December 19, 2022

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight
State House, Room 101
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 November 16, 2022 – December 15, 2022. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System Performance and Improvement
- RI Department of Human Services (DHS) Employee Training
- Pending Applications
- SNAP Timeliness and Lobby/DHS Call Center Summaries
- CCAP Off-Cycle 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. Please contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito, Acting Director
RI Department of Human Services

RIBridges: Monthly Update
December 2022

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. System stabilization remains a priority for DHS, and we continue our focus on ensuring full system compliance. 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 December 5, 2022, there were **79** open incidents.
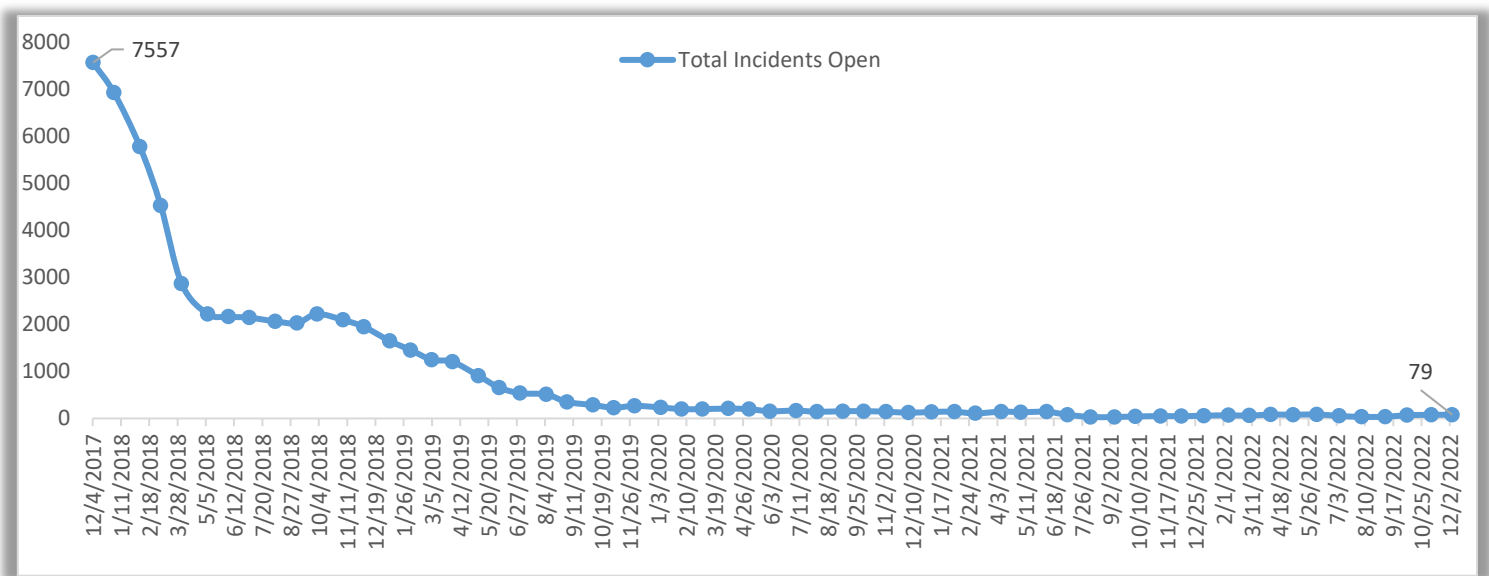
DHS STAFFING
DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since November, DHS hired 13 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 9 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Eligibility Technician II (Lobby)
- 2 Customer Support Specialist I
- 1 Social Caseworker LTSS

