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March 29, 2023

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

**RE: Staffing and Operations Report for March 29, 2023**

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 16, 2023, to March 17, 2023, as formally requested in Article 1 of the enacted SFY23 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 average wait time
- Other Call Center statistics and insights

We appreciate your patience as we continue to make adjustments to this report in an effort to provide a thorough overview of the staffing and operations outlook at this agency. 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. Importantly, this report shows a continued decline in the current caseload backlog, an initial data analysis on pending Medicaid (undetermined medical) applications, and an update regarding Processing Wednesdays.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve, your interest in DHS staffing improvements, and the progress made to address outstanding issues. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Kimberly Merolla-Brito*

Kimberly Merolla-Brito, Acting Director  
RI Department of Human Services

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



# Staffing and Operations Report

## March 29, 2023

The DHS team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and providing stability to Rhode Island residents in need. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

FOR DATA FROM January 16 THROUGH March 17

This section reflects progress made in hiring and retaining staff at DHS, which filled a cumulative total of 225 positions between January 2022 -- March 17, 2023. Reporting data reflects a 60-day window, with subsequent reports capturing data where the previous report concludes. Highlights for the Staffing and Operations Report dated March 29, 2023, include:

|                                                                                  |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Total vacancies cited in 'DOA Leave Report' between Jan. 16-March. 17, 2023----- | 8*       |
| Total NET difference of filled positions for Jan. 16-March. 17, 2023-----        | - 3†     |
| Total HIRING ACTIVITY for Jan. 16-March. 17, 2023-----                           | 23††     |
| Total REMAINING POSITIONS to be FILLED at DHS -----                              | 117 ‡    |
| Total POSITIONS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS (defined in report) at DHS -----          | 100      |
| Total PHE Positions FILLED -----                                                 | 44 of 60 |

\*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.

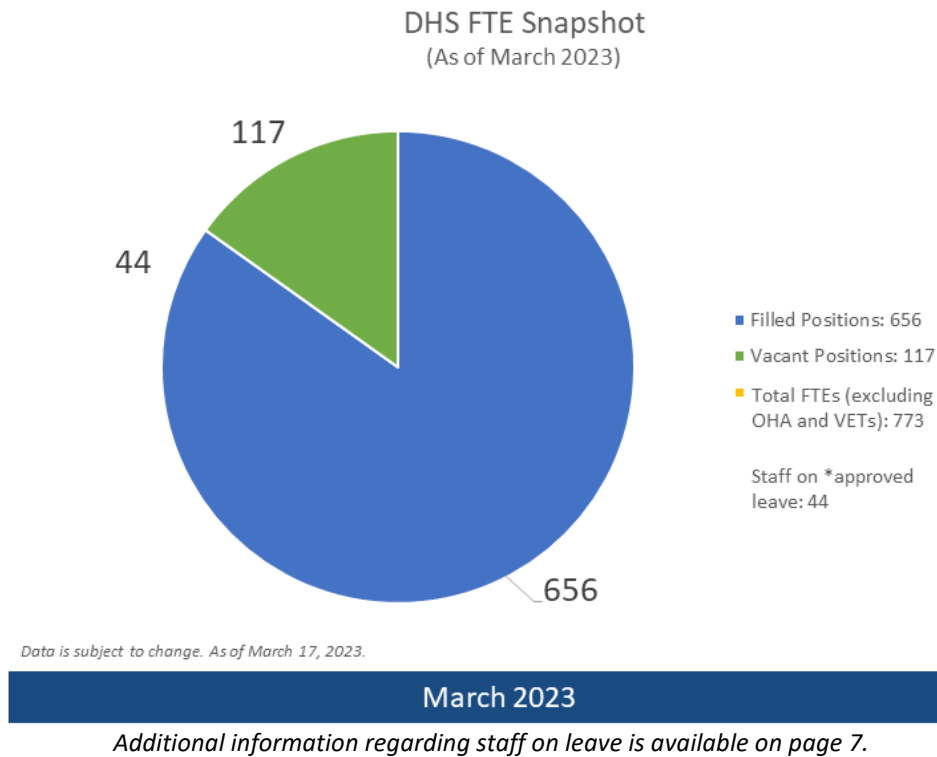
††Total hiring activity includes all lateral, promotional, and new hires at DHS (includes OCSS and ORS) for the reporting period.

‡The FY23 Budget included funding for 20 additional positions that increased the FTE count for DHS from 753 to 773. This figure uses payroll data as the basis for the FTE count and should only be compared with figures using the same methodology.

## Newly Filled and Vacant Positions

DHS continues to prioritize the hiring of critical customer facing positions. ***From January 2022 through December 2022, DHS filled 196 positions through a combination of promotional opportunities, lateral transfers, and new hires.*** Since January 1, 2023, the cumulative hiring count at DHS for this year is 29 positions and this includes all promotional opportunities, lateral transfers and new hires.

