



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of the Secretary

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Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
Overview - Q00
Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee
Senator Michael Jackson Chair
January 30, 2024

Appropriations Committee
Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee
Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair
January, 29th, 2024

OLA Audit Finds

Issue: DPSCS should comment on the minimum hourly rates being paid to medical professionals and what steps are being taken to ensure the contract is fully staffed.

Response:

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) ensures that medical professionals under the new medical and mental health contracts with Centurion of Maryland, LLC (Centurion) are compensated competitively. The new contracts mandate that Centurion align their minimum hourly rates with the 75th percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) hourly rates. This guarantees competitive wages comparable to similar positions within the State, enhancing recruitment and retention.

To ensure the contract is fully staffed, DPSCS has implemented proactive measures, including streamlining background investigations, prioritizing vendor applicants, and expediting onboarding processes. Additional resources, such as dedicated investigators, collaborative applicant tracking systems, and hiring event partnerships, have significantly reduced delays. DPSCS remains committed to addressing staffing challenges through

ongoing collaboration with Centurion to maintain high-quality healthcare services.

What steps are being taken to ensure the contract is fully staffed.

DPSCS recognizes the critical importance of ensuring our medical contract is fully staffed to meet the healthcare needs of individuals in our custody. DPSCS does not set the specific minimum hourly rates for medical professionals hired by Centurion, other than language in the contract.

In addition, DPSCS has taken a series of proactive measures to support the contractor in addressing hiring challenges and expediting the staffing process. Below is an overview of the key actions being taken:

Streamlining the Hiring Process

- **Timeline for Medical Vendor Clearance:** On average, the timeline for a vendor employee to clear the background process is 15 to 30 days. This process is continuously monitored to identify and address potential delays.
- **Expedited Hiring Provisions:** DPSCS has worked with Centurion to implement measures that help expedite the background and training of new hires.

Efforts to Support the Contractor and Reduce Backlogs

To address potential delays and ensure that Centurion has the resources necessary to hire and onboard qualified medical professionals efficiently, DPSCS has implemented the following improvements:

- **Additional Investigative Resources:**
 - Assigned several additional investigators to prioritize the review of Centurion applicants.
 - Instructed the background team to treat Centurion candidates as a top priority.
 - Currently four investigators have vendors as their primary caseload.
- **Streamlined Background Review Processes:**
 - Streamlined internal review processes to ensure that investigators can perform all necessary steps in a timely manner, including providing access to run all required reports for each candidate.
- **Hiring Event Collaboration:**
 - Invite Centurion to participate in DPSCS hiring events, allowing them to recruit staff directly for their contract. At these events, candidates selected by Centurion for conditional offers were able to complete fingerprinting onsite, significantly reducing delays in the onboarding process.

These targeted measures have allowed us to keep up with the high volume of candidates Centurion is sending for background checks and have significantly reduced the backlog of vendor applicants.

Applicant Tracking and Communication

- **Tracking Systems:** All applicants are tracked using a collaborative database (Smartsheet), which provides a real-time dashboard for senior DPSCS leadership to monitor the progress of each candidate. This system includes automation, such as automated email notifications to the Assistant Contract Operations Manager (ACOM) when a candidate clears background, enabling the next steps (e.g., scheduling required training with PCTC) to proceed without delay.
- **Regular Communication Cadence:** A Department's Human Resources Background Investigations Team maintains regular communication with Centurion. The liaison coordinates with Centurion and other stakeholders as needed. Additionally, DPSCS leadership closely monitors staffing progress to ensure alignment with operational priorities.
- **Real-Time Reporting and Leadership Oversight:** The Smartsheet dashboard is updated in real time and reported out daily to senior leadership, allowing for full transparency and oversight of the hiring process. This enables leadership to quickly identify any changes, delays, or hurdles in the pipeline and implement solutions within 24 hours to ensure the process remains efficient and responsive to staffing needs.

