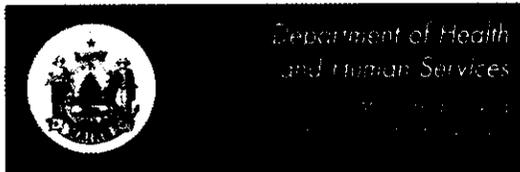


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Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

October 14, 2015

To: Senator Roger Katz, Chair
Representative Charles Kruger, Chair
Members of the Government Oversight Committee

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

Re: DHHS Response to questions from the Government Oversight Committee

1. What is the current situation for direct care staff (nurses, MHW, social workers and Acuity specialists) re: staffing shortages and limitations due to vacancies, staff out on Family Medical Leave or Worker's Comp, and staff with work restrictions that limit the number of hours and types of work they can do? What percentage of the direct care staff positions are vacant, staff out on FML and WC, and staff with work restrictions? What percentage are working more than their regular shifts on a regular basis?

Response: Out of 272 direct care positions, there are currently 29 direct care vacancies. Seven employees are out of work due to work related injuries, and there are six employees with work restrictions due to a work related injury that we are currently accommodating. Additionally, there are five other employees out due to non-work related issues.

2. What is the current situation with regard to ability to staff all shifts with at least minimum coverage? How often are requests for staff to cover extra shifts being made and how difficult is it to get volunteers to fill those shifts? How difficult is it to consistently maintain the minimum staffing levels required by Consent Decree?

Response: We have consistently maintained higher than minimum coverage as outlined by the Consent Decree.

3. What is the status of efforts to hire staff to fill direct care vacancies? Are any unexpected challenges being encountered? Will the recent ruling on de-certification and related loss of federal funding impact RPC's plans for adding staff and filling vacancies?

Response: Recruiting and retention of staff has historically been a challenge for RPC. Nurses are one of the most highly recruited for positions in the State of Maine, and Riverview faces many competitors in the Greater Augusta area to include; MaineGeneral, Inland, and Togus VA among others. All these providers are competing for the same staff. With the de-certification, bad press and changes in Executive Leadership, simply getting qualified applicants has been a challenge, but does not change RPC's plans to recruit for and fill vacant positions. Senior management has been working to develop relationships with area colleges and universities to act as a "feeder" program for professional and para-professional levels of staff. Human Resource and Nursing staff are attending job fairs as another venue to locate applicants and ads are placed in professional publications quarterly. Online recruitment continues on an ongoing basis.

There has been no change in funding for Riverview.

4. What is senior management at RPC and DHHS or the Court Master doing to monitor whether there are employees who are working an excessive amount of hours within particular time periods on a regular basis? What action is being taken when you identify such situations?

Response: Pursuant to Federal Labor laws, this is actively monitored.

5. What is senior management at RPC doing to address the staff tensions that appear to be associated with the implementation of the Acuity Specialist positions?

Response: The difficulty of change exists in every organization and it cannot be a barrier to quality improvement. Safety data supports the enormous value of the addition of acuity specialists.