Between January 16, 2023, and March 17, 2023, **DHS filled 23 positions.** Using the payroll data closest to the reporting period for this report, you can find a Snapshot of the FTE count at DHS, which will fluctuate from each payroll period as new staff join, who are promoted; retire from state service; accept opportunities elsewhere or otherwise leave state service. Payroll data only counts individuals who have received a paycheck and/or are on leave.



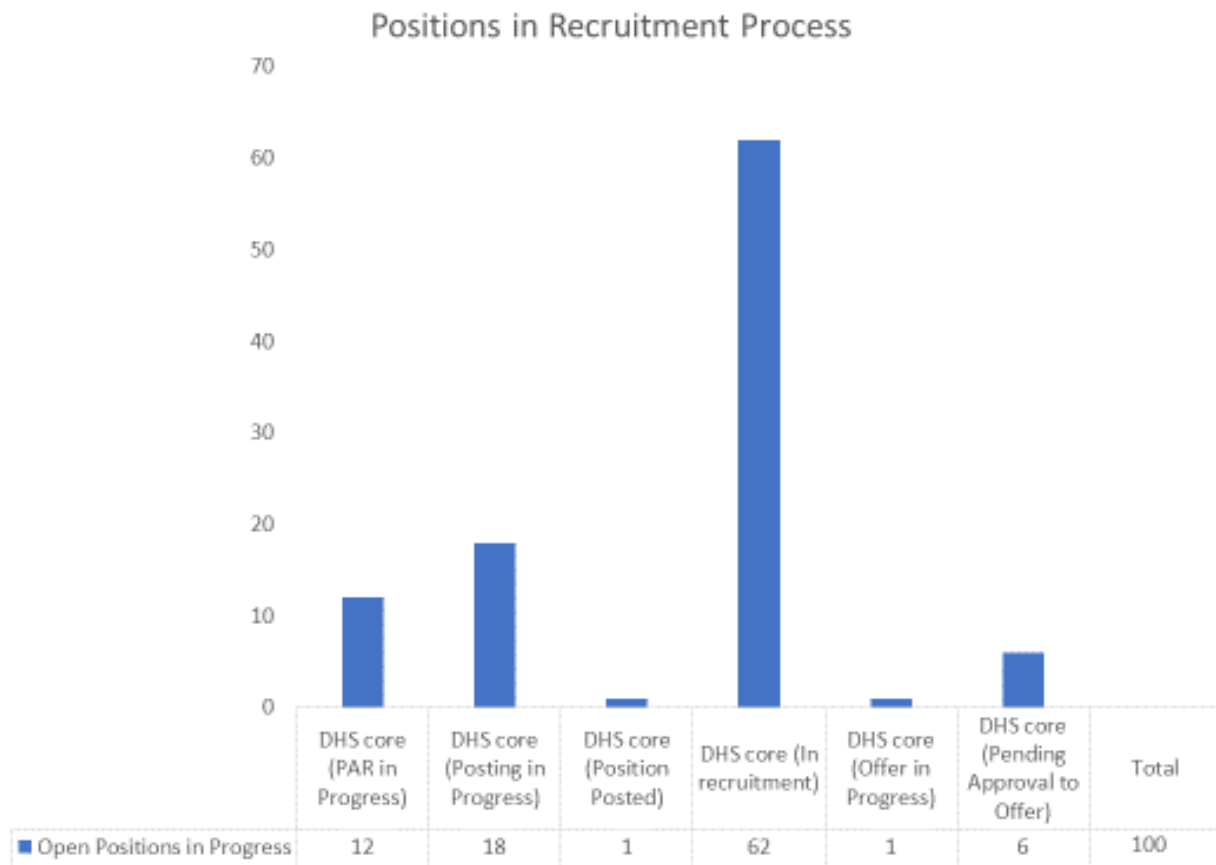
**As shared first in the November 29, 2022, Staffing and Operations Report, DHS will be using payroll data as the basis of FTE counts at DHS.** Through payroll information, DHS anticipates FTE counts to be a more accurate, consistent, and reliable measure of the workforce. This change results in an amended FTE count for previous reports:

- Amended FTE count for August 1, 2022 report: 635
- Amended FTE count for September 30, 2022 report: 639
- FTE count for November 29, 2022 report: 656
- FTE count for January 28, 2023 report: 659
- FTE count for March 29, 2023 report: 656

Of the total 773 DHS FTEs (only includes DHS core, OCSS, and ORS), **100 of 117** vacant positions -- or approximately 85 percent -- of those positions are in the process of being filled as of **March 10, 2023** (payroll issued on 03/10/23). Since the January 28 staffing and operations report, DHS has seen an approximate 52

