



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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August 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 July 16, 2021 – August 15, 2021. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement
- DHS 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 blue ink that reads "Celia J. Blue". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Celia" being the most prominent.

Celia J. Blue, Interim Director



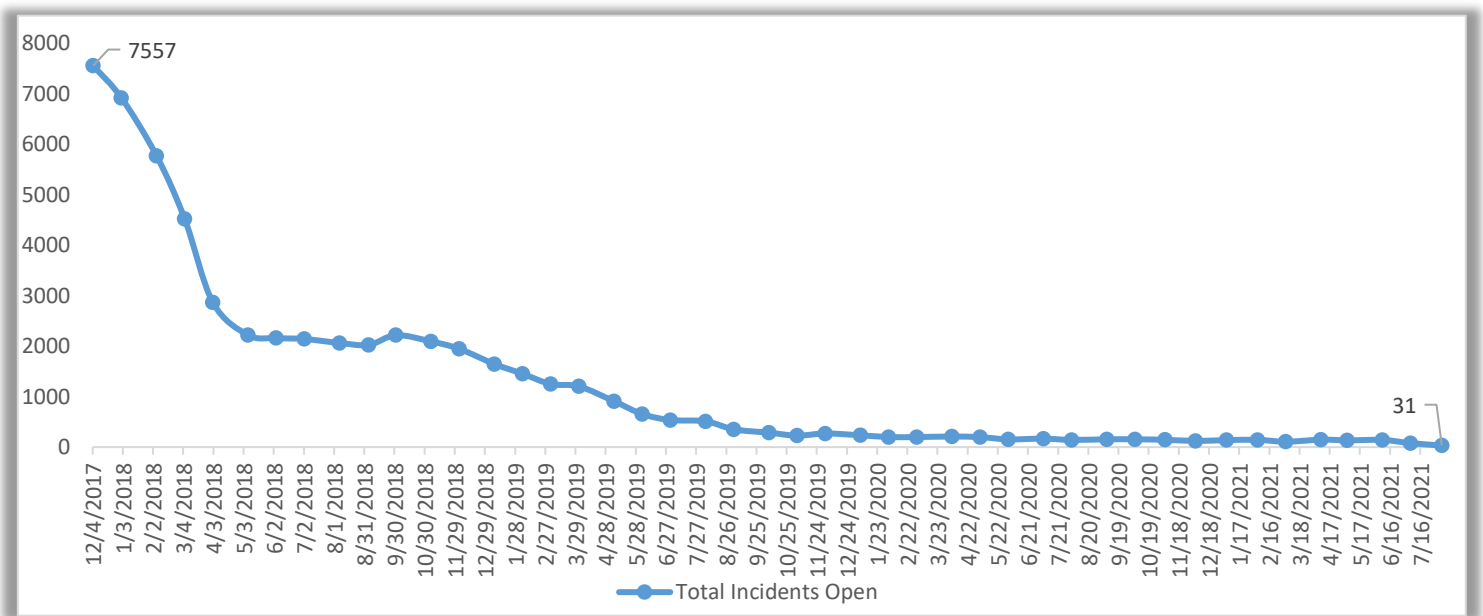
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

August 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 RIBridges 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 99 percent** since December 2017. As of August 6, 2021, there were **31** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since July, DHS hired six employees. This includes:

- 1 Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist dedicated to the Office of Child Care Licensing team
- 1 Programming Services Officer dedicated to the Office of Child Care Licensing team
- 1 Social Caseworker dedicated to the Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) team
- 1 Associate Director of Revenue Services dedicated to the Office of Child Support division
- 1 Administrator, Family and Adult Services
- 1 Supervising Eligibility Technician

