



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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September 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 August 16, 2022 – September 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



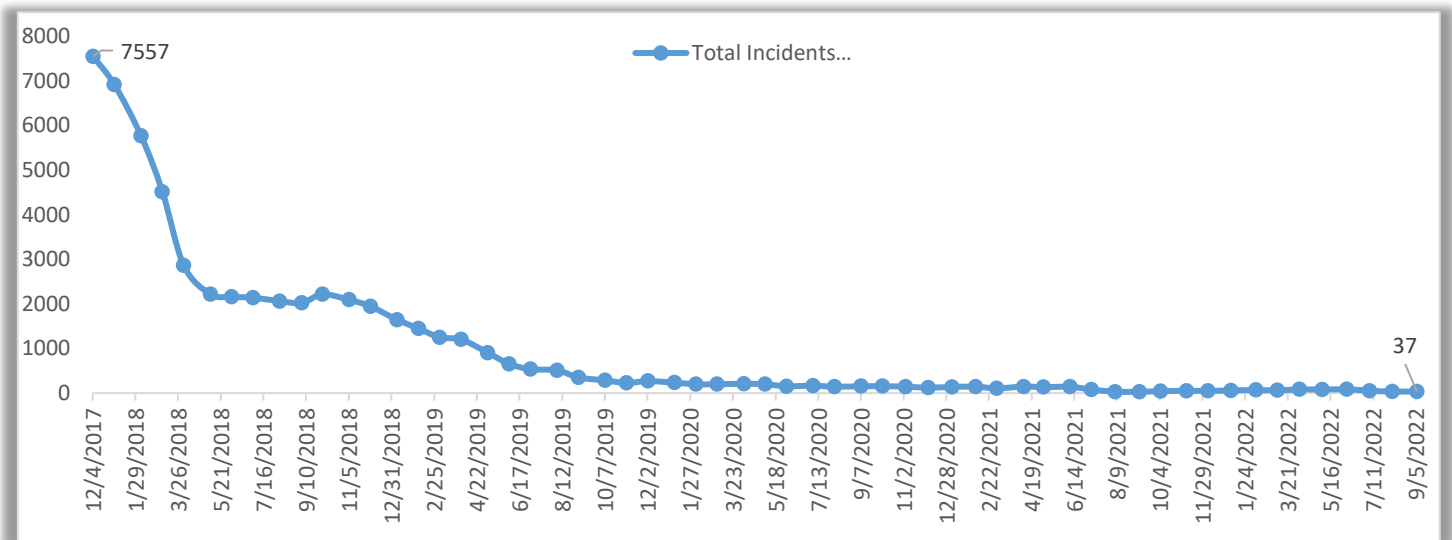
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## September 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. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to 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 September 6, 2022, there were **37** open incidents.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified\*. Since August, DHS hired 20 employees. This includes:

- 1 Employment and Career Advisor
- 1 Human Services Business Officer
- 12 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Senior Casework Supervisor
- 3 Social Caseworker LTSS
- 1 Customer Service Aide
- 1 Supervising Eligibility Technician

*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 (Five sessions, varies in hours)	8-16-2022 8-17-2022 9-6-2022 9-7-2022 9-8-2022	20	20	0
Interface Walkthrough: PARIS (One --two-hour session)	8-30-2022	2	0	19
Time Management Training Series (Two --two-hour session)	8-18-2022 8-25-2022	4	0	11
Multicultural Competency Training Series: Module one and two (Two --one and a half-hour session)	8-23-2022 9-13-2022	3	0	11
STAR Supervisor Training Series: Session One (One --two-hour session)	9-13-2022	2	0	15
SNAP Training Series and processing lab (Seven --full day session)	8-16-2022 8-17-2022 8-18-2022 8-19-2022 8-22-2022 8-23-2022 8-24-2022	31.5	0	11
Customer Relations Training Series: Session One (One --two-hour session)	9-8-2022	2	0	16
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Training Series (Three full day sessions with two half day sessions of processing lab)	8-29-2022 8-30-2022 8-31-2022 9-1-2022	22	0	17
September Quarterly Meeting (Six --two-hour session)	9-13-2022 9-14-2022 9-15-2022 9-16-2022	12	0	185**
LTSS Office Hours (Two --one-hour session)	9-6-2022 9-10-2022	2	0	18
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.5</b>	<b>20*</b>	<b>303*</b>
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Telephonic Signature' – 124 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Telephonic Signature -Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD)'-- 39 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Asset Verification System (AVS)' -- 117 staff enrolled</li> </ul>	Combined total of <b>1,928*</b> staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 41 completed Telephonic Signature</li> <li>• 21 completed Telephonic Signature EAD</li> <li>• 86 completed AVS</li> <li>• 289 completed 'Customer Portal'</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Customer Portal’ -- 407 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘SNAP Reinvestment Updates’-- 403 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Visit Record’ -- 404 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘RIW Mini-Series Completed’ - - 122 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Scheduling Refresher’ -- 325 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Medicaid Renewal Refresher’ -- 273 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘SNAP Eligibility Redetermination Results’ -- 262 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer’ 287 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Case Maintenance Refresher’ 277 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Case Notes Refresher’ -- 296 staff enrolled</li> <li>• ‘Virtual Contact Center’ -- 129 staff enrolled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 184 completed ‘SNAP Reinvestment Training’</li> <li>• 230 completed ‘Visit Record Training’</li> <li>• 74 completed the ‘RIW Mini-Series’</li> <li>• 209 completed ‘Scheduling Refresher’</li> <li>• 158 completed ‘Medicaid Renewal Refresher’</li> <li>• 163 completed ‘SNAP Eligibility Redetermination’</li> <li>• 150 completed ‘SNAP Work Registrant’ and ‘ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer’</li> <li>• 168 completed ‘Case Notes Refresher’</li> <li>• 128 completed ‘Case Maintenance Refresher’</li> <li>• 27 completed ‘VCC KT’</li> </ul>
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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
- The LEAN initiative
- 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.