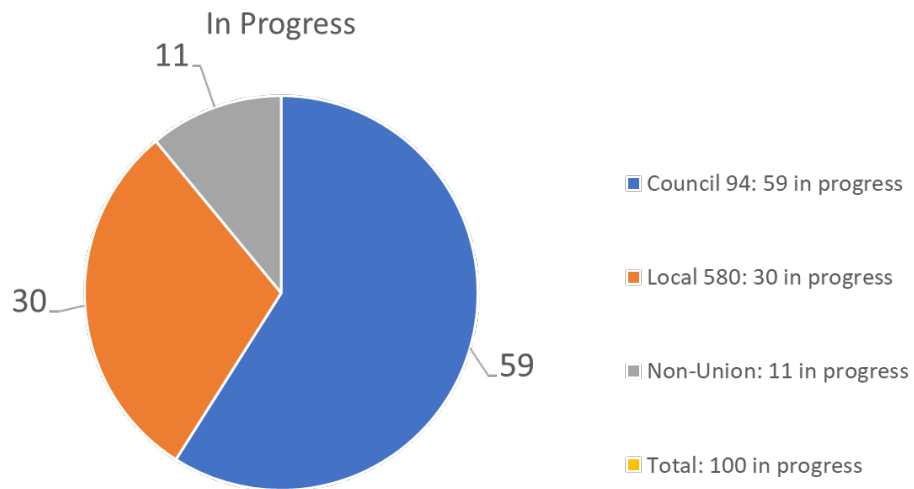
percent increase, from 66 to 100, in the number of open positions moved to the recruitment process – signifying the majority of vacant positions are at some stage of the recruitment process.

Please refer to the chart below to see 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.*

### Positions in Recruitment by Union Affiliation



The recruitment process is a multifaceted process, for both union and non-union positions, 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. The remaining vacant positions—not currently in the recruitment process—will be reflected in subsequent reports in tandem with payroll reporting.

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

**Hiring Activity**  
(January 16-March 17)

New hiring activity for the reporting period between January 16, 2022, and March 17, 2023, is comprised of back-office and customer-facing positions. For this reporting period, DHS hired 23 employees through a combination of net new, lateral, and promotional opportunities.

*Please note DHS and DOA will continue to work together to align hiring/staffing discrepancies reported. Position titles and the types of hire are outlined below:*

|                                                         | Lateral Hires | Promotional Hires | New Hires |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services | 0             | 1                 | 0         |
| Customer Service Aide                                   | 1             | 0                 | 4         |
| Customer Support Specialist I                           | 0             | 1                 | 0         |
| Deputy Director, DHS                                    | 0             | 1                 | 0         |
| Eligibility Technician I                                | 0             | 1                 | 2         |
| Eligibility Technician II (Lobby)                       | 0             | 4                 | 0         |
| Implementation Aide                                     | 0             | 1                 | 0         |
| Information Services Technician                         | 0             | 0                 | 1         |
| Principal Human Services Business Officer               | 0             | 1                 | 0         |
| Senior Case Work Supervisor                             | 0             | 2                 | 0         |
| Social Caseworker                                       | 0             | 1                 | 1         |
| Supervising Eligibility Technician                      | 1             | 0                 | 0         |
| <b>Total*</b>                                           | <b>2</b>      | <b>13</b>         | <b>8</b>  |

*\*Positions listed in 'Hiring Activity' are filled but may not be reflected in the FTE count above 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.*

## FTE Impact from Hiring Activity

Hiring at DHS fluctuates on a daily basis 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, between Jan. 16, 2022-March 17, 2023, using payroll as a basis with changes from previous reports marked.

| Title                                                   | Jan. 28, 2023 Report              | March. 29, 2023 Report            | Change +/- |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Administrative Officer                                  | 1                                 | 2                                 | 1          |
| Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services | 7                                 | 8                                 | 1          |
| Assistant Administrator Family and Children's Services  | 3                                 | 2                                 | -1         |
| Assistant Administrator- Financial Management           | 3                                 | 2                                 | -1         |
| Assistant Director for Administrative Services          | 2                                 | 1                                 | -1         |
| Casework Supervisor                                     | 5                                 | 4                                 | -1         |
| Child Support Enforcement Agent I                       | 12                                | 11                                | -1         |
| Child Support Enforcement Agent II                      | 17                                | 18                                | 1          |
| Clinical Training Specialist                            | 5                                 | 6                                 | 1          |
| Consultant Public Health Nurse                          | 5                                 | 6                                 | 1          |
| Customer Service Aide (DHS)                             | 32                                | 33                                | 1          |
| Customer Support Specialist I (DHS)                     | 7                                 | 8                                 | 1          |
| Data Analyst I                                          | 1                                 | 2                                 | 1          |
| Data Control Clerk                                      | 3                                 | 5                                 | 2          |
| Deputy Director Department of Human Services            | 0                                 | 1                                 | 1          |
| Eligibility Technician I                                | 161                               | 153                               | -8         |
| Employment And Career Advisor                           | 14                                | 15                                | 1          |
| Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist            | 9                                 | 8                                 | -1         |
| Information Services Technician I                       | 0                                 | 1                                 | 1          |
| Interdepartmental Project Manager                       | 2                                 | 4                                 | 2          |
| Principal Clerk                                         | 3                                 | 2                                 | -1         |
| Principal Clerk-typist                                  | 1                                 | 3                                 | 2          |
| Productivity Project Director                           | 6                                 | 3                                 | -3         |
| Programming Services Officer                            | 6                                 | 4                                 | -2         |
| Rehabilitation Counselor                                | 30                                | 32                                | 2          |
| Social Case Worker                                      | 26                                | 23                                | -3         |
| Supervising Eligibility Technician                      | 24                                | 23                                | -1         |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I                   | 18                                | 20                                | 2          |
|                                                         | <b>Total filled<br/>FTEs: 659</b> | <b>Total filled<br/>FTEs: 656</b> | <b>-3</b>  |

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.

