

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL MASTER

Gemmell v. Hawkins – C. A. No. 16-350 WES

Report (#6) to the Court

This Report is filed pursuant to Section IV.A.4 of the Order Appointing Special Master.

During this past month I have continued to meet with the parties and with Deloitte Consulting to review implementation of the work plan to improve the timeliness of the processing of SNAP applications. A log of my activities is attached.

For the month of March, the Department of Human Services (“DHS”) reported timeliness percentages as follows: 87.8% for expedited SNAP applications and 77.9% for non-expedited SNAP applications. The expedited application percentage for March is slightly better than for February (85.5%) and slightly worse for non-expedited applications (78.6%). The standard to be achieved on both an initial and continuing basis remains 96% for both categories. As before, DHS continues to meet regularly to identify the reasons that some applications are not timely processed and has been addressing the issues presented. The updating of eligibility for previously unprocessed recertifications has affected timeliness. This work will be completed by early May.

As reported previously, DHS hired a business design consultant to assess workflow and related matters with the goal of moving applicants through the DHS lobbies more quickly and thereby processing applications faster. The consultant began its work in April. Further, DHS has hired additional personnel to process SNAP applications.

All of these steps should positively impact the April percentages.

The call center remains a problem, that is, callers are still having to wait for 2 hours or more to be serviced. On April 3, pursuant to my Order issued in March, DHS submitted a request to the federal Food and Nutritional Service (“FNS”) to allow it to hire an off-site contractor to assist in handling calls for both SNAP applications and other applications for social services that are incorporated within the R. I. Bridges program. On April 9, I sent a letter to FNS urging the agency to give prompt approval for the request. FNS responded to the request by asking some questions, which DHS promptly answered. DHS has submitted to FNS a draft contract and copies of training materials that the agency now is reviewing.¹

In my meetings with Deloitte, I have reviewed the schedule for both lesser fixes (a number of which have now been implemented) and major upgrades. As I have previously reported, a major upgrade relating to the worker inboxes is due to be implemented on May 19 provided that the testing has been done and DHS staff has been trained. As far as I can tell, this upgrade is on track; I have a meeting scheduled with Deloitte and DHS on May 2 to confirm this and review other items on the implementation schedule.

My goal remains to achieve compliance by June 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Deming E. Sherman

Special Master

May 1, 2018

cc Counsel of Record (by email)

¹ On April 16, FNS sent a letter to DHS concerning deficiencies in the SNAP program. This letter followed by several days a meeting that DHS had with FNS about the progress in the SNAP program to date and its plan to come into full compliance. Courtney Hawkins, Director of DHS, advises me that the meeting was cordial and positive. DHS has 30 days to respond, which I expect will be done.