

DHS & MAPE Meet & Confer MINUTES

Date

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Invited for MAPE (those crossed out did not attend)

1. Tonja Rolfson, CO
2. Emily Waymire, CO
3. Faye Bernstein, CO
4. Whitney Terrill, CO
5. Susan Hall, CO
6. Nancy Torres, DCT
- ~~7. Timothy Jacobson, DCT~~
8. Lynn Butcher, DCT
- ~~9. Jeremy Gwilt, DCT~~
10. Debbie Prokopf, MAPE
11. Caitlin Reid, MAPE

Invited for Management (those crossed out did not attend)

1. Chuck Johnson, Deputy Commissioner
2. Marshall Smith, Health System CEO
- ~~3. Dan Pollock, A/C~~
- ~~4. Matt Anderson, A/C~~
5. Jeff Swanson, Management Svcs Director
6. Stacy Twite, A/C
7. Nikki Farago, A/C
8. Connie Jones, Director of HR
- ~~9. Sean Toefree, HR Manager~~
- ~~10. Mel Gresczyk, HR Manager~~
11. Shireen Gandhi, Chief Compliance Officer
12. Karen McKinney, A/C
13. Gertrude Matemba-Mutassa, A/C
14. Jennifer Blanchard, Deputy A/C, in place of Matt Anderson

COVID-19 - Redeployment

What are the current plans?

DHS Response: Agencies submit their needs to the Redeployment Center. Requests are sent out to all agencies to find staff. The Redeployment Center has redeployed approximately 60 staff between various agencies.

MAPE: Connie Jones also clarified that both redeployment and reassignment is happening. Redeployment is when people are moved across agencies, and reassignment is when people are moved with their same agency. Both of these are occurring. DHS is operating the Redeployment Center. According to Connie Jones, the Redeployment Center has received 99 requests and redeployed approximately 60 staff between the various agencies. Within DHS, 151 employees have been reassigned.

How widespread will the redeployment be?

DHS Response: All depends upon needs

Do employees who are redeployed keep their current pay?

DHS Response: At a minimum, yes. If the position is deemed to be a work out of class (WOOC) at a higher rate the person will receive a WOOC rate adjustment. Note: A WOOC is defined as performing substantially all of the duties of the vacant position for more than 10 consecutive work days.

How are people being identified for redeployment? How are people selected? Is seniority a factor?

DHS Response: Each agency is being asked to determine which staff have the skills needed to be redeployed AND that the agency can allow the person to go to the other agency. Seniority is not a factor.

If a person does not feel comfortable using a skill they have a license for, does the person have to report that licensure?

DHS Response: Reporting in SEMA4 is voluntary. We cannot make people identify their skills.

MAPE: Connie Jones further clarified that DHS is working with employees who have licenses but do not feel comfortable using them. For instance, one employee had a nursing license, but had not practiced for 25 years and did not feel comfortable assuming nursing duties.

[COVID-19 - Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Procurement for Staff](#)

What is the plan for ensuring there is enough PPE for direct care?

DHS Response:

DCT staff have worked over the past few weeks to establish current inventory of PPE supplies, develop a distribution network throughout the state, institute purchasing pathways with external vendors, increase internal inventory distribution processes, and expand site based purchasing power for needed supplies. The following are key points on this work:

- ✓ DCT currently has roughly enough supplies to last at current rates until the end of next week. Knowing this, and balancing this supply limitation with safety concerns, the teams have worked to establish stewardship programs and guidelines to promote effective and efficient use of the existing PPE items.
- ✓ DCT has worked to secure large shipments of additional PPE supplies (namely masks and sanitizer) that should arrive around the time we anticipate running at critical low levels. The distribution network that has been established will assist in packaging and statewide distribution of materials once they arrive. Ironically, Marshall was notified today that we have received notice that we would be receiving 100K masks by Friday/Saturday; and another 100K by the following week. We will continue to work on supplies each and every day and work in parallel, but independently to assure supplies are available to staff to assure their safety, and the safety for our patients.

Existing supplies:

- ✓ Remaining supplies will be bundled into “drop kits” of two sizes to have on hand in the event of an outbreak or medical emergency (this means no additional centrally managed supplies will be distributed to sites at this time to support daily operations or preventative work)
- ✓ DHS-DCT has a large inventory of N95 masks which require special screening and testing to be done before deployed. Over the next 10 days, staff will be engaging in a DCT wide initiative to screen and test highest risk staff (those working in direct patient care with higher risk patients) for use of these N95’s. Once this first round of screening and testing is done, additional rounds will be completed. Please note, there is considerable cost associated with this testing through 3M, approximately \$30 per person fitted for the mask. We are looking into other options at a reduced rate. We are also reaching out to other systems to potentially trade some N95s (which by and large are not necessary in our programs) for procedure masks and other supplies.

The team has done incredible work to ensure safety for staff and patients/clients during this difficult time. We are doing all we can to responsibly use the existing PPE and cleaning supplies and procure additional resources as they become available.

MAPE: DHS also reported that staff in facilities are now allowed to use cloth masks. It was MAPE's understanding that the Department of Corrections was passing out surgical masks to employees, but that needed to be clarified. Marshall Smith said he would follow up on this and bring it to the Incident Command team.