In this report, Eligibility Technician I positions had more activity due to numerous factors including staff not passing probation, taking promotional opportunities at other agencies, or for other reasons as seen in the regular the labor market.

## Recent Departures/New Vacancies Resulting

From January 16, 2022, through March 17, 2023, the Department of Administration’s Leave Report indicated there were 8 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 resulted in:

- **1 Casework Supervisor**
- **1 Customer Service Aide**
- **3 Eligibility Technicians**
- **1 Human Services Business Officer**
- **1 Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist**
- **1 Social Case Worker**

*Please note the Leave Report provided by DOA may not align with other data points in this report because it is not connected to payroll, which serves as a basis of the DHS Staffing and Operations Report. Additionally, the different HR/payroll systems used by the state have delays due to legacy tracking methods that have not been updated. Please note certain positions, such as ET II and ET III, are only available as promotional opportunities that also create a new vacancy and the hiring process it entails.*

## Staff on Leave Snapshot

For the current report dated March, 29, 2023, DHS has 656 employees on payroll – of which approximately 44 staff members are currently on leave based on March 17 data provided by DOA.

These positions are filled and active on the payroll but represent a portion of the workforce who are out of the office and not currently contributing to the day-to-day operations of the agency. While it is important to recognize that these employees are acting within their employment rights and that these rights will continue to be honored across state government, approved staff leaves reduce the agency’s actual workforce since there are fewer employees performing duties than the FTE count may suggest. All cases of positions filled and on leave are managed by DOA’s Disability Management Unit. DHS, in coordination with labor leadership and DOA, will be exploring voluntary options for staff on extended leave to join the Call Center team as a form of ‘light duty’ as functions can be performed remotely.

Below, please find a snapshot of current staff on leave based on the closest payroll period. Please note these numbers fluctuate every pay period as staff return and other leaves are pending approval.

|                                                    |           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Staff on Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA/PIL Leave) | 9         |
| Staff on Intermittent FMLA Leave                   | 18        |
| Staff on Maternity/Paternity Leave                 | 7         |
| Staff on Worker’s Compensation Leave               | 2         |
| Staff on Military Leave                            | --        |
| Light Duty                                         | --        |
| Pending Cases/Under Review*                        | 8         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>44</b> |

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

## PHE Staffing

As of March 17, 2023, **we have filled 44 of 60 PHE Eligibility Technician positions.** DHS initially posted 14 Eligibility Technician II (Call Center) positions and received applications and interest to recruit and hire 4 of those FTEs. Due to the candidate pool for Eligibility Technician II (Call Center) positions since November 2022, DHS shifted 10 of those positions to Eligibility Technician I (Call Center) positions to expedite the hiring, onboarding, and training of PHE staff who will help ensure Medicaid customers keep and/or maintain access to health coverage when renewals are set to begin on April 1, 2023, over the course of 12 months. DHS has worked in partnership with labor leadership and HR to offer a voluntary bid day for several open positions prior to securing a six (6) month extension to the Special Purpose Agreement (SPA) lateral freeze. Remaining positions after voluntary bid day would be pulled from the Civil Service List.

Currently, DHS Eligibility Technician II (Call Center) positions are promotional opportunities for existing DHS staff who have 18 months or more experience and time in service as an Eligibility Technician I. Through informal conversations, candidates have shared that the pay increase is not large enough for the volume of work. DHS has revisited business operations in the Call Center and have increased the need for Eligibility Technician I's as described above. Most recently, through additional conversations with labor leadership, DHS revisited the need to have an Eligibility Technician III onsite with the PHE staff and have reassigned an FTE from the Eligibility Technician I allocation for a new FTE as noted below. PHE positions are included within the Hiring Activity figures. Please refer to the chart below to see the status of PHE staffing.

| Position Titles                    | Status                 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Eligibility Technician Is          | 38 of 49 filled        |
| ET II Call Center                  | 4 of 4 filled          |
| ET III (DHS)                       | 0 of 1 filled          |
| Supervising Eligibility Technician | 2 of 6                 |
| <b>*TOTAL</b>                      | <b>44 of 60 filled</b> |

*\*For the report dated March 29, 2023, DHS experienced a net loss of FTEs that also affected PHE staffing. Importantly, there have been Eligibility Technician I positions that became vacant as a result of new hires not passing their probationary period.*

## Civil Service Information

The Civil Service Exam is hosted by the RI Department of Administration (DOA). DHS works closely with DOA to fill critical positions as each agency performs a crucial function in moving qualified candidates through the completion of the onboarding process. As of March 14, 2023, the number of eligible and available candidates includes:

- Approximately 214 candidates remain on the current Eligibility Technician I list established in August of 2019, pending current certifications and active/ongoing interview process. While the current list no longer includes candidates who have indicated they are available for **Limited Period Appointment**, DHS is however, successfully utilizing this current list to fill permanent full-time vacancies. This civil service list expires on August 1, 2023.



