



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

25 Howard Avenue, Louis Pasteur Building 57 Cranston, RI 02920
(401) 462-2121 Fax (401) 462-6594

Office of the Director

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: DHS Staffing and Operations Report

Dear Chairman Abney:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on staffing and operations for the reporting period of January 1, 2026, to February 28, 2026, as formally requested in Article 1 of the enacted SFY24 budget to show progress in recruiting and retaining staff at the RI Department of Human Services (DHS). As detailed in the budget, this report will provide an update every 60 days beginning August 1, 2022, and will cover the following topics:

- Newly filled and vacant positions by title, including lateral transfers
- Civil service information including number of eligible and available candidates as well as plans for future testing and the anticipated number of eligible and available candidates from future testing
- Current average caseload backlog
- Call Center Overview

Update on Finance and HR System Transition

For this reporting period, the RI Department of Human Services is using internal payroll records to measure staffing levels. DHS continues to collaborate with the Department of Administration regarding Enterprise Resource Planning and Workday reports.

DHS remains committed to transparency, continuous improvement, and timely legislative reporting. As ERP functionality continues to evolve, future 60-day updates will incorporate enhanced reporting features, offering greater detail and improved visibility into staffing and operational metrics.

Thank you for your continued oversight and partnership. Please do not hesitate to reach out if additional clarification or follow-up would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Director

RI Department of Human Services

CC: Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor
Christopher O'Brien, Committee Clerk, House Committee on Finance



Staffing and Operations Report

March 13, 2026

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

FOR DATA FROM January 1 THROUGH February 28

This section reflects progress made in hiring and retaining staff at DHS. Reporting period data reflects a 60-day window, with subsequent reports capturing data where the previous report concludes and up to 10 days of the current due date. Highlights for the Staffing and Operations Report dated March 13, 2026, include:

Total NET difference of filled positions for January 1 – February 28, 2026-----**-13***
17 candidates and/or employees are awaiting a start date or an update in payroll

Total HIRING ACTIVITY for January 1 to February 28, 2026----- **15++**

Total REMAINING POSITIONS to be FILLED at DHS ----- **88**

Total POSITIONS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS (defined in report) at DHS ----- **75**

** This report uses internal payroll records to report filled FTEs at DHS.*

++Total hiring activity includes all lateral, promotional, and new hires at DHS (includes OCSS and ORS) for the reporting period.

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Newly Filled and Vacant Positions

For this reporting period, DHS brought on 7 new hire and 8 laterals and/or promotional opportunities totaling 15 employees. As expected, DHS saw an increase in its vacancies primarily associated with the transition from HR legacy systems to the ERP/Workday system.

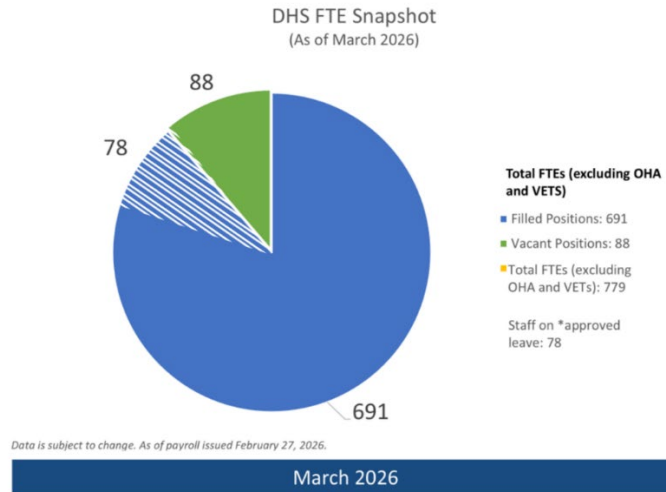
This transition spanned approximately six weeks, from early October to the ERP/Workday launch on November 16, 2025, during which position postings were temporarily paused across state agencies. While these activities are not fully reflected in this report due to payroll timing, DHS is making strong progress in accelerating hiring efforts to recover from the transition period.