[COVID-19 - Safe Return to Work](#)

MAPE: Tonja Rolfson introduced the topic:

We are nearing the end of a two-week shelter-in-place order. Even if the shelter-in-place order is continued, it is not too early to plan for how work environments should be configured for employees once they start returning to the workplace. Our Commissioner has called this a marathon, not a sprint. We can expect to be working for many months under the restrictions required to keep the corona virus's spread in check.

Our workplace was designed for a world that did not have COVID-19. Work and meeting spaces were not designed with social distancing in mind. Cubes have often been configured so that people face each other across short barriers which are not six feet apart. Elevators and stairwells do not permit the required social distancing.

We cannot only address the spaces DHS occupies in our buildings. We need to also work with other agencies who house employees here. I learned some very surprising and concerning information on March 9, 2020 as the COVID-19 drama was unfolding. Sixty-one (61) MNIT contract unclassified employees work in one room elbow-to-elbow at tables on the first floor of 444 Lafayette behind the hearing rooms. I had no idea they were housed there and in that type of work space. One MNIT employee in that workspace had come back from a cruise coughing and sneezing for two days before going home sick. The unclassified MNIT employees were concerned about speaking out. It took bravery to come forward. As one of the employees told me, it was not just about their safety. They were concerned they could be carrying the virus to others. The employee said: "We ride on the shuttle. We use the elevator. We use the cafeteria. This affects everyone in the building." The response from MNIT was very slow. These were IT workers on laptops who should have been able to work from anywhere there is an internet connection.

We are now coming to realize how much we all depend on people without job security, living wages or health care benefits. Grocery store workers, Amazon warehouse workers and contract workers make it possible for us to shelter-in-place. There is a lot to unpack in the guilty pause that should give us. But, guilty pause or not, we still come to this understanding: the safety of all of us depends on each one of us being safe. The business of how other agencies operate and house employees in DHS buildings needs to be our business, too, when it comes to the addressing the issue of returning to a safe workplace.

What is the plan to make sure the workplace is safe?

DHS Response: We will wait for direction from MMB

How many people will be able to telework? Will those with pre-existing conditions be given preference to telework?

DHS Response: This will need to be reviewed based on the telework policy.

How often will work areas be sanitized?

DHS Response: We will wait for information from Admin.

Can social distancing be maintained given the current workspace configurations?

Again, we will take direction from MMB

[COVID-19 - Suspension of Parts of our Contract](#)

Do you have any plans to request a waiver from MMB to suspend any parts of our contract? If so, what parts?

DHS Response: The only exception to date is if an employee initiates a request to amend their hours due to COVID before 6 am or after 7 pm, shift differential is waived. This was approved by MMB when the waiver process first started.

How could we work together to find other solutions?

DHS Response: If DHS is going to submit a request to MMB, we will work with local labor prior to submitting.

[COVID-19 – New Employee Orientation \(NEO\)](#)

What is the plan for new employee orientations?

DHS Response: NEO in DCT is continuing as scheduled with maintaining 6 foot distance and using distance learning when possible.

The April Neo has been postponed. The next Central Office NEO is scheduled for May 20 and 21. The team has been brainstorming and looking at distance learning options for the two days.

[Collaborative Safety Model](#)

Who has been trained on it? How many people have been trained?

DHS Response: To date, DHS has trained over 500 staff.

What has each Assistant Commissioner done to implement the collaborative safety model?

DHS Response: A draft project charter is being developed and will be shared once it is finalized. In addition, A/Cs are attending leadership labs with the Safety Institute. The labs are designed as onsite learning engagements that incorporate specific tools and strategies to promote a safety culture in everyday practice.

Is there follow-up aftercare provided by the collaborative safety contractors to assist with implementation?

DHS Response: In addition to the leadership labs, we have extended the contract to include additional orientations, on-line training, and more leadership labs

[Pay Equity](#)

Status update from Connie Jones

DHS Response: On March 13, Commissioner Jodi Harpstead, authorized equity adjustment requests – 16 in total to be submitted to Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB) for employees serving in the legal series who have the job classification option “Legal Services.” As you are aware, in 2016 a compensation worksheet was developed for the classifications with the legal services class option (this class option is ONLY used for attorneys who have a job function of providing legal advice). This worksheet was used as the basis for the request to MMB. As of today, MMB has not made a decision. Once a final decision is made employees will be notified of the outcome.

DHS is not submitting a request to MMB for lump sum payments.

MAPE Response: Connie Jones agreed to send the DHS Meet and Confer a copy of what was sent to MMB.

[Tuition Reimbursement](#)

How much money is available?

DHS Response: In FY20, \$215,000 was made available. Employees may receive reimbursement for 75% of tuition costs with a maximum reimbursement cap of \$2000 per semester and \$4000 per fiscal year

Who has received it?

DHS Response: 83 employees have been pre-approved for tuition reimbursement.

[COVID-19 Leave for Disabled Employees](#)

MAPE: Karen McKinney, Assistant Commissioner, mentioned that she had attended an Employee Resource Group for employees with disabilities. The employees voiced concern that COVID-19 leave was not available to them under the current criteria even though the inability to access consistent health services impacted their ability to work. Connie Jones said the employees should contact their MAPE representatives.