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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Government Oversight Committee
FROM: Department of Health and Human Services
DATE: October 18, 2023
RE: Additional information re: Call wait times and public phone lines at Maine DHHS

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides public health, health care, behavioral health, and human services through a number of programs. Those programs, by definition, provide different services to different people. As such, DHHS does not run a single call center but instead has distinct numbers. When possible, those call centers are consolidated. Maine residents can call 211 to learn which one may best answer their questions or help them address their concerns. In addition, the DHHS home page has a “hotline” button that brings individuals to a list of numbers to call if a person needs urgent assistance. A list of the public-facing phone lines is attached to this memo.

Further, we would like to provide the following information in response to requests that arose during the September 20th meeting of the Government Oversight Committee:

What actions has the Department taken in response to the Federal government citing Maine as one of sixteen states where call center wait time is impeding equitable access to assistance and the ability of people to apply for or renew Medicaid, and that the State may be in violation of Federal law?

The Office for Family Independence (OFI) operates a call center for individuals applying for or renewing eligibility for MaineCare, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and related programs. The Department has and will continue to take steps to address increased call volumes to OFI resulting from the end of extra federal support related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These includes:

- Adding 50 contract staff in January to train and begin work in March 2023, adding another 50 shortly after, and another 50 in September 2023 to assist eligibility specialists and other call center staff in answering questions and processing MaineCare and SNAP applications;
- Reassigning eligibility specialist staff to augment the call center staff regularly as determined by projected work volumes;
- Approving overtime for employees to more quickly process calls since January 2023;

- Upskilling call center staff who are not eligibility specialists to enable them to better assist eligibility specialists. Training began in January 2023 and continues as new efficiencies can be gained;
- Adding new functionality in September 2023 to the OFI phone queue for callers to select a MaineCare-only help line and an option for a call back for those wishing to speak to an eligibility specialist;
- Expanding the call back functionality for all call center staff, not just eligibility specialists – scheduled for November 2023.

The Department remains committed to continued improvement as we work to best serve the people of Maine.

Senator Tipping referenced a constituent experience where an older Mainer was trying to speak with someone regarding Medicare Parts C and D, after the insurance company requested that she speak with the Maine Medicare office. The constituent reported that calls were not being taken at all on a Wednesday, but that she could call on Thursday starting at 7 am. When she called, she was on hold after 35 minutes and had to hang up.

OFI continues to work to reduce its call waiting time. Part of that work is ensuring Mainers know the best number to call to get the help that they need. Medicare is a Federally run program and the OFI call center cannot assist callers with questions about its Parts C and D. Insurance companies should direct such individuals to 1-800-MEDICARE or 1-800-633-4227. Based on this experience, the Department will remind insurance carriers in Maine about the different call centers for different programs.

Why do some constituents' experiences counter the data from the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) about its call waiting time for its intake hotline?

The Intake Hotline is primarily for anyone to report a concern about child abuse or neglect. It is separate from OFI's call center and staffed by specialized OCFS workers who are trained in receiving reports and determining how to address the concern. As previously presented, the overall average wait time in August to speak with Child Protective Intake Hotline staff to report suspected abuse or neglect was 2 minutes, 25 seconds. This is down significantly from April 2019, before OCFS upgraded the hotline technology, when the average wait time was 3 minutes, 16 seconds. OCFS in 2022 also launched online reporting for specific mandated reporters, including school, medical, and law enforcement personnel.

The intake hotline is not the system for which biological or resource parents, Guardians ad litem, and others communicate with Child Protective Service caseworkers about specific investigations or cases. The speed of response to calls to caseworkers is dependent on a number of factors, such as whether they are in the field or in court on a specific day, the urgency of the call, or the need to find information to appropriately respond to the question asked. The OCFS practice guidance is for a caseworker to return a voicemail as soon as is practicable and, whenever possible, no longer than two business days after it was received.

