



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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November 18, 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 October 16, 2022 – November 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Merolla-Brito".

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



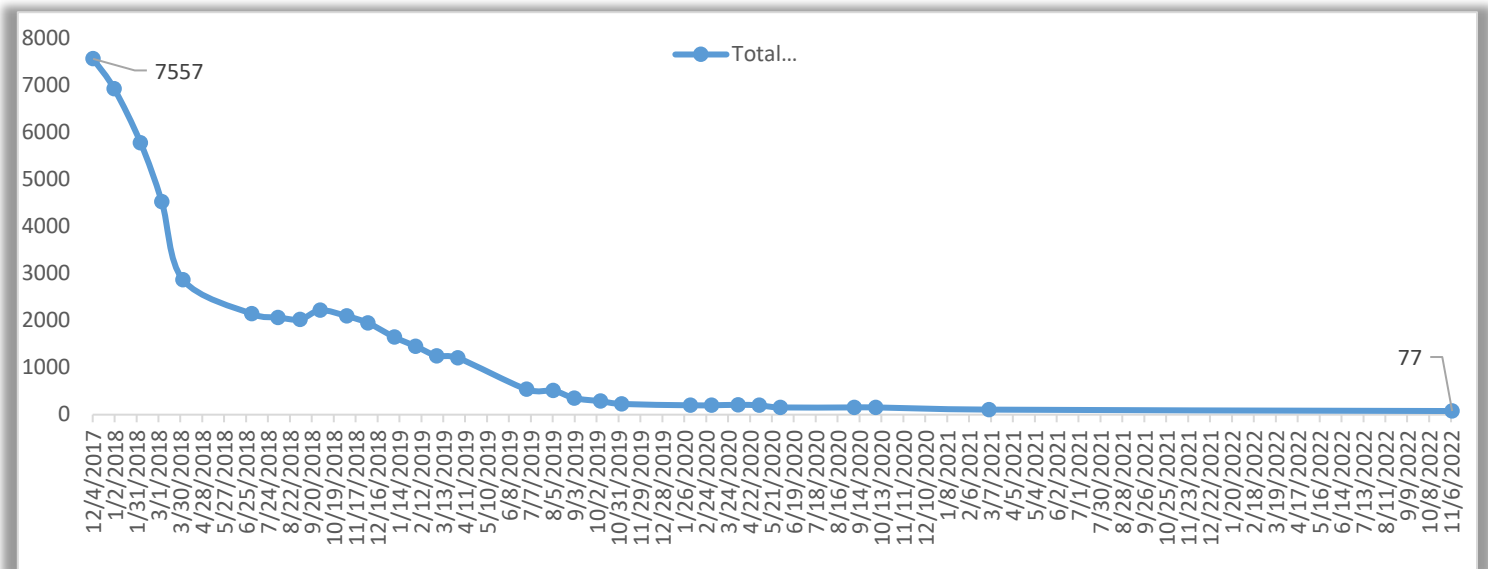
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

November 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 RI Bridges 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 November 7, 2022, there were **77** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since October, DHS hired 22 employees. These include:

- 1 Chief Program Development
- 14 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Principal Clerk
- 1 Human Services Business Officer
- 4 Eligibility Technician II (Call Center)
- 1 Assistant Business Management Officer

