



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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February 18, 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 January 16, 2021 – February 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



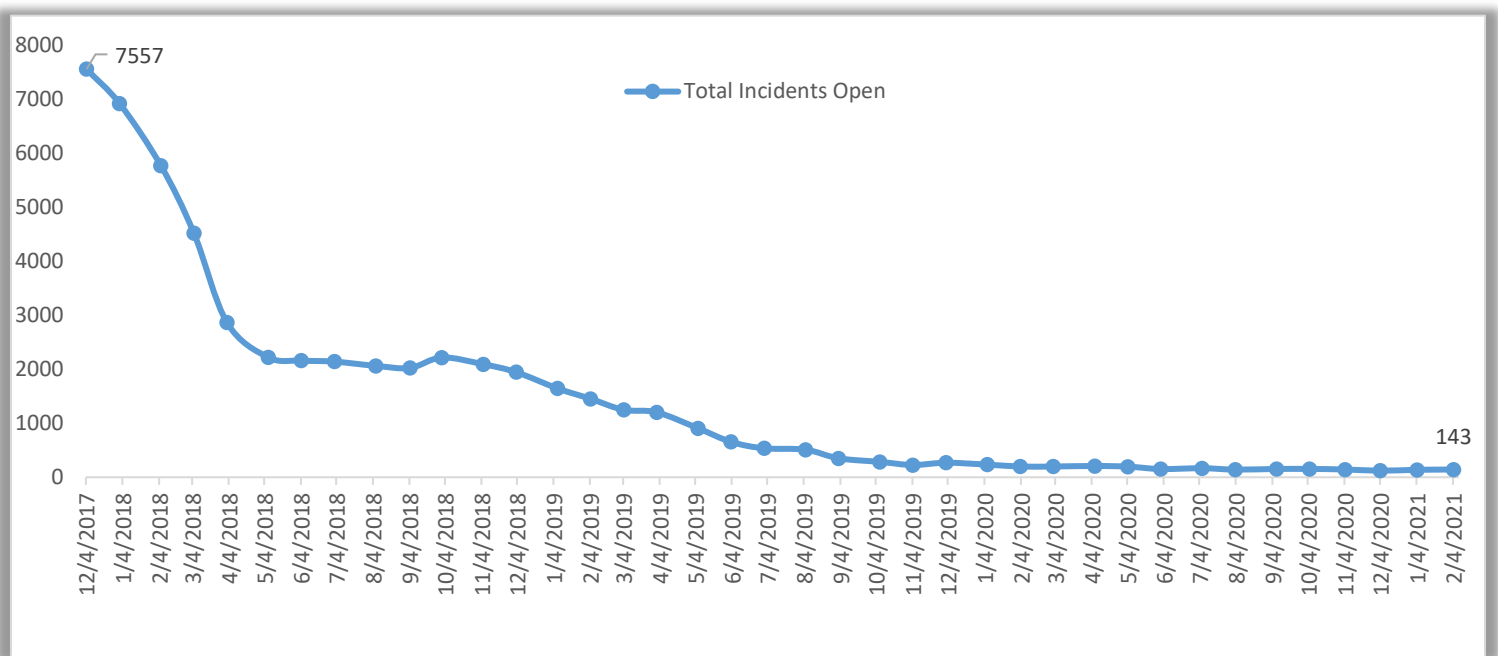
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

February 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 February 8, 2021, there were **143** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since January 2021, DHS hired four employees:

- 3 Eligibility Technicians dedicated to the Providence and Pawtucket regional family centers
- 1 Chief Human Services Business Officer dedicated to Financial Management

