



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

November 13, 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 September 6, 2025, to November 3, 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.

Important SNAP Update

The issuance of SNAP benefits is a top priority for the Governor's Office and the RI Department of Human Services (DHS). We understand the great responsibility DHS has in administering benefits as quickly and as accurately as possible. In the last few days, DHS received revised federal guidance on multiple occasions and has been able to disburse SNAP benefits to families and individuals.

During the federal shutdown, the SNAPsupport.ri.gov page was setup in coordination with the Governor's Office to provide the public with updates, resources, and data. Though no other DHS benefit programs were at risk in early November, the impacts of a prolonged federal shutdown could have created additional uncertainties.

Importantly, while this report shows a decline in net filled FTEs, the federal shutdown has had no impact on hiring. The decline is a snapshot in time and attributed to the state's transition to the ERP/Workday enterprise system

from the legacy systems. The transition from the current systems has lasted approximately 6-8 weeks where no new postings or PAR activity occurred. Due to the transition, certain hiring processes have been paused through December 1, 2025.

DHS offices remained open during the federal shutdown and we continued to process applications and recertifications for all programs. Customers should be encouraged to immediately open any mailings from DHS and submit any requested documents as soon as possible regardless of the status of the shutdown.

We appreciate your advocacy and support for Rhode Islanders, and hope you will direct customers to SNAPSupport.ri.gov to help them connect with local resources and become informed of the latest developments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Merolla-Brito". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

November 13, 2025

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

FOR DATA FROM September 6 THROUGH November 3

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 November 13, 2025, include:

Total NET difference of filled positions for September 6 – November 3, 2025-----	-4*
Total HIRING ACTIVITY for September 6 to November 3, 2025-----	30++
Total REMAINING POSITIONS to be FILLED at DHS -----	75
Total POSITIONS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS (defined in report) at DHS -----	70

** Initial August 2022 reports used a hybrid tracker that introduced irreconcilable data from payroll and HR. Similarly, please note the DOA Leave Report information has been retired as it contains duplicative information captured within hiring activity, and FTE impacts that otherwise provide a trajectory of hiring activity within the agency.*

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

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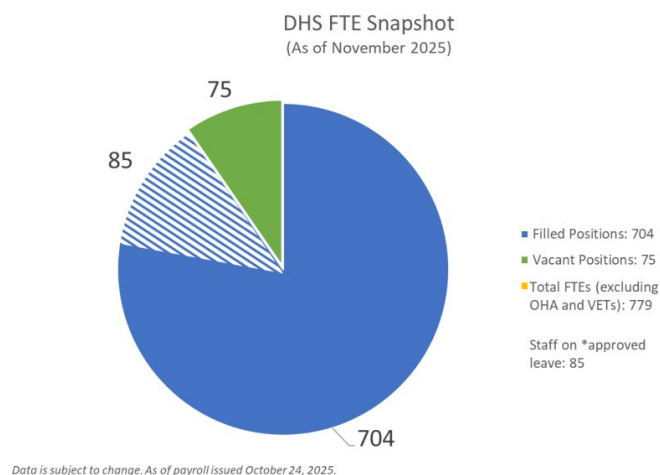
Newly Filled and Vacant Positions

For this reporting period, DHS brought on 5 new hires and 25 laterals and/or promotional opportunities totaling 30 employees. The specific position titles and types of hires made in this reporting period are outlined in the chart below. Please note DHS has cumulatively brought on 44 new hires and conducted 106 lateral and/or promotional opportunities, totaling 150 positions in 2025 across the Department.