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
New Hire Orientation	12-5-2022 12-6-2022 12-7-2022	12	16	0
Interface Walkthrough Training Series (Three sessions varied in length)	11-17-2022 12-8-2022 12-9-2022	6	0	39
SNAP Training Series: Two cohorts	11-28-2022 through 12-7-2022 12-12-2022 through 12-15-2022	60	3	31
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Training Series	11-28-2022 -- 12-1-2022	20	12	7
SNAP Office Hours (one hour session)	11-22-2022	1	0	6
Medicaid Office Hours (one hour session)	11-16-2022 12-8-2022	2	0	11
LTSS Training Series	11-14-2022 through 11-21-2022	25	0	16
Computer Literacy Trainings (three-hour sessions)	11-17-2022 12-12-2022	9	0	31
	Totals	**135**	**31***	**41***
Self-Directed Learning				
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	• 'Telephonic Signature' -- 125 staff enrolled • 'Telephonic Signature - Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD)' -- 42 staff enrolled • 'Asset Verification System (AVS)' -- 141 staff enrolled • 'Customer Portal' – 405 staff enrolled • 'SNAP Reinvestment Updates' -- 401 staff enrolled • 'Visit Record' – 402 staff enrolled • 'RIW Mini-Series Completed' -- 140 staff enrolled • 'Scheduling Refresher' -- 323 staff enrolled • 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher' 287 staff enrolled	Combined total of **2,520*** staff trained on LMS: • 43 completed 'Telephonic Signature' • 21 completed 'Telephonic Signature EAD' • 109 completed 'AVS' • 286 completed 'Customer Portal' • 184 completed 'SNAP Reinvestment Training' • 230 completed 'Visit Record Training' • 90 completed the 'RIW Mini-Series' • 208 completed 'Scheduling Refresher' • 174 completed 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher' • 180 completed 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination' • 170 completed 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer' • 184 completed 'Case Notes Refresher' • 184 completed 'Case Maintenance Refresher'			

	• 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination Results' -- 273 staff enrolled • 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer' -- 300 staff enrolled • 'Case Maintenance Refresher' -- 297 staff enrolled • 'Case Notes Refresher' -- 300 staff enrolled • 'Virtual Contact Center (VCC)' -- 132 staff enrolled • 'Knowledge Transfer (KT) for September release (7.40)' --448 staff enrolled • 'KT for September release (7.41)' -- 442 staff enrolled • 'LTSS Telephonic Signature' -- 27 staff enrolled	• 64 completed 'VCC KT' • 197 completed 'KT September release 7.40 • 188 completed 'KT September release 7.41' • 8 completed 'LTSS Telephonic Signature'

* This number is duplicate and based on number of staff enrolled to attend training.

** Projected attendance

Workshop Descriptions

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. Besides introducing employees to the RIBridges system, participants learn:

- The organizational hierarchy
- DHS' mission and vision
- A broader understanding of DHS' programs and services
- Policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code, and other practices
- Rules, regulations and laws surrounding Federal Tax Information (FTI), Civil Rights, Voter Registration, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Basic navigation and data collection training in RIBridges

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Training Series: The SNAP Training Series is designed to introduce new Eligibility Technicians to SNAP program policy and RIBridges. A wide range of operational tasks are covered and/or discussed to help ensure Eligibility Technicians are prepared for the variety of questions and challenges they may encounter in their role.

Interface Walkthrough Training Series: This training series will walk participants through three major interfaces that are used in RIBridges, SOLQ, Bendex, and PARIS.

The MAGI Medicaid Training Series: This provides participants with an overview of the Medicaid hierarchy, an introduction to MAGI Medicaid policy and process, a working knowledge of RIBridges screens relating to MAGI, and insight into related interagency units. This a four session training series that includes a final day in the MAGI Medicaid Processing Lab where participants apply learning concepts in the RIBridges production environment with support from a cross–agency

team made up of staff development (trainer), operations (supervisor), and policy (Senior Human Services and System Specialist) with the goal of providing trainees hands-on processing experience. Participants must attend all sessions to get the full training scope of the knowledge and skills offered. This training is offered in-person via 6.5 hour sessions. This training is targeted to new Eligibility Technicians and employees who have not attended MAGI Medicaid Training since the RIBridges roll-out in 2016.

Processing Lab: A space for staff who attend program trainings (i.e., SNAP, RIW, Medical and LTSS) to apply the learning in the RIBridges production environment with support from a cross-agency team made up of staff development (trainer), operations (supervisor), and policy (Principal Human Services and System Specialist) with the goal of providing trainees with hands-on experience in processing applications.

SNAP Office Hours: SNAP Office Hours is an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case specific questions related to SNAP cases they are processing. Participation is encouraged among staff that attended SNAP training in 2022.

Computer Literacy Trainings: Participants take these basic and advanced excel training sessions to understand the commands and functions available. The courses are designed to help participants understand the tools available within Excel to improve efficiency.

LTSS Training Series: The LTSS Training Series provides participants with an introduction and breakdown to the LTSS program and RIBridges screens relating to LTSS. Participants must attend all sessions in this 5-day training series to get the full training scope of the knowledge and skills offered. This training is targeted for Eligibility Technicians and Supervisors who process LTSS applications.

Medicaid Office Hours: Medicaid Office Hours are designed to be an open forum to ask system and policy questions related to non-LTSS Medicaid cases you are processing. Participants are invited to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with a Clinical Training Specialist.

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

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a required training for all DHS employees. Annual training on FTI/HIPAA is a requirement from our respective federal partners. This refresher training covers the federal regulations and internal procedures that staff need to follow in protecting customer information.
- **Telephonic Signature/Telephonic Signature - EAD:** 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.
- **SNAP Reinvestment:** This course is designed as a refresher for operations staff on SNAP six-month interim processing. The intent of this course is to review best practices for interim processing.
