October 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 September 16, 2022 – October 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
October 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 October 5, 2022, there were **68** open incidents.
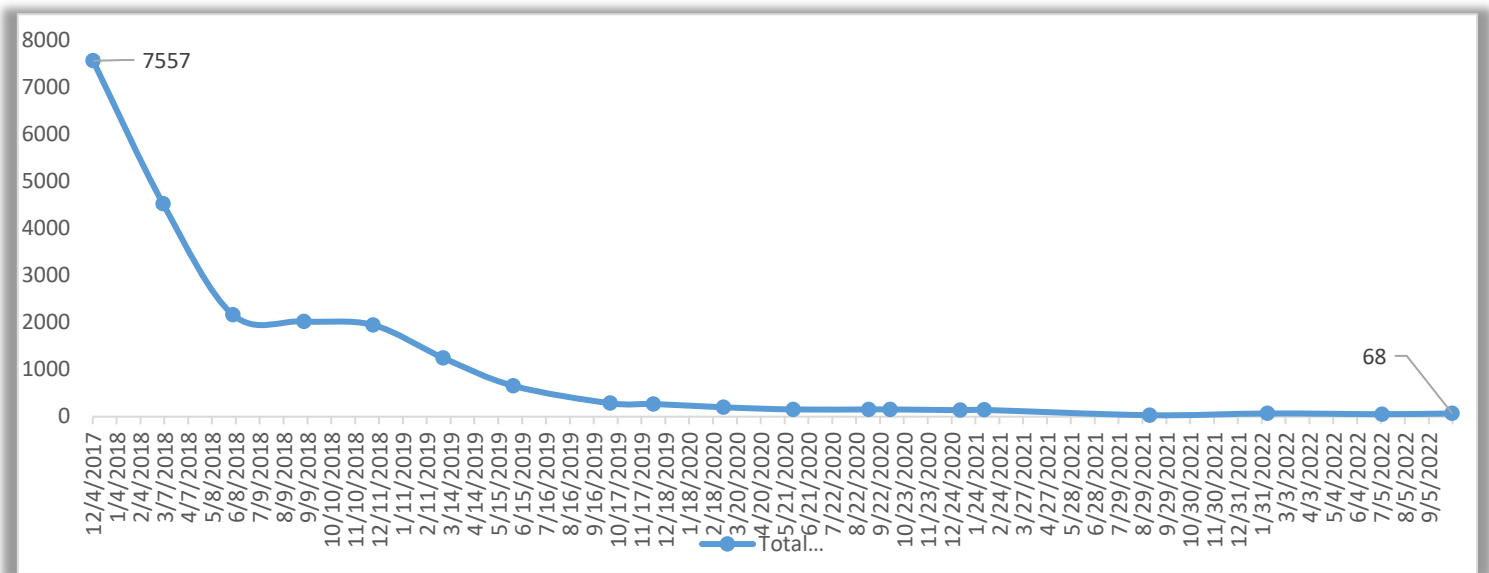
DHS STAFFING
DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since September, DHS hired 10 employees. These include:

- 7 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Administrator of Family and Children Services
- 1 Eligibility Technician II (Lobby)
- 1 Data Control Clerk

The Department has completed the recruitment of the priority 71 front facing and back-office positions. Of the 71 positions, 67 were filled and 4 positions were promotional opportunities influenced by the pool of qualified and interested candidates.