Based on positions in recruitment, DHS anticipates a cohort of ETI hires with a start date of March 8 not accounted for in hiring activity or filled FTEs. For this reporting period, the specific position titles and types of hires made are outlined in the chart below. In 2025, DHS collectively onboarded 47 new hires and facilitated 110 lateral and/or promotional opportunities, totaling 157 positions across the Department. DHS anticipates returning to this cadence of hiring activity as new systems stabilize and process efficiencies continue to improve.

	January 1 – February 28		
	Lateral	Promotional	New Hires
Customer Support Specialist I	0	0	2
Eligibility Technician I	2	3	5
Eligibility Technician II Call Center	0	1	0
Employment and Career Advisor	0	1	0
Supervising Eligibility Technician	1	0	0
Total	3	5	7

**Positions listed in 'Hiring Activity' are filled but may not be reflected in the FTE count since not all have received their first paycheck at time of reporting. Additionally, since this chart also includes those with only start dates, these positions will be reflected in the 'FTE impact' chart for subsequent staffing reports after a first paycheck is received.*

The FTE snapshot below illustrates the current filled positions, vacant/in progress positions, and staff on approved leave across the Department. These employees will be captured in future reports.



Data is subject to change. As of February 27, 2026, there were 78 staff on approved leave.

FTE Impact from Hiring Activity

Hiring fluctuates daily as employees join DHS, receive promotions, are transferred, or otherwise leave state service. The chart below focuses on the status of job classifications impacted by ongoing hiring activity, using internal payroll records for staff paid February 27, as the basis for changes from the previous report.

Title	Nov. 2025	Feb. 2026	Delta
Child Support Enforcement Agent I	14	15	+1
Consultant Public Health Nurse	4	5	+1
Customer Service Aide (DHS)	29	28	-1
Eligibility Technician	155	139	-16
Eligibility Technician II (DHS - Call Center)	15	18	+3
Eligibility Technician II (DHS - Lobby)	34	33	-1
Eligibility Technician III	22	23	+1
Administrator, Financial Management	1	2	+1
Assistant Administrator- Financial Management	2	1	-1
Business Management Officer	1	2	+1
Chief Human Services Business Officer	4	5	+1
Chief Program Development	5	7	+2
Child Support Enforcement Agent III	16	17	+1
Customer Service Aide (DHS) - Central Scanning	7	8	+1
Data Analyst III	0	1	+1
Employment And Career Advisor	15	16	+1
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	9	7	-2
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist II	0	1	+1
Interdepartmental Project Manager	5	4	-1
Interpreter (Spanish)	5	4	-1
Interpreter (Portuguese)	0	1	+1
Office Manager	3	2	-1
Principal Clerk	3	2	-1
Principal Clerk-Typist	3	2	-1
Programming Services Officer	7	4	-3
Rehabilitation Counselor	28	27	-1
Senior Word Processing Typist	4	3	-1
Supervisor Of Vocational Rehabilitation (Rehab.)	7	8	+1
Weatherization Tech Monitor	3	2	-1
Principal Human Services Business Officer	4	5	+1
Senior Human Services Business Officer	5	4	-1
Senior Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	5	6	+1
Senior Rehabilitation Counselor (Disability Deter.)	6	7	+1
Supervising Eligibility Technician	27	26	-1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I	17	16	-1
Supervising Clerk (DHS)	0	1	+1
		Total net aggregate	-13