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Medical Adjust Gross Income (MAGI) Part Two	1-22-2021	3	0	10
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Mini Training: Students (3 sessions)	2-8-2021 2-10-2021 2-11-2021	6	0	1
Domestic Violence 101 (2 sessions – 1.5 hours each)	1-19-2021 1-26-2021	3	0	30
Courageous Conversation Corner	1-22-2021 1-29-2021	3	0	8
Customer Relations Training Series (5 sessions – 2 hours each)	1-19-2021 1-21-2021	4	0	17
Ex Parte Training Series (5 sessions – 3 hours each)	1-26-2021(2) 1-27-2021 (1) 1-28-2021 (2)	15	0	26
Long Term Services Supports (LTSS) (5 sessions vary hours)	1-19-2021 1-20-2021 1-22-2021 1-26-2021 2-2-2021 2-3-2021 2-5-2021	21	0	10
New Hire Orientation (4 sessions (2 two-hour sessions; and 2 three-hour sessions))	2-4-2021 2-5-2021	10	3	0
STAR Supervisor Training (2 two-hour sessions)	2-2-2021 2-9-2021	4	0	13
Civil Rights and Voter Registration Training (2 one-hour sessions)	2-9-2021 (2)	2	0	67
Federal Tax Information Training (4 half-hour sessions)	1-26-2021 (2) 1-27-2021 (2)	2	0	50
Telephonic Signature (5 1.25-hour sessions)	1-25-2021 1-27-2021 1-28-2021 2-9-2021 2-10-2021	6.25	0	73
Asset Verification Question and Answer Sessions (5 2-hours sessions)	1-21-2021 1-22-2021 1-25-2021 1-26-2021 1-27-2021	10	0	164
Totals		89.25	3	500*

*current number of staff trained is a duplicate number

Workshop Descriptions

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Mini Training: *Students:* This training reviews policy surrounding who is considered a student, the impact of student status and income on eligibility. This particular workshop includes a “hands-on” exercise to practice entering student information into RI Bridges correctly as well as efficiently.

Medical Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Part Two: This training catapults the participant into modern times to provide an analysis of Rhode Island MAGI basic eligibility concepts. A discussion of household construction, income, taxes and relationship as they pertain 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 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 strategies for DHS staff members 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, interpersonal communication skills are the primary focus in this session. Participants will learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and the role stress can play during particular communications.
- **Session Three:** “*Meeting and Exceeding Customer Expectations:*” This session pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand our customers’ needs, and how to deliver those needs effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore the demonstration of empathy, learn to be more responsive, and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the expectations of our customers, creating an enthusiastically satisfied experience.

Domestic Violence 101: This training provides the foundation for community members aiming to support survivors of 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 as well as the various barriers survivors face.

Ex Parte Training Series:

- **Medicaid Overview:** Participants will learn ex parte Medicaid policy 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, functions occurring in the Customer 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 also learn the role of the IES and what occurs in the Customer Portal and Worker Portal for ex parte cases. 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 the 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 and the standards used to evaluate *Complex Medicaid*. Participants will also 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 the financial and non-financial program eligibility factors. 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 personal demographic information and Income eligibility.

Courageous Conversation Corner: This session is created to be a 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 to a first-come, first-serve basis.

New Hire Orientation: The New Employee Orientation (NEO) program is the first step in welcoming new hires to DHS. Its main objective is to familiarize new employees with the agency, its structure, and its policies and procedures.

Federal Tax Information (FTI): This is a required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covers the federal regulations and internal procedures staff need to follow in order to protect customer information.

STAR Supervisor Training: This training was designed by supervisors for supervisors. The goals of the trainings are as follows:

- Instill the DHS Guiding Principles in everyday work;
- Support supervisors by enhancing leadership, coaching, and mentoring skills;
- Build professional capacity through the DHS workforce;
- Create tools that encourage and support a culture of continuous improvement;
- Understand what constitutes good supervision;
- Incorporate the DHS guiding principles in everyday work and decision making;
- Reset from past experiences and looking to the future of DHS; and
- Identify behavioral styles

Civil Rights and Voter Registration Training: This training will review civil rights laws and the policies that prohibit any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance to discriminate in the provision of services or benefits based on any of the protected classes. It will also review the DHS agency's processes and protocols as it relates to Voter Registration.

