



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

July 16, 2025

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 May 8, 2025, to July 6, 2025, 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

In following the same methodology as previous staffing and operations reports, we are continuing to use payroll data as the basis of FTE counts to provide a more accurate, consistent, and reliable measure of staffing levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "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

July 16, 2025

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

FROM DATA FROM May 8 THROUGH July 6

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 July 16, 2025, include:

Total vacancies cited in 'DOA Leave Report' between May 8-July 6, 2025----- 8*

Total NET difference of filled positions for May 8 - July 6, 2025-----+5†

Total HIRING ACTIVITY for May 8 to July 6, 2025----- 29††

Total REMAINING POSITIONS to be FILLED at DHS ----- 73

Total POSITIONS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS (defined in report) at DHS ----- 66

**The Leave Report refers to a report from the DOA that lists all employees who left DHS (includes staff from OCSS, OHA, ORS and VETS; DHS uses filters to remove VETS and OHA departures) during the reporting period. It is not intended to be compared with other stats/data points DHS uses in this report.*

† Initial August 2022 reports used a hybrid tracker that introduced irreconcilable data from payroll and HR.

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

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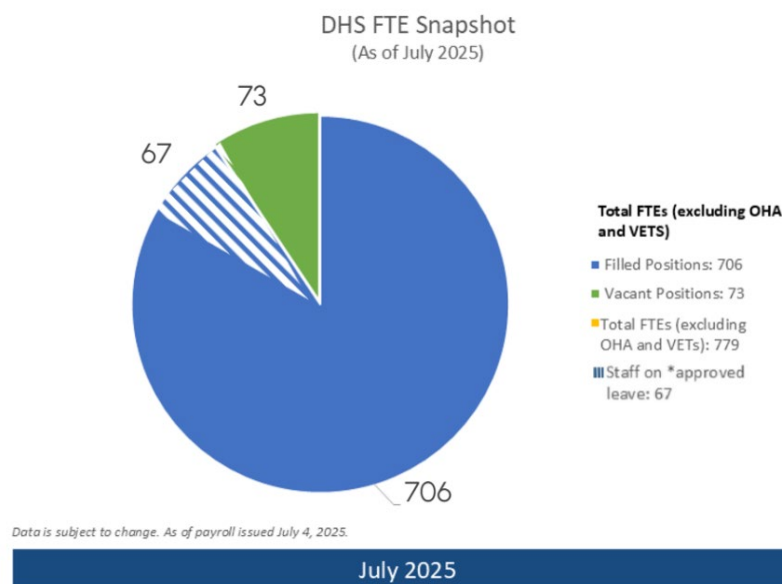
Newly Filled and Vacant Positions

DHS continues to make steady progress in filling positions, with many offers resulting in lateral or promotional opportunities. This is often due not only to the level of expertise required for posted roles, but also to contractual obligations that prioritize internal candidates under existing collective bargaining agreements. While this approach supports career growth and retention, it can also result in new vacancies elsewhere in the agency. To date in 2025, DHS has filled 87 positions—32 through new hires and 55 through lateral or promotional moves. For this reporting period, DHS filled 29 positions, bringing in 11 new hires and offering 18 current staff members new roles through promotions or internal transfers. Position titles and types of hire for this period are outlined below.

	Lateral	Promotional	New Hires
Customer Service Aide	1	0	1
Customer Support Specialist I	0	0	1
Eligibility Technician I	4	1	7
Eligibility Technician II Lobby	2	1	0
Eligibility Technician III	0	3	0
Employment and Career Advisor	0	2	0
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	0	0	1
Principal Human Services Business Officer	0	1	0
Quality Control Reviewer	0	1	0
Social Case Worker	0	1	0
Supervising Eligibility Technician	0	1	1
Total	7	11	11

**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.*

Please refer to the charts below for key highlights on overall FTE counts, positions in recruitment, and hiring progress made to date. Please note there are eight individuals in this reporting period who are not reflected in the FTE count below because they are not yet registered in the payroll system.



