



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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January 26, 2021

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight
101 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period December 16, 2020 – January 15, 2021. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement
- DHS staffing and employee training
- Pending applications
- SNAP timeliness and lobby/DHS Call Center summaries
- CCAP off-cycle payments
- LTSS interim payments
- Correspondence with federal partners (if any)

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve, your interest in the health of the RIBridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CHAWKINS", written in a cursive style.

Courtney E. Hawkins, Director



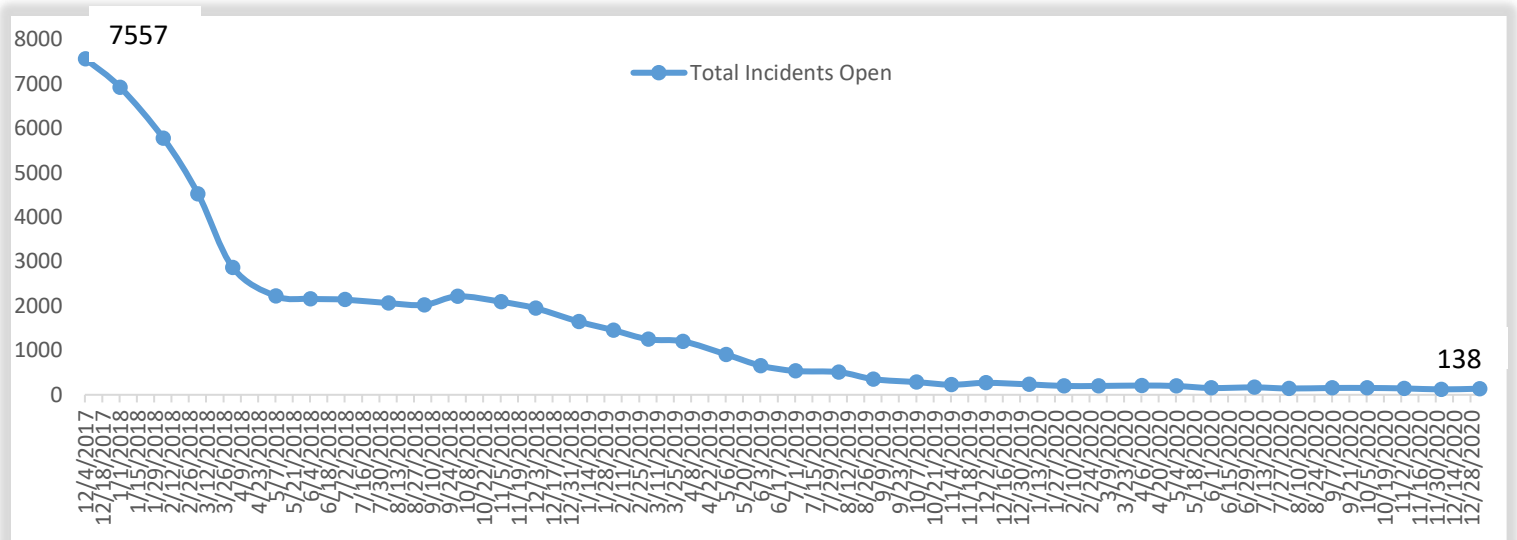
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

January 2021

Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of the work on the RI Bridges system is an important part of the equation. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to focus on ensuring full compliance of the system. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

Due to a focused effort on consistent and stable system operations, the number of new and existing incidents (when the system does not operate as expected for a DHS customer, worker or provider) has **decreased by 98 percent** since December 2017. As of January 4, 2021, there were **138** open incidents. Please note in the graphic that the dates below are shown bi-weekly and hence 1/4/2021 is not shown, but its corresponding open incidents number is shown.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since December, DHS hired one employee: an eligibility technician dedicated to the Claims, Collections, and Recoveries Unit (CCRU) in Warwick.

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Medical Adjust Gross Income (MAGI) Part One	12-16-2020	2	0	5
Medical Adjust Gross Income (MAGI) Part Two	1-11-2021	3	0	19
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Mini Training: Students	1-12-2021	3	0	9
Domestic Violence 101 (2 sessions – 1.5 hours each)	1-5-2021 1-12-2021	3	0	37
Multicultural Cultural Competency Training (2 sessions – 1.5 hours each)	12-17-2020	3	0	19
Quarterly Meetings (3 sessions – 2.5 hours each)	12-16-2020 12-17-2020 12-18-2020	7.5	0	180
Courageous Conversation Corner	12-18-2020	1.5	0	14
Customer Relations Training Series (5 sessions – 2 hours each)	12-16-2020 1-5-2021 1-7-2021 1-12-2021 1-14-2021	10	0	43
Ex-parte Training Series (5 sessions – 3 hours each)	1-12-2021 1-13-2021 1-14-2021	15	0	46
Long Term Services Supports (LTSS) (5 sessions vary hours)	1-5-2021 1-6-2021 1-8-2021 1-12-2021 1-13-2021	10	0	10
Totals		58	0	382*

*current number of staff trained is a duplicate number

Workshop Descriptions

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Mini Training: Student: This training reviews policy surrounding who is considered a student, the impact of student status on eligibility and student income. It includes a hands-on portion to practice correctly inputting student information in RIBridges.