- The DHS is successfully making appointments from the current ET-I list and intends to continue to certify, interview and hire from the current list until the list is no longer used successfully or the list expires in August, at which time, DHS will access the new 45 person ET-1 list.
- Importantly, a new civil service recruitment is set for April 2, 2023, to establish a second reserve ET-1 list.
- A total of 52 candidates participated in the Eligibility Technician I Civil Service testing that occurred on September 30, 2022, which established a “reserve ET-I candidate list” of 45 passing candidates. This reserve/stand-by list is ready to be published immediately upon consultation/confirmation with DHS indicating they no longer are successfully utilizing the current ET list for appointments. A fresh new ET-I Civil Service recruitment is about to be announced on April 2, 2023, with an application period through April 28.
- 232 candidates remain on the Social Caseworker (SCW) examination also established in late 2019. This Civil Service list expires on December 4, 2023. The expectation is that an additional candidate recruitment for testing will be necessary and a new SCW Civil Service announcement/recruitment is planned for July 2023 to ensure continuous list availability for the DHS.
  - DOA in partnership with DHS initiated an ‘availability mailing’ for candidates on the current list to assess their interest and availability.

*See Appendix C. at the end of the report.*

## Current Caseload\*

### Snapshot

Data on pending applications reflect a point in time. For the current March 2023 Staffing and Operations Report, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 7,045 (an approximate 19 percent decline from January 2023). The total overdue pending applications awaiting State action was 3,809 (representing a 13 percent decline from the previous report). DHS continues to process applications within the mandatory timeliness standard set by the federal government, which typically requires applications to be processed within 30 days with the exception of complex Medicaid and expedited SNAP.

Progress has been made addressing the elevated pending applications backlog as noted above. Ongoing challenges impacting this report period include current staffing capacity, the increased onboarding activity associated with the influx of new staff, enhanced quality control measures, the return of SNAP related processes, and an IT discrepancy that previously counted resolved cases. Our IT vendor and state team have completed analysis on the existing overdue undetermined medical (\*2,614 cases) and is prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. Importantly, actual cases awaiting state action are approximately 64 percent lower than the reflected all-inclusive count listed in the pending application chart below. As the state begins Medicaid renewals, the analysis shows DHS does not have a significant backlog that would impede redeterminations. More information is available under the caseload snapshot.

The recent decline in total current caseload could also be partially attributed to newly onboarded staff gaining more policy knowledge and case processing skills as well as the ongoing work to dispose of cases already worked and the success we have seen from the pilot Processing Wednesdays initiative (*please refer to the Processing Wednesdays analysis below for more information*). Each newly onboarded Eligibility Technician I, with training and experience, is projected to bring 50 households to case completion (new and pending cases) to help them maintain and/or receive benefits each month. In addition, DHS has reorganized staff assignments in a way that ensures tasks for working all programs have worker coverage. Additional operational adjustments in place since January is also aiding in the management of workload, adding more structure and accountability to drive down the backlog.

|                                  | Not Overdue |       |       | Overdue |       |       | Total        |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------------|
|                                  | Client      | State | Total | Client  | State | Total |              |
| <b>SNAP Expedited</b>            | 27          | 212   | 239   | 4       | 13    | 17    | <b>256</b>   |
| <b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>        | 549         | 334   | 883   | 63      | 101   | 164   | <b>1,047</b> |
| <b>CCAP</b>                      | 17          | 172   | 189   | 4       | 41    | 45    | <b>234</b>   |
| <b>GPA Burial</b>                | 0           | 10    | 10    | 0       | 4     | 4     | <b>14</b>    |
| <b>SSP</b>                       | 0           | 35    | 35    | 0       | 25    | 25    | <b>60</b>    |
| <b>GPA</b>                       | 31          | 51    | 82    | 14      | 20    | 34    | <b>116</b>   |
| <b>RIW</b>                       | 105         | 122   | 227   | 20      | 27    | 47    | <b>274</b>   |
| <b>*Undetermined Medical</b>     | 23          | 355   | 378   | 170     | 2,614 | 2,784 | <b>3,162</b> |
| <b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>             | 33          | 47    | 80    | 169     | 167   | 336   | <b>416</b>   |
| <b>Medicare Premium Payments</b> | 8           | 287   | 295   | 35      | 407   | 442   | <b>737</b>   |
| <b>Medicaid Complex</b>          | 4           | 76    | 80    | 48      | 346   | 394   | <b>474</b>   |
| <b>LTSS</b>                      | 4           | 201   | 205   | 6       | 44    | 50    | <b>255</b>   |
| <b>Grand Total</b>               | 801         | 1,902 | 2,703 | 533     | 3,809 | 4,342 | <b>7,045</b> |