DHS TRAINING
Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
New Hire Orientation (Three sessions varied in length)	10-3-2022 10-4-2022 10-5-2022	12	12	0
Interface Walkthrough Training Series (Three sessions varied in length)	9-27-2022 9-28-2022 9-29-2022	4	0	24
Multicultural Competency Training Series: Module three and four (Two -one and half-hour session)	9-20-2022 9-26-2022	3	0	13
STAR Supervisor Training Series: Sessions three and four (Two - two-hour session)	9-13-2022	4	0	13
SNAP Training Series: Sessions one through four (Four - full day sessions)	10-11-2022 10-12-2022 10-13-2022 10-14-2022	20	0	21
Customer Relations Training Series: Session Two and Three (One two-hour session)	9-15-2022 9-22-2022	4	0	20
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Training Series (Three full day sessions with two half day sessions of processing lab)	9-26-2022 9-27-2022 9-28-2022 9-29-2022	22	0	13
September Quarterly Meeting (Seven two-hour sessions)	9-16-2022 9-21-2022 9-23-2022 9-26-2022 9-27-2022	14	0	176**
LTSS Office Hours (Four one-hour sessions)	9-19-2022 9-20-2022 9-27-2022 9-29-2022	4	0	42
SNAP Office Hours (One – one hour session)	9-22-2022	1	0	2
Medicaid Office Hours (One – one hour session)	10-11-2022	1	0	3
LTSS Mini Training (Three full day sessions)	10-11-2022 10-12-2022 10-13-2022	15	0	3
	Totals	**104**	**12***	**330***
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	Combined total of **2,441*** staff trained on LMS: • 43 completed 'Telephonic Signature' • 21 completed 'Telephonic Signature EAD'		

	• 'Asset Verification System (AVS)' -- 133 staff enrolled • 'Customer Portal' – 407 staff enrolled • 'SNAP Reinvestment Updates' --- 403 staff enrolled • 'Visit Record' – 404 staff enrolled • 'RIW Mini-Series Completed' ----- 131 staff enrolled • 'Scheduling Refresher' -- 325 staff enrolled • 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher' -- 284 staff enrolled • 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination Results' -- 266 staff enrolled • 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer' -- 301 staff enrolled • 'Case Maintenance Refresher' --298 staff enrolled • 'Case Notes Refresher' -- 300 staff enrolled • 'Virtual Contact Center' -- 132 staff enrolled • 'Knowledge Transfer for September release 7.40' -- 448 staff enrolled • 'Knowledge transfer for September release 7.41' -- 442 staff enrolled • 'LTSS Telephonic Signature' -- 27 staff enrolled	• 100 completed 'AVS' • 288 completed 'Customer Portal' • 184 completed 'SNAP Reinvestment Training' • 230 completed 'Visit Record Training' • 82 completed the 'RIW Mini-Series' • 209 completed 'Scheduling' Refresher • 164 completed 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher' • 169 completed 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination' • 168 completed 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer' • 174 completed 'Case Notes Refresher' • 178 completed 'Case Maintenance Refresher' • 61 completed 'VCC KT' • 187 completed 'KT September release 7.40' • 177 completed 'KT September release 7.41' • 6 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 (HIPPA)
- Basic navigation and data collection training in RIBridges

Multicultural Competency Training Series: 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

- **Session One: Understanding Your Customer:** Our customers bring both standard and unique expectations. In this session, participants are trained on what internal and external customers expect. Our staff will explore how change affects their customers and begin to examine the role empathy plays in every interaction**.**

STAR Supervisor Training Session One: Supervising at DHS: What does it mean to be a Strengths, Talent, Asset, and Resources (STAR) supervisor at DHS? What are the ideal characteristics of effective leaders and how can these characteristics bring teams closer towards organizational goals? In this session, participants review the current DHS Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles and learn how to use them while supervising. Discussion points include the role and the supervisory functions of managing self, managing others, managing results and managing the organization.

Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Office Hours: LTSS office hours are led by Rose Leandre and are intended for Eligibility Technicians, LTSS Social Caseworker Supervisors (SCWS), and supervisors who have already completed the online LTSS knowledge transfer. This session provides an opportunity to bring questions related to updates made to the Special Circumstances and Level of Care pages. This also provides an opportunity to address worker inbox questions for the LTSS program.

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. We invite you to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with a Clinical Training Specialist.

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

LTSS Mini-Training for Eligibility: LTSS Mini-Series is designed to be an overview of the LTSS Medicaid Program that includes a brief summary of all the Medicaid programs with a focus on LTSS Home and Community Based Services, nursing homes, and assisted living.