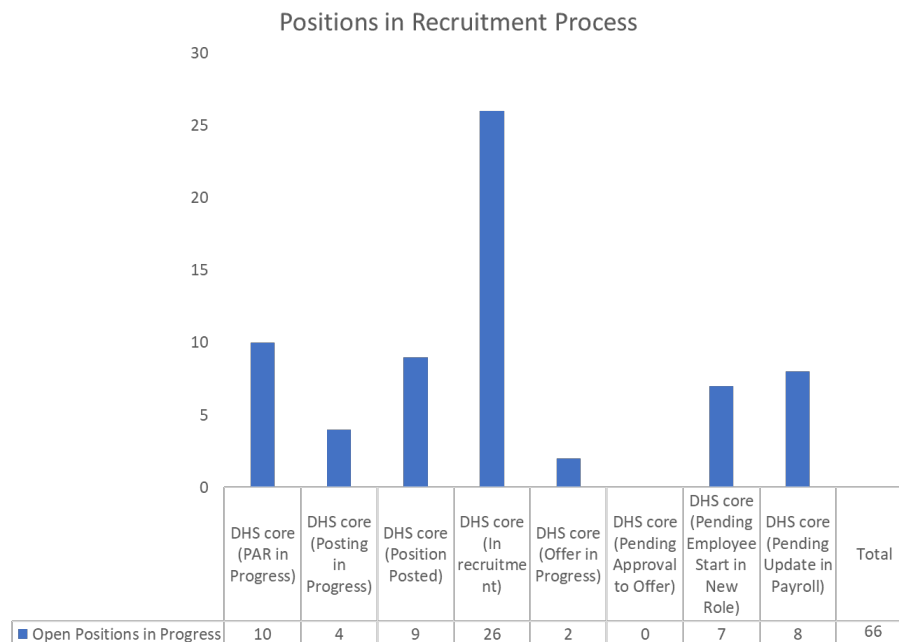
Data is subject to change. As of July 4, 2025, there were 67 staff on approved leave. Additional information regarding staff on leave is available on page 8.

Positions In Active Recruitment

As of this report, DHS has 706 of its 779 FTEs filled. Of the 73 current vacancies, 66 positions are in active recruitment. The remaining vacancies—not yet in the recruitment process—will be reflected in subsequent reports, in alignment with payroll cycles. It should be noted that some of these vacancies are tied to federal hiring freezes.

The recruitment process, which varies for union and non-union positions, is multifaceted and designed to ensure that qualified candidates are selected to perform critical functions for DHS. Depending on the position and candidate availability, it can take several weeks to several months to complete the hiring process and confirm a start date.

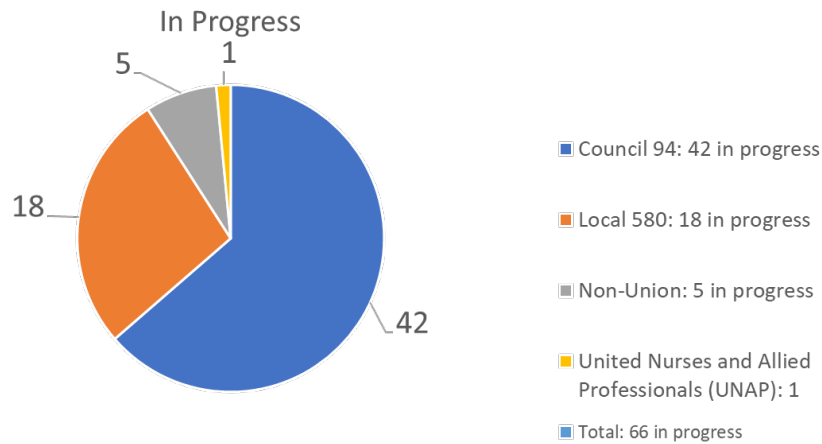
Please refer to the chart below for the current status of positions in recruitment.



