

Though judges can have the most significant impact on the system as a whole, every leader within the Court system has the capacity to improve the work environments of those working as a part of their team.

Workplace Culture: 5 Key Elements For A Positive Employee Environment

Stay Interviews

Stay interviews can be a great employee retention tool. A well-implemented stay interview process positively impacts retention by promoting a culture of respect and trust. Conducting stay interviews is a simple and cost-effective method to discover why employees stay, resolve issues promptly, and enhance satisfaction and engagement, ultimately reducing turnover.

Stay Interviews – Guidance

Stay Interview Questions

Stay interviews are conducted to help managers understand why employees stay and what might cause them to leave. In an effective stay interview, managers ask standard, structured questions in a casual and conversational manner. Most stay interviews take less than half an hour.

Opening the Interview

To open the stay interview, a manager may use the following (or similar) statements:

- I would like to talk with you about the reasons you stay with [Company Name] so I understand what I might be able to do to make this a great place to work for you.
- I'd like to have an informal talk with you to find out how the job is going so I can do my best to support you as your manager, particularly with issues within my control.

Questions

The following are questions you may ask during a stay interview. You should have several open-ended questions on hand. It's important to listen and gather ideas from the employee about how you and your organization can retain them.

- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- What do you like most or least about working here?
- What keeps you working here?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What talents are not being used in your current role?
- What would you like to learn here?
- What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- What can I do to best support you?
- What can I do more of or less of as your manager?
- What might tempt you to leave?

Closing the Interview

To close the stay interview, summarize the key reasons the employee gave for staying or potentially leaving the organization, and work with the employee to develop a stay plan. Be sure to end on a positive note.

Examples of closing statements include:

- Let me summarize what I heard you say about the reasons you stay at [Company Name] as well as reasons you might leave. Then, let's develop a plan to make this a great place for you to work.
- I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me today. I am committed to doing what I can to make this a great place for you to work.

Considering a Remote or Hybrid Working Environment?

There are many great reasons to consider remote or hybrid working environments for employees within the Courts who have tasks and responsibilities capable of being completed outside of the Courthouse or office. Employees appreciate the opportunity to manage their work in their own way in their own environment. Working remotely can increase an employee's commitment to their work and allow them to balance the needs of their home and their work, leading to better employee satisfaction.

There are many Illinois Courts already offering opportunities to work remotely and in hybrid environments.

Check out the 17th Circuit Court's [Remote Working Agreement](#)

The Illinois Courts: Real World Examples of Employee Retention Strategies

Seeing and reading how research has been able to show the best ways to retain employees is great, but can those same strategies be used in the Illinois Courts? YES, they can! Many counties and systems throughout Illinois are already providing unique opportunities to employees. See the examples below of the amazing and creative ways Illinois Courts are already striving to retain and promote their employees. For more information about any of these examples, reach out to the individual who submitted the example whose information is also below.

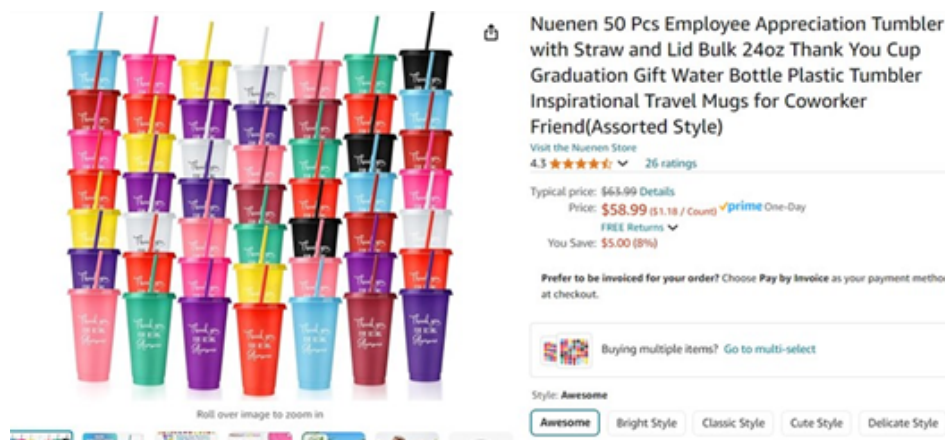
Benefits

1. In the Circuit Court Clerk's Office in DuPage County, they offer parental leave allowing individuals to take off 12 weeks paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child and regardless of the parent's gender. The parents are not required to use vacation or sick time while they are on leave so the new parents can come back to work with time available. While the parents are on leave they do not accrue additional vacation or sick time. *For questions, contact [Candice Adams](#), DuPage County Circuit Clerk.*
2. Two years ago, Hancock County gave all employees a \$1000 end-of-year bonus except officeholders. All circuit clerk employees have 13 paid holidays and start with ten days off and earn one sick day for every month worked. The county offers health, vision, dental, and IMRF. *For questions, contact [Keara Weber](#), Hancock County Circuit Clerk.*
3. The 22nd Circuit has a contract with their local community college, McHenry County College, to handle their Traffic School and part of that contract includes an annual amount of tuition that McHenry County College gives to employees (Court employees or Circuit Clerk employees) as free tuition. They have had many employees over the years who have finished their associate's degrees using this program and it has been a great retention tool for those interested in taking community college classes. *For questions, contact [Dan Wallis](#) and [Kathy Keefe](#).*
4. In the 18th Judicial Circuit Court, they provide tuition reimbursement up to \$2,500 per year per employee. Also, personal and sick time was recently changed so that employees can take their time off in one-hour increments which allows employees to have more flexibility to do the things they need to tend to in their personal life and take care of their health without having to take off an entire day or half-day if they didn't want to. Additionally, management is reminded to encourage staff who are working toward Public Service Loan Forgiveness to complete their paperwork annually and staff has learned how to complete the employer section so that employee's can keep track of their PSLF progress. To learn more about PSLF [click here](#). *For questions, contact [Suzanne Armstrong](#), Court Administrator, DuPage County.*