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. 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 **October 12, 2022**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **9,125**. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **4,005.** Later this year, the Department expects to implement a system fix that will archive pending cases that have already been resolved. 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	54	459	513	34	467	501	**1,014**
SNAP Non-Expedited	536	1,053	1,589	104	238	342	**1,931**

CCAP	17	398	415	20	149	169	584
GPA Burial	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
SSP	0	86	86	1	27	28	114
GPA	25	64	89	5	13	18	107
RIW	117	318	435	34	86	120	555
Undetermined Medical	21	614	635	168	2,402	2,570	3,205
Medicaid-MAGI	22	41	63	140	159	299	362
Medicare Premium Payments	9	341	350	28	125	153	503
Medicaid Complex	7	82	89	35	276	311	400
LTSS	16	266	282	3	63	66	348
Grand Total	824	3724	**4,548**	572	4,005	**4,577**	9,125

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, **82,285** households received benefits in September 2022. About **71** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 29 percent of new applications were processed untimely.

3,699 1,512

82,285

- ■ New Applications Processed Timely
- ■ New Applications Processed Untimely
- ■ Total Households Receiving SNAP Benefits
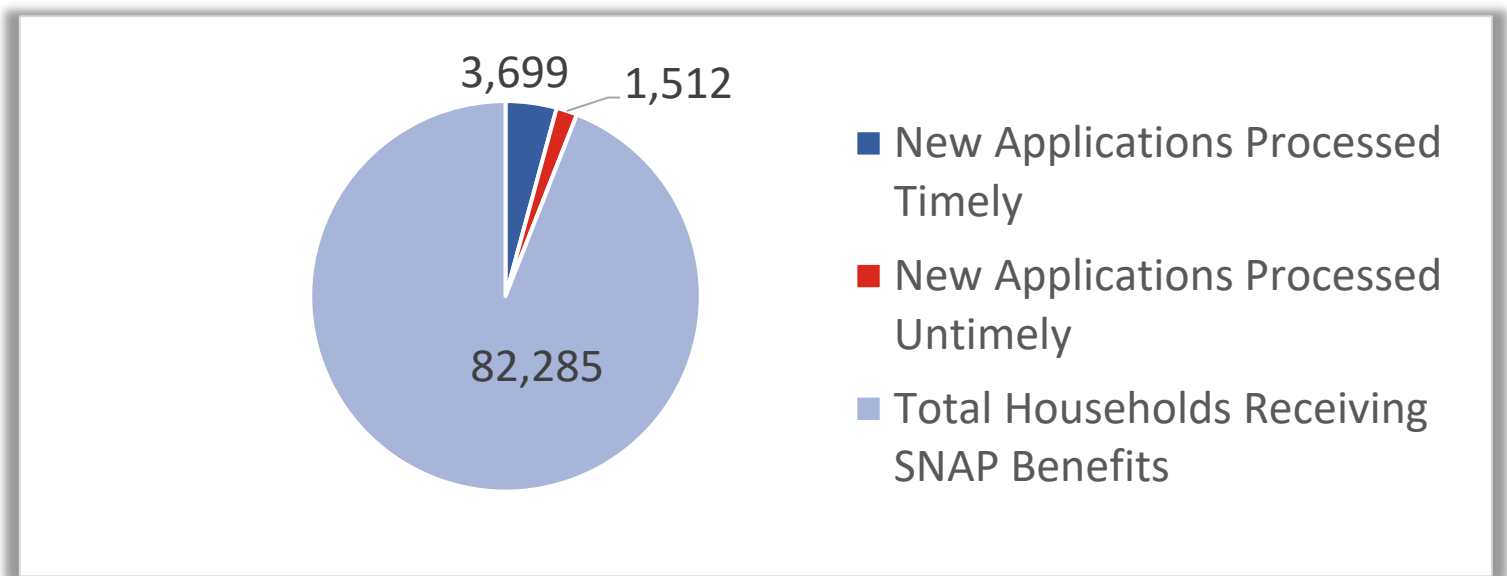
CALL CENTER

For the period between **August 28, 2022, through the week that started on October 2, 2022**, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 9 minutes** despite an increase in average call volume per week. 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.

