



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

July 31, 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 Quarterly DHS Staffing and Operations Report for the reporting period between April 1 through June 30, 2026.

Since 2022, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) has provided regular Staffing and Operations Reports centered on agency workforce and operational trends. While this report is no longer required as of the enacted FY2027 budget, DHS remains committed to transparency and will continue generating this report on a quarterly basis. The quarterly cadence is intended to align the report more closely with the Department's financial reporting schedule.

This report serves as the transition from the previous 60-day reporting cycle to the new quarterly schedule. Since the May 2026 report covered activity through April 30, 2026, the July report will contain information that overlaps with previously reported information. This overlap is necessary to establish a new quarterly reporting cadence.

Each report hereafter will continue where the prior report left off, and no further overlap is anticipated. The report will continue to provide updates on key staffing and operational measures, including:

- 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

Importantly, this report represents the last to be distributed directly to General Assembly members as new reports will be made public at dhs.ri.gov/about-us. DHS remains committed to transparency, continuous improvement, and providing stakeholders with timely information regarding agency operations.

Thank you for your continued advocacy, support, and commitment to Rhode Island families and individuals. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Merolla-Brito". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kimberly" being more prominent.

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

July 31, 2026

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

FOR DATA FROM April 1 THROUGH JUNE 30

This section reflects progress made in hiring and retaining staff at DHS. Reporting period data reflects a quarterly window, with subsequent reports capturing data where the previous report concludes. Highlights for the Staffing and Operations Report dated July 31, 2026, include:

Total NET difference of filled positions for April 1 to June 30 -----**-6***
25 candidates and/or employees are awaiting a start date or an update in payroll

Total HIRING ACTIVITY for April 1 to June 30, 2026----- **41++**

Total REMAINING POSITIONS to be FILLED at DHS ----- **86**

Total POSITIONS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS (defined in report) at DHS ----- **65**

** 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

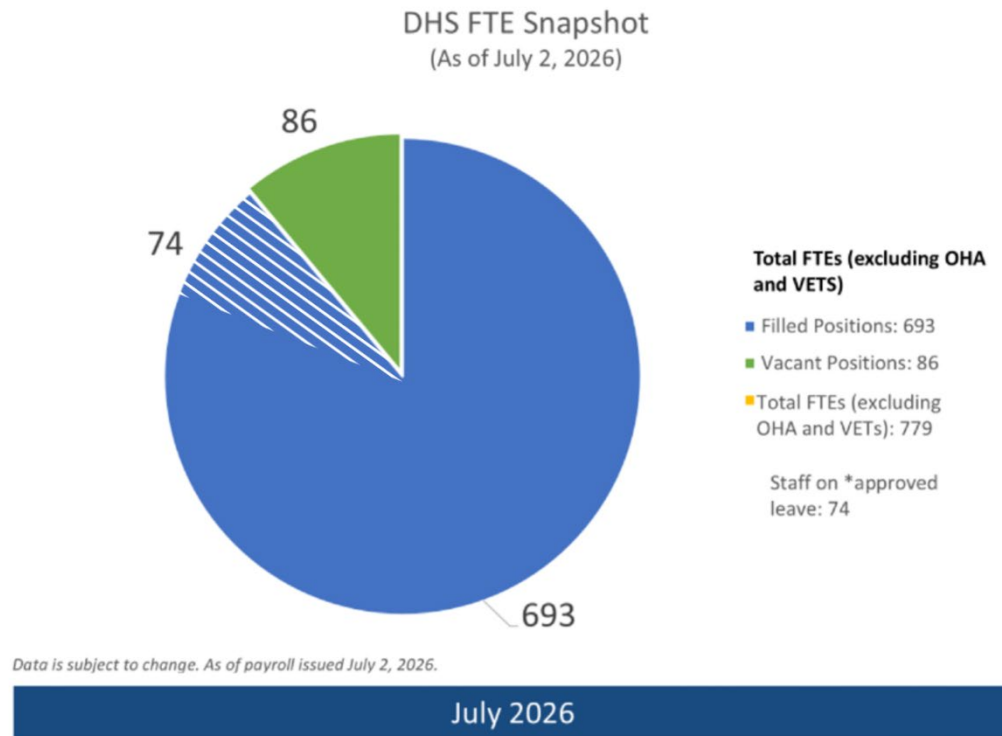
For this reporting period, DHS brought on 13 new hires and 28 lateral and/or promotional opportunities totaling 41 employees. For this reporting period, the specific position titles and types of hires made are outlined in the chart below. In 2026, DHS collectively onboarded 27 new hires and facilitated 47 lateral and/or promotional opportunities, totaling 74 positions across the Department. DHS anticipates returning to a regular cadence of hiring activity now that the new ERP system is stabilized and other process efficiencies continue to improve.