	Sept. 6 – Nov. 3		
	Lateral	Promotional	New Hires
Assistant Administrator, Family and Children's Services	0	1	0
Consultant Public Health Nurse	0	0	1
Customer Service Aide	0	0	2
Customer Support Specialist I	0	1	0
Eligibility Technician I	0	3	2
Eligibility Technician II Lobby	0	9	0
Eligibility Technician III	0	2	0
Employment and Career Advisor	1	0	0
Human Services Business Officer	0	1	0
Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist II	0	1	0
LTSS Level II Financial Reviewer	0	1	0
Senior Casework Supervisor	0	1	0
Senior Human Services Business Officer	0	1	0
Social Case Worker	0	3	0
Total	1	24	5

**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. As of November, there are two individuals who have started in their roles who have not registered in the payroll system and therefore are not reflected in the FTE snapshot below. These employees will be captured in future reports.



Data is subject to change. As of October 24, 2025, there were 85 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. Since 83% (25 out of 30) 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 October 24, as the basis for changes from the previous report.

Title	Sept. 2025	Nov. 2025	Delta
Assistant Administrator, Community and Planning Services	7	8	+1
Assistant Business Manager Officer	1	0	-1
Assistant Director for Administrative Services	2	3	+1
Child Support Enforcement Agent I	15	14	-1
Child Support Enforcement Agent II	7	5	-2
Consultant Public Health Nurse	5	4	-1
Customer Service Aide (DHS)	30	29	-1
Customer Support Specialist I (DHS)	9	10	+1
Data Control Clerk	7	6	-1
Eligibility Technician	162	155	-7
Eligibility Technician II (DHS - Call Center)	16	15	-1
Eligibility Technician II (DHS - Lobby)	28	34	+6
Eligibility Technician III	21	22	+1
Human Services Business Officer	3	4	+1
Total net aggregate			-4

