

OYA *In the Loop*

March 4, 2009

More Open Forums Today

You have another chance today to put me through my paces on the budget, agency plans or anything else that's on your mind. Two forums will be held this afternoon at 2 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. We have lots of call-in lines, and I look forward to sharing information with you and hearing what you have to say. Please contact Jean Bergen at 503-373-7212 if you would like the dial-in information.

Changes in Meal Pricing

One of the broader SIP recommendations centers on meals and snacks and includes conducting periodic reviews of staff meal charges. I want to bring you up to date with where we are on that review.

An evaluation of staff meal charges was completed by a workgroup and Budget. It included a comparison to other state agencies providing a similar service and looked at food cost and the facility cost of preparation. Based on these findings, it was determined the cost of meal tickets should increase from the current charge of \$1.50 to \$2.75 per meal.

I realize this increase is significant. Candidly, it is compounded by our lack of reviews over time, making the increase even more pronounced.

According to contract, OYA youth correctional facilities and camps allow staff to eat facility meals with youth when assigned by management to supervise youth during regularly scheduled youth meal periods. Their meals are free, but they will not be provided a duty-free meal period. All others wishing to eat are required to purchase a meal ticket.

We anticipate the new rate to take effect April 1, 2009, with a few details to be worked out prior to this date.

Medicaid Match Rate

Some folks are curious about the change in the Medicaid match rate so I asked Phil Cox to explain it for In the Loop. Here's what he wrote:

Included in the federal stimulus package signed by the President was an increase in the Medicaid percentage rate matched by the federal government.

For Oregon, this increase means that the federal government will provide around 71 percent of the cost of Medicaid health services. The remaining amount – 29 percent – is State of Oregon general funds. The 71 percent/29 percent split is much different from the 62 percent/38 percent split that applied to Oregon prior to the stimulus package.

The best news for our state is that not only does the increase apply from now through 2010, it also applies to Medicaid services that were provided from October 2008 until the present.

What staff may not realize is that OYA's BRS services (like services at St. Mary's, Rosemont, Haag Home, etc.) are, in fact, paid for in large part with Medicaid dollars. Additionally, certain case management activities provided by our field staff are also Medicaid services called Targeted Case Management.

So, the bottom line is that OYA will generate an additional \$1.5 million in Medicaid funds as a result of the federal stimulus. A portion of the increased revenue is going toward reducing the cuts the agency will have to take for the rest of this biennium. The remainder will be applied to meet the state's other service needs in this time of severe budget shortfall.

In the Loop email

As you know, I am a fan of two-way communication. I would like to thank those of you who have written me via my In the Loop email address (oyaintheloop@oya.state.or.us). Here is a sampling of two questions and answers:

Q: Hello Sir – I am just wondering why everything has to be on the sacrifice of State Workers versus say increased taxes for all Oregonians. It seems this is a budget deficit that should be shared by all Oregon Citizens not just the one's employed in state government. Maybe I am naïve and a shared tax would need to be voted in by the people and cannot be constitutionally decided by the Governor? I am not sure but that is my question and opinion on the matter.

A: Thanks for sharing your thoughts. Tax increases take at least 90 days, and with the limited number of days left in the biennium, I think that the Governor and Legislature did what they could with the resources at hand. I'm sure a variety of enhanced revenue streams will be considered by the Legislature and Governor in the coming days and weeks. Stay tuned!

Q: I have heard that furloughs will not be expected of employees lower than pay grade 19. Is this a true statement or will every pay grade be expected to take furloughs? Will 24/7 posted folks be expected to take furlough days? It will just cost more money to cover the shifts of the 24/7 posted positions. Please let me know so I can give accurate information to those who ask. Thank you for all your hard work and please continue to look out for the "little guy" helping to keep this state in operation.

A: Furloughs for represented staff are still in negotiation with the unions. Management staff furlough days are tiered depending on the salary range. At salary range 19 and below, managers have to take one furlough day between now and June 30.

You are right about the posted positions -- we are working with DAS to come up with a policy that won't require overtime.