DHS Call Center Summary
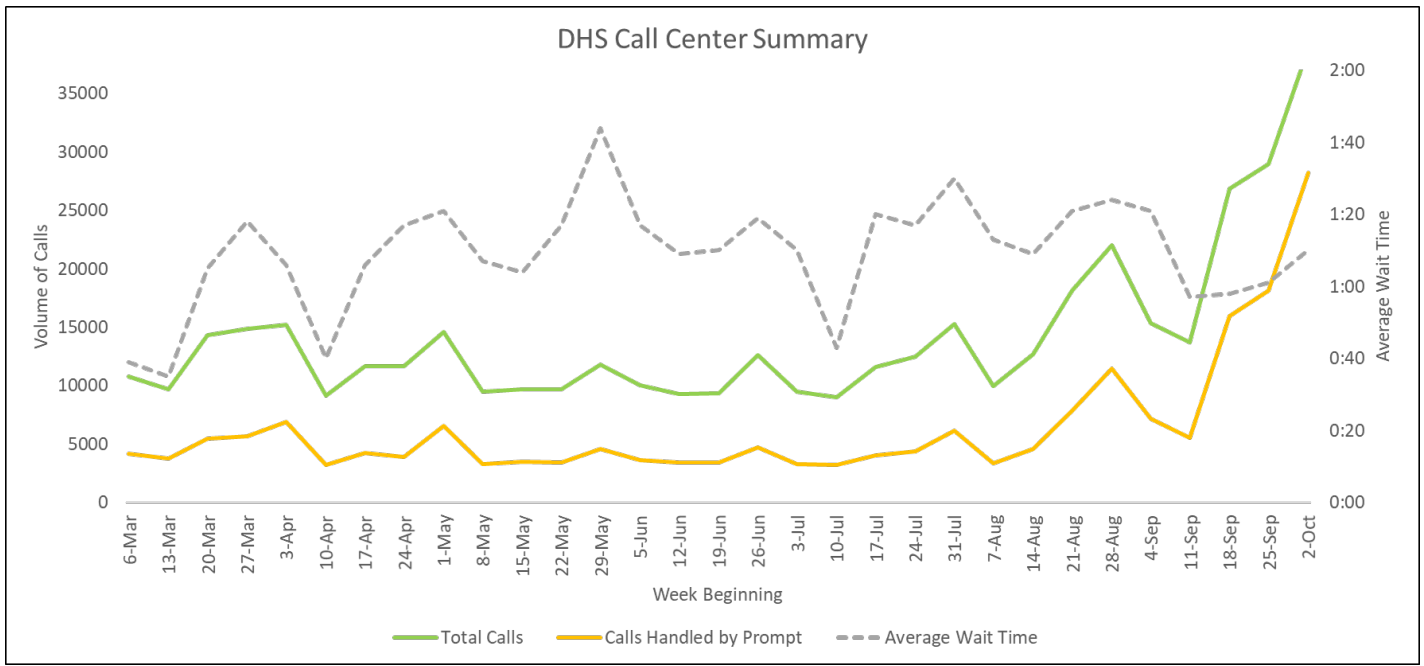
CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
7	9/8/2022	476	$2,352,904.16
7A	9/9/2022	24	$190,020.28
7B	9/16/2022	35	$88,691.79
8	9/22/2022	525	$2,499,389.37
8A	9/23/2022	11	$28,288.90
8B	9/30/2022	22	$135,112.84

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (7, 7A &7B)	535	$2,631,616.23
Off-cycle (7A & 7B)	59	$278,712.07
Provider off-cycle/total	12.39%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	11.85%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (8, 8A, 8B)	558	$2,662,791.11
Off-cycle (6A, 6B, &6C)	33	$163,401.74
Provider off-cycle/total	6.29 %	-
Payments off-cycle/total	6.54 %	-

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.