**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.*

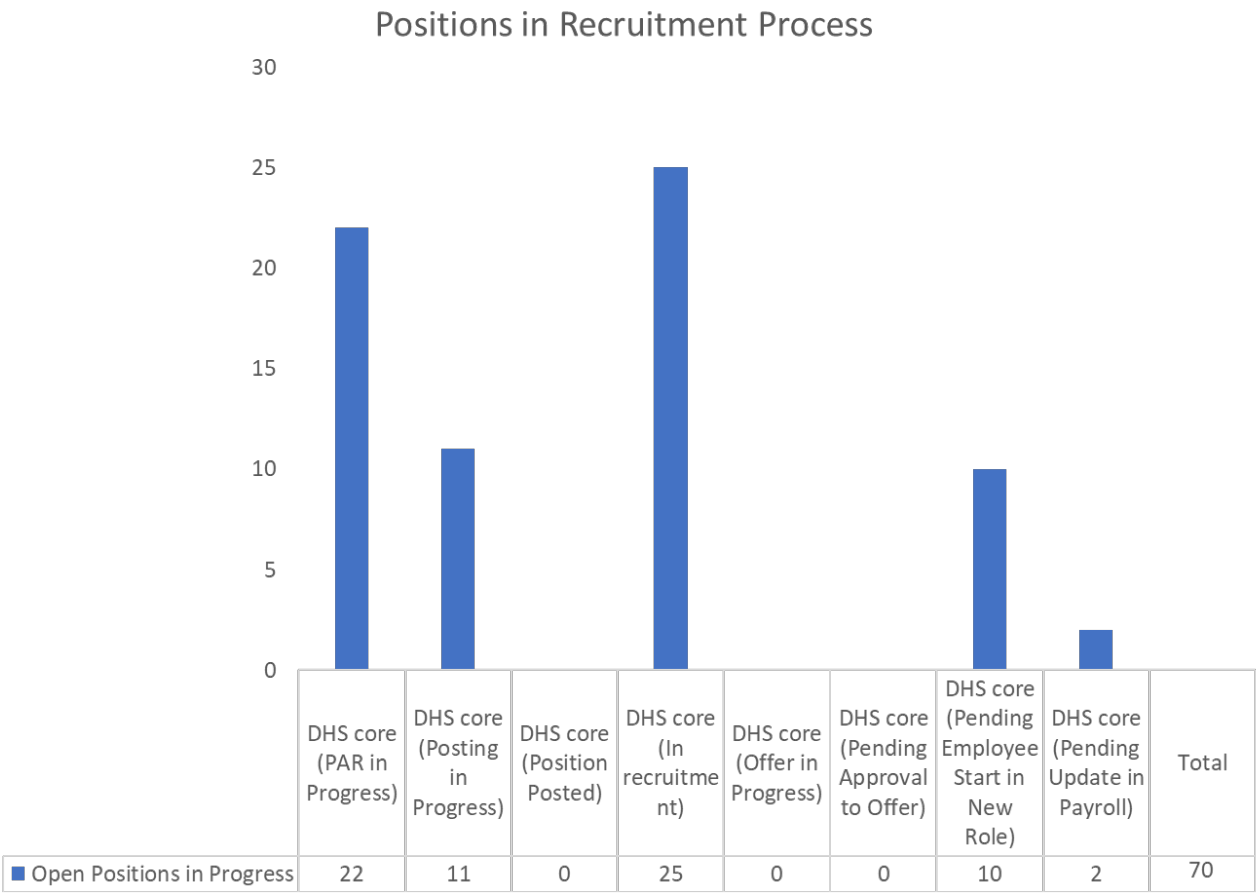
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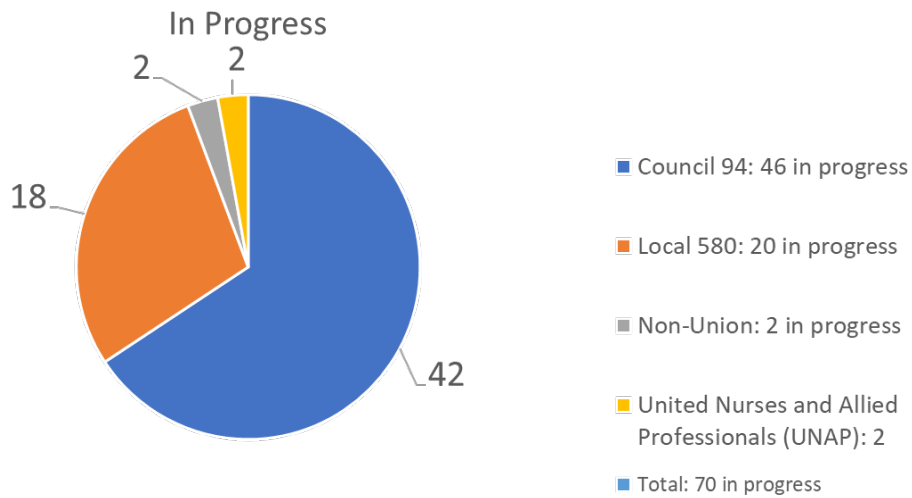
Positions In Active Recruitment

Of the total 779 DHS FTEs (only includes DHS core, OCSS, and ORS), there was a decrease in filled FTEs to 704 (see note in cover letter). At the time of this report, 70 of 75 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.

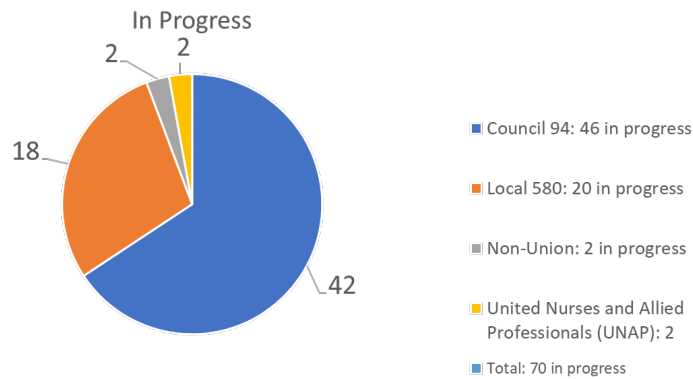
Please refer to the chart below for the status of these positions in the recruitment process.