- **Customer Portal:** This training provides a walk-through of the front and back ends of the Customer Portal.
- **Visit Record Refresher**: This course provides an overview of the Visit Record functionality in RIBridges. The purpose of the training is to increase knowledge on the Visit Record function in RIBridges that will be included in all field offices, enhancing consistency in our processes by appreciating the customer journey.
- **Scheduling Refresher:** This course provides a review of how to use the scheduling functionality in RIBridges.
- **Medicaid Renewal Refresher:** This training provides an overview on how to process Medicaid enrollment
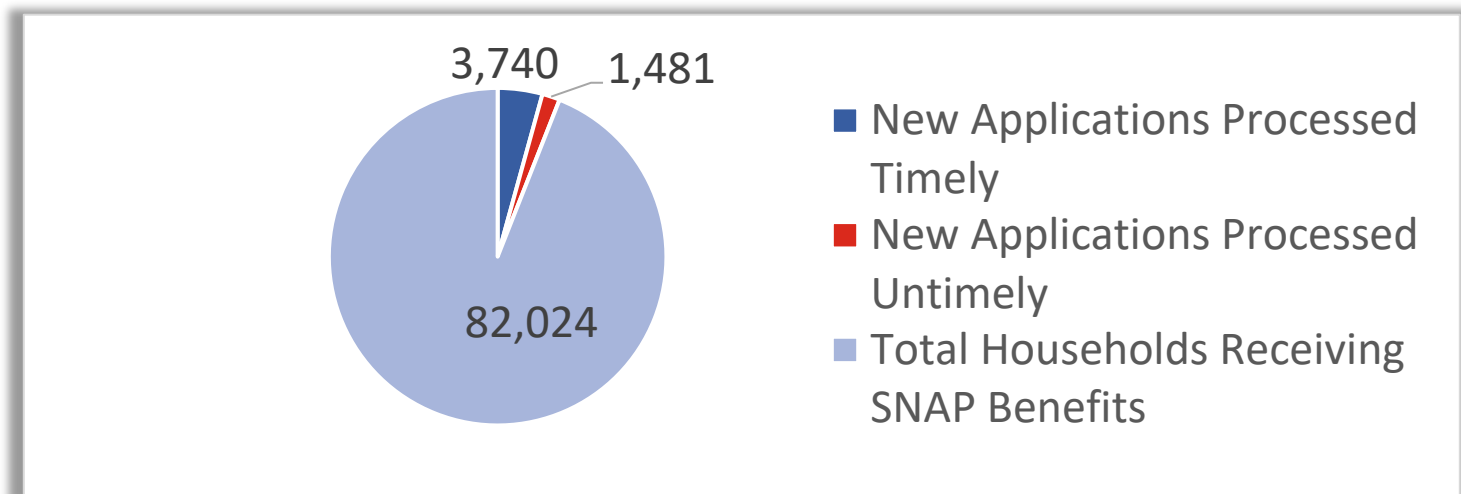
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **December 18, 2022**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **9,013**. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **4,329.** With the November Release intended to archive active pending cases already resolved, the Department has seen progress in the way that erroneous, aged and duplicate applications are not being added to the overall pending Undetermined Medical backlog. Our IT vendor and state team are completing analysis on the existing overdue undetermined medical (2,830 cases) and prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. Importantly, this system fix is only part of the solution to address the increase in pending cases. As DHS continues to hire critical front facing and back operations staff, we are also looking at an operational model that builds in time for customer facing staff to be deployed to work back-office tasks one day a week. DHS will share additional information on this concept as we finalize details of our pilot and engage our federal partners.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	48	349	397	22	95	117	**514**
SNAP Non-Expedited	662	613	1,275	260	378	638	**1,913**
CCAP	11	253	264	20	197	217	**481**
GPA Burial	0	10	10	0	2	2	**12**
SSP	0	67	67	0	21	21	**88**
GPA	24	31	55	6	16	22	**77**
RIW	132	283	415	45	94	139	**554**
Undetermined Medical	32	658	690	179	2,651	2,830	**3,520**
Medicaid - MAGI	28	40	68	158	155	313	**381**
Medicare Premium Payments	5	316	321	41	362	403	**724**
Medicaid Complex	8	94	102	38	294	332	**434**
LTSS	8	241	249	2	64	66	**315**
Grand Total	**958**	**2,955**	**3,913**	**771**	**4,329**	**5,100**	**9,013**