Fingerprinting Process and Scheduling Flexibility

- **Fingerprint Scheduling:** Applicants have the flexibility to schedule fingerprinting appointments directly or through Centurion. For traveling registered nurses, who often provide ¹*hard cards* with their fingerprints, there may be delays due to mailing and processing times. DPSCS continues to work with CJIS to streamline this part of the process wherever possible.
- **Extended Hours:** While fingerprinting is currently conducted during regular business hours, we are exploring options to expand evening and weekend availability to further expedite the hiring process.

Ensuring Long-Term Staffing Stability

- **Competitive Pay and Recruitment:** While Centurion determines pay rates for its medical professionals, DPSCS recognizes the

¹ Some applicants for the nursing positions are traveling RNs. Due to many of them not being in close proximity a procedure of using physical finger print cards (hard cards) is in place. CJIS sends the applicant the hard card which the candidate takes to a vendor in their area to be fingerprinted. The hard card is then sent to CJIS for processing.

importance of competitive compensation to attract and retain high-quality staff. We work closely with Centurion to identify and address any compensation-related concerns that could impact recruitment.

- **Ongoing Collaboration:** DPSCS leadership, including representatives from the Medical and Reentry teams, are in regular discussions with Centurion to identify challenges and implement solutions to ensure full staffing levels are achieved.

Current Staffing Data

- As of January 22, 2025, there are approximately 85 applicants in Centurion's pipeline awaiting clearance. DPSCS and Centurion remain committed to processing these applications as efficiently as possible while ensuring all safety and compliance requirements are met.

DPSCS is fully committed to ensuring that our medical contract is staffed to the highest levels possible. By streamlining background investigations, supporting hiring events, expediting the onboarding process, and leveraging robust tracking systems, we have made significant progress in addressing staffing challenges. Furthermore, our ongoing collaboration with Centurion allows us to identify new opportunities to improve the process and meet the critical healthcare needs of our population.

Issue: DPSCS should provide an update on the status of the corrective action plans and discuss how they have been incorporated in the current contract with Centurion.

Response:

The Department has taken the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA) Audit of the DPSCS Incarcerated Individual Healthcare Contracts very seriously, and has prepared a DPSCS Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that responds to each of the findings and recommendations that were included in the OLA's recent audit. To the extent possible in this brief post audit period, the CAP includes some status information. This CAP was submitted to the Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee on January 22, 2025. It should be noted that the new contract with Centurion of Maryland, LLC (Centurion) began several months before the OLA Audit was issued, but in practice, some of the OLA recommendations were already reflected in the new Centurion contract. Some of the corrective action steps, especially regarding the contract monitoring, have future anticipated compliance dates, such as the end of February or March of 2025. The Department is fully committed to resolving the issues that still need to be corrected, and the DPSCS Office of

the Inspector General will be conducting follow-up audits of the Department's CAP to verify and ensure corrective action progress.

Recommended Actions

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends adding budget bill language restricting \$500,000 pending a report describing how DPSCS has incorporated OLA feedback about the previous contract's structure and lack of oversight into the current contract. The report should include the following:

- **a detailed justification of DPSCS's decision to re-enter a fixed-fee payment structure, including an explanation of why the methodology selected is in the State's best interest and whether the agency intends to renegotiate the contract structure;**
- **an update on the development of a contingency plan outlining the agency's efforts to supplement medical and mental health services and personnel should its contractors fail to meet the terms of the contract;**
- **a timeline and strategy to achieve and maintain contract staffing levels and ensure that minimum hourly rates paid to the contract's health care professionals are competitive with similar positions across the State;**
- **a description of the procedures to ensure invoices accurately reflect the resources provided by the contractors and to identify and address inaccurate staffing reports collected from the contractors;**
- **a description of the procedures to guarantee contractors complete medical and mental health examinations within the required timeframes as well as investigate and resolve inmate complaints in a timely manner; and**
- **determinations and outcomes regarding liquidated damages, including the amount charged and collected as of the submission of the report.**

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation

DLS recommends adding budget bill language restricting \$250,000 pending a report on DPSCS's hiring goals for fiscal 2026 to minimize the need for mandatory overtime in the future.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation

