



Goodhue County
Health and Human Services

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DATE: September 10, 2024
TO: Goodhue County Personnel Committee
FROM: Nina Arneson, GCHHS Director
RE: **Eligibility Worker Provisional to Permanent**

REQUEST:

As the Public Health Emergency (PHE) has been winding down, the provisional Eligibility Workers were to help with the extensive workload increases that occurred with the ending of the PHE for healthcare. The majority of those cases have been reassessed. However, cases have continued to grow (see CHART A) and it takes much longer to determine eligibility even after the end of the PHE. HHS is requesting to make one of the provisional Eligibility Workers permanent.

This position is in the 2025 HHS budget as a provisional EW. HHS receives funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) of which HHS would receive approximately 47.05% Federal reimbursement through (Income Maintenance Random Moment Study (IMRMS); HHS has funding from Medical Assistance Enrollment allocation to counties that was approved by the legislature in 2023 to support medical assistance renewals. This funding will cover this position until approximately 3/31/25. After federal reimbursements HHS will balance out the remaining cost within our agency budget.

BACKGROUND:

Goodhue County HHS Board on September 20, 2022, approved 2 Provisional Eligibility Workers hired in December 2022 to assist with extensive workload increases with the ending of the Federal Public Health Emergency with the increased caseloads and work required by all Counties.

Goodhue County HHS Board on February 20, 2024, approved a temporary 14 hour/week Eligibility Worker for 2024 as HHS had this arrangement during 2023 as this person was already trained as an Eligibility Worker.

This has been very helpful and appreciated by the agency to assist with the additional workload during this transition period.

There has been turnover in the provisional Eligibility Worker (EW) positions, as we have had to hire and train 5 workers during this period. Estimated cost to train an EW is \$41,653 (which includes the hiree, supervisor, EW Lead and other staff time involved in trainings) With the time commitment for training the Income Maintenance Supervisor and Lead Eligibility Workers decided not to fill the latest provisional EW opening (3/15/24).

The Income Maintenance administers the following programs:

- Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)(TANF)
- Minnesota Diversionary Work Program (DWP)
- General Assistance (GA)
- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Group Residential Housing (GRH)
- Child Care (CC)
- Medical Assistance (MA)
- Emergency Assistance (EA)
- Emergency General Assistance (EGA)

Caseload sizes:

The caseload sizes of our Income Maintenance Unit (IMU) had increased during the public health emergency. The chart below shows the caseload for Goodhue County before the Public Health Emergency (PHE); during the PHE (July 2022) and current August 2024 after the PHE closing of cases. MAXIS Healthcare Program currently has 114 pending cases that are greater than 60 days.

Chart A:

Goodhue County	February 2020	July 2022 PHE **	Aug 2024	Pending Cases as of Aug 31, 2024	% Change 2020-2024
METS Healthcare Cases & MCRE	2,420	3,443	2,874	19	+18.76%
MAXIS Healthcare Cases	2,302	2,525	2,254	139 (with 114 >60 days) (with 22 >31<60 days)	-2.08%
Food Programs	1,019	1,230	1,394	43	+36.80%
Food Persons	1,515	2,165	2,289		+51.09%
Cash Programs	418	418	365	37	-12.68%
GRH Programs	116	108	128	4	+10.34%
Emergency Programs	4	8	16	13	+300.00%
Child Care Assistance	114	127	85		-25.44%
Total Cases	6,393	7,859	7,116		+11.31%

** Could not close cases during PHE

Cases		
February 2020	6,393	376.06 cases per staff *
July 2022	7,859	413.63 cases per staff **
August 2024	7,116	395.33 cases per staff ***
August 2024	7,116	418.59 cases per staff ****

* Staffing February 2020; 17 EW/Lead EW

** Staffing December 2022 with 2 provisional EW; 19 EW/Lead EW

*** Staffing August 2024 with adding 1 provisional to permanent 18 EW/Lead EW

**** Staffing August 2024 without adding 1 permanent EW; 17 EW/Lead EW

Impacts of high caseload:

- Applicants have longer wait times for obtaining Public Assistance/Healthcare.
- Individuals and families not being able to meet their basic needs if they do not receive timely benefits
- Delay medical care, which could result in serious health consequences or not receive vital medications.
- May need to remain in the hospital instead of moving to less restrictive options.