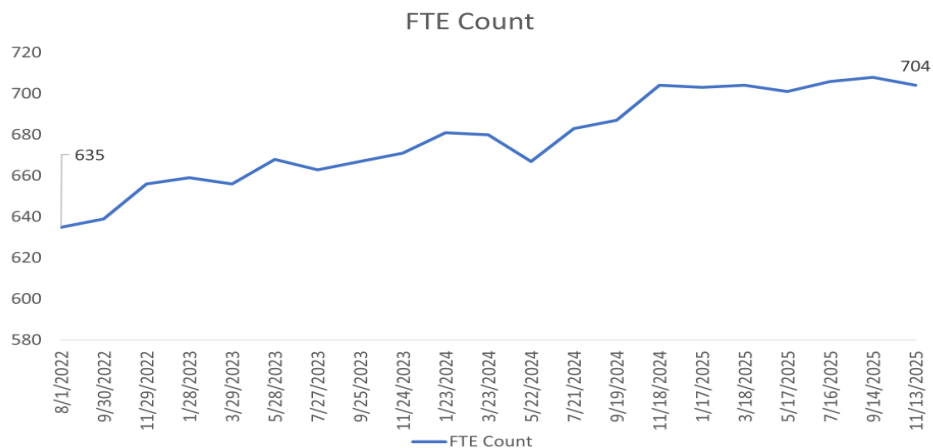
Recruitment and hiring activities change daily. Data is subject to change and may not reflect the latest status. *Additional categories are further explained in Appendix A.

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



Staff on Leave Snapshot

For the current report, DHS has 704 employees on payroll, of which 85 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:

Staff on Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA/PIL Leave)	14
Staff on Intermittent FMLA Leave	35
Staff on Maternity/Paternity Leave	8
Staff on Worker's Compensation Leave	1
Staff on Military Leave	0
Light Duty	0
Pending Cases/Under Review*	27
Total:	85

**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	Date	Candidates Applied	Candidates on List
Current List - Q1 Exam ET I	January 2025	164	33
Q2 Exam ET I	April 2025	72	13
Q3 Exam ET I	July 2025	68	December 2 nd testing
Q4 Exam ET-I	October 3, 2025	24	Pending Examination
Current List SCW	October 2024	110	73
Q1 Exam SCW	January 2025	122	30
Q2 Exam SCW	April 2025	85	23
Q3 Exam July 2025	July 2025	75	December 3 rd testing
Q4 Exam SCW	October 3, 2025	36	Pending Examination - TBA

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 November 6, 2025, the number of overdue applications awaiting state action is 1,566. This reflects an approximate 6% increase from the prior report. 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. For more details on SNAP Connect, please visit: dhs.ri.gov/SNAPconnect

Pending Applications Awaiting State Action (Snapshot as of November 6, 2025)

Overdue Awaiting State Action	
Program Name	State
SNAP Expedited	231
SNAP Non-Expedited	96
CCAP	73
GPA Burial	1
SSP	1
GPA	2
*RIW	43
Undetermined Medical	399

**This is an estimate as of November 6, 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.*

Medicaid-MAGI	66
Medicare Premium Payments	175
Medicaid Complex	358
LTSS	121
Grand total	1,566

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	17
Medicaid MAGI	30 Days	24
Complex Medical	45 Days	43
Long Term Care (LTSS)	90 Days	62

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

NEW Hire FTE Impact on Pending Applications

The Department currently has 15 Eligibility Technician positions needing supervisory approval (ETSAs), who are collectively processing over 287 cases per week. Of the 15 ETSAs, there is one staff member with that designation who is not contributing to processing cases yet because they are newly hired. There are also two ETSAs that are on some type of leave and are not contributing to the processing of cases. All ETSAs have, however, completed new hire training and have begun either SNAP or MAGI training. 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: 190 cases Medical: 97 cases
7	SNAP applications, recertifications, or interim reviews	

Call Center

For the current Staffing and Operations Report dated November 13, the Call Center average wait time to speak with a staff member was 27 minutes 24 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 fluctuate when there are federal changes to program policy. During this reporting period, DHS began informing the public about changes related to H.R. 1 slated to take effect November 1, 2025. The changes related to H.R. 1 were summarized on staycovered.ri.gov/SNAP-Updates before the agency prioritization shifted to the federal shutdown and its impact on SNAP.

