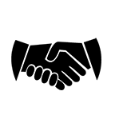
* Name of interviewee: Angela Pie
* Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Organization: Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
* Date of Interview: 01/02/25

**Public Manager Interview**

**POL 520: Introduction to Public Management**

Document the time you begin the interview. 10:30am



Start by introducing yourself. Explain who you are and why you asked for this interview.

Example: “I am a graduate student studying public management at Indiana Wesleyan University. For one of my classes, I am required to conduct a brief interview a public sector manager in my area, and write a paper about their experiences and viewpoints on contemporary challenges of management in the public sector environment. I only have a few questions and it should only take about 15 -20 minutes of your time.”

Explain why they are being interviewed and the distribution of their comments.

Example: “I want to interview you because you have experience managing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It is an area that I am very interested in learning more about. Your comments will be used only for a class paper and will not be used or quoted outside of a classroom setting.”

Required Interview Questions:

1. Opening questions:
   1. Tell me about how you came to be working in your current position.

Ms. Pie came to working in her current position after spending over 20 years working child safety in various cities across the US as well as overseas. She stated she began as Child Protective Investigator and climbed through leadership until she moved to Australia where she held various director positions. She eventually came back to Texas and accepted her current position, where she spears leadership and staff development.

* 1. Tell me a little bit about your daily activities. What does a “typical” work day look life for you?

1. Human Factor Question: In your experience, what is the most challenging part of attracting and retaining good employees?

At our division, we address these challenges by creating an integrated approach to employee engagement, development, and retention. Ms. Pie stated her department provides ongoing learning and development opportunities, tailor leadership training to both current and future leaders, and ensure our leadership team actively works on creating an inclusive, supportive, and growth-oriented culture. Overall, attracting and retaining top talent is an ongoing challenge that requires a multi-faceted strategy. It’s not just about offering a competitive salary, but about ensuring that employees have opportunities for growth, a positive work culture, work-life balance, and meaningful recognition. Through targeted leadership development and by building a supportive environment, we can both attract and retain great employees.

1. Management Structures and Strategies Question: What innovative strategies have you used (or hope to use) to improve the functioning of your department or services to the public?

As the Division Administrator of Leadership & Staff Development for Texas DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services), my primary focus is on improving the internal capabilities of our staff, which directly translates to better services for the public we serve. Our department handles complex and critical responsibilities, including child welfare, adult protective services, and family support programs, so it is essential that we continuously innovate to meet the challenges our staff and the communities face.

We have also looked into partnerships with universities and academic institutions to enhance the knowledge base of our staff. This includes offering specialized courses on child welfare, trauma-informed care, and leadership development, often in collaboration with academic experts. Additionally, some of our employees have participated in advanced degree programs, with DFPS providing financial support and flexible work schedules to help them complete their studies. We plan to establish more formalized partnerships with academic institutions to create customized leadership development curriculums specifically for our staff, ensuring that they are well-equipped to handle the evolving needs of the families we serve.

1. *Information, Budgeting and Goals Question*: In my class, we are studying some of the challenges public managers have gathering, organizing, and using information (financial/budgetary, from citizens, from elected officials, from inside the organization, outside the organization, other governmental organizations, etc.) to make important decisions and recommendations. Can you give me an example of how information flows in this organization and how that impacts your job?

As the Division Administrator of Leadership & Staff Development for Texas DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services), I work within a highly dynamic environment where gathering, organizing, and using information from multiple sources—such as financial data, public feedback, legislative decisions, and input from internal and external stakeholders—directly influences the recommendations I make to senior leadership and the commissioner. In particular, my role involves being a key part of the communication process between the department and elected officials, including responding to legislative decisions that can affect our programs and services.

The legislative process greatly influences our programs. New laws, mandates, or funding changes from the Texas Legislature can have direct implications for how we design and deliver leadership training and staff development programs. These decisions often reflect the priorities of elected officials, particularly those who oversee social services and child welfare.

How Information Flows: Information from the legislature flows through the state's legislative services and is disseminated by our government relations team. Additionally, the commissioner’s office plays a key role in interpreting these decisions and ensuring they are communicated effectively within DFPS.

Impact on Job: As new laws or budgetary decisions are made, I must quickly assess how they will affect our leadership development programs. For example, if the legislature passes new child welfare policies, we may need to quickly develop new training modules to ensure our staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement these changes. I work closely with the commissioner’s office to ensure that we are in alignment with these legislative directives and to communicate our department’s needs for additional resources if necessary.

1. *Communication Question*: What advice would you have for a new public manager who is faced with the challenge of communicating with the media and the public?

My one piece of advice for a new public manager at DFPS facing the challenge of communicating with the media and the public is to **balance empathy with transparency**. The work DFPS often involves sensitive and emotional issues, such as child welfare and family support, so it’s essential to communicate with compassion and understanding. At the same time, you must be transparent about the agency's actions, policies, and limitations. Acknowledge the human impact of your work while providing clear, factual information. This approach will help build public trust and credibility, especially in times of crisis or when addressing challenging topics.

**Two Student Questions:**

1. *How do you balance the need to control costs with the goal of maintaining or improving program efficiency in your department, and what strategies do you use to ensure that cost-cutting measures do not negatively impact service delivery or program outcomes?*

Ms. Pie stated balancing the need to control costs with the goal of maintaining or improving program efficiency is a crucial aspect of managing a department like DFPS, especially given the public’s expectations for high-quality services in areas such as child welfare and adult protective services. While it’s important to control costs, I focus on identifying areas where investments can create the greatest returns in terms of program outcomes and long-term savings. For example, investing in staff training and leadership development can improve employee retention, reduce turnover, and enhance the effectiveness of service delivery. This approach helps minimize costs in the long run, even if there is an upfront investment.

1. *What strategies do you implement to create and maintain a positive work environment in your team, and how do you address challenges such as employee burnout or low morale while ensuring productivity and engagement?*

Ms. Pie stated maintaining a positive work environment is critical to ensuring the long-term success and well-being of both the team and the individuals we serve. Given the high demands and emotional nature of our work, especially in child welfare and adult protective services, addressing challenges like employee burnout and low morale is especially important. Ms. Pie stated the emotional toll of social services work can be significant, which is why she prioritizes promoting employee well-being and work-life balance. When staff are overworked and stressed, burnout is inevitable, and this ultimately impacts productivity and morale. Ms. Pie stated, “I encourage the use of paid time off (PTO) and support flexible working arrangements when possible.” Additionally, I champion wellness programs, such as mental health support and stress-relief initiatives, to help employees cope with the emotional demands of the job.



Thank the manager for his or her time.

Example: “Well, that covers all the questions I had. I really appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. I’ve learned a lot, and have a much better understanding of what you do every day and the challenges you face. Thanks so much.”

Document the time you ended the interview. 10:55am

\* Immediately upon finishing the interview, type up your notes by placing the responses of the interviewee after each typed question. You will be surprised how much additional information will come back to you. The longer you wait to write your interview notes, the less you will retain.