- Providers may need to wait longer to get service approvals.
- HHS Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver unit might be required to do another assessment has the assessment had expired before MA had been approved.
- Staff burnout and overtime.

Overtime cost:

Even with 2 provisional workers, there were still overtime costs due to the increased processing requirements, extensive training and learning curve, and staff turnover.

The EDU unit (which currently has 139 pending cases) has a long term trained 22-year employee retiring at the end of September which will add overtime to the highest paid employees as they are the ones trained in long term care.

Without the provisional EW position, the overtime will probably triple.

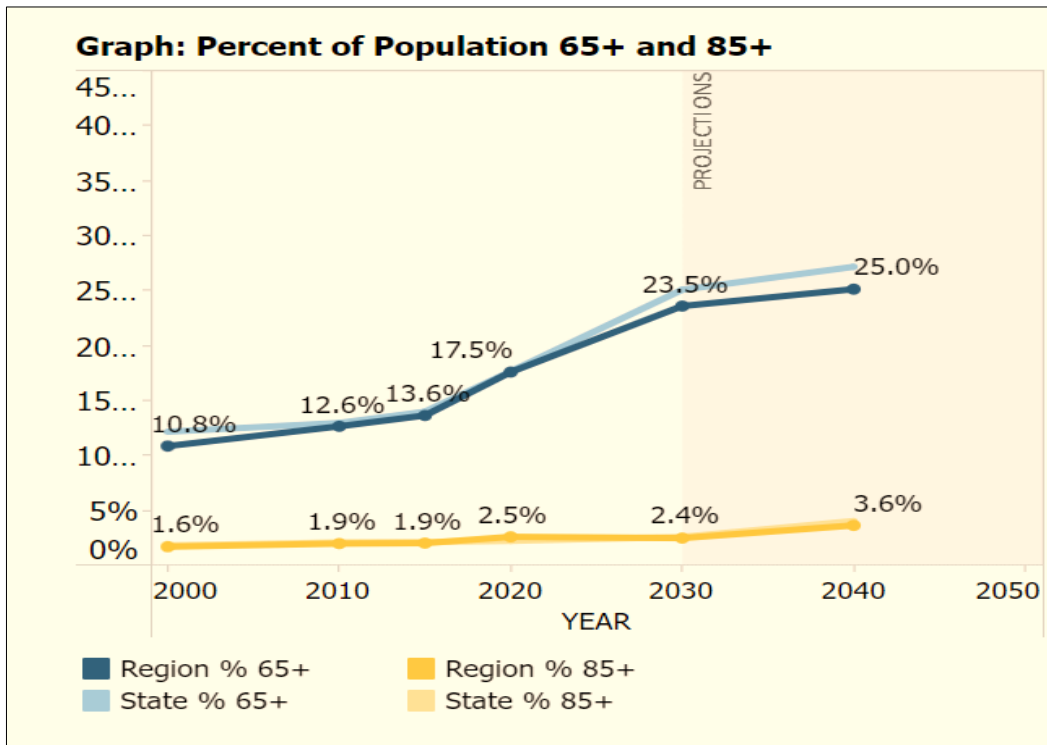
- The total cost for a starting EW with benefits is \$76,687-\$88,618.
- The overtime and temporary employee costs are already approaching the cost of hiring another worker.

2023 Overtime	\$27,867
2024 Overtime 1/24-8/24	\$32,232 extrapolate to full year estimate \$48,348

Temporary Employee 1/23-8/23	\$18,190
Temporary Employee 3/24-8/24	\$10,745 extrapolate to full year estimate \$21,490

Future needs:

Goodhue County has an aging population. This is SE MN Region Population Projections



MAXIS/METS cases for a variety of reasons can open; then close; then open again; most common when the recipient has excess assets; they have to be closed to spend down those assets on approved expenditures and then they have to reapply again.

Currently our Elderly Disabled Unit is 91 days out on documents waiting to be reviewed, which would include new applications, renewals and all supporting or miscellaneous documents.

RECOMMENDATION:

The HHS Department recommends approving the following:

1. Move forward immediately to restructure (1 FTE) provisional Eligibility Worker position to (1 FTE) permanent position as an Eligibility Worker.
2. Finalize position restructuring after GCHHS Board's review and approval.