Morale

1. As a small county, Cumberland County had to find other ways to foster retention because their county benefits are lacking. For example their county won't cover dependents for health insurance because of the cost of premiums. Therefore, it has become imperative that they build a positive "team" environment, and the Circuit Clerk makes sure employees know that their family life is important to them as employer and staff report that makes a HUGE difference in their wanting to stay. Praise, appreciation, and genuine concern and support for them makes having to work much easier on everyone. *For questions, contact [Rhonda Wilson](#), Cumberland County Circuit Clerk.*

2. In the Kankakee County Circuit Clerk's office, they have created exciting traditions to celebrate the end of each month, employee work anniversaries, and employee birthdays. For employee work anniversaries, the employee receives a personal certificate that indicates their years of service. For each staff member's birthday, the Clerk gives the employee a birthday card and smiley face pen (see example below); for the employee's work anniversary, they are gifted a plastic cup with lid and straw (see example below). Other morale boosters include a sweet treat day at the end of each month like brownies, cupcakes, coffee cakes, muffins or ice cream sundae bar. The Clerk also sends out a monthly newsletter that includes dates for birthdays and anniversaries.



For questions, contact [Sandra Cianci](#), Kankakee, County Circuit Clerk.

3. In McHenry County, there are two award ceremonies per year where work anniversaries are celebrated. Employees receive comp time for certain milestones, but also receive a pin that indicates their years of service. For their first year, they receive a pin with their seal. Many employees wear the pins on their ID/Badge lanyard.



For questions, contact [Kathy Keefe](#), McHenry County Circuit Clerk.

4. The Lake County Circuit Clerk has given a half comp day for hard work on special projects, like their case management system upgrade. They also do raffle drawings on a monthly basis for compliments from the public or compliments from another employee in the office, if someone went out of their way, went above and beyond with customer service, or just being a great team member. For questions, contact [Erin Cartwright Weinstein](#), Lake County Circuit Clerk.

5. In Stephenson County, the Circuit Clerk's office has agreements with the YMCA and Fitness Lifestyle for a small discount for county employees. They have BlueCross and BlueShield of IL and conduct complete bloodwork every year for anyone on county insurance, giving them \$20 if they do it. This helps keep our insurance premiums down. They also do a "Shout Out" form to acknowledge employees' who go above and beyond. Anyone in the courthouse can write up a form and give it to them. A couple of times a year someone is selected at random for a \$15 gift card. The "Shot Out" forms are posted where everyone can see them. This is paid for through the clerk's operating fund.

A "STAFF SHOUT OUT" form. It has a purple header with a megaphone icon. Below the header are three sections: "TO:" with a line, "BECAUSE:" with two lines, and "FROM:" with a line.

For questions, contact [Shanelle Bardell](#), Stephenson County Circuit Clerk.

6. The 18th Judicial Circuit Court has several morale boosting events per year. First, there are the monthly Open House events where each department is highlighted and the rest of the courthouse and stakeholders are invited to take a tour of that department, get to know what that department does, meet the individuals who work there and to honor the employees of that department for their work. For example, during National Librarian month (June), the Law Library hosted an open house event where food was brought in pot-luck style and guests were invited to

learn more about what the Law Library does and who the employees are who work there. Staff report that they enjoy the opportunity to meet new people and learn more about what is going on in other departments because it increases communication and a sense of community. DuPage has found that it was a great way for people to put names with faces and learn more about what those around them are doing. On Administrative Professionals Day, the Chief Judge writes a handwritten note thanking the employee for their hard work and the day is celebrated in different ways for example a catered lunch or small succulent plants and holders given out as a small token thanking employees for their hard work. Next, on a staff members work anniversary (year 5 and every 5-year increments thereafter) the employee is invited to meet with the Chief Judge in their chambers along with the Court Administrator for a picture, award and opportunity to say thank you. Finally, managers are encouraged to have weekly one-on-one check-ins with their employees with the focus being getting to know them personally and what their interests are so management can align individuals with assignments that are connected to their personal career goals and interests and also as a way to make sure employees know their employer values their personal wellbeing in and outside of work. *For questions, contact [Suzanne Armstrong](#).*

Flexibility

1. At Macoupin County Probation and Court Services, employees are given the capacity to set their own schedules based on their personal preference, taking into consideration the needs of the clients they serve. If clients need late appointments or officers have a personal appointment in the morning, their day may begin midday instead of when the department opens. Having flexibility is one of the most important things to the employees. They value their autonomy and the ability to have flexible hours. *If you want more information on how this department provides a flexible work environment, contact [Corinne Briscoe](#).*

2. In Wabash County, which is a small county that is not union. For years, in the Circuit Court Clerk's office they have given employees three extra days off per year. These days are for their birthday, Administrative Professionals Day and a Christmas Shopping Day. They do not have to take the day off on these specific dates, but they can use them throughout the year. This started back when budgets were really tight and for several years there were no annual raises. *Please contact [Angie Crum](#), Wabash County Circuit Clerk, with any questions.*