**\*Total:**  
Approximately 1,783

**Awaiting DHS action:**  
Approximately 928  
(Down from 2,614)

*Reporting as of March 17, 2023. Please note there is ongoing analysis and recommendations for closure for cases that have been resolved but are still being counted.*

### \*Undetermined Medical Analysis

DHS has conducted a deep dive into this specific data. With the additional analysis, DHS refined the numbers provided offering a clearer understanding of this category. The pending application caseload of 3,162 for undetermined medical must be divided into several distinct categories. The snapshot below depicts three main categories:

- **460** -- Applications that meet existing archive conditions
- **916** -- Applications that were submitted through the Customer Portal and did not result in a task for state action
- **1,783** -- Applications that were submitted through other customer channel access points that are either incomplete or have actionable state tasks

Of the roughly 1,783 total cases for DHS - 928 have a task associated and are being prioritized in a backlog reduction plan. The remaining 855 cases are a combination of incomplete applications, and received and in-process under current timeliness standards. There are an additional 460 cases no longer being worked (archived) because customers did not take necessary action in the 90-day window to submit additional information. With renewals for Medicaid set to begin on April 1, DHS expects to be able to work the remaining cases and will not be starting renewals with an anticipated backlog.

## Processing Wednesdays

On February 8, 2023, DHS launched a pilot initiative called Processing Wednesdays. With the goal of improving operational efficiency and customer service, the strategy shifts call center staff to prioritize case processing one day a week, deemed crucial for addressing the backlog. Initial results from the pilot have been positive as DHS has seen an approximate 70 percent increase in tasks completed on Wednesdays since the start of the initiative.

Prior to the introduction of the initiative, the Call Center team completed about 101 cases each Wednesday. Since the pilot on the same day, Call Center staff complete approximately 172 case tasks each Wednesday, which is helping reduce the backlog and in-turn reducing the need for people to call into the Call Center for resolution in customer cases.

Additionally, DHS has not seen an increase in the volume of calls the following day. Customers who call during a Processing Wednesday are able to use one of the self-service options available, such as checking their benefits or status of their application. When customers call in on Wednesdays they are also greeted with timely information on a range of announcements that may be of interest to them. While incoming calls are not taken during these days, customers continue to have access to the Customer Portal and HealthyRhode mobile app, which has seen more adoption. The analysis below is for informational purposes only and a decision has not yet been made on extending or adjusting the pilot's parameters.



The chart above shows the number of tasks completed on Wednesdays. The dates listed are for the week beginning with the shaded area marking when Processing Wednesdays began. Data on Processing Wednesdays that was reported out for the beginning March 5 was skewed due to a statewide technology disruption that occurred on March 8.

## Caseload Processing Averages

As the agency charged with administering health and human service public benefits, the Department must process applications that follow the federal government's mandatory timeliness standard. While most programs have a mandatory 30-day threshold – the amount of time DHS has to process an application before it is considered overdue – there are programs with longer deadlines for processing before it is considered 'overdue.'

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                            | 17                                                           |
| Cash Assistance (RIW/GPA) | 30 Days                            | 21                                                           |
| Medicaid MAGI             | 30 Days                            | 22                                                           |
| Complex Medical           | 45 Days                            | 43                                                           |
| Long Term Care (LTSS)     | 90 Days                            | 53                                                           |

*Previous reports included an 'average days from overdue to authorization,' which has been removed for clarity. The reported data was specific to a small proportion of customers whose cases had remained unresolved for numerous reasons such as failure to return missing documents. Additionally, undetermined medical was also removed as it is not a program. It is DHS's goal to process all applications within the federal standard and operational initiatives such as Processing Wednesdays will help move the agency towards that goal.*

See Appendix D. at the end of the report.

### NEW Hire FTE Impact on Pending Applications

The Department currently has 30 Eligibility Technicians needing supervisory approval (ETSAs), who are collectively processing about 495 cases per week. All ETSAs have completed new hire training and have begun either SNAP or MAGI training. Ten have are training in community Medicaid. Of the total 30 ETSAs, all have started working in RI Bridges. With direct coaching, training and support cases completion builds month over month until final ESTA assessment at 6 months.

| # of ETSAs | Assigned to:                                            | Outcomes                                                                                                                     |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0          | Incoming calls at the Call Center                       | Each assigned group is averaging, per week, approximately:<br><br>Outbound: 20 cases<br>SNAP: 445 cases<br>Medical: 30 cases |
| 2          | outbound calls (branch based)                           |                                                                                                                              |
| 26         | SNAP applications, recertifications, or interim reviews |                                                                                                                              |
| 2          | Processing MAGI applications                            |                                                                                                                              |