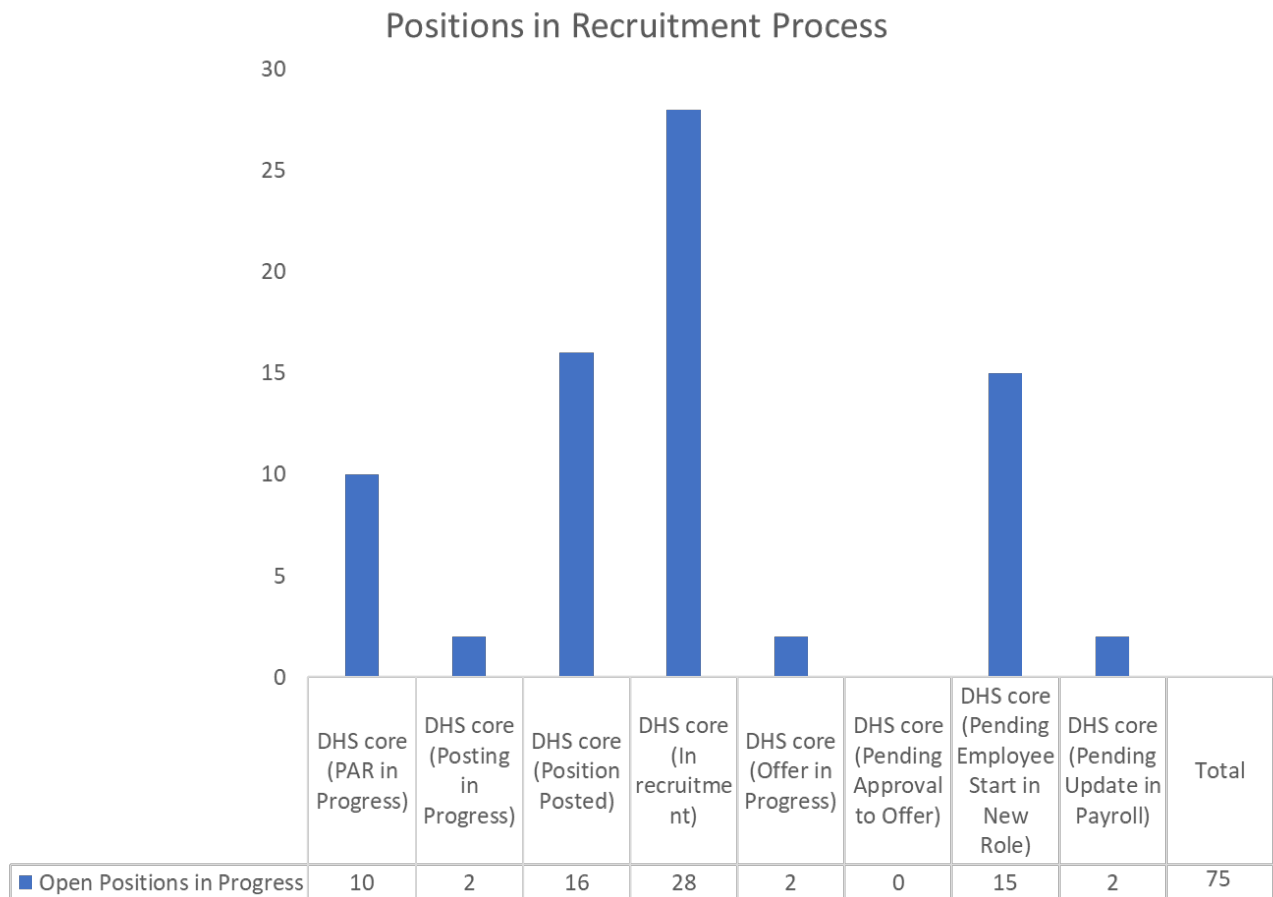
**All data is preliminary and subject to change. The total accounts for new staff (marked as +) in direct relation to new departures (-) resulting in an aggregate tabulation of new hires at DHS – not to be compared with 'hiring activity' since those include employees with start dates not yet on payroll. Please note, internal promotional opportunities may take more than one pay period to appear in their new job title.*

Positions In Active Recruitment

Of the total 779 DHS FTEs (only includes DHS core, OCSS, and ORS), there was a decrease in filled FTEs to 691 that is expected to increase based on the positions near the completion of the recruitment process. At the time of this report, 75 of 88 vacant positions are in active recruitment. The remaining vacant positions—not currently in the recruitment process—will be reflected in subsequent reports in tandem with payroll reporting.

The recruitment process is multifaceted for both union and non-union positions. It is intended to help ensure qualified candidates are hired to perform critical functions for DHS. It can take several weeks to several months until a position is filled and a pending start date is confirmed by a candidate.