**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.

**Interface Walkthrough: PARIS:** This session provides an overview of all 3 interfaces matched within the PARIS matching system and how the interface can be reviewed and utilized within RIBridges.

**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:** Every customer brings unique and standard expectations. In this session, participants are trained on 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.

**STAR Supervisor Training Session One: Supervising at DHS:** What does it mean to be a 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.

**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 end 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

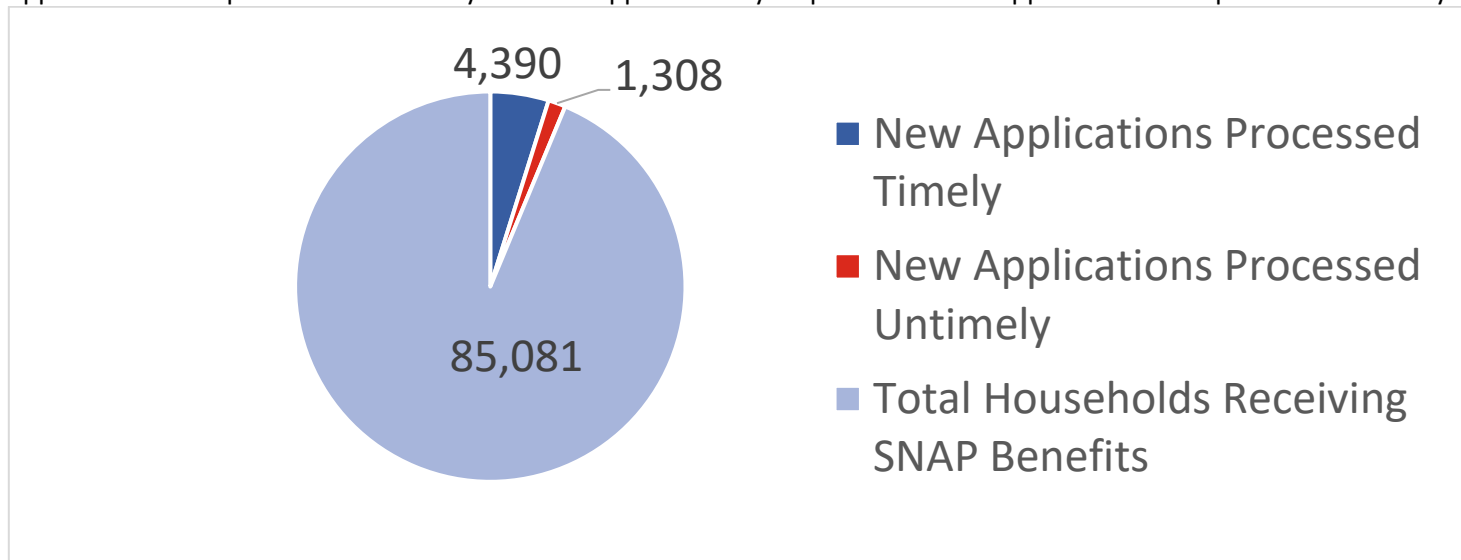
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **September 13, 2022**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **8,006**. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **3,273**. Upon the implementation of a future update later this year, DHS will prioritize resources as needed to address any excess backlogs.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	69	415	484	36	283	319	<b>803</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	552	870	1,422	107	141	248	<b>1,670</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	21	406	427	12	59	71	<b>498</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	79	79	0	7	7	<b>86</b>
<b>GPA</b>	13	62	75	2	8	10	<b>85</b>
<b>RIW</b>	153	351	504	27	58	85	<b>589</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	33	513	546	164	2,223	2,387	<b>2,933</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	38	39	77	130	159	289	<b>366</b>
<b>Medicare Premium Payments</b>	13	195	208	22	101	123	<b>331</b>
<b>Medicaid Complex</b>	7	88	95	30	253	283	<b>378</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	9	267	276	2	56	58	<b>334</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>3,285</b>	<b>4,193</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>3,348</b>	<b>3,880</b>	<b>8,073</b>

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. A future update will archive pending applications that require no further action.