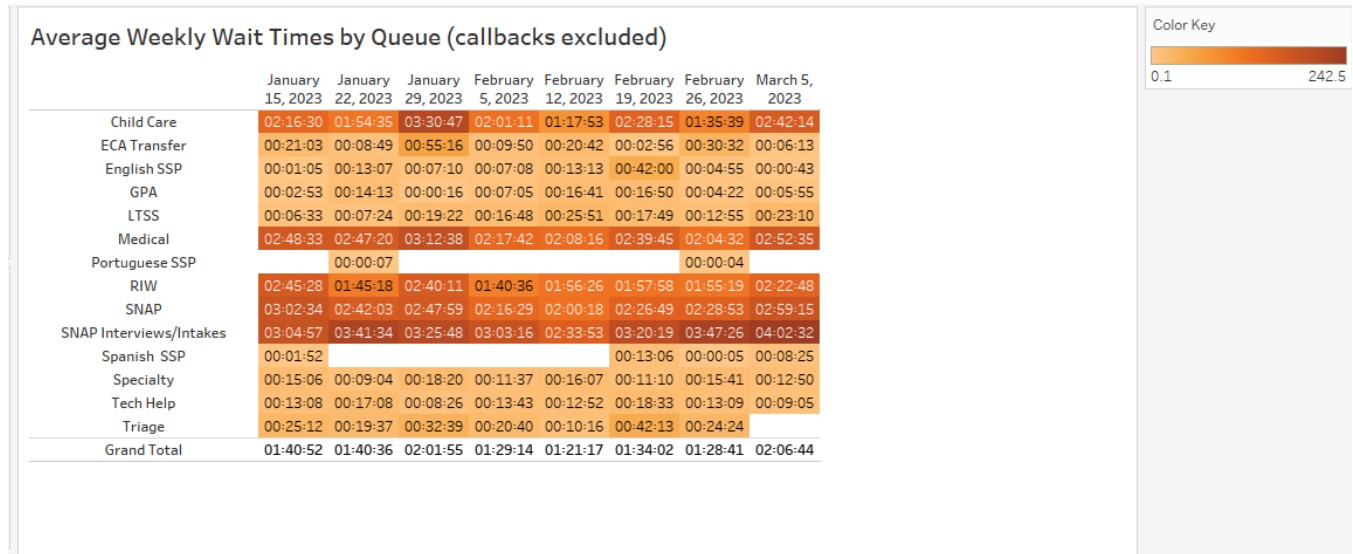
*\*ETSAs require supervisory approval because they have not completed their probation period. As a result, a review by a supervisor for final eligibility determination is required, adding time but assuring accuracy in processing.*

### Call Center

For the period between **January 16, 2023, through March 17, 2023**, the average wait time to speak to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 7 minutes**. DHS recognizes this average wait time remains longer than it should be and has implemented call back functionality to reduce the time customers spend waiting on the phone. The average wait time encompasses all calls (those opting for a call back and those that wait in queue) that are transferred and connected with a DHS worker.

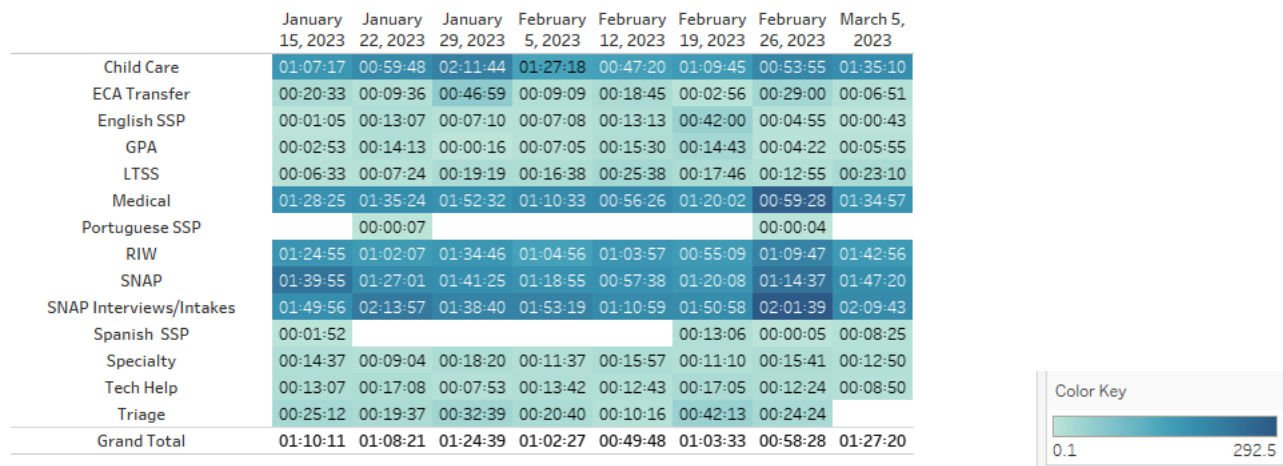
Through strategic planning, technology resources, additional progress on keeping up with back-office tasks and hiring efforts, DHS anticipates continued progress in reducing average wait times and improving customer satisfaction. Importantly, the availability of call back functionality changes on a daily basis due to staff availability and call volume. In order to reach all those in the queue by the end of the day, DHS makes it

