



RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services
74 West Road, Hazard Building, Cranston, RI 02920

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Ashley O'Shea, EOHHS

401-462-6394

Ashley.G.Oshea@ohhs.ri.gov

Brenna McCabe, DOA

401-222-2277

Brenna.McCabe@doa.ri.gov

DHS Announces Additional Extended Hours in the Providence and Woonsocket Locations

Providence and Woonsocket Offices to open Saturday mornings and remain open until 6:30pm two weekdays to help ease wait times

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Department of Human Services (DHS) Director Melba Depeña-Affigne today announced additional extended office hours at DHS' Providence and Woonsocket locations in an effort to reduce lobby wait times and assist customers with their applications for benefits.

"The Providence and Woonsocket DHS offices are often our busiest," said Director Depeña-Affigne. "We recently launched a new computer system and acknowledge that our wait times have been unacceptably long at times, especially in these particular offices. My top priority is to ensure our customers' needs are being met while our workers get used to this new technology and new business processes."

This announcement follows the [announcement](#) of extended hours in Providence and the enhancement of the on-site management team.

"We experienced success with our initial DHS office hour extension in Providence, so I urged the team to take a hard look at extending hours in Woonsocket, which is experiencing longer than usual wait times," said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. "With these extended hours, we are improving our ability to process applications and offering services at a more convenient time for many of our customers. I appreciate Council 94 and our DHS employees' continued partnership in expanding hours in order to provide better customer service for the people we serve."

Beginning this week and continuing until further notice, the Providence DHS Office (206 Elmwood Avenue, Providence) and the Woonsocket DHS Office (800 Clinton Street, 2nd Floor, Suite 201, Woonsocket) will extend customer hours on Saturdays from 8:30am – 12:30pm. Both



the Providence and Woonsocket DHS offices will also remain open until 6:30pm every Tuesday and Wednesday. All DHS field offices are equipped to assist Rhode Islanders from every part of the state.

Last month, Rhode Island's health and human service agencies switched to a new eligibility system, replacing a 30+ year old software platform. To transition to the new system, which serves nearly 320,000 Rhode Islanders, the state transferred more than 400 million fields of data from the old platform to the new one. As anticipated, the state has experienced some technical and business process issues with the new system that have impacted customer service and contributed to increased wait times at the DHS service centers. However, the overwhelming majority of customers and workers are able to use the system without any significant issue and most issues have been resolved within days of being identified.

The state is currently preparing for November 1, 2016, as on the first business day of each month, the system completes a number of significant activities, including processing all SNAP payments, state supplemental payments, Rhode Island Works payments and payments to child care agencies. Additionally, November 1 is the first day of HealthSource RI's open enrollment period, which is likely to increase call volume and web traffic.

Rhode Island's comprehensive, modern, digital health and human services eligibility system will improve customer service in the long term, ensure that the state is delivering the right services to the right people at the right time, and save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in just a few years by expanding protections against waste and fraud and more efficiently connecting people to services.

###