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
New Hire Orientation (One full day session and two half-day sessions)	8/10/2021 8/11/2021 8/12/2021	10.5	4	0
Multicultural Competency Training: Module Two (Eight one-and-half hour sessions)	7/20/2021 (2) 7/22/2021 7/27/2021 (2) 7/29/2021 8/10/2021 8/12/2021	9.5	0	187
STAR Supervisor Training (One two-hour sessions)	8/10/2021	2	0	6
Courageous Conversation Circle (One, one-and-half hour session)	8/6/2021	1.5	0	5
Knowledge Transfer (Two half hour sessions)	8/11/2021 8/13/2021	1	0	41
Long Term Services and Supports Training Series (Thirteen three-hour sessions)	7/16/2021 7/19/2021 7/20/2021 7/21/2021 7/23/2021 7/26/2021 7/27/2021 7/28/2021 7/30/2021 8/2/2021 8/3/2021 8/4/2021 8/5/2021	39	0	22
SNAP Training Series (Seven two-hour sessions)	7/19/2021 7/21/2021 7/26/2021 7/27/2021 8/11/2021 8/12/2021 8/13/2021	14	0	9
Beacon Health Option Trainings (Two one-hour sessions)	8/11/2021 8/11/2021	2	0	20
Customer Relations Training Series (Two two-hour sessions)	8/5/2021 8/12/2021	4	0	22

Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHS FTI, HIPPA, and Confidentiality 684 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature 32 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature – Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD) 17 staff enrolled Asset Verification System (AVS) 83 staff enrolled 	-	0	<p>Combined total of 231 staff trained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 191 Completed FTI 34 Completed AVS 6 Completed Telephonic Signature
Totals		83.5	4	543

** current number of staff trained is a duplicate number*

Workshop Descriptions

STAR Supervisor Training: This training was designed by supervisor 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
- Resetting from past experiences and looking to the future of DHS
- Identifying behavioral styles

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 its diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format for the sessions includes facilitated dialogue with individual and group activities.

Module Two: Understanding Social Identity, Power, and Privilege in the Workplace

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of social identity, power, and privilege. Special emphasis will be placed on social identity, power, and privilege in human services settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Defining the concept of social identity
- Exploring the major forms of social identity in the United States
- Describing the three processes of social identity
- Describing the systems of power, privilege, and oppression
- Identifying one’s position on the social identity scale and discuss implications for practice

Module Three: Disrupting Implicit Bias with Inclusive Behaviors in the Workplace

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of implicit bias. Special emphasis will be placed on implicit bias in human service settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Discussing the roots of bias
- Differentiating between explicit and implicit bias
- Presenting the common forms of implicit bias
- Identifying strategies to disrupt implicit bias using the multicultural change intervention matrix

Module Four: Combating Microaggressions with Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Traditional notions of oppression hold that it is rare, occurring by a handful of rogue agents who intend to inflict harm on targets. However, it also occurs by well-meaning agents who convey unintentional, but no less harmful, “hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults.” The effects of these indignities, coined microaggressions, are cumulative. The purpose of this interactive module will be to present and discuss the contours of microaggressions, offering examples of inclusive language to combat microaggressions as a target or a bystander. Objectives of this session include:

- Describing the origins of the term microaggressions (i.e., identity-based abuse)
- Differentiating between agents and targets of microaggressions
- Identifying the manifestations of microaggressions (e.g., intent vs impact)
- Delineating the three types of microaggressions
- Describing the consequences on targets
- Delineating select microaggression themes
- Outlining strategies for responding to microaggressions as a target or bystander

Courageous Conversation Circle: 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 and it is on a first come basis.

Knowledge Transfer Training: The purpose of these sessions is to communicate the system updates/changes to the attendees. The learning goals include:

- Explaining new knowledge transfer process for releases
- Reviewing each new/updated QRG, flash, etc. related to the upcoming release in the month of November
- Recognizing the end user impact of the system updates

New Hire Orientation: The goal of the session is to provide new employees with all the pertinent information they need to begin working at DHS and to familiarize them with organizational policies and procedures. In addition to introducing employees to the RIBridges system, participants will:

- Understand the organizational hierarchy
- Learn DHS’ mission and vision
- Gain an understanding of DHS’ programs and services
- Review and learn policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code, and other practices
- Learn about the LEAN initiative
- Obtain mandated training for Federal Tax Information (FTI), Civil Rights, Voter Registration, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA)
- Hands on basic navigation and data collection training in RIBridges

Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Training Series:

