



October 14, 2016

Kurt Messner, Regional Administrator
United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Northeast Regional Office
10 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02222

Dear Administrator Messner:

Attached, per your request, is the data report through October 3, 2016. Thank you for your patience as we fine-tuned this template to provide the data in the clearest way possible. We welcome your feedback and the opportunity to ensure that future weekly reports are responsive to your needs.

Rhode Island's new eligibility system, which went live on September 13, 2016, is successfully delivering benefits to tens of thousands of eligible Rhode Islanders. Some initial challenges temporarily delayed some payments and caused understandable frustration for some customers. However, the vast majority of the 318,000 people we serve have experienced no disruption in service. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you as we quickly resolve any outstanding issues.

In addition to improving the service we provide our customers, Rhode Island's new integrated eligibility system has enhanced our capability to track and report metrics. We are now able to track data more comprehensively and in more categories than we could in the antiquated legacy system.

Listed below is information about the key data points you requested:

- **Applications by Type:** This table breaks down the overall number of applications received by DHS between 9/13/16 and 10/3/16 broken down by application type – online or in-office. Additionally, it breaks out the number of SNAP applications by expedited, non-expedited, and recertification. The new, enhanced system enables customers to apply online for their SNAP benefits and about 15 percent – or 401 applications received between 9/14/16 and 10/3/16 – were submitted online. This percentage is expected to increase as customers become more aware of the new system's online capabilities.
- **Case Maintenance Documents by Type:** This table includes SNAP-related documentation, outside of the actual applications themselves, broken down by date and field office at which the document was submitted. The new, enhanced system enables documents to be scanned into the system in a timely manner and electronically shared across all six field offices. Previously, DHS maintained paper records for customers, which limited the agency's ability to provide flexible customer service. Additionally, a paper-only system created more potential for documents to be lost or misplaced, placing an additional burden on our customers. Scanning

and storing all case maintenance documents electronically provides a no-wrong-door access that ensures that a customer can be served in any office or on the phone, and that any customer-facing DHS field staff can view their records. This approach will also facilitate appeals hearings because records will be available electronically. In the past, paper documentation could be unavailable.

- **Caseload by Document Type:** This represents the number of unprocessed SNAP documents.
- **EBT Cards – Priority:** EBT card applications from the transition period identified as ‘priority’ were processed once the new eligibility system launched on 9/13/16.
- **EBT Cards Loaded and Distributed:** This displays the number of new and replacement EBT cards loaded with benefits and issued to SNAP customers, by date.
- **Scanned Documents:** This table shows that more than 40,000 documents have been scanned since the launch on 9/13/16 through 10/3/16. We did not have the ability to scan documents under the old system.
- **Number of Documents Scanned but not Indexed:** As of 10/3/16, all items have been scanned and indexed. All documents will continue to be scanned and indexed into the system as soon as they are received as part of our ongoing, daily process.
- **Lobby Traffic and Waits:** The reported average wait is the wait at each DHS office for self-identified SNAP customers only; this does not include wait times for other DHS customers. Wait time is calculated once a customer “checks in” with a lobby attendant and ends when their number is called and their interaction with the worker begins. It does not account for the time it may take someone to get to the check-in desk. We fully acknowledge that lobby wait times have been unacceptably long and have failed to meet the standards we set for ourselves. We are taking additional steps to reduce wait times and deliver benefits and services more quickly and efficiently. As customers become more aware of the new system’s online functions, we expect to see a reduction in the number of people who need to visit a DHS office in person.
- **Call Center Metrics:** Call volume increased more than 100 percent over the period of time from week ending 9/10/16 to week ending 10/8/16. (Please note that customers who hung up and called again are counted multiple times. Increased call volume last week led to customers being unable to leave a callback number because that capacity became full. In order to ensure that we could make those callbacks, we downloaded the information from the system and cleared the queue. This enabled new callers to successfully call in. Meanwhile, our staff were able to make call backs to the customers whose names and numbers were downloaded from the system. Those successful call backs are not reflected in these statistics as they were made from the list that was downloaded. The significant increase in call volume may be due to calls from customers who did not receive their \$39.92 State Supplemental Social Security Income payments on the first of the month. A data entry error delayed delivery of this payment to roughly 29,000 Rhode Islanders. The error was resolved in a matter of days. We recognize the frustration that this caused our customers, and we do not expect the call volumes reflected in this weekly report to remain this high in the future because of actions taken.
- **Determination by Application Type/Method:** This table lists the number of SNAP applications by submission date, office, and method of application as well as the status of that application as of 10/3/16.
- **Case Terminations:** A SNAP customer’s case may terminate for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to a customer requesting to end benefits, a customer moving out of state, and a customer being over-income. In accordance with federal policy, when a customer’s case is set to expire, they are sent an application for recertification. If they fail to submit this application in a timely fashion, the case closes. This is evidenced here on 9/20/16 for cases expiring in

September 2016.” Customers who submitted their recertification documentation after the 9/20/16 negative action date but before the 9/30/16 case termination date have their cases processed upon completion of the interview requirement.

- **Timeliness of Processing:** The timeliness data provided in this report presents only an initial evaluation of less than a month of transactions. DHS will continue to fine-tune this data in the weeks ahead to ensure it is accurate and comprehensive.
- **Transition Period:** During our transition period, all field offices were open and customers were able to drop off documents as well as speak with DHS staff. Upon the new system launch, we prioritized for processing the expedited SNAP recipients and replacement EBT card requests received during the transition period.

If you have any questions about the data provided here, please do not hesitate to contact me or my office.

Sincerely,



Melba Depeña Affigne
Director, Rhode Island Department of Human Services

cc: Bonnie Brathwaite, NERO SNAP Director

Enclosure

***The data provided here is accurate to the best of our ability at this time. We conduct quality control on an ongoing basis and will let you know if any of this information changes. ***