Multicultural Competency Training: The Multicultural Competence modules offer contextualized, scaffolded, anti-oppression educational workshops for DHS employees. There are four foundational modules that introduce participants to frameworks, concepts, and strategies so DHS personnel are better equipped to advance diversity, equity and inclusion of strategic goals,

individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format includes facilitated dialogue activities with individuals and groups.

- **Module One: *Advancing Anti-Oppression in the Workplace*** is the first of the four workshops. This session presents and discusses the multicultural competencies necessary to advance anti-oppression in the workplace (e.g., awareness, understanding, knowledge, interaction, and sensitivity).

Medical Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Part One: Participants will have acquired a foundation – especially those new to Medical determination – that will serve purposeful for a subsequent session incorporating introductory principles that will be applied to RIBRIDGES as a hands-on process to combine theory with practice.

Following the conclusion of part one of *Introduction to MAGI*, participants will have an increased knowledge of the history of government provided health insurance programs of the past and present at the federal and state levels, general concepts of eligibility criteria, special population eligibility, and the application process for DHS.

Medical Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Part Two: This training takes the participant beyond the history and catapults them into modern times to provide an analysis of Rhode Island MAGI basic eligibility concepts. A discussion of Household Construction, Income, Taxes and Relationship as it pertains to the household will pull participants into understanding how these basic concepts are integrated into RIBridges for case processing via presentation and video demonstration. Participants will follow cases from Application Registration, Data Collection, basic MAGI case processing, and a MAGI and SNAP application. Participants will leave with a basic understanding of MAGI eligibility and simple case processing to be the second tiered foundation for complex-based MAGI training in upcoming modules.

Customer Relations Training: This training provides information for DHS staff members on strategies to build their customer service skills.

- **Session One: Understanding Your Customer:** Every customer brings unique and standard expectations. In this session, the participants will begin to understand what internal and external customers expect. They will explore how change affects their customers and begin to explore the role empathy plays in every interaction.
- **Session Two: Communicating Effectively with Your Customer:** This session focuses on what it takes to communicate effectively with customers. Although we will be discussing serving customers by phone throughout the course, this is the primary focus in this session. Participants will learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and what happens to communication during stress.
- **Session Three: Meeting and Exceeding Customer Expectations:** This session pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand what customers want/don't want and how to deliver them effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore what it takes to demonstrate empathy, be responsive, and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the customer expectation, creating an enthusiastically satisfied experience.

Domestic Violence 101 -This training provides the foundation for community members aiming to support survivors and help end domestic violence. During the first training session, participants will learn about the dynamics and forms of abuse, including patterns of abusive behaviors, the cycle of violence, power and control tactics and the various barriers survivors face.

Ex-Parte Training Series:

- **Medicaid Overview:** Participants will learn policy as it relates to Ex-Parte Medicaid and recent enhancements made to RIBridges to support the policy. Enhancements include Special Circumstances Review screen, XPR icon, and Ex-Parte Medicaid Review screen. The Ex-Parte Medicaid overview, timeline and flow chart will lay the foundation for Ex-Parte Medicaid and all modules included in this training. Participants will learn what occurs when an individual is facing possible closure to their current Medicaid, Ex-Parte policy, how the Special Circumstances questions are a potential gateway to other forms of Medicaid and screen enhancements made in RIBridges to support Ex-Parte Medicaid.

