April 18, 2023

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa
Chair, 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 March 16, 2023 – April 15, 2023. 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
April 2023

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 April 8, 2023, there were **77** open incidents.
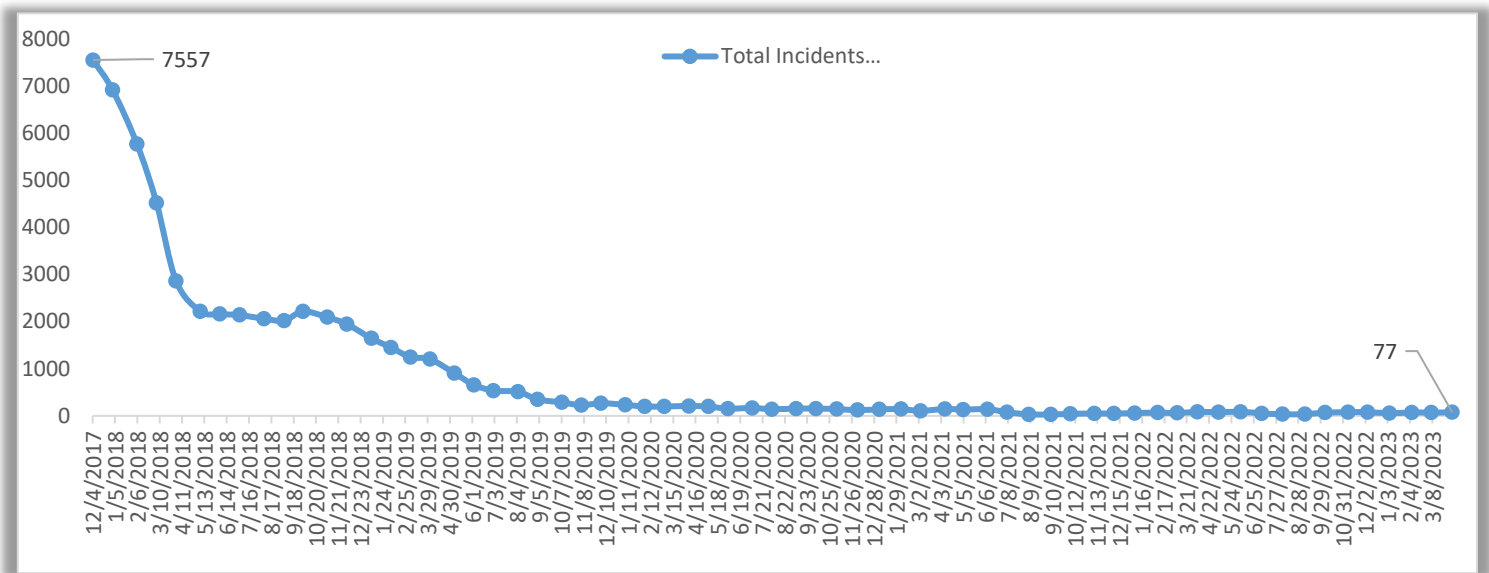
DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since March, DHS hired 17 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 1 Casework Supervisor
- 2 Customer Service Aide
- 3 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Interdepartmental Project Manager
- 1 Programming Services Officer
- 1 Social Caseworker
- 4 Supervising Eligibility Technician
- 1 Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist
- 2 Customer Support Specialist
- 1 Eligibility Technician III

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
LTSS ET Training Series (7 full day sessions)	3-20-23 thru 3-27-23 4-13-23 thru 4-14-23	31.5	0	19
Community Medical Training (2 three-day training sessions)	3-20-23 thru 3-23-23 3-27-23 thru 3-30-23	27	17	22
DLT Interface Training (1 full day session)	3-31-2023	4.5	10	12
New Hire Orientation (Two full day sessions)	4-3-23 thru 4-4-23	9	5	0
SNAP Processing Lab (1 full day session)	4-5-2023	4.5	0	15
Customer Service Aide Training (2 full day sessions)	4-6-23 thru 4-7-23	9	1	3
RIW Office Hours (1 one-hour session)	4-7-2023	1	0	12
Modified Adjusted Gross Income Training Series (4 full day sessions)	4-10-23 thru 4-14-23	18	0	12
Ex Parte Training (2 full day sessions)	4-11-23 thru 4-13-23	9	0	25
Medicaid Processing Lab (1 full day session)	4-12-23	4.5	0	9
SNAP Office Hours (1 one-hour session)	4-14-23	1	0	7
Totals		**119**	**33***	**136***