	April 1 – June 30		
	Lateral	Promotional	New Hires
Assistant Administrator	0	1	0
Assistant Business Management Business Officer	0	0	1
Chief Casework Supervisor	0	1	0
Consultant Public Health Nurse	0	0	1
Customer Service Aide	1	0	5
Eligibility Technician I	5	0	1
Eligibility Technician II Call Center	0	1	0
Eligibility Technician II Lobby	0	2	0
Eligibility Technician III	0	1	0
Employment and Career Advisor	0	1	0
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist I	0	1	1
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist II	0	1	0
Interdepartmental Project Manager	0	0	1
Interpreter	0	0	1
LTSS Level II Financial Reviewer	0	1	0
Principal Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	0	1	0
Programming Services Officer	0	0	1
Quality Control Reviewer	0	1	0
Senior Casework Supervisor	0	2	0
Senior Human Services Business Officer	0	1	0
Senior Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	0	3	0
Social Caseworker	0	1	0
Supervising Eligibility Technician	1	2	0
Weatherization Technical Monitor	0	0	1
Total	7	21	13

**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.*

-see next page-

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.



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 July 2, as the basis for changes from the previous report.

Title	April 2026	June 2026	Delta
Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services	7	8	1
Assistant Business Management Officer	0	1	1
Child Support Enforcement Agent I	16	14	-2
Consultant Public Health Nurse	5	6	1
Customer Service Aide (DHS)	24	29	5
Customer Support Specialist I (DHS)	11	9	-2
Eligibility Technician	150	139	-11
Eligibility Technician III (DHS)	21	22	1
Administrator- Family and Adult Services	7	8	1
Chief Case Work Supervisor	3	4	1
Chief Clerk	2	1	-1
Clinical Training Specialist	7	5	-2

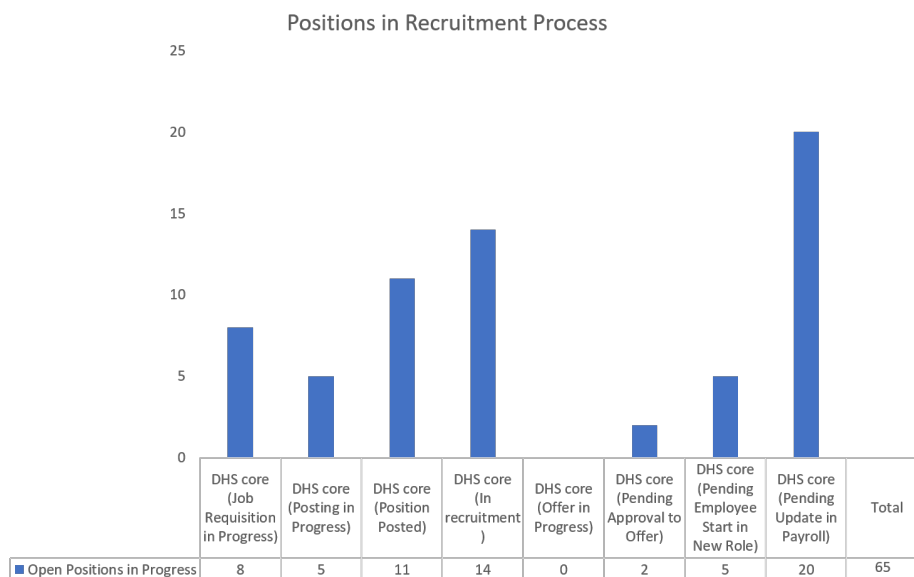
Employment and Career Advisor	16	14	-2
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist II	1	2	1
Interpreter (Spanish)	4	5	1
Programming Services Officer	4	5	1
Rehabilitation Counselor	27	26	-1
Senior Case Work Supervisor	14	16	2
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II	24	26	2
Weatherization Tech Monitor	2	3	1
Senior Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	7	8	1
Social Case Worker	35	33	-2
Supervising Eligibility Technician	25	24	-1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I	15	13	-2
Total changes on filled FTEs (Apr 2026 vs Jun 2026)			-6

**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

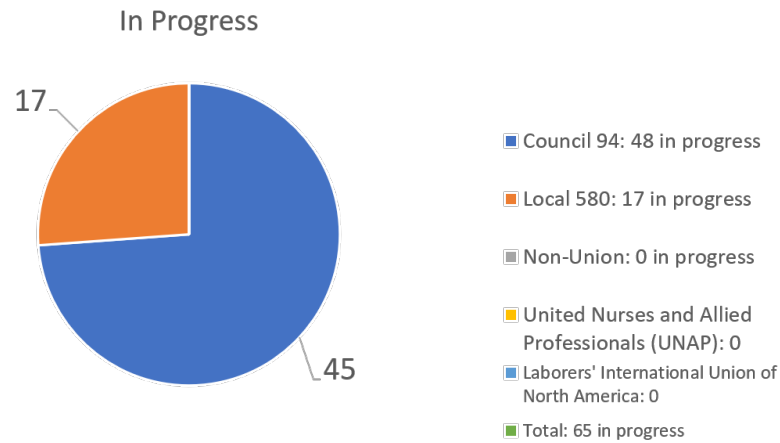
Of the total 779 DHS FTEs (only includes DHS core, OCSS, and ORS), there was a decrease in filled FTEs to 693 that is expected to increase based on the positions near the completion of the recruitment process. At the time of this report, 65 of 86 vacant positions are in active recruitment. The remaining 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.