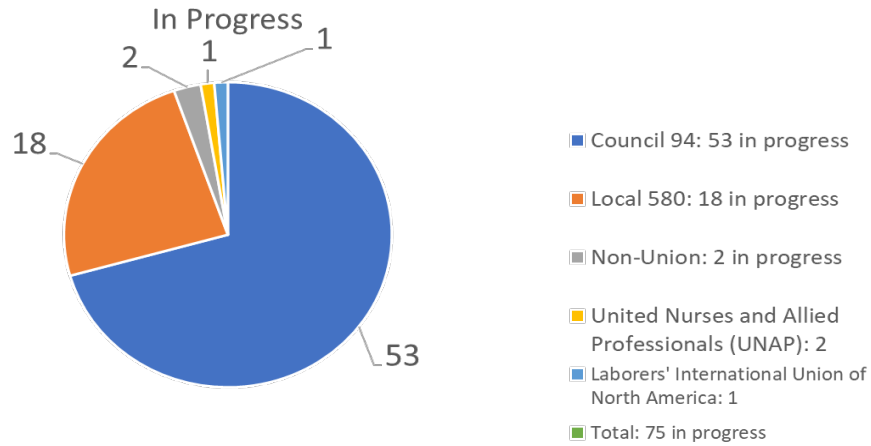
Please refer to the chart below for the status of these positions in the recruitment process.



*Recruitment and hiring activities change daily. Data is subject to change and may not reflect the latest status. *Additional categories are further explained in Appendix A.*

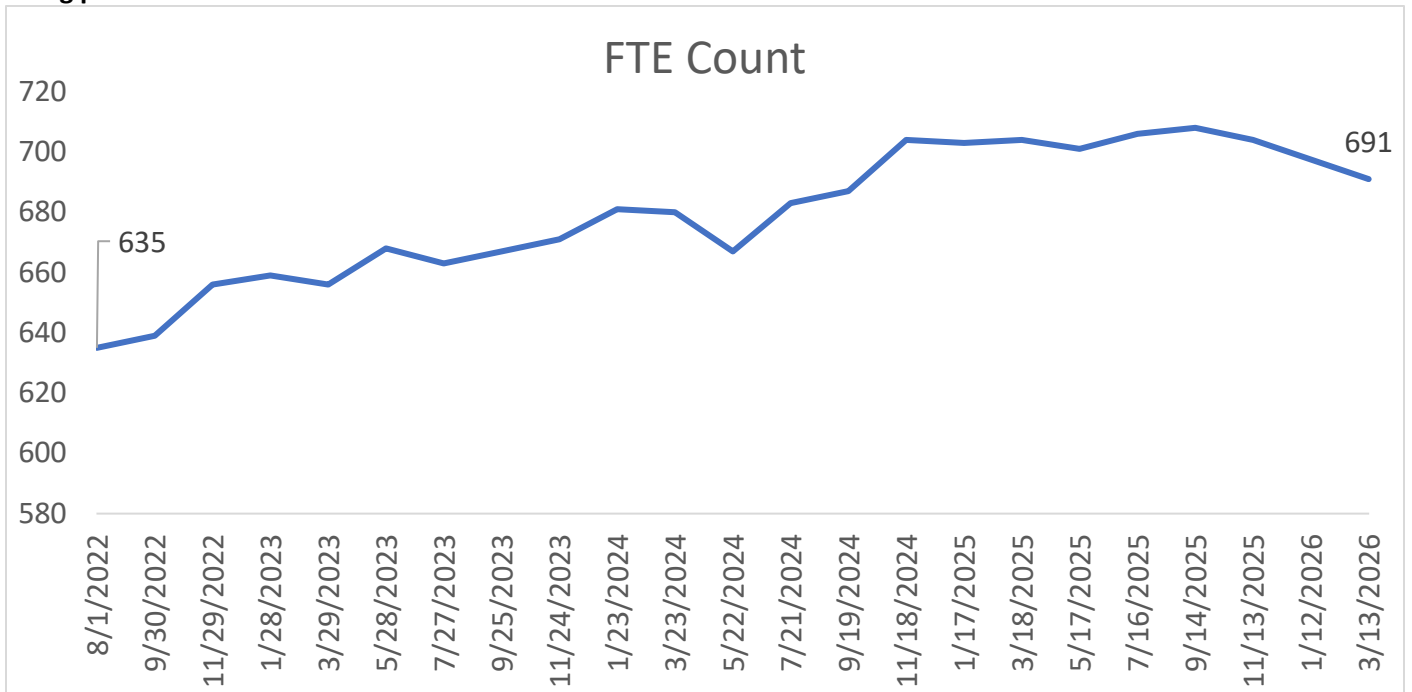
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Positions in Recruitment by Union Affiliation



For consistency, please refer to the appendix section at the bottom of the report for definitions on terms from DHS and DOA.