	Self-Directed Learning: Learning Management System		
	Course Title	**Number of staff Enrolled**	**Number of Staff Completed**
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed) *** This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.**	FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality	871	289
	Asset Verification System	156	118
	Customer Portal	384	274
	Medical Renewal Refresher	292	182
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	454	205
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	454	199
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	333	143
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	315	147
	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	317	108
	RIW Miniseries	168	119
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	335	206
	SNAP: Case Notes	313	195
	RIBridges: Scheduling Refresher	308	206
	RIBridges: Visit Record	381	218
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	379	178

	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	285	200
	SNAP: ABAWD	323	187
	SNAP: ESAP	338	233
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	44	12
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	135	44
	VCC: Call Back Functionality	127	63
	Totals	**6,768***	**3,550***

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's 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.

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.

DLT Interface Walkthrough Learning Series: This session provides participants with an overview the DLT interface. Specifically, this session provides a breakdown of the data provided, how to access the interface within RIBridges, and when and where the data can be utilized within RIBridges.

Ex Parte Virtual Learning Series: The Ex Parte Virtual Learning Series provides participants with an overview of Ex Parte policy and the integrated eligibility system designed to provide clarity when an individual faces possible closure to their current Medicaid and special circumstance questions that are a potential gateway to other forms of Medicaid. Specific topics discussed include pre-screening, age outs, MAGI and complex medical.

Community Medicaid learning Series: During this three-day learning series, participants gain an understanding of the difference between the two Medicaid coverage groups as well as eligibility requirements for community Medicaid. Participants also learn to integrate learning concepts within RIBridges, learn to interpret Medicaid eligibility results in RIBridges, and explore health plan enrollments at Managed Care Organizations (MCO).

Medicaid Processing Lab: The Medicaid Processing Lab is designed to provide an opportunity for participants to work real cases in a learning environment with support of a supervisor and Clinical Training Specialist. In addition, participants learn about case maintenance and case notes.

SNAP Processing Lab: In this SNAP-centered processing lab**,** participants are provided the opportunity to work real cases in a learning environment supported by a supervisor and Clinical Training Specialist. Participants also learn about case maintenance and case notes.

Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Learning Series: The MAGI Training Series provides participants with an introduction to MAGI policy and RIBridges screens relating to MAGI. This a four session training series, participants must attend all sessions to get the full training scope of the knowledge and skills offered. This training is offered in-person via six-hour sessions. This training is targeted to New Eligibility Technicians and employees who have not attended MAGI training since the Bridges roll-out in 2016.

SNAP Office Hours: SNAP Office Hours provide an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case specific questions related to SNAP cases they are processing. Staff are encouraged to attend SNAP training to improve their knowledge and proficiency around SNAP.

Customer Service Aid Learning Series: In this training series, participants receive an introduction to the Customer Service Aide (CSA) job responsibilities and functions over the course of two full days and an additional processing lab day (date TBD). Participants also learn about the different DHS programs, an overview of the system, front and back-office functions as well as processing application registrations and expedited SNAP—among other back-office related tasks.

RIW Office Hours: RIW Office Hours provide staff with an open forum to ask general system, policy, or case specific questions related to RI Works cases they are processing.

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 April 11, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 6,541, representing an approximate 10 percent decline from the pending new applications reported in the March 2023 RIBridges report. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 3,175. 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 continuing analysis on the existing overdue undetermined medical (2,578 cases) and prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. Data is also showing some cases in pending status and have already been worked with tasks needing to be disposed.