Telephonic Signature: In order to work new documents such as applications, recerts, interims (with a change) and employment plans over the phone, it is imperative that either a signed document is present in the case file OR the worker records a

telephonic signature while the customer is on the phone. In this training, participants will learn the requirements for telephonic signatures and how to record them. This training is delivered virtually in one session that lasts one hour and fifteen minutes.

Asset Verification System Question and Answer Sessions: These sessions were offered to DHS staff members who work within the Asset Verification System and had questions after the changes were made in a RIBridges system release. The CSDL trainers made themselves available to provide technical assistance to staff members.

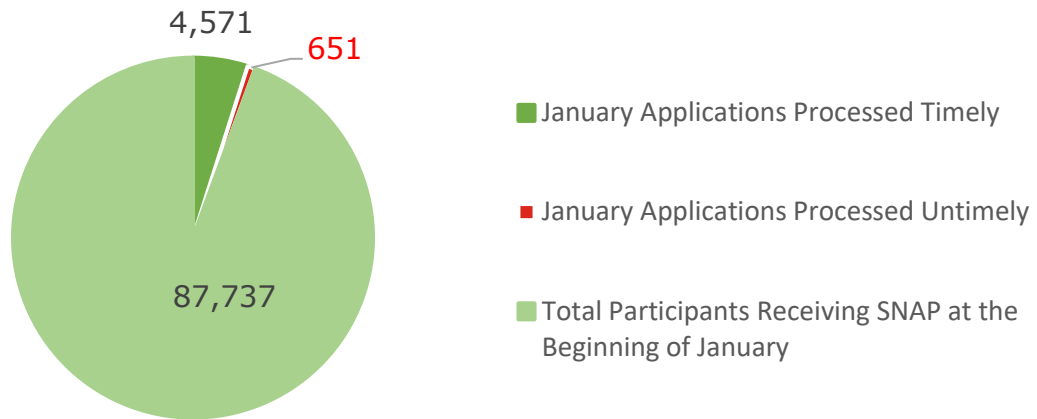
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **February 12, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **3,677**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,690**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	7	26	33	3	8	11	44
SNAP Non-Expedited	407	324	731	10	11	21	752
CCAP	13	83	96	3	3	6	102
GPA Burial	0	2	2	0	3	3	5
SSP	0	15	15	0	4	4	19
GPA	14	35	49	14	26	40	89
RIW	86	51	137	7	6	13	150
Undetermined Medical	16	262	278	25	942	967	1,245
Medicaid-MAGI	3	4	7	22	32	54	61
MPP	10	107	117	0	421	421	538
Complex Medicaid	6	40	46	17	78	95	141
LTSS	53	313	366	9	156	165	531
Totals	615	1,262	1,877	110	1,690	1,800	3,677