While these circumstances have affected the call center, call volume is stable. Furthermore, initiatives and other enhancements collectively help maintain our customer service level by reducing abandonment rates, 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 under ten 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.

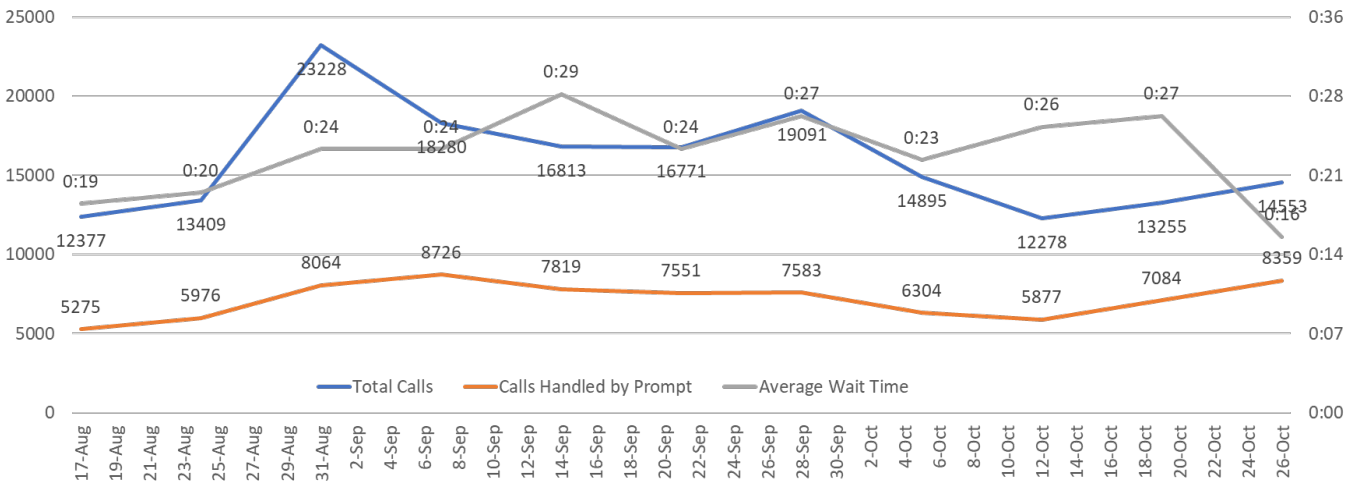
Average Monthly Wait Times by Queue

	September			October		
	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Triage Agent	Callbacks	DHS Agent	Triage Agent
RIW	00:14:22	02:27:39		00:15:12	02:13:25	
Child Care	00:15:56	02:16:54		00:15:07	02:48:57	
SNAP	00:12:49	01:42:20		00:12:19	01:07:05	
Medical	00:12:45	01:00:06		00:12:53	00:56:06	
ECA Transfer	00:12:43	00:42:49		00:12:16	00:42:53	
Specialty	00:07:06	00:26:26		00:05:08	00:29:35	
SSP	00:23:37	00:17:46			00:24:05	
LTSS	00:08:29	00:14:37		00:09:07	00:15:13	
GPA	00:17:52	00:13:01		00:12:07	00:14:21	
SNAP Interviews/Intakes	00:09:34	00:13:44		00:09:45	00:09:58	
Triage			00:11:12			00:08:57
SNAP_Connect_Recert	00:09:56	00:10:26		00:10:12	00:08:50	
SNAP_Connect_Intake	00:08:28	00:08:58		00:09:22	00:06:19	
Grand Total	00:11:58	00:46:29	00:11:12	00:11:49	00:38:15	00:08:57

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 47 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 12.5 calls per day, per Eligibility Technician, with a current handle time of approximately 25 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 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..