available strategically in the morning until capacity is reached. Wait times, however, fluctuate from month-to-month and DHS did see a decrease in call volume from the January staffing and operations report. To help address current limitations, DHS has secured a resource through Knowledge Service that will provide improved customer access to the functionality by way of full adoption of the place-in-line call backs; exploring individual queue max limits; and DHS' ability to implement changes to IVR scripting independent of Verizon support.



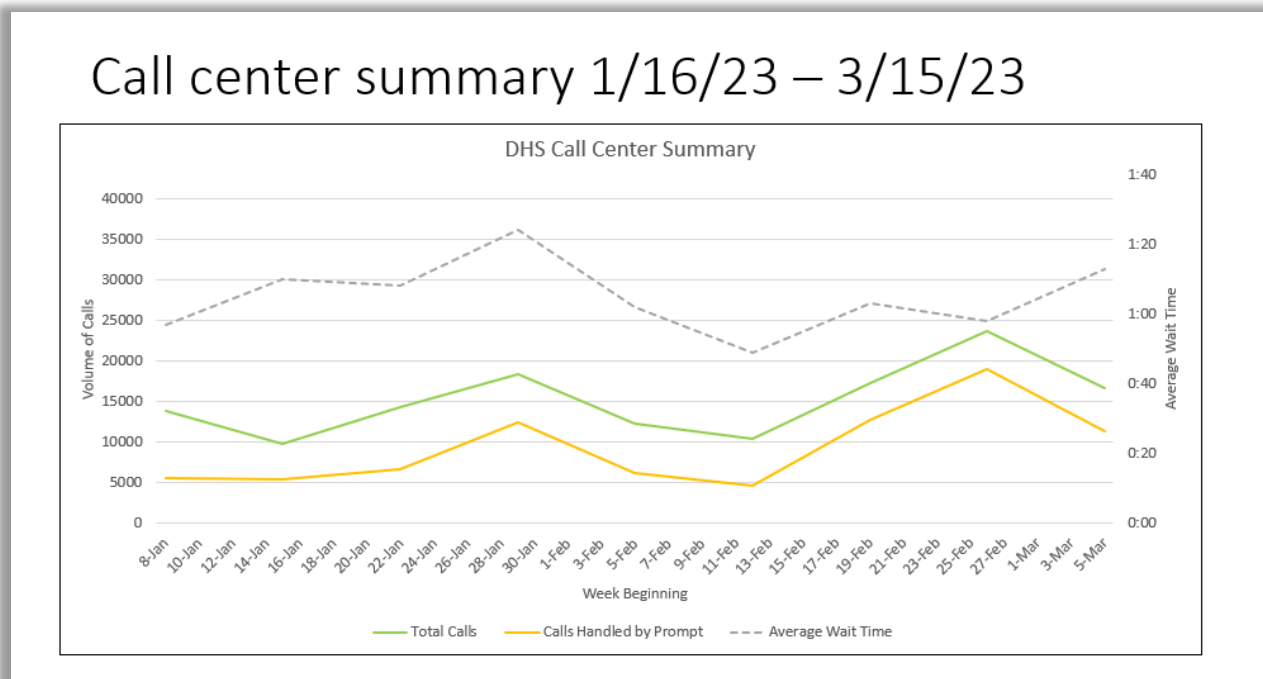
The charts below demonstrate the impact of call backs in lowering wait times for customers that opt to hang up and receive a call back.

### Average Weekly Wait Times by Queue (callbacks included)



During this time period, there were approximately 36 staff members supporting the Call Center, which is a decline attributed to the end of the staff rotating into the Call Center. However, as noted below, DHS is currently working on onboarding new staff into the Call Center that should be reflected in the next staffing report.

On average, Eligibility Technicians handle approximately 12 calls per day with an average handle time of approximately 20 minutes. The handle time includes both the time spent on the phone with the customer, as well as time spent taking action on the customer’s account in RIBridges.



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 FTE to Call Center Activity

As the agency continues to make progress in filling critical positions overall, the Department has maintained and addressed incoming calls to the Call Center with reduced staff. Despite this, 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 15 minutes waiting on the phone.

In March, three Eligibility Technician I staff members at the Call Center moved on to other positions within the agency during an open bid day. To fill this gap and add additional resources, DHS has made offers on 11 positions of the total ETI FTEs bulleted below that are not yet reflected in this staffing report:

- 12 Eligibility Technician I (staffed by individuals on the civil service exam)
- 1 Eligibility Technician II
- 1 Eligibility Technician III

###

# 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.

**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.