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
New Hire Orientation	11-2-2022 11-3-2022 11-4-2022	9	14	0
Interface Walkthrough Training Series (Three sessions varied in length)	10-24-2022 10-27-2022	4	14	7
STAR Supervisor Training Series: Sessions five, six, and seven (Three - two-hour session)	10-18-2022 10-25-2022 11-1-2022	6	0	15
SNAP Training Series: Sessions five thru eight (five - full day sessions)	10-17-2022 10-18-2022 10-19-2022 10-20-2022 10-21-2022	25	15	5
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Training Series (four full sessions)	10-24-2022 10-25-2022 10-26-2022 10-27-2022	20	8	8
SNAP Office Hours (One – one hour session)	10-25-2022	1	0	8
Computer Literacy Trainings (five – three-hour sessions)	10-17-2022 (2) 10-24-2022 (2) 11-10-2022	15	0	17
Time Management Training Series (two -two hour sessions)	11-1-2022 11-10-2022	4	0	13
	Totals	84	51*	73*
Self-Directed Learning				
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘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 	Combined total of 2,520* staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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’ 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Scheduling Refresher’ -- 323 staff enrolled • ‘Medicaid Renewal Refresher’ – 287 staff enrolled • ‘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 for September release (7.40)’ - - 448 staff enrolled • ‘Knowledge transfer for September release (7.41)’ (KT) -- 442 staff enrolled • ‘LTSS Telephonic Signature’ -- 27 staff enrolled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 170 completed ‘SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer’ • 184 completed ‘Case Notes Refresher’ • 184 completed ‘Case Maintenance Refresher’ • 64 completed ‘VCC KT’ • 197 completed ‘KT September release 7.40’ • 188 completed ‘KT September release 7.41’ • 8 completed ‘LTSS Telephonic Signature’
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* 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 (HIPPA)
- 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.

STAR Supervisor Training: Five through Seven

- **Session Five: *Performance Management Accountability and Engagement:*** Performance management and accountability are sometimes viewed negatively by leaders and staff alike because they are thought to be wholly punitive measures. In this session, we seek to dispel this myth by increasing understanding of the components of an effective performance management system, the benefits and supports built into it, and how accountability helps staff to be engaged, grow, learn, and thrive. There are a number of meeting vehicles for managing performance at DHS, including huddles, 1-on-1s, and all supervisor and unit meetings. Each has a different purpose. We focus primarily on the 1-on-1 meetings as these are the most widely used and effective in driving engagement and accountability. In addition to understanding how to structure this type of meeting, we also discuss the different roles staff play, including as coach, trainer, manager, mentor.
- **Session Six: *Performance Feedback:*** Performance feedback is a form of communication and should occur regularly between supervisors and employees. Supervisors should give both positive and corrective feedback that is constructive, supportive, and based on behaviors and data. Providing effective feedback takes some planning and practice! In addition, the human condition will impact reactions and the outcome of these discussions. Again, using the 1-on-1 meeting vehicle, we share a framework to use for planning feedback discussions. Staff are then encouraged to practice giving and receiving feedback that is designed to either reinforce positive behaviors or change problematic behavior based on various scenarios.
- **Session Seven: *Human Resources Labor Relations and Disciplinary Procedures:*** Supervising people is rewarding and challenging in many ways. The Department of Administration Human Resources (HR) division is here to help! In this session, we review key HR policies and procedures related to leave requests, work schedules, standards and ethics and union relations. While most employees follow the rules and try their best, there are circumstances that lead to a need for progressive discipline. This session offers a review of these steps. We also share some supportive resources available to both supervisors and staff through the Employee Assistance Program. Finally, a Q&A session on HR questions is held.

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. We encourage staff that attended SNAP training in 2022 to participate.

Time Management Training Series: Time management is more than just getting more done in the day. It is finishing the day feeling accomplished and being able to prioritize what is truly important. In this series, participants explore the reality of time and the everyday obstacles of managing time all while assessing competing and shifting priorities. By the end of

the program, participants are provided the tools needed to help maximize time, prioritize effectively, and most importantly leave work feeling accomplished.

- **Session One: Understanding the Realities of Time:** There are only 24 hours in a day. This is the first reality. In this session, employees explore time management and the realities of some habits that may be costing more time than realized. Participants also take part in an interactive activity that illustrates time management hurdles and opportunities.
- **Session Two: Handling Competing Priorities:** Days are filled with constant competing and shifting priorities including interruptions. Each of these can pull employees away from true priorities. In this session, participants learn about tools that can help determine what work is most important, strategies and tactics to remain focused, and other tips to handle interruptions.