Using internal payroll records as the basis of FTE counts at DHS, the chart below shows the progress made on filling positions:



-see next page-

Staff on Leave Snapshot

For the current report, DHS has 691 employees on payroll, of which 78 staff members are currently on continuous or intermittent medical leave, or their case is pending review, based on data provided by DOA.

These staff members remain active on payroll but are out of the office either partially or entirely, resulting in a reduction in DHS’s workforce capacity that affects daily operations, especially in units where staffing levels are directly correlated with service delivery. While these are approved and legitimate absences managed by DOA’s Disability Management Unit (DMU), DHS is exploring strategies that are respectful and compassionate to staff needs while also supporting DHS’s operational structure. These strategies include:

- **Improved Verification Criteria:** Working in partnership with DOA, we aim to assess whether current verification and documentation practices for extended leave offer adequate clarity and accountability.
- **Efficient Utilization of Light Duty Assignments:** This strategy focuses on identifying opportunities more actively to match able-bodied individuals— who are still capable of contributing— to light duty or alternative assignments.
- **Enhance Re-engagement Strategies:** DHS is working towards identifying innovative and flexible ways to re-engage staff approved for partial leave or light duty, ensuring efficient alignment of staff resources to operational needs.

These efforts will support a more resilient workforce, while honoring the needs of staff experiencing health-related challenges. DHS appreciates the continued partnership of the legislature and DOA in advancing solutions that promote employee well-being and agency effectiveness. Below, please find the latest snapshot of current staff on medical leave:

Type of Leave	Previous Report	Current Report	Delta
Staff on Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA/PIL Leave)	14	14	0
Staff on Intermittent FMLA Leave	35	42	+7
Staff on Maternity/Paternity Leave	8	2	-6
Staff on Worker’s Compensation Leave	1	3	+2
Staff on Military Leave	0	0	0
Light Duty	0	0	0
Pending Cases/Under Review*	27	17	-10
Total:	85	78	-7

**Cases pending or under review refers to staff whose cases and related medical documentation are under review by DOA’s Disability Management Unit.*

Civil Service Information

The Department of Administration/Human Resources works closely with the Department of Human Services to fill critical positions. As part of this collaboration, DOA-HR’s division of Human Capital Management (HCM) is responsible for administering Civil Service Examinations and qualified names are provided to DHS, per Merit System Law (RI General Laws § 36-4-26). Importantly, legislation to Merit System Law passed in the 2024 session (S3003) has enabled the DOA-HR to increase the cadence of examinations and conduct quarterly testing for social workers. The legislation also revised Merit System Law to allow for greater flexibility in contacting qualified

candidates more efficiently. Please refer to the chart below for additional civil service information including exam dates, number applicants, and candidates.

Exam Name	Examination Date	Candidates Applied	Candidates on List
2025 - Q3 - Exam ET I	December 3, 2025	68	13
2025 - Q4 - Exam ET-I	December 23, 2025	24	4
2026 - Q1 - Exam ET-I	March 6, 2026	48	12
2024 - Q4 - Exam SCW	November 4, 2024	110	73
2025 - Q1 - Exam SCW	April 18, 2025	122	30
2025 - Q2 - Exam SCW	July 11, 2025	85	23
2025 - Q3 - Exam SCW	December 3, 2025	75	20
2025 - Q4 - Exam SCW	December 23, 2025	36	16
2026 - Q1 - Exam SCW	March 27, 2026	52	Pending test administration

Current Caseload Backlog* Snapshot

DHS continues to prioritize the efficient processing of applications through improvements to technology, processes, and communications, with the goal of reducing any application backlog across all programs. As of March 3, 2026, the number of overdue applications awaiting state action is 1,569, reflecting a stable caseload at the agency. Through initiatives such as SNAP Connect, Technology Adoption Days, and ongoing investments in process redesign, DHS is continually making strides in key metrics while maintaining and/or improving the customer experience. These operational and digital tools increasingly support customers’ needs by providing flexible interview scheduling, education around resources, and other support to help ensure uninterrupted access to benefits whenever possible. These strategies are expected to further improve operational efficiency in processing applications and handling of calls, which will improve customer satisfaction and the overall customer experience.