Please note that some undetermined medical cases awaiting state action have already been resolved but were added to this reporting metric as part of broader system fixes in 2022 to ensure an accurate accounting of applications. Recently, recertifications of SNAP benefits have also been prioritized by the agency leading to an increase in the total number of pending cases, which will remain higher than usual until the agency is adequately staffed.

SNAP TIMELINESS

Despite the impact of COVID-19, **82,024** households received benefits in November 2022. About **72** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 28 percent of new applications were processed untimely.

Pie chart values: 3,740 — New Applications Processed Timely; 1,481 — New Applications Processed Untimely; 82,024 — Total Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

CALL CENTER

For the period between **October 30, 2022, through the week that started on November 27, 2022**, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 21 minutes**. DHS recognizes this average wait time remains longer than it should be and has implemented call back functionality to reduce the time customers spend waiting on the phone. Customers may experience longer than usual wait times during high call volume days if they are not able, or do not choose to opt into the newly implemented call back functionality, available across all programs. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning November 27, 2022, and there were **29,522** calls. DHS has changed its scope of work in the Call Center and continues to implement operational changes to achieve its goal of reducing wait times to 30 minutes.

DHS Call Center Summary
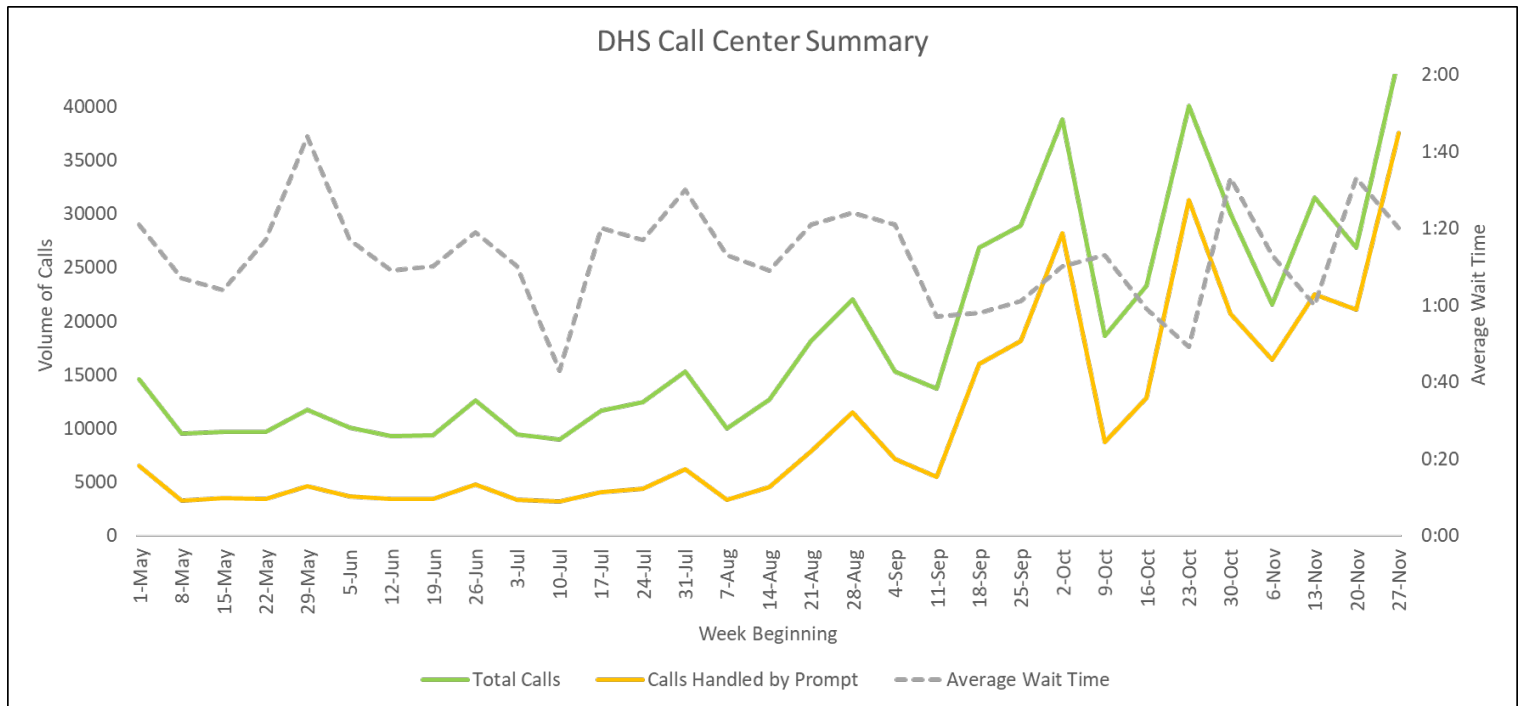
CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers for the reporting period of November 16, 2022 through December 15, 2022.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
11	11/3/2022	535	$2,060,848.61
11A	11/4/2022	19	$47,421.86
11B	11/11/2022	--	--
12	11/17/2022	530	$2,211,635.94
12A	11/18/2022	20	$58,162.63
12B	11/25/2022	20	$32,216.75

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (11, 11A, & 11B)	554	$2,108,270.47
Off-cycle (11A & 11B)	19	$47,421.86
Provider off-cycle/total	3.55%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.30 %	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (12, 12A, & 12B)	570	$2,302,015.32
Off-cycle (12A, 12B)	40	$90,379.38
Provider off-cycle/total	7.55 %	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.09 %	-

UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The state has verified that Medicaid renewal dates continue to be extended in accordance with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance for the Public Health Emergency (PHE). This guidance will continue to dictate the state's recertification process until the PHE is declared over and renewals can resume.

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 communications from our federal partners related to the RIBridges System.