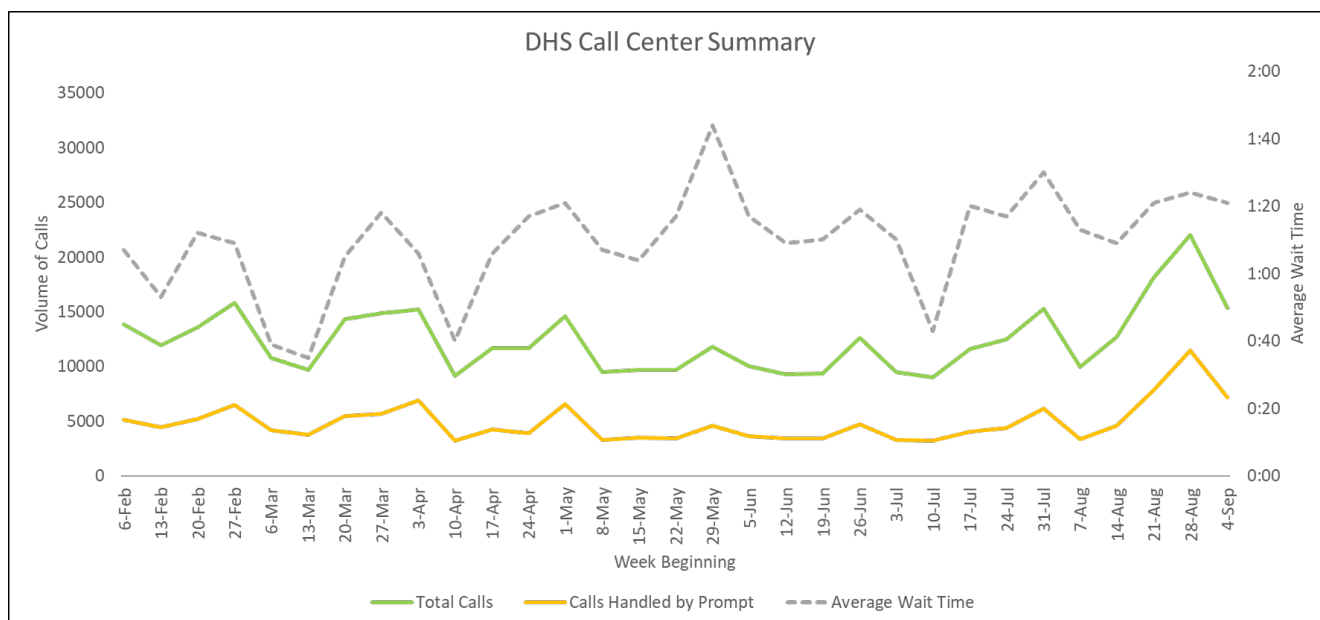
## SNAP TIMELINESS

Despite the impact of COVID-19, **85,081** households received benefits in August 2022. About **77** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 23 percent of new applications were processed untimely.



## CALL CENTER

For the period between **August 7, 2022, through the week that started on September 4, 2022**, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was about **1 hour and 18 minutes** despite an increase in average call volume per week. DHS recognizes this average wait time is longer than it should be and is in the midst of implementing limited call back functionality to reduce the time customers spend waiting on the phone. ‘Limited’ call back functionality should be interpreted to suggest that not all programs have call back functionality at this time. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning August 28, 2022, and there were **22,037** calls, reflecting an approximate 40 percent increase for the last week in July.



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
5	7/14/2022	494	\$2,528,325.50
5A	7/15/2022	22	\$33,907.19
5B	7/22/2022	37	\$143,798.77
6	7/28/2022	501	\$2,511,234.64
6A	7/29/2022	12	\$92,444.72
6B	8/2/2022	1	\$499.20
6C	9/2/2022	21	\$80,910.89

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (5, 5A & 5B)	553	\$2,706,031.46
Off-cycle (5A & 5B)	59	\$177,705.96
Provider off-cycle/total	11.94%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	7.03%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (6, 6A, 6B, & 6C)	535	\$2,604,178.56
Off-cycle (6A, 6B, & 6C)	34	\$92,943.92
Provider off-cycle/total	6.79 %	-
Payments off-cycle/total	6.92 %	-

## 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 wasn't any communication during this reporting period.