

OYA *In the Loop*

March 10, 2009

Two open forums last Wednesday continued our dialogue about the budget, furloughs and agency priorities. Although these are the last scheduled for now, I really enjoyed the opportunity to listen to you and gauge what's on your minds. I anticipate we will have more forums after we present our budget to the Legislature on or about April 8.

Thanks to everyone who participated. Here are some of the questions and responses from Wednesday:

Q. What will be the incentive for early retirement?

A. One would certainly be 'not to have to go through this (!)' but, seriously, I haven't heard anything from DAS. If they come up with something, it will be a statewide decision.

Q. Are the 23 positions being eliminated at MYCF tied to the six parole/probation positions being eliminated?

A. No, not directly. The six field positions have been held vacant, so no field staff will be laid off at this point.

Q. Are rotations retracted?

A. No

Q. Have service points been calculated? Where can we find those?

A. They are posted on bulletin boards in our workplaces in the SEIU region affected. In this case, the lists are at MacLaren, Hillcrest, and Central Office.

Q. Can you clarify SEIU's use of email?

A. Sure. The collective bargaining agreement in Section 10, Subsection (b) says, among other things:
(5) E-mail messages sent simultaneously to more than five (5) people shall be no more than approximately one (1) page and in plain or rich text format. Such group e-mails shall not include attachments or contain graphics (except for the Union logo). Recipients of such group e-mails shall not use the "Reply All" function.
(9) Such e-mail communications shall only be between SEIU-represented employees and managers, within their respective Agency, and the Union. However, for purposes of negotiations, bargaining team members may communicate across Agencies. Additionally, DAS recognized joint multi-Agency Labor- Management Committee members and the Union's Board of Directors may communicate across Agencies. The Union shall provide the names of its Board of Directors to DAS.

(10) Use of Agency's e-mail system shall be on employee's non-work time.

(11) E-mail communication may include links to the Union website, which may be accessed on non-work time.

(12) Nothing shall prohibit an employee from forwarding an e-mail message to his/her home computer. (13) E-mail shall not be used to lobby, solicit, recruit, persuade for or against any political candidate, ballot measure, legislative bill or law, or to initiate or coordinate strikes, walkouts, work stoppages, or activities that violate the Contract.

Q. If a person retires early, will it save the low person on the totem pole?

A. Conceivably. In most situations it would probably help, but we'd really need to meet with people who are considering these options. We can do individual calculations.

Q. How were service credits calculated?

A. The union contracts spell it out. If you need specifics or have any questions about your status, the staff in Human Resources will be happy to help.

Q. How will the increase in the Medicaid match rate affect our residential beds in the next biennium?

A. We don't know yet. The increased match rate was retroactive to October '08 so the Legislature applied those funds both to OYA and other budget holes. How they are spent next biennium will be a conversation involving DHS, LFO, BAM and us.

Q. Has there been any further conversation or analysis of the fact that furloughing line staff will have a negative, undesirable, fiscal impact?

A. One of our managers at RVYCF did a brief analysis that showed what we know to be true: Overtime for furloughed staff or those who call in sick -- all will mean more dollars. I communicated the concern to DAS.

Q. Has there been any official word about the director position?

A. The two candidates who interviewed were both likable, but not the best fit right now -- so it is a failed recruitment. The Governor asked me to stay on, but I can't ruin my pension to do so. So, the Governor is working with the Legislature (SB 112) to make a slight law change so I can stay and not have my pension compromised. I like retirement, but I feel I'd be deserting the agency at this time. I don't know what it is, but I like working with you and helping the kids. Plus, I understand that people from our advisory committee, labor unions, and staff have contacted the Governor and Legislature to ask that we maintain the momentum we've built up. Because we've made some gains, the thinking is that I can manage us through this crisis.

Q. What is Plan B?

A. I don't think there is one, but there are always options.

Q. Is Fariborz staying?

A. I sure hope so, but that's up to him. I want him to stay on but I think he's waiting to see what happens to me. He's done a remarkable job while he's been here. He is calm, collected, thoughtful – a good balance for me! Plus, he has dug into stuff with his inquisitive mind and his work product is going to help us advance in these tough times.

Q. Has anyone looked at the number of people who are eligible to retire?

A. Actually, I have. I asked for a list, just to see what's out there. More than 100 employees are time- or age-eligible.

Q. Is there any conversation about, as a retirement incentive, making health care more available to people who are too young for Medicare?

A. I don't know of any – again, this is a statewide issue. In my opinion, if the state were to look at a health insurance subsidy, it would really help people take the plunge.

Q. EOYCF is stuck in a horrible food contract. We feel we can manage it better ourselves; for instance, it would be cheaper to drive to Cash N' Carry in Bend than use Sysco.

A. Interesting! We will look into it. Keep those cost-saving ideas coming!

Q. Are QMHPs going to be laid off?

A. The layoffs will generally follow the staffing pattern of the closed units but accommodating the needs of the new unit.

Q. Is OYA holding vacancies open?

A. Yes, but there is an exception process. Fariborz or I will make the final decision. We are likely to approve filling posted positions.

In closing, I want to reassure you that we are going to help every staff impacted to find a job here or somewhere else. We are going to keep listening and sharing information with you – that is my commitment to you.

I'd also like to thank the management teams in our facilities. I know that seeing an initial reduction of 375 beds was disconcerting -- to say the least. It is at times like this that it is very hard to balance being sympathetic to the needs of staff while setting aside your own feelings to support the state's decisions. We talk a lot about encouraging managers to become leaders – it is times like this that true leadership shows.