Pending Applications Awaiting State Action (Snapshot as of March 3, 2026)

Program Name	Overdue Awaiting State Action
	State
SNAP Expedited	81
SNAP Non-Expedited	62
CCAP	75
GPA Burial	1
SSP	1
GPA	3
*RIW	45
Undetermined Medical	428

Medicaid-MAGI	65
Medicare Premium Payments	215
Medicaid Complex	433
LTSS	160
Grand total	1,569

**This is an estimate as of March 3, 2026, for RI Works and is subject to change. An estimate is necessary after a system enhancement to the system used for gathering RIW related caseload data started pulling incorrect data and is now manually retrieved. The technical discrepancy has no impact on the customer experience and a fix is expected at a later time.*

Caseload Processing Averages

As the agency charged with administering health and human service public benefits, DHS must process applications that follow the federal government’s mandatory timeliness standard. The federal requirement threshold as well as current agency statistics are further illustrated below.

Refer to the chart on the right to see the mandatory timeliness standard per program. While the majority of cases per program are processed in a timely manner, a select number of cases awaiting customer or state action that become overdue may see a delay in authorization of benefits that is not reflective of the overall customer experience.

Program	Overdue Threshold for Applications	Avg. Number of Days from Applications Received to Authorized
Expedited SNAP	7 Days	8
Non-Expedited SNAP	30 Days	16
Cash Assistance (RIW/GPA)	30 Days	20
Medicaid MAGI	30 Days	22
Complex Medical	45 Days	33
Long Term Care (LTSS)	90 Days	59

See Appendix D at the end of the report for additional context.

NEW Hire FTE Impact on Pending Applications

The Department currently has 23 Eligibility Technician positions needing supervisory approval (ETSAs), who are collectively processing over 130 cases per week. Of the 23 ETSAs, there are **17 staff members with that designation who are not contributing to processing cases yet because they are newly hired**. All of the newly hired ETSAs, however, are in process of new hire training and will begin their CORE training in either SNAP or MAGI training this month. With direct coaching, training, and support, ETSAs build their case completion month over month until their final assessment at six months. Importantly, since assessments are done in six months, ETSAs may be represented in multiple reports alongside new staff who are beginning their training.

# of ETSAs	Assigned to:	Outcomes
5	Medical (applications, recertifications, LTSS)	Each assigned group is averaging, per week, approximately: SNAP: 20 cases Medical: 110 cases
1	SNAP applications, recertifications, or interim reviews	

Call Center

For the current Staffing and Operations Report dated March 13, the Call Center average wait time to speak with a staff member was 24 minutes 13 seconds.

The overall Call Center wait time remains below 30 minutes due to the implementation of the SNAP Connect initiative, which allows SNAP customers to complete their required interview at a time that is most convenient. Currently, there are 48 Eligibility Technicians assigned to the SNAP Connect process that answer interview calls five days a week. This is in addition to the designated call center staff. As of this report, the SNAP Connect pilot has been implemented across all cities and towns.

Importantly, call center wait times may fluctuate in response to federal program policy changes. During this reporting period, DHS continued informing the public about changes related to H.R. 1 which took effect on November 1, 2025, with additional changes impacting on March 1, 2026. Information about these changes is available at staycovered.ri.gov/SNAP-Updates.