- **Introduction to LTSS:** 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. Session one will discuss programs available under the LTSS umbrella.
- **Medical Documentation:** LTSS training participants will understand how to process an LTSS request, the training will cover non-financial, financial and program eligibility. Participants will also understand case flow, cost of care and case authorization. Session 2 will assist participants in identifying medical documents needed for specific LTSS programs.
- **Program Eligibility:** LTSS training participants will understand how to process an LTSS request, the training will cover non-financial, financial and program Eligibility. Participants will also understand case flow, cost of care and case authorization. Session 3 will help participants understand the process of completing a Level of Care and Service Plan.
- **Nursing Home Eligibility:** LTSS training participants will understand how to process an LTSS request, the training will cover non-financial, financial and program eligibility. Participants will also understand case flow, cost of care and case authorization. Session 4 will assist participants in completing the Level of Care and Service Plan for Nursing Home recipients.
- **Financial Eligibility-Person Demographics and Income:** LTSS training participants will understand how to process an LTSS request, the training will cover non-financial, financial and program eligibility. Participants will also understand case flow, cost of care and case authorization. Session 5 will review with participants the how to apply policy and complete system requirements for person demographic information and income eligibility.

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP): The SNAP Training is designed to introduce Eligibility Technicians to SNAP program policy and RIBridges. The virtual sessions are focused on SNAP policy.

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 the customers. Although we will be discussing serving customers by phone throughout the course, in this session this will be a primary focus. Participants will learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and what happens to communication during stress.

Beacon Health Option Trainings:

- **The New Normal: Life after COVID-19:** We all know that life will never be quite the same after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this course, we will use lessons we've learned from past crises, such as 9/11, to prepare for the post-pandemic world.
- **Leading in Times of Crisis COVID-19:** Certain traits of an effective leader are especially crucial during times of crisis. Learn how great leaders in history used their skills to communicate, adapt, and bring their people together in some of the worst crises ever faced in this country. This course offers practical strategies and tools to calm, inspire and motivate those who look to you for guidance.

Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings: These trainings are self-directed. Staff are enrolled through the Learning Management System (LMS).

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covered the federal regulations and internal procedures that staff need to follow in protecting customer information.
- **Telephonic Signature/Telephonic Signature - EAD:** 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.

Asset Verification Training System: This training provides guidance to staff processing EAD and LTSS requests for Medicaid determinations at the time of application and renewals.

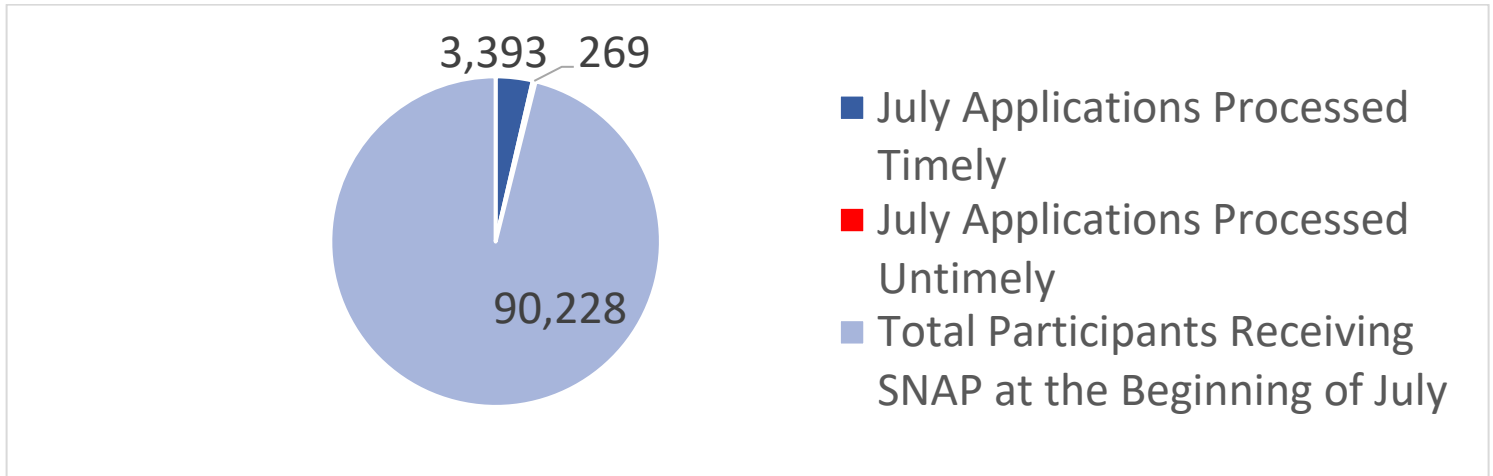
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **August 10, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **3,297**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,607**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	11	17	28	7	13	20	48
SNAP Non-Expedited	465	257	722	9	12	21	743
CCAP	21	124	145	2	9	11	156
GPA Burial	0	2	2	0	1	1	3
SSP	0	23	23	0	3	3	26
GPA	18	23	41	22	17	39	80
RIW	71	52	123	5	4	9	132
Undetermined Medical	15	165	180	32	1,013	1,045	1,225
Medicaid-MAGI	0	1	1	22	33	55	56
MPP	17	63	80	6	408	414	494
Complex Medicaid	13	31	44	15	70	85	129
LTSS	5	175	180	1	24	25	205
Totals	636	933	1,569	121	1,607	1,728	3,297