*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.*

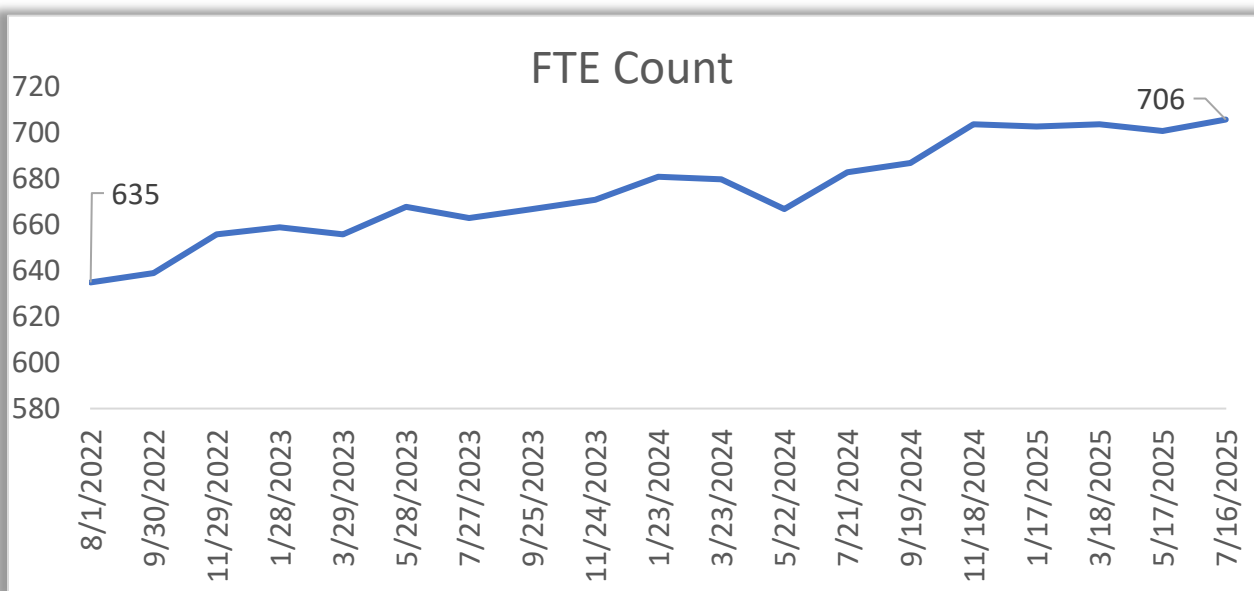
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Positions in Recruitment by Union Affiliation



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

Hiring Progress to Date



FTE Impact from Hiring Activity

Hiring fluctuates on a daily basis as employees join DHS, receive promotions, are transferred, or otherwise leave state service. Since 62% (18 out of 29) of all hiring activity in this report were lateral or promotional hires, it is important to know that these filled positions also create a new vacancy needing to be filled that is reflected in current or subsequent net aggregate charts. The chart below focuses on the status of job classifications impacted by ongoing hiring activity, using payroll issued from July 4, as the basis for changes from the previous report.

Title	May 2025	July 2025	Delta
Administrator Family and Children's Services	4	5	+1

Chief Implementation Aide	4	3	-1
Child Support Enforcement Agent I	15	14	-1
Child Support Enforcement Agent II	8	6	-2
Customer Service Aide (DHS)	31	28	-3
Data Control Clerk	6	7	+1
Administrator- Family and Adult Services	5	6	+1
Eligibility Technician	159	166	+7
Child Support Enforcement Agent Iii	14	16	+2
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	8	9	+1
Eligibility Technician II (DHS - Lobby)	34	31	-3
Eligibility Technician III (DHS)	20	22	+2
Senior Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist	6	7	+1
Social Case Worker	30	28	-2
Supervising Eligibility Technician	27	29	+2
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II	26	25	-1
		Total net aggregate	+5

**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.*

Recent Departures/New Vacancies Resulting

The Department of Administration's Leave Report indicated there were **eight departures and/or vacancies** at DHS core (includes ORS and OCSS, excludes RIVETS and OHA). As the keeper of record for hiring across state agencies, DOA records show departures and new vacancies for the following positions:

- 1 Chief Implementation Aide
- 4 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Employment and Career Advisor
- 1 Social Case Worker
- 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Staff on Leave Snapshot

As of this reporting period, DHS has 706 employees on payroll. Currently, 67 of 706 employees are currently on continuous or intermittent medical leave based on data provided by the Department of Administration (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:

Staff on Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA/PIL Leave)	9
Staff on Intermittent FMLA Leave	37
Staff on Maternity/Paternity Leave	4
Staff on Worker's Compensation Leave	1
Staff on Military Leave	0
Light Duty	0
Pending Cases/Under Review*	16
Total:	67

**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 Capitol 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	Date	Candidates Applied	Candidates on List
Current List ET I	October 2024		53
Q1 Exam ET I	January 2025	164	28
Q2 Exam ET I	April 2025	72	Scoring in progress
Q3 Exam ET I	July 2025	62	Pending examination
Current List SCW			73
Q1 Exam SCW	January 2025	122	30
Q2 Exam SCW	April 2025	85	Scoring in progress
Q3 Exam July 2025	July 2025	63	Pending examination

See Appendix C at the end of the report.

Current Caseload Backlog* Snapshot

RIBridges, the state's integrated eligibility system managed by Deloitte, has been fully restored following the cybersecurity incident. DHS is now focused on regaining momentum in regards to efficiently processing applications and reducing the application backlog across all programs.

As of July 7, 2025, the number of overdue applications awaiting state action is 1,596. This reflects an approximate 10% decrease compared to pre-breach levels in November 2024 (1,760), signaling positive progress.

DHS continues to build operational resilience through initiatives such as **SNAP Connect, Technology Adoption Days**, and ongoing investments in process redesign. 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. 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.

For more details on SNAP Connect, please visit: dhs.ri.gov/SNAPconnect

Pending Applications Awaiting State Action (Snapshot as of July 7, 2025)

Program Name	Overdue Awaiting State Action
	State
SNAP Expedited	195
SNAP Non-Expedited	194
CCAP	55
GPA Burial	4
SSP	0
GPA	0
*RIW	25
Undetermined Medical	324
Medicaid-MAGI	51
Medicare Premium Payments	139
Medicaid Complex	458
LTSS	151
Grand total	1,596

**This is an estimate as of July 7, 2025, 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.*

Processing Wednesdays

Below, you will also find data for Processing Wednesdays, now called Technology Adoption Days, which has been instrumental in giving staff the time needed to process applications, forms, and documents. As new initiatives become part of the regular workflow, DHS will retire sections dedicated specifically to initiatives. This aligns with the goal of ensuring subsequent reports are concise and contain key insights required by statute now in or the future as amended.

Beginning Week	Tasks Per Worker	# of Staff	Total Tasks Completed
June 1, 2025	16.6	23	381
June 8 2025	17.6	25	441
June 15, 2025	10.7	17	182
June 22, 2025	21.9	19	417
June 29, 2025	20.1	18	361

This chart related to Processing Wednesdays has been updated for ease of readability.

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	17
Medicaid MAGI	30 Days	22
Complex Medical	45 Days	39
Long Term Care (LTSS)	90 Days	64

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

NEW Hire FTE Impact on Pending Applications

DHS currently has 25 Eligibility Technician positions needing supervisory approval (ETSAs), who are collectively processing over 327 cases per week. Of the 25 ETSAs, there are seven staff members with that designation who are not contributing to processing cases yet because they are newly hired. All ETSAs have, however, completed new hire training and have begun either SNAP or MAGI training. Please note there are ETSAs not included in this section whose status was extended as a result of the December 2024 data breach, with extensions beginning from the point of system restoration. 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
2	Call Center onboarding (MAGI/ SNAP training, partial-day answering calls)	Each assigned group is averaging, per week, approximately: SNAP: 252 cases Medical: 75 cases
9	Medical (applications, recertifications, LTSS)	
7	SNAP applications, recertifications, or interim reviews	

Call Center

As of this reporting period, the average wait time to speak with a staff member at the DHS Call Center is approximately 20 minutes. While DHS has reached its goal of reducing average wait times to under 30 minutes, DHS is now focused on its continuous improvement efforts in technological and operational innovations such as SNAP Connect to help improve the customer experience across all queues.

