

The Division of Public Assistance (DPA) is notifying you of a significant change that is taking place now through this summer to improve our responsiveness. Phone calls to Ketchikan and Juneau field offices will go directly to voice mail so they can be more effectively answered through either an “interview line” or a “general number” for all other inquiries. This will increase our ability to respond to customer needs in a timelier manner (see page 2 for more details).

Currently, customers are on hold for a long time or are transferred multiple times before the right person can help the caller. To improve this, DPA is working on a long-term solution. However, in the interim, a statewide initiative of DPA is to implement Business Process Redesign (BPR). Our Ketchikan and Juneau field offices each has implemented BPR and have two contact phone numbers for customers to call for access.

DPA will be implementing BPR in approximately two field offices per month throughout the summer. As offices implement BPR, their phones will go directly to voicemail as described on page two. For the two offices who have implemented BPR, the general information lines are: Juneau 1-907-465-3537 (local) and 1-800-478-3537; and Ketchikan 1-907-225-2135 (local) and 1-800-478-2135.

The Division continues to prioritize work around identifying and responding to 8 urgent needs:

1. Pregnant women Medicaid (including add a baby) seeking services delivered by the Division;
2. Individuals qualified for expedited Food Stamp determinations;
3. Hospital Presumptive Eligibility: Applications received from the hospital and from clients related to their hospital stay;
4. Disconnect Notices for major utilities (phone disconnects are not included);
5. Eviction notices for rent;
6. Temporary Assistance penalties if a case manager requests a penalty be applied, cured or lifted;
7. Burials: these are acted on as soon as all the information is received from the client’s representative and/or the funeral home; or
8. Emergent needs as defined as:
 - a) Prescriptions needing to be filled right away
 - b) Medical procedures that need to occur right away
 - c) Travel necessary for immediate medical reasons or
 - d) Contact by Division of Health Care Services staff concerning Medicaid eligibility issues.

For more details on DPA’s plans for improvement, please [click here](#) for more information.

DPA needs to effectively manage the high call volumes, including the two hot-lines originally created to triage the emergent need and pregnant woman incoming calls for the Medicaid program. The volume of calls the Division is receiving is primarily due to the backlog of unprocessed cases. The backlog is being addressed with the implementation of the Business Process Redesign efforts.

Currently, DPA's telephony strategy has been to allow all offices to answer the phone as calls are received but this has resulted in long wait times for customers on hold, phone transfers to other staff, calls being dropped, delays with returned calls, and multiple messages being left. The Division understands a more effective approach is necessary; therefore, a statewide virtual contact center is currently being developed and may be in place by August 2016.

The Division is obliged to address the telephony issue at least temporarily until the statewide contact system is in place.

1. As our field offices begin implementing BPR (Ketchikan and Juneau already have implemented BPR), each office will have two phone numbers for customers to call. One number will be the primary "interview" line, and the other number will be the general number for all other inquiries.
2. Please note these phones go directly to voice mail and voice messages will be returned in the order received.
3. The voice message needs to be clear and concise so the customer's call can be returned.
4. Office assistants check messages every hour, look up the case in the eligibility system, and triage why the customer was calling. If office assistants can respond to simpler requests, they will do so immediately.
5. The office assistants enter the customer name, phone number, and client ID into a management tool that tracks all customer contact with the office.
6. Customers who have an emergent need will be identified and prioritized appropriately.
7. As field offices implement the BPR, all eligibility staff will be working in the management tool to work the next customer who was entered in the queue.

By limiting daily interruptions of eligibility staff and allowing them to focus their time on customers, this will allow eligibility staff to contact customers within two business hours. This strategy allows the Division to be as responsive as possible, gives the staff an opportunity to meet client expectations, fulfill our promised return call times, allows staff to triage the work to the appropriate pathway, and provides meaningful data to measure the effects of BPR in the telephone access point.