On February 8, 2023, DHS launched a pilot called Processing Wednesdays intended to prioritize call center staff to process applications, update customer files, complete reports and other operational tasks, which will support efforts to reduce the backlog. All regional offices remain open with regular services available according to their posted schedule. As of April 15, DHS has seen an approximate 90 percent increase in the number of tasks completed, or an increase from 102 to 194 cases completed on average, when comparing data from the last four Wednesdays prior to launch and data from the most recent four Wednesdays. While this only examines the tasks completed, Processing Wednesdays has also increased the number of tasks worked and helped reduce the backlog, which directly helps reduce the need for customers to seek additional support services either by phone or in-person.
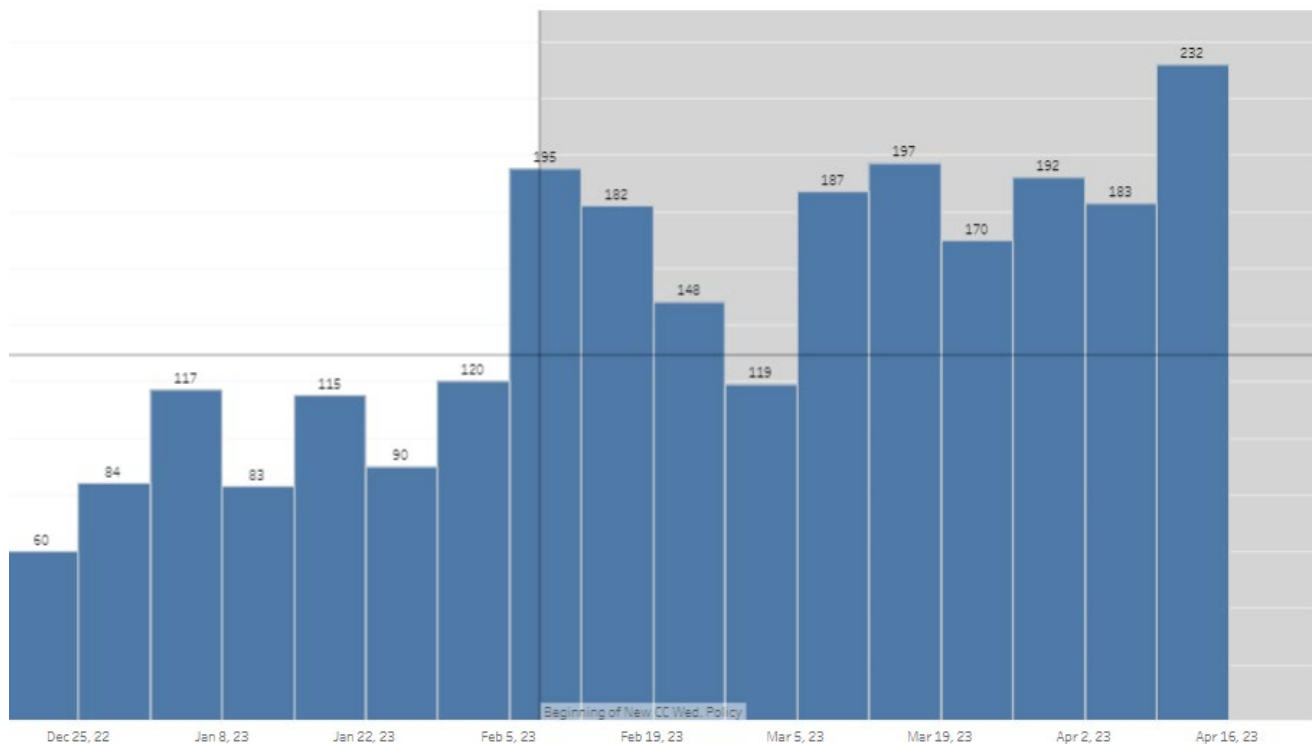