Computer Literacy Trainings: This course provides basic and advanced Excel training that helps participants understand the commands and functions available. Participants will learn the basics while understanding the powerful tools that Excel offers.

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/HIPPA 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

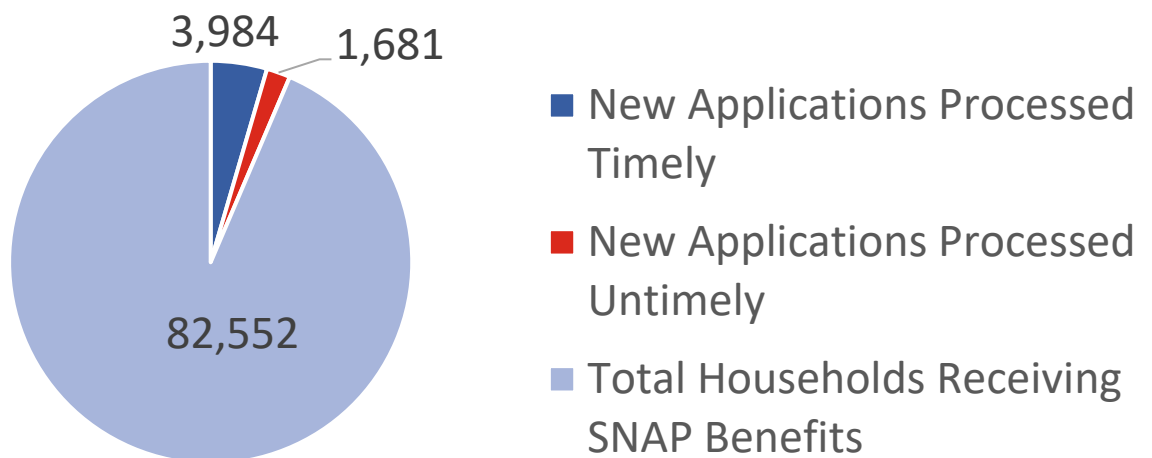
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **November 9, 2022**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **9,215**. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **4,274**. With the Release scheduled for this coming weekend (11/18) the Department is implementing a system fix that will archive pending cases that have already been resolved. This will result in the proper removal of resolved cases that are still being counted in the actionable pending case count. This is only part of the solution to address the increase in pending cases as staff have been reassigned to process a high volume of SNAP related recertifications that are now due to the expiration of a COVID-related flexibility. As DHS continues to hire critical front facing and back operations staff, we anticipate pending applications to remain higher than usual until the agency can fill, onboard, and train staff who are new to DHS.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	42	409	451	29	53	82	533
SNAP Non-Expedited	584	1,041	1,625	134	448	582	2,207
CCAP	12	322	334	23	256	279	613
GPA Burial	0	3	3	0	0	0	3
SSP	0	75	75	0	27	27	102
GPA	18	53	71	1	14	15	86
RIW	111	252	363	42	132	174	537
Undetermined Medical	26	552	578	176	2,597	2,773	3,351
Medicaid-MAGI	37	51	88	142	178	320	408
Medicare Premium Payments	9	380	389	27	238	265	654
Medicaid Complex	10	84	94	34	269	303	397
LTSS	11	249	260	2	62	64	324
Grand Total	860	3,471	4,331	610	4,274	4,884	9,215

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.

