

OYA *In the Loop*

February 27, 2009

Friday's Second Open Forum

Thank you to all who attended the open forums on Friday. Not only do I appreciate your attentiveness, but also your great questions. My respect and admiration for the staff of this agency grows every day.

I want to start off by correcting information in my In the Loop from the first Open Forum. The roll backs in management raises are limited to the top step increases^[1]. I apologize for the error and promise to furlough my note-taker!

Forum #2 started off much in the same way as the earlier meeting – I pledged “no surprises” and that I will continue to share information with you as soon as I can.

Q: Will medical benefits continue if we are laid off?

A: All employees who separate are eligible to enroll in a medical plan through COBRA (continuation of benefits), but they have to pick up the cost.

Q: Do staff have some rights to work somewhere else?

A: There are bumping rights within a region and recall lists that are open statewide.

Q: What is the timeline for closing the 50 beds in the valley?

A: The decision will be made by noon on Monday. I will let you know.

Q: Whose decision was it to freeze management wages?

A: DAS and the Governor.

Q: Our unit has open positions. Have they been figured into the budget savings?

A: Yes, they helped to defray our share of the cuts this biennium and are expected to carry into next biennium.

Q: How many vacant positions do we have?

A: As of last week we have about 47 vacancies and 16 vacant positions being filled with people on rotation or doublefill.

Q: Is there any talk about pulling back rotations?

A: No, nor double-fills. At least I haven't heard anything.

Q: Will vacancies be filled with bumped people?

A: First we have to be able to afford to fill the position. The bumper would need to be qualified for the position as well. We're looking into whether or not qualified employees have rights to bump into a frozen position.

Q: If we close a cottage, two staffs' positions will be affected. Can they fill vacant positions in another unit?

A: We would go through layoff, let the bumping run its course and then use recall lists when a vacancy opens up.

Q: Will '09-11 reductions carry to '11-13?

A: Possibly. The Legislature balances to the bottom line. We'll have to live within it. I anticipate that they will decide '09-11 based on the May forecast and then convene again in a February special session to rebalance if necessary. That is speculation on my part though.

Q: What are the expectations regarding travel – we haven't heard much about that.

A: We should only be traveling when essential. Per diem is very expensive. This should have been communicated by your assistant director.

Q: Can you clarify filling positions?

A: We have to maintain our post factor and make sure we have a safe environment for staff and kids. There are exceptions for safety and health reasons. If we aren't adequately staffed in a cottage, for instance, Joan needs to know that.

Q: It is refreshing that you have kept us "in the loop" so to speak. Knowing the process helps us. If you don't keep sharing, we'll wonder what you are hiding from us!

A: We will never hide stuff. What we do know is that now the Legislature is turning their attention to '09-11. They are learning from the agencies about what they do. There likely won't be any decisions until the May forecast. Our turn at the table begins April 8, but that is a fluid date. You can watch it on your computer during your break, or hear the recording online anytime.

We'll be listening to other agencies' presentations. The legislators' questions often reveal their thinking on various subjects so we'll be better prepared when it is our turn.

Q: What is the criteria for layoffs?

A: For represented staff, service credits and contracts. Management staff will be based on performance.

Thank you everyone for taking time out of your day to listen, ask questions and hopefully learn what we know right now. Our next open forums are Wednesday afternoon from 2:00 – 3:00 and 4:00 – 5:00. If you would like to call in , please contact Jean Bergen at 503-373-7212.

¹¹ The "add/drop" steps that became effective on July 1, 2008, will be rolled back for the specified executive and management service employees. This roll-back affects only those executive and management service employees who received a step increase after July 1, 2008, and who currently work at the top steps of their respective salary ranges. The roll-back will not require payback of salary increases received for step increases awarded since July 2008.