SNAP Connect is an initiative that enables SNAP recipients to complete their required interviews by phone at a time convenient for them. The model supports streamlined, one-touch processing and has significantly reduced interview wait times. As of July:

- There are 31 eligibility technicians assigned to the SNAP Connect line to answer live interview calls Monday through Friday, which is in addition to the 49 dedicated Call Center staff.
- The average wait time for interviews is currently around three minutes.
- SNAP Connect coverage expanded in June to include residents of Warwick and Woonsocket.
- DHS is evaluating early results and will refine the model prior to statewide expansion.

SNAP Connect is attributed to helping further improve average wait times. This initiative and other enhancements collectively aim to improve the customer experience by reducing abandonment rates, promoting one-touch processing, and striving for a 30-minute or less wait time across all queues. Call volume overall continues to follow a monthly pattern, with higher demand observed at the beginning and end of each month. On high call volume days, DHS may issue an update via its website regarding any adjustments to hours of operation.

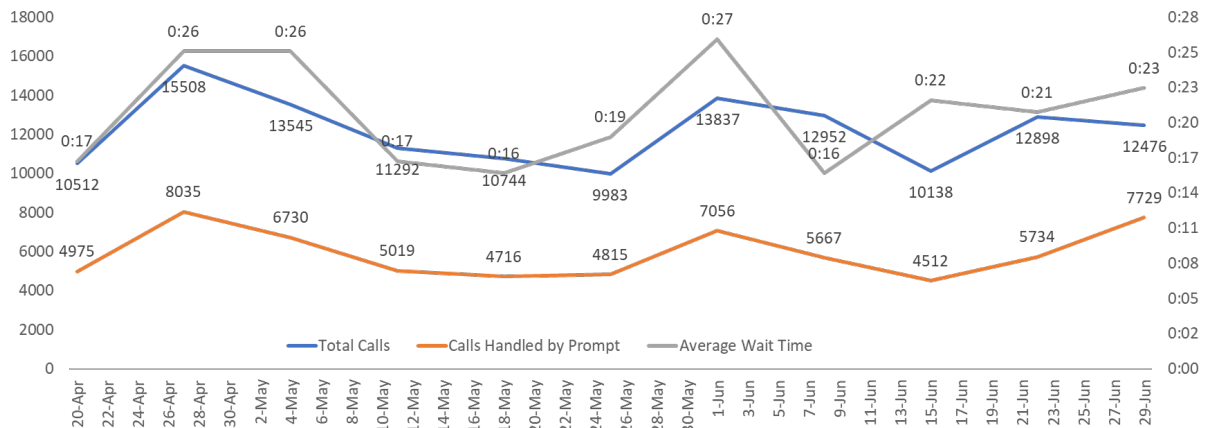
Currently, each ET assigned to the Call Center manages an average of 14 calls per day, with a handle time of approximately 25 minutes. Call handle times include both time on the call and any follow-up case action in the worker portal. These productively measures are influenced by several factors, including staffing levels, vacancy fill rates, and overall interest in Call Center roles.

-see next page-

Average Monthly Wait Times by Queue

	June			July		
	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Triage Agent	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Triage Agent
RIW	00:16:46	01:53:18		00:21:18	01:33:57	
Child Care	00:16:59	02:03:58		00:10:59	01:12:27	
Medical	00:13:21	00:52:35		00:01:44	00:37:14	
SNAP	00:11:32	00:53:35		00:13:21	01:36:28	
SSP	00:04:08	00:32:52			01:20:03	
ECA Transfer	00:08:42	00:28:29		00:18:48	01:16:36	
GPA	00:12:51	00:27:13		00:09:10	00:37:02	
Specialty	00:08:28	00:24:01			00:07:43	
Tech Help	00:09:51	00:15:49		00:08:40	00:12:59	
Triage			00:12:31			00:25:46
LTSS	00:08:54	00:11:00		00:34:56	00:12:02	
SNAP_Connect_Recert	00:08:26	00:03:59		00:08:08	00:03:42	
SNAP Interviews/Intakes	00:07:48	00:03:36		00:05:09	00:05:08	
SNAP_Connect_Intake	00:07:19	00:02:56		00:07:59	00:02:33	
Grand Total	00:12:11	00:28:48	00:12:31	00:12:20	00:38:27	00:25:46

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



This chart reflects the fluctuation of wait times in relation call volume and call center self-service prompts.

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 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.