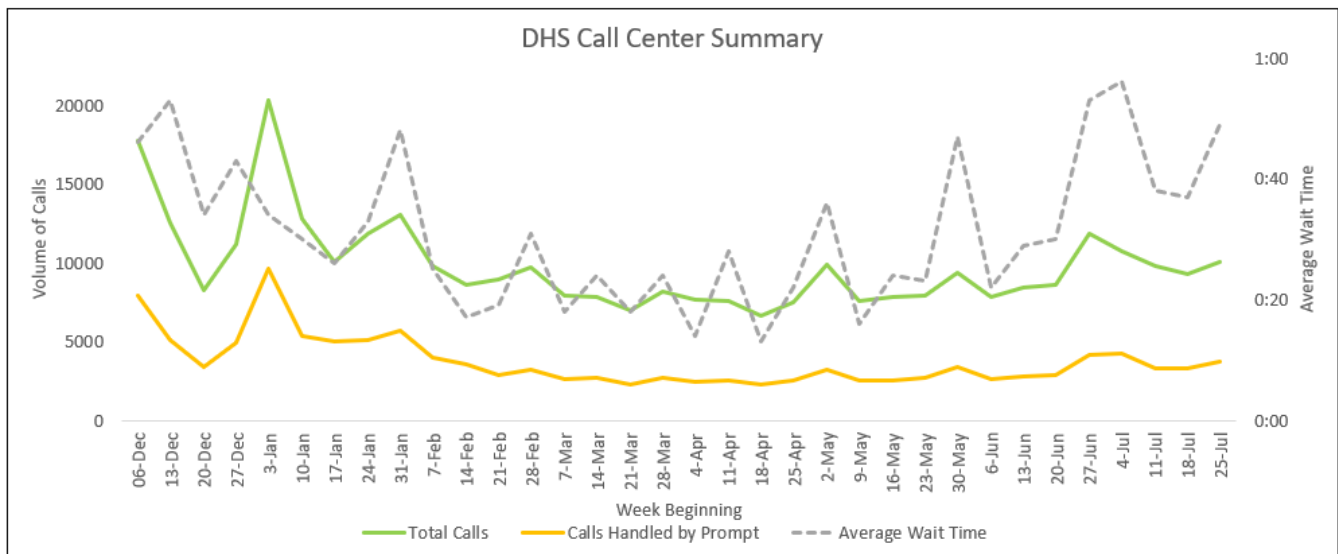
SNAP TIMELINESS

In July 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **90,228** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **93** 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 four-week period of **July 4, 2021 through the week that started on July 25, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **45** minutes. The busiest week was the week beginning July 4th, and there were **10,738** 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 July 16, 2021 through August 15, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
3	7/15/2021	516	\$2,182,390.49
3A	7/16/2021	9	\$22,846.81
3B	7/23/2021	28	\$44,958.57
4	7/29/2021	501	\$2,255,571.82
4A	7/30/2021	8	\$26,166.63
4B	8/6/2021	21	\$21,917.19

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (3, 3A, &3B)	553	\$2,250,195.87
Off-cycle (3A & 3B)	37	\$67,805.38
Provider off-cycle/total	7.17%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.11%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (4, 4A & 4B)	530	\$2,303,655.64
Off-cycle (4A & 4B)	29	\$48,083.82
Provider off-cycle/total	5.79%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.13%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **24** 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 paid out approximately **\$1.7 million** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2021. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021. We have yet to make any interim payments to long term care facilities for the month of July. The complete expenditure report will be distributed in August after all year end entries are posted on RIFANS

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 **\$152 million** and we have collected **at least \$124 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately 82 percent of the total amount of contingency payments made. We will update this number as soon as possible.

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 wasn't any communication during this reporting period.