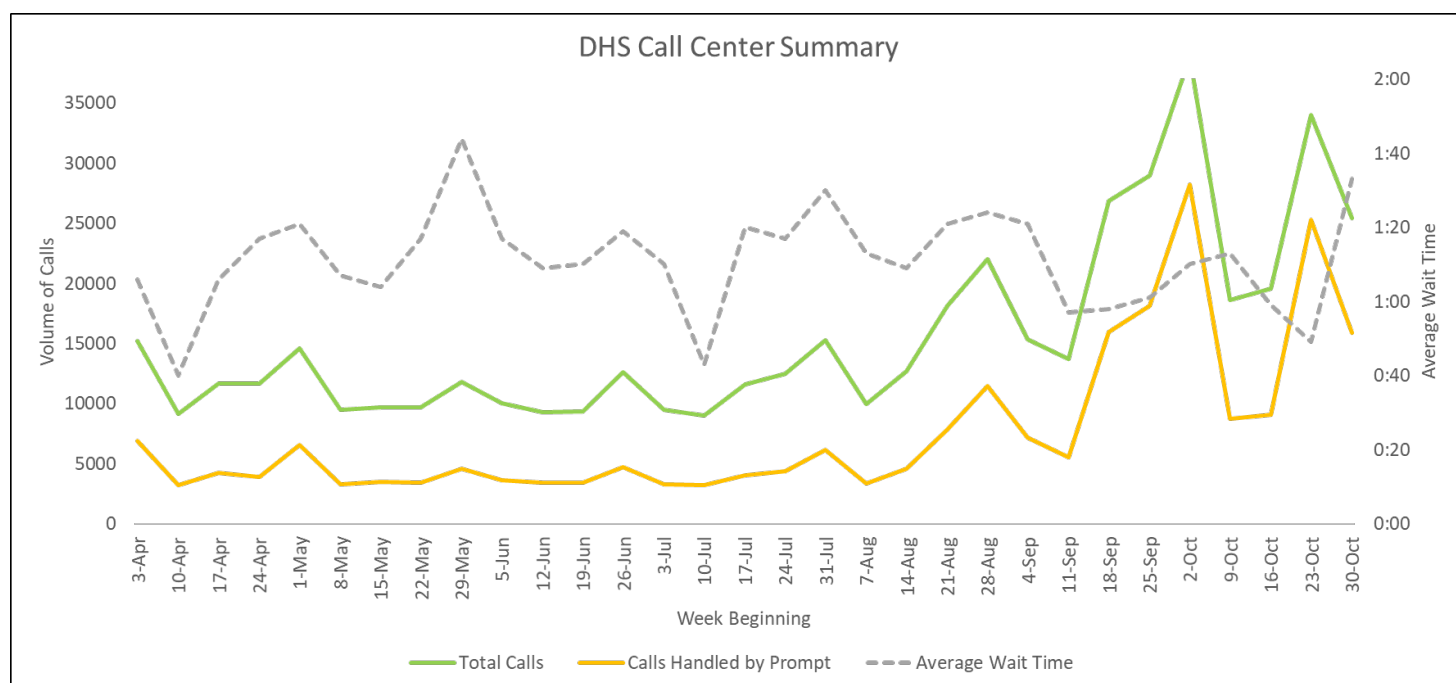
SNAP TIMELINESS

Despite the impact of COVID-19, **82,552** households received benefits in October 2022. About **70** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 30 percent of new applications were processed untimely.



CALL CENTER

For the period between **October 2, 2022, through the week that started on October 30, 2022**, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 9 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 October 2, 2022, and there were **38,854** calls, reflecting an approximate 76 percent increase from the busiest week cited in the September 2022 RIBridges Oversight Report.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between October 16, 2022 through November 15, 2022.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
9	10/6/2022	538	\$2,486,527.85
9A	10/7/2022	10	\$17,127.24
9B	10/14/2022	37	\$94,324.24
10	10/20/2022	530	\$2,005,770.77
10A	10/21/2022	26	\$55,810.10
10B	10/28/2022	52	\$83,341.77

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (9, 9A & 9B)	585	\$2,597,979.24
Off-cycle (9A & 9B)	47	\$111,451.39
Provider off-cycle/total	8.74%	-

Payments off-cycle/total	4.48 %	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (10, 10A, 10B)	608	\$2,144,922.64
Off-cycle (10A, 10B)	78	\$139,151.87
Provider off-cycle/total	14.72 %	-
Payments off-cycle/total	6.94 %	-

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 *RI Bridges* system. There were no communications from our federal partners related to the *RI Bridges* System.