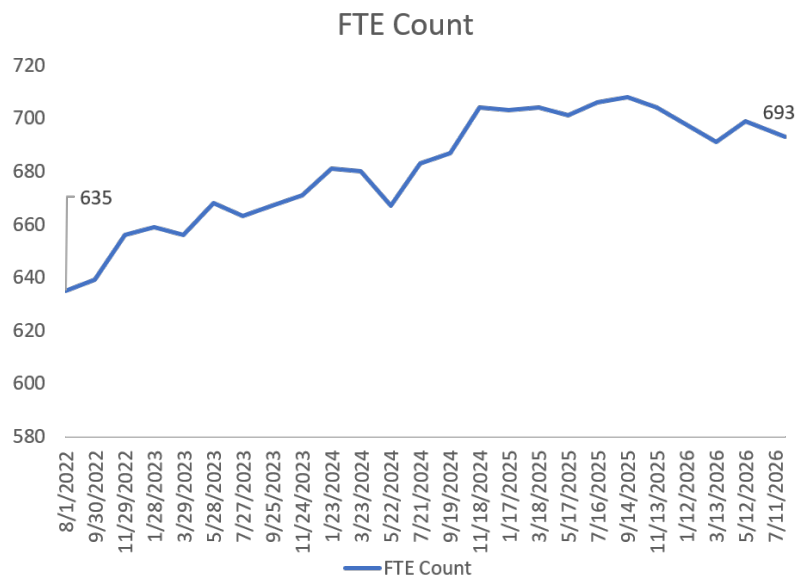
*Recruitment and hiring activities change daily. Data is subject to change and may not reflect the latest status. *Additional categories are further explained in Appendix A.*

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 693 employees on payroll, of which 74 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 has worked with DMU to develop a second light duty assignment for back-office work that will be offered to those employees on approved leave. DHS is hopeful that this will be another option 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)	16	8	-8
Staff on Intermittent FMLA Leave	48	45	-3
Staff on Maternity/Paternity Leave	2	5	+3
Staff on Worker's Compensation Leave	3	4	+1
Staff on Military Leave	0	0	0
Light Duty	0	2	+2
Pending Cases/Under Review*	14	10	-4
Total:	83	74	-9

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

-see next page-

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
2026 – Q2 – Exam ET-I	May 22, 2026	26	Pending
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	2
2026 – Q2 – Exam	May 22, 2026	28	Pending

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 this reporting, the number of overdue applications awaiting state action is 2,290, reflecting a stable caseload and a moderate increase mainly attributed to new Medicaid applications. At the same time, DHS has continued the implementation of recent federal SNAP policy changes. DHS will continue to closely monitor pending applications, leveraging communication, technology, and processes to help people access benefits and receive any supports needed. 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.

Additionally, DHS is building on the first-touch accuracy measure through a Business Process Excellence Redesign initiative, an effort intended to help resolve applications as completely as possible during the initial review of an application. While this initiative will further improve operational efficiency, DHS anticipates a temporary increase in application processing until the initiative is fully realized.

Pending Applications Awaiting State Action

	Overdue Awaiting State Action
Program Name	State
SNAP Expedited	110
SNAP Non-Expedited	246
CCAP	94
GPA Burial	0
SSP	1
GPA	6
*RIW	25
Undetermined Medical	564
Medicaid-MAGI	67
Medicare Premium Payments	433
Medicaid Complex	566
LTSS	178
Grand total	2,290

**This is an estimate 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	15
Cash Assistance (RIW/GPA)	30 Days	20
Medicaid MAGI	30 Days	19
Complex Medical	45 Days	39
Long Term Care (LTSS)	90 Days	52

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

NEW Hire FTE Impact on Pending Applications

DHS currently has 13 Eligibility Technician positions needing supervisory approval (ETSAs), who are collectively processing over 360 cases per week. All of the newly hired ETSAs have completed their core trainings, are currently being trained on our SNAP Connect Line, and participating in the newly modeled ETSA Hub.