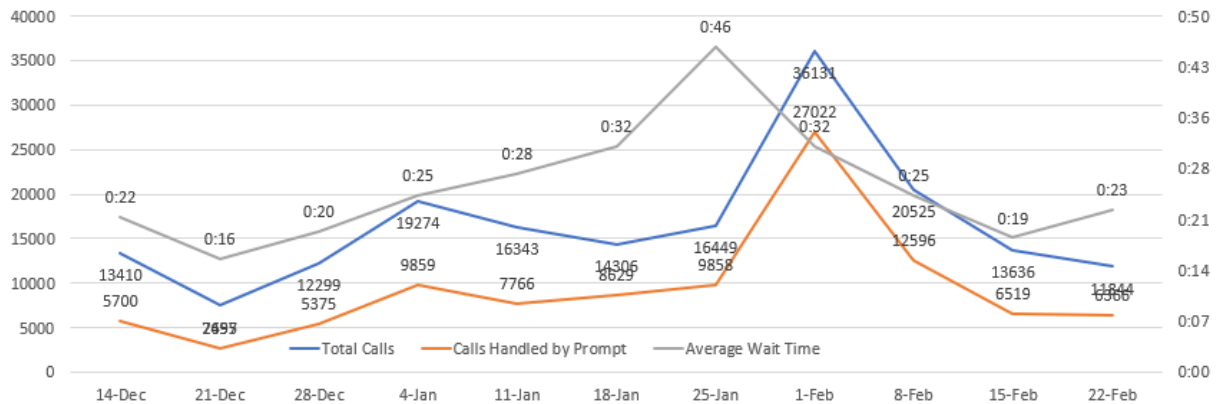
While recent federal changes have affected call center operations, overall call volume has remained stable. Ongoing initiatives and other enhancements continue to support customer service performance by reducing call abandonment, promoting one-touch processing, and striving for a 30-minute or less wait time across all queues. The average wait for an interview is currently just over 10 minutes. DHS remains committed to excellence in service delivery through optimized processes, workforce training, and innovative technological solutions. Through improved processes and technological solutions, DHS intends to further improve the wait times for all queues.

Average Monthly Wait Times by Queue

	February		March	
	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Callbacks	DHS Agent
SNAP	00:14:22	01:52:39	00:15:08	01:57:07
SNAP_Connect_Intake		00:12:23		00:16:31
SNAP_Connect_Recert		00:13:17		00:20:02
SNAP Interviews/Intakes	00:09:18	00:10:10	00:08:23	00:19:49
LTSS	00:10:37	00:09:57	00:10:30	00:08:56
GPA	00:14:23	00:20:37	00:09:39	00:11:14
SSP	00:08:24	00:31:14		00:00:59
Specialty	00:06:49	00:25:02	00:23:58	00:07:27
ECA Transfer	00:10:05	00:31:05	00:07:27	00:23:17
Medical	00:11:37	00:51:51	00:05:33	00:47:03
Child Care	00:14:52	02:31:19	00:14:15	01:50:41
RIW	00:14:50	02:15:13	00:13:53	01:44:41
Password Reset	00:07:47	00:11:55	00:08:33	00:08:18
Grand Total	00:13:25	00:35:59	00:13:37	00:40:24

The chart demonstrates the impact of call backs in lowering wait times for customers who opt for callbacks, per program.

During this time, there were approximately 48 dedicated call center staff members. An additional team of 48 field Eligibility Technicians supported the SNAP Connect interview lines. Current Eligibility Technician staffing levels support up to an average of 12 calls per day, per Eligibility Technician, with a current handle time of approximately 27 minutes. Several factors contribute to the average number of handled calls per day, including, but not limited to the availability of staff, the process for filling positions, and general interest in Call Center positions. The handle time includes both the time spent on the phone with the customer as well as time spent taking action on the worker portal.



The Call Center typically sees a pattern of high call volume toward the beginning and end of each month. Since call volume may vary from day-to-day, DHS on occasion publishes a website notification to announce high call volume days and any changes to operational hours for the day.

Impact of NEW FTEs to Call Center Activity

As the agency continues to make progress in filling critical positions overall, DHS has maintained and addressed incoming calls to the Call Center. Call back functionality across all programs has been an instrumental tool in lowering overall wait times with data indicating callers who opted for call backs averaged approximately 12 minutes waiting on the phone.