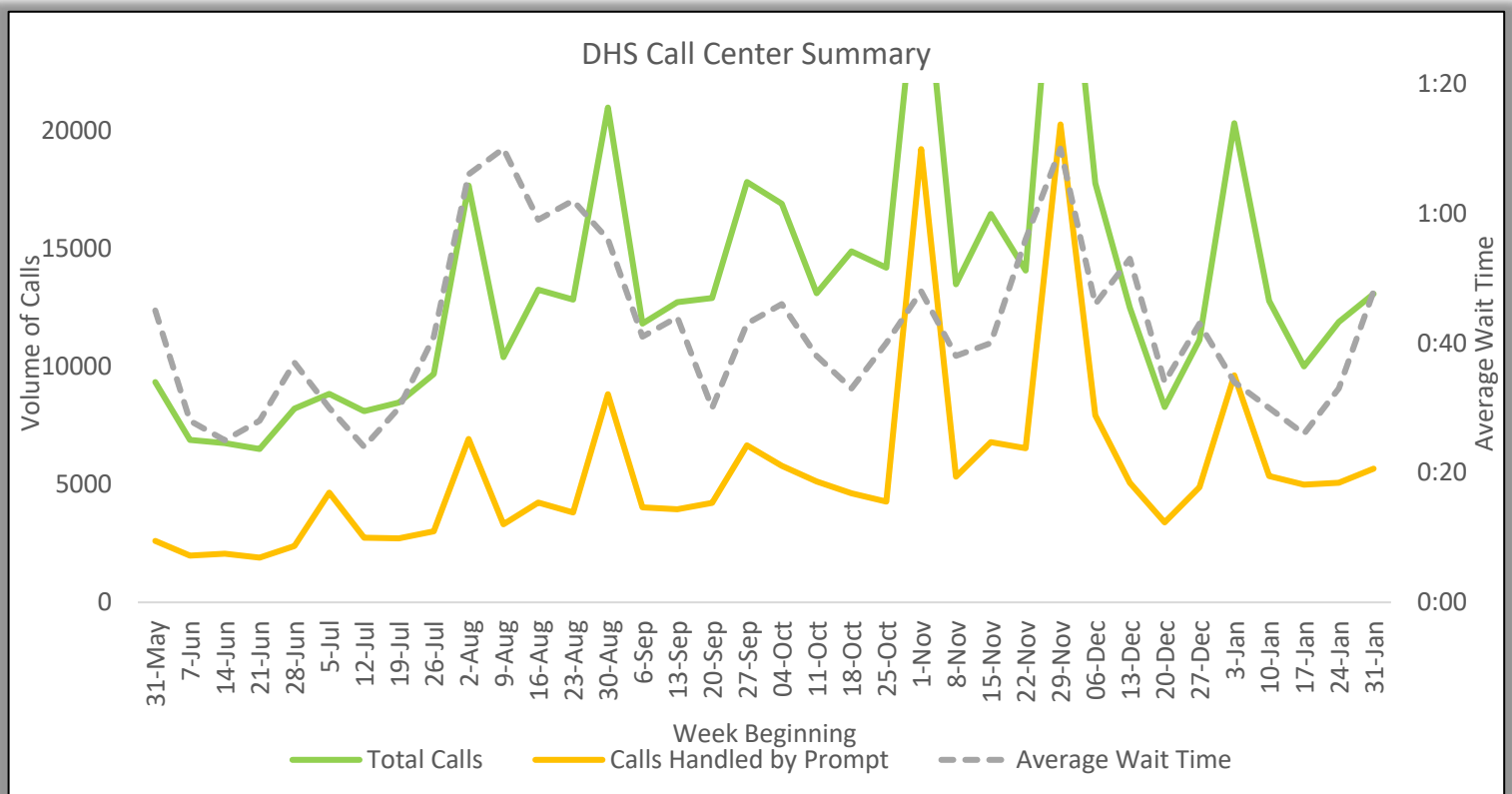
SNAP TIMELINESS

In January 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **87,737** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **88** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than 1 percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



CALL CENTER

For the month of **January 2021 through February 6, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was just shy of **34** minutes. The busiest week in January was the week beginning on January 3, and there were **20,320** calls then. 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 January 12, 2021 through February 4, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
16	01/12/2021	534	\$2,231,952
16A	01/14/2021	15	\$67,707
16B	01/21/2021	20	\$29,574
17	01/26/2021	545	\$2,121,468
17A	01/28/2021	25	\$39,867
17B	02/04/2021	75	\$87,334.52

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (16, 16A & 16B)	569	\$2,329,233
Off-cycle (16A & 16B)	35	\$97,828
Provider off-cycle/total	6.55%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.36%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (17, 17A & 17B)	645	\$2,248,670
Off-cycle (17A & 17B)	100	\$127,202
Provider off-cycle/total	18.35%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	6.00%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **156** 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 **\$1.4 million** 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 **\$151.4 million**, and we have collected about **\$109 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately **72** 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.