This group will begin their transition to their “Home” office and join the rotational assignment for all programs upon the completion of their probation. 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 at six months, ETSAs may be represented in multiple reports alongside new staff who are beginning their training. It is important to note that while staff are categorized as ETSAs, they are processing all DHS Core programs including SNAP, MA, CCAP and RIW. Please refer to the moment-in-time chart below for an average number of processed SNAP applications completed by ETSAs every week.

The second ETSA HUB group started on July 13 with 18 ETSAs, who all began their basic RIBridges and New Hire Trainings.

# of ETSAs	Assigned to:	Outcomes
0	Medical (applications, recertifications, LTSS)	Each assigned group is averaging, per week, approximately: SNAP: 360 cases Medical: 0 cases
13	SNAP applications, recertifications, or interim reviews	

Call Center

For the current Staffing and Operations Report dated July 31, the Call Center average wait time to speak with a staff member was 26 minutes 52 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 42 eligibility technicians assigned to the SNAP Connect process that answer calls for interviews 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 taking effect March 1, 2026, and June 1, 2026. Notably, there has been an increase in customer interactions since this report is capturing activity when ABAWD changes occurred. Additional information about these changes are available here: staycovered.ri.gov/SNAP-Updates.

Ongoing initiatives and other enhancements continue to support customer service priorities 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 a SNAP interview during this period was approximately 23 minutes. DHS remains committed

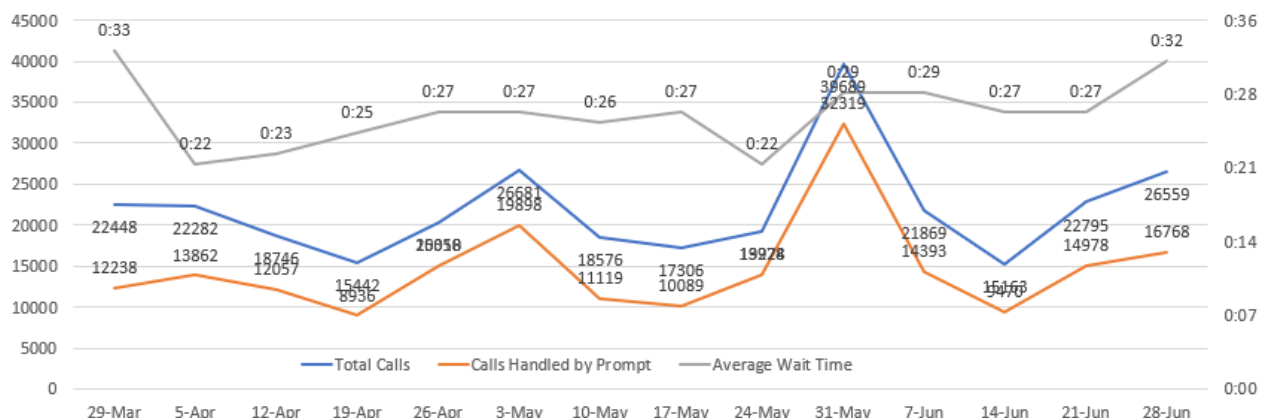
to excellence in service delivery through optimized processes, workforce training, and innovative technological solutions. Through improved processes and technological solutions, DHS intends to further improve the wait times for all queues.

Average Monthly Wait Times by Queue

	April		May		June	
	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Callbacks	DHS Agent
SNAP	00:14:09	01:38:53	00:14:32	01:44:51	00:16:58	01:48:54
SNAP_Con..		00:16:12		00:27:25	00:00:04	00:34:20
SNAP_Con..		00:17:37	00:00:04	00:28:45		00:36:07
SNAP Inte..	00:09:43	00:15:58	00:11:30	00:26:00	00:12:53	00:32:22
LTSS	00:07:51	00:13:20	00:08:54	00:07:55	00:08:19	00:07:37
GPA	00:11:10	00:18:59	00:13:39	00:16:11	00:09:40	00:22:51
SSP		00:22:20		00:14:11	00:34:15	00:36:48
Specialty	00:09:28	00:25:15	00:11:07	00:20:00	00:11:06	00:17:01
ECA Trans..	00:10:39	00:21:11	00:08:33	00:25:03	00:11:32	00:27:14
Medical	00:10:45	00:58:56	00:12:32	00:54:21	00:12:37	00:56:08
Child Care	00:17:33	02:34:24	00:15:12	02:39:27	00:16:40	02:19:04
RIW	00:15:19	02:42:04	00:15:18	02:29:51	00:14:26	02:19:41
Password ..	00:09:01	00:15:08	00:10:16	00:09:20	00:10:47	00:13:12
Grand Total	00:13:00	00:38:19	00:13:41	00:39:16	00:15:01	00:43:20

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 46 dedicated Call Center staff members. An additional team of 42 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 13 minutes 54 seconds 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 then 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..