



Department of Health and Human Services
Commissioner's Office
221 State Street
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel.: (207) 287-3707; Fax (207) 287-3005
TTY Users: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

February 3, 2015

To: Senator James M. Hamper, Chair
Representative Margaret R. Rotundo, Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner, Department of Health and Human Services

Re: DHHS Response to questions from Representative Margaret Rotundo

1. What is the Department's plan to fill key vacancies at the Maine CDC? With the onset of flu season and lingering concerns regarding other infectious diseases it seems imperative to have appropriately credentialed professionals in place.

Response: The Department actively continues to seek qualified individuals for key public health vacancies. While vacancies are being addressed, the CDC maintains a highly qualified staff of credentialed professionals who monitor infectious diseases and attend to other public health matters.

2. The Court Master has issued a report that questions the Department's compliance with the AMHI Consent Decree. Please detail for us the steps taken to achieve compliance with the CD and federal certification since our last communication.

Response: The Department of Health and Human Services biennial budget proposal, proposes to fully fund the needs of the consent decree as outlined by the Court Master. Please see attached response to the report issued by the Court Master.

3. Major staff changes are taking place at key divisions within the Department. What has led to these changes? Does this herald a change in direction or policy, and what is the plan and time table for permanently filling these positions?

Response: As with all large businesses and organizations, staff changes at various levels are inevitable. Information was recently provided to the Committee at the orientation regarding leadership within the Department and areas of focus. The Department continues to strive to promote safe, healthy, independent lives for all, while ensuring efficient and effective use of resources for Maine's most vulnerable.

4. Please provide us with the following data compiled by month for the period beginning January 1, 2013 to date related to processing times for applications and redeterminations in the Food Supplement and MaineCare programs and the administration of expedited food supplement benefits:
- Applications pending in excess of the processing standards required by rule (that is, excluding those cases in which the applicant has failed to timely provide required information) at the end of each month during this period. Please provide the data in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of all applications filed within that month. For those cases that exceed the required processing time, please provide the amount of additional time it took to make a determination in these cases expressed in ranges of time.
 - Recertification requests pending in excess of the processing standard required by rule (that is, excluding those cases in which the household has failed to timely provide required information) at the end of each month during this period. Please provide the data in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of all recertification requests considered in that month. For those cases that exceed the required processing time, please provide the amount of additional time it took to make a determination in these cases expressed in ranges of time.
 - The number of cases denied for failing to recertify for each month. Please provide the data in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of all recertification requests considered in that month.
 - The number of expedited Food Supplement cases granted for each month during this period. Please provide the data in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of all applications filed within that month.
 - The average processing time for expedited Food Supplement applications granted during each month.

Response: As of February 3, 2015 OFI has 4,215 applications pending prior to 12/31/2014. Many of these have come from the FFM. To date we have received approximately 4,500 FFM applications since open enrollment. Unfortunately, over half of the applications being sent by the federal government are ineligible for MaineCare. This adds a tremendous amount of work for our staff. The most recent SNAP quality control timeliness report has the Department at an 80% timeliness rate. This rate has declined some since October 2013.

The Office for Family Independence is in the process of a statewide business process transition. This includes implementation of new technology and processing methods that are designed to improve workflow, timeliness and efficiency. The Department has instituted strategies to address the backlog of applications and recertification's. Overtime has been implemented and strategic work teams have been identified throughout the state to work solely on applications pending for the longest time period. Our goal is to bring the work as current as possible as we fully transition to our new model in 2015.