DHHS Phone Lines

The Committee requested a list of public-facing phone lines for review. Please find these, separated by Office, below:

Department of Health and Human Services	
Program	Phone Number
Main Line, including Constituent Services	207-287-3707
Augusta District Office	207-624-8000
Bangor District Office	207-561-4100
Biddeford District Office	207-286-2400
Calais District Office	207-454-2417
Caribou District Office	207-493-4000
Ellsworth District Office	207-664-1400
Farmington District Office	207-778-8400
Fort Kent District Office	207-834-1000
Houlton District Office	207-532-5000
Lewiston District Office	207-795-4300
Machias District Office	207-255-2000
Portland District Office	207-822-2000
Rockland District Office	207-596-4200
Sanford District Office	207-490-5400
Skowhegan District Office	207-474-4800
South Paris District Office	207-744-1200

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention	
Program	Phone Number
CDC Main Line	207-287-8016
Division of Disease Prevention	207-287-4064
Comprehensive Cancer	207-287-4321
Colorectal Cancer	207-287-2906
Asthma Program	207-287-3041
Breast and Cervical Cancer	800-350-5180
Maternal and Child Health	800-698-3624
Diabetes Prevention	207-287-4298
Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	207-287-3991
Adolescent and School Health	207-287-3856
Cardiovascular Health	207-287-5380
Infectious Disease/Disease Surveillance	207-287-6582
Health Inspection Program	207-287-5671
Emergency and After-Hours Health Inspection Program	800-821-5821
Drinking Water/Subsurface Wastewater	207-287-2070
Emergency number for Drinking Water/Subsurface Wastewater/PFAS	207-557-4214

EOHP - Environmental and Occupational Health Programs/Lead Poisoning Prevention	207-287-4311 or 866-292-3474
Radiation Control Program	207-287-5676 or 207-287-4770
Public Health Nursing	207-287-4112
Public Health Nursing Referral Line	888-644-1130
Immunization/ImmPACT	207-287-3746
HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis and Tuberculosis, ADAP (Ryan White Program)	207-287-3747
Vital Records	207-287-1919 207-287-3711 or 888-664-9491
Statistical Information	207-287-5500
CradleME	207-287-5351
Tobacco and Substance Use Prevention	207-287-4627
MaineQuitNow	800-784-8669
Health and Environmental Testing Lab	207-287-2727

Division of Licensing and Certification	
Program	Phone Number
Central Office (automated menu)	207-287-9300
Sentinel Event Hotline	207-287-5813
Complaint Line	800-383-2441 (207-287-9308)
Home Health & Hospice Hotline	800-621-8222 (207-287-9302)

Office of Aging and Disability Services	
Program	Phone Number
Central Office	207-287-9200 or 800-262-2232
OADS Crisis Hotline (contract with the Opportunity Alliance, administered by OBH)	888-568-1112
Adult Protective Services Intake	800-624-8404 or 207-287-1234

Office of Behavioral Health	
Program	Phone Number
OBH Main Line	207-287-2595
DEEP Intake Line	207-626-8600
DEEP Provider Line	207-626-8611
Prescription Drug Monitoring (PMP)	207-287-2595, Option 2
State Forensic Service General Line	207-624-4648
StrengthenME Warmline	207-221-8198
Peer Warm Line	866-771-9276
988/Maine Crisis Line	988 or 888-568-1112
211 Maine	211
Maine Frontline Warmline	207-221-8196

Teen Text Line (contracted with NAMI)	207-515-8398
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Office of Child and Family Services	
Program	Phone Number
Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline	800-452-1999
A Family for Me (contracted with Spurwink)	844-893-6311
Help Me Grow Maine	833-714-7969
Child Care Subsidy Program	877-680-5866 or 207-624-7999
Statewide Domestic Violence Helpline (MCEDV funded to support 24/7 hotline)	866-834-4357
Sexual Assault Support (MECASA funded to support 24/7hotline)	800-871-7741

Office for Family Independence	
Program	Phone Number
Eligibility Division	855-797-4357
General Assistance Hotline	800-442-6003
Higher Opportunities for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Program	207-624-4170
EBT Card Service Line	800-477-7428
Disability Determination Services	207-287-9600 or 800-452-8718
Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery (child support)	207-624-4100
Fraud Investigation and Recovery	866-348-1129

Office of the Health Insurance Marketplace	
Program	Phone Number
Consumer Assistance Center	866-636-0355

Office of MaineCare Services	
Program	Phone Number
MaineCare Member Services and Private Health Insurance Premium Assistance	800-977-6740
Pharmacy Help Desk and Third Party Liability Assistance	866-796-2463
Provider Services & Enrollment	866-690-5585
Modivcare Transportation Services	855-608-5174
MidCoast Connector Transportation Services	855-930-7900
Penquis CAP Transportation Services	844-736-7847

State Psychiatric Hospitals	
Hospital	Phone Number
Riverview Psychiatric Center (24/7)	207-624-3900
Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center (24/7)	207-941-4000