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Appendix A.

DOA Positions in Recruitment Definitions

Personnel Action Request (PAR) – The Personnel Action Request (PAR) is the requisition that begins the process of filling a position. It is entered by a designated individual at the agency level and goes through several levels of approval. The specific approval process for DHS PARs includes DHS (CFO and Director), EOHHS, HR, Budget Analyst and Budget Management. Once all approvals are in place, HR and DHS work together to finalize the posting and the recruitment begins.

PAR in Progress – The term ‘PAR in Process’ refers to PARs that have been entered into the system by DHS but have not yet completed the approval process.

Posting in Progress – Once the PAR is approved, the position is prepared to be posted on apply.ri.gov. DOA/HR confers with DHS to determine when the position should be posted and as a result of such discussion, HR prepares a draft posting for DHS approval. Once DHS finalizes and approves the posting, it is returned to DOA/HR for posting.

Position Posted – The position is posted on apply.ri.gov for the required 10 calendar days.

Pending Candidate Referral – After the posting closes, DOA/HR reviews applicant information to determine who is eligible based on Collective Bargaining Agreements (if applicable for the position). If the position is a non-union position, all applicants are referred to DHS.

In Recruitment – The posting has closed and candidates are referred to DHS. During this time, the DHS is reviewing candidates' qualifications/screening to determine if they meet minimum qualifications. At this time in the process, interviews are conducted if appropriate.

Candidate Recommended for Hire/Pending Approval to Offer – The top candidate has been recommended by the DHS for hire in the Automated Applicant Tracking System (NeoGov). DOA/HR reviews and approves the hire recommendation and notifies DHS, which then makes a job offer to the candidate.

Candidate Accepted, Pending Start Date – The candidate has accepted the position and DHS is waiting on confirmation of when the employee will begin in their new role.

Pending Employee Start in New Role – Refers to employees who have started in their new role from the pay period used in the report to current date but would not have been included in a full pay period as of yet. This category also refers to individuals who have accepted a role and have a start date in the future.

Pending Update in Payroll – Refers to DHS and DOA payroll working to address discrepancies with regards to positions hired.

Filled – The candidate has accepted the position and has a confirmed start date for when they will move into the new role or join DHS.

Appendix B.

DHS Hiring Terminology

Lateral Transfer – A lateral hire is an employee moving to a new home office location within the same job classification title. For example, an Eligibility Technician I moving from a home office of Warwick to Middletown.

Promotional Opportunity – A promotional opportunity is when an existing DHS employee accepts a different position opening from within DHS.

When an existing DHS employee takes another position opening with DHS, the employee is promoted into their new role resulting in a new vacancy. For example, a Supervising Eligibility Technician is promoted into a vacant Senior Casework Supervisor position. While adhering to any collective bargaining agreements, DHS promotes the internal employee and now needs to recruit for the vacant Supervising Eligibility Technician. **Please note:** DOA considers a promotional opportunity to include the above but also includes when an employee from another state agency joins DHS and fills a vacant position, which increases DHS' workforce.

New Hire – A new hire is a completed hire resulting in an increase to DHS workforce. This person is new to DHS (either from another state agency or new to state) and fills a vacancy at DHS not resulting in another vacancy to be filled. **Please note:** DOA considers new hires as those new to state service.

Appendix C.

DOA Civil Service HR Definitions

'Active' Candidates – Refers to candidates who have passed the civil service examination with a score of 70 or more and appear in rank order of performance on this list.

'Certified' Candidates – Refers to candidates who have been reached on the list, based on their score/rank, and are eligible to be interviewed and considered for appointment by the Department's interview team.

'Available' Candidates – Refers to candidates on the list, who during exam administration, select "Regional Location" and "Position Type" preferences. These selections will influence their availability when "certified/reached" for Departmental interview.

Appendix D.

Caseload Key Terminology

Not Overdue—Refers to applications that are within the mandatory timeliness standard set by the federal government. Each program has its own timeliness standard before it is considered overdue.

Overdue—Refers to applications not yet processed and past the mandatory timeliness standard. Even if an overdue application is completed a single day later, it is tracked as overdue by the agency..