

USOR answers to subcommittee member questions
Submitted for Social Service Interim 6/12/15

1. Representative Ray a. (2/4/15) Quantify for FY 2014 the amount of penalties and late fees assessed due to USOR paying client school tuition and enrollment late. For example, if a USOR client's tuition was not paid on time and then was assessed a late fee and/or a penalty, what was that cumulative amount for FY 2014? By practice, who is responsible for the late fee or penalty (the client/student or USOR)?

It is the general policy of USOR to not pay late fees or other penalties assessed by training institutions. USOR has agreements with several institutions of higher learning that USOR will not be charged late fees in cases where authorizations have been submitted to a school but the school does not process or enter them in time to prevent fees.

In a case where a counselor or other USOR staff makes a mistake and there is a late fee or other penalty assessed, the counselor would first try to work with the school to see if the fee can be waived. If the school refuses to waive a fee the counselor would submit a request for payment through channels asking that an exception to the general policy be made and that USOR pay the fee because it resulted from a staff error. The counselor would then work with USOE fiscal to get approval to pay the fee. Under no circumstances would a client be expected to pay a fee that was incurred as the result of an error by a USOR staff member.

Because these fees are submitted with other school payments USOR cannot quantify an exact amount that was spent in a fiscal year without reviewing thousands of individual authorizations. We did survey staff directors however asking them to estimate for their area what they paid in the last year in fees (since they must be reviewed by a supervisor). We combined the responses and USOR believes that the total amount in late fees per year is less than \$500 for the entire agency.

USOR staff has been reminded of the above policy in a recent memo. They have also been advised to counsel clients that they are not obligated to pay any fees due to USOR error and to contact their counselor immediately if the school appears to be charging any fees so the counselor can help to resolve the charges appropriately.

USOR wishes again to express our apologies to any client who has been embarrassed, inconvenienced or made to pay a fee because of a failure on our part to deliver timely and appropriate services. We will continue to work diligently to make sure that we are doing everything in our power to correct this issue.

2. Senator Christensen a. (1/29/15) For all reported performance measures included in the 2014 General Session Base budget bill (S.B. 8), provide an explanation regarding the choice of the target and a response regarding increasing the target where actual experience was 10 percent or greater above the chosen target.

USOR has 3 performance measures identified in S.B. 8. For two measures USOR's actual experience was not 10 percent or greater above the chosen target. The third performance measure reads "(3) Deaf and 1097 Hard of Hearing - Increase in the number of individuals served by Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing programs (Target = 7,144). Actual number served was 8689 which is more than 10 percent greater than the target. USOR provides the following explanation:

USOR chooses the 'total number served' for the DSDHH programs because we believe it is a reflection of all the programs operating within DSDHH. USOR chose the target of 7,144 because it was close to the number served in the previous year and in the two years prior the increase in the number of individuals served was below 5% per year therefore USOR believed the target to be appropriate. However, the Utah State Legislature granted USOR one-time funding to do outreach to rural consumers who were hard of hearing that year. It appears that when setting the goal USOR did not account for the number of clients who would be served with the new one-time money and therefore the numbers served were higher than expected. Because the money was one-time USOR does not believe that new targets should match the actual for that one year. It is likely numbers served will drop as the one-time funding was not renewed. However, in the future USOR will try to make sure that increases that might be possible from additional funds received are more accurately reflected in chosen performance targets.