- **Pre-screening Medicaid:** This is for participants to learn how the pre-screening process works for individuals who are facing potential closure to their current Medicaid, the role of the IES, what occurs in the Customer Portal and Worker Portal, and to practice a scenario in the RIBridges system. The Ex-Parte Pre-screening Medicaid session will provide participants with an understanding of how the pre-screening process occurs for individuals who are facing potential closure to their current Medicaid. Participants will learn the role of the IES and what occurs in the Customer Portal and Worker Portal for Ex-Parte. Lastly, participants will be provided with an opportunity to practice a pre-screening exercise in RIBridges.
- **MAGI Medicaid:** The Ex-Parte MAGI Medicaid session will provide participants with program policy as it relates to Ex-Parte MAGI Medicaid, an understanding of the State's responsibilities in processing Ex-Parte MAGI Medicaid and hands on practice in RIBridges.
- **Age Out:** The Ex-Parte MAGI Age-Out session will provide participants with the information needed to process Age-Out cases in RIBridges when individuals do not transition to another form of Medicaid because they are facing potential closure from aging out. Participants will learn what the Medicaid Verification Batch is and the role it plays in the Ex-Parte process. Participants will have an opportunity to practice an Age-Out scenario in RIBridges
- **Ex-parte Complex Medicaid:** During the Ex-Parte Complex Medicaid session, participants will gain an understanding of the Ex-Parte Complex Medicaid process, the standards used to evaluate Complex Medicaid and have opportunity for hands on practice in RIBridges.

Long Term Services Supports (LTSS) Training Series: LTSS training participants will understand how to process an LTSS request. The training will cover non-financial, financial and program eligibility. Participants will understand case flow, cost of care and case authorization.

- **Introduction to Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS):** Session one will discuss programs available under the LTSS umbrella.
- **Medical Documentation:** Session two will assist participants in identifying medical documents needed for specific LTSS programs.
- **Program Eligibility:** Session three will help participants understand the process of completing a Level of Care and Service Plan.
- **Nursing Home Eligibility:** Session four will assist participants in completing the Level of Care and Service Plan for Nursing Home recipients.
- **Financial Eligibility-Person Demographics and Income:** Session five will review with participants how to apply policy and complete system requirements for person demographic information and Income eligibility.

Courageous Conversation Corner: This session is created to be safe and open space to discuss race. DHS staff members are invited to discuss their race openly and honestly with the intention to help promote our goal of developing shared language and understanding about race equity. Space is limited and its first come basis.

Quarterly Meetings: DHS holds quarterly meetings with staff members to inform staff about upcoming changes, provide program updates, celebrate accomplishments, and show appreciation for our staff members.

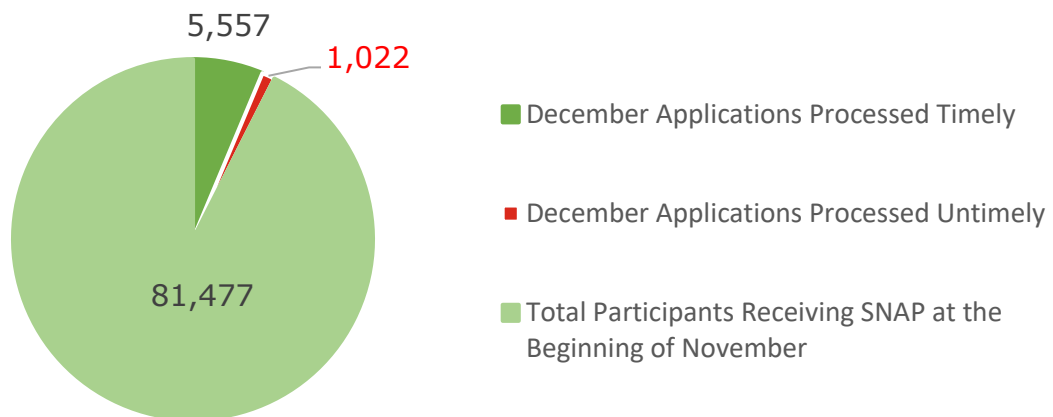
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **January 14, 2020**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **4,015**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,802**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	9	46	55	4	14	18	73
SNAP Non-Expedited	555	393	948	49	30	79	1,027
CCAP	11	98	109	1	9	10	119
GPA Burial	0	3	3	1	1	2	5
SSP	0	77	77	0	15	15	92
GPA	14	23	37	16	17	33	70
RIW	97	68	165	26	55	81	246
Undetermined Medical	6	167	173	33	956	989	1,162
Medicaid-MAGI	1	3	4	22	33	55	59
MPP	3	95	98	3	427	430	528
Complex Medicaid	10	30	40	15	83	98	138
LTSS	54	270	324	10	162	172	496
Totals	760	1,273	2,033	180	1,802	1,982	4,015

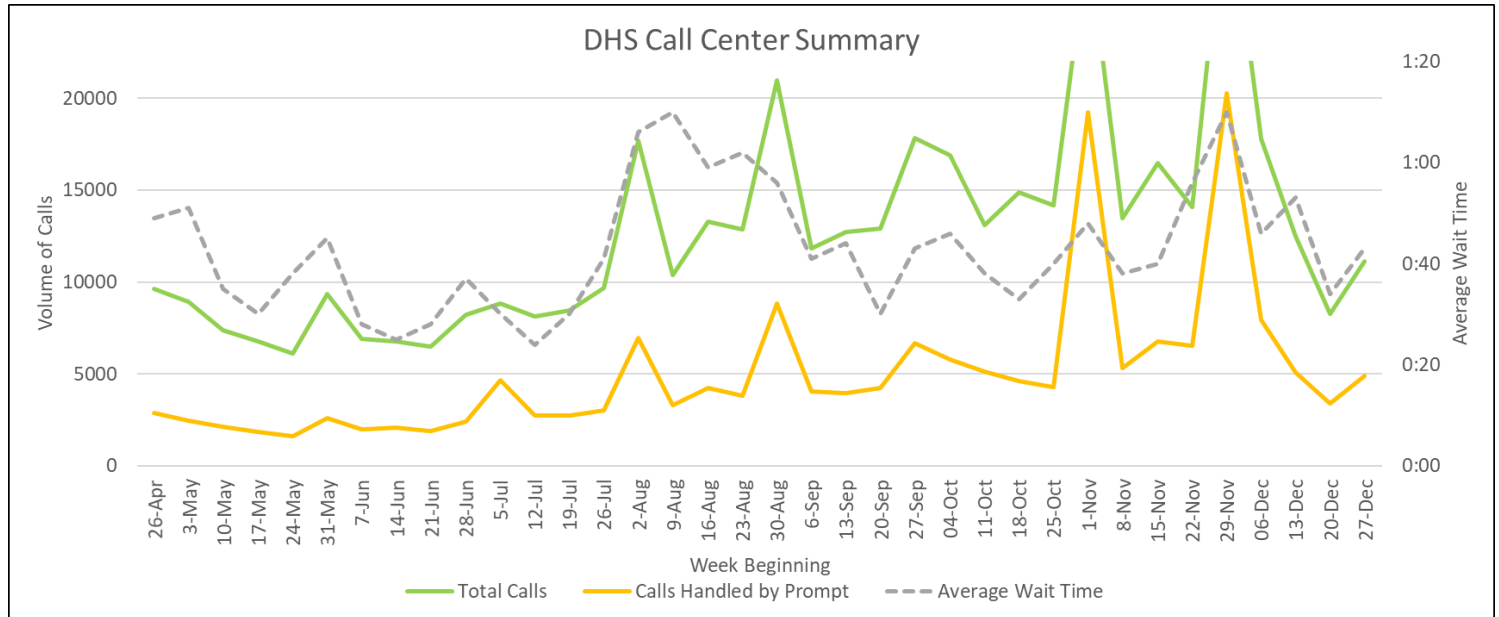
SNAP TIMELINESS

In December 2020, SNAP benefits were issued timely to nearly **81,477** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **84** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than 1.5 percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



CALL CENTER

For the month of **December 2020**, the average wait time to DHS staff was **49 minutes, 28 seconds**. The busiest week in December was the week beginning on December 6, and there were **17,775** calls then. Yet just one week prior, the week that included Dec. 1, there were **32,091** calls. With the close of lobby facing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the DHS Call Center capacity was increased to accommodate customer interviews and questions regarding benefits.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between December 15, 2020 through January 6, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
14	12/15/2020	536	\$2,225,078
14A	12/17/2020	18	\$40,024
14B	12/24/200	21	\$61,027
15	12/29/2020	536	\$2,221,325
15A	N/A	N/A	N/A
15B	01/06/2021	36	\$140,137

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (14, 14A & 14B)	575	\$2,326,129
Off-cycle (14a & 14B)	39	\$101,051
Provider off-cycle/total	3.36%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	1.80%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (15, 15A & 15B)	572	\$2,361,462
Off-cycle (15A & 15B)	36	\$140,137
Provider off-cycle/total	5.78%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	5.93%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **162** overdue LTSS applications pending State action.

Through the contingency process, which ensures nursing and assisted living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, Rhode Island has paid out approximately **\$200,000** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2021. The fiscal year for 2021 began on July 1, 2020.

Our payment reconciliation process remains ongoing as we continue to meet with long term care facilities across the state. In total, the State has paid approximately **\$150 million**, and we have collected about **\$106.5 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately 71 percent of the total amount of contingency payments made.

UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The State has verified that Medicaid renewals were appropriately initiated by the RIBridges System in compliance with the CMS approved renewal plan.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are important partners to the State. We continue to communicate regularly to review progress with the RIBridges system. There were no UHIP related correspondences with our federal partners during this reporting period.