

# Washington State Health Care Authority

## Report to the Legislature

### HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER PROVISIO

2 ESHB 1087, Section 213, Subsection 45

1/6/2012

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## Legislative Proviso: 2ESBH 1087, Section 213, Subsection 45

\$480,000 of the general fund – state appropriation for fiscal year 2012, \$480,000 of the general fund – state appropriation for fiscal year 2013, and \$824,000 of the general fund – federal appropriation are provided solely for customer services staff. The authority will attempt to improve the phone answer rate to 40 percent and reduce the response times to written questions to ten days for clients and 25 days for providers. The authority will report to the legislature on its progress toward achieving these goals by January 1, 2012. If the authority has not achieved these goals by July 1, 2012, then the authority shall reduce expenditures on management staff in order to increase expenditures on customer service staff until the goals are achieved.

### Progress Report:

As of December 3, 2011, there has been improvement in the phone answer rate due to the additional staffing that was allocated to meet Legislative goals. The Health Care Authority, Division of Eligibility and Service Delivery, Office of Medical Assistance Customer Services Center (MACSC) hired the 9 FTE's newly allocated; filled 3 vacancies that were previously under a hiring freeze; and filled an additional 14 vacancies that occurred due to internal staff movement effective with the lifting of the hiring freeze. Having 26 vacancies to fill was a challenge but the increase in staff created a positive outcome due to a revamped training process. Due to the increased number of newly hired staff, MACSC streamlined how training was delivered in order to create the outcomes intended. The first group of newly hired staff was trained to first respond to two to three specific types of phone calls (skills) and then answered those skills for a specific period of time. As MACSC trained the next group of staff for specific skills, the first group was brought back to train on additional skills. This method has enabled MACSC to focus staff where there would be an immediate impact on hold times and answer rate.

|   | November Data  | 5 month average (July-Nov)  |
|---|--|---|
| Average % Calls Answered                                | 47% * (Provider 40%, Client 50%)<br>67,097 total call attempts | 36.2% *(Provider 38%, Client 36%)<br>73,385 call attempts average |
| Average number of days to respond to Non-Phone contacts | 35 days – Provider<br>11 days - Client                         | 22 days – Provider<br>13 days - Client                            |

\*While MACSC is pleased with the progress to date and the fact it appears the Legislative goals have been met for both provider and clients (phone responses) well in advance of the July 1, 2012 deadline, it must be tempered with the fact MACSC must do additional and more complex provider training which requires more staff time away from

the phones, thereby diminishing capacity, which in turn will impact the response times. It should also be noted that the months of November and December, despite having fewer workdays, have traditionally been lower volume months for all incoming call attempts and call response rates have been higher. Additionally, MACSC has continued efforts to educate providers on self-service options which finally appear to be successful. MACSC is making progress towards meeting the goals of responding to provider and client non-work requests and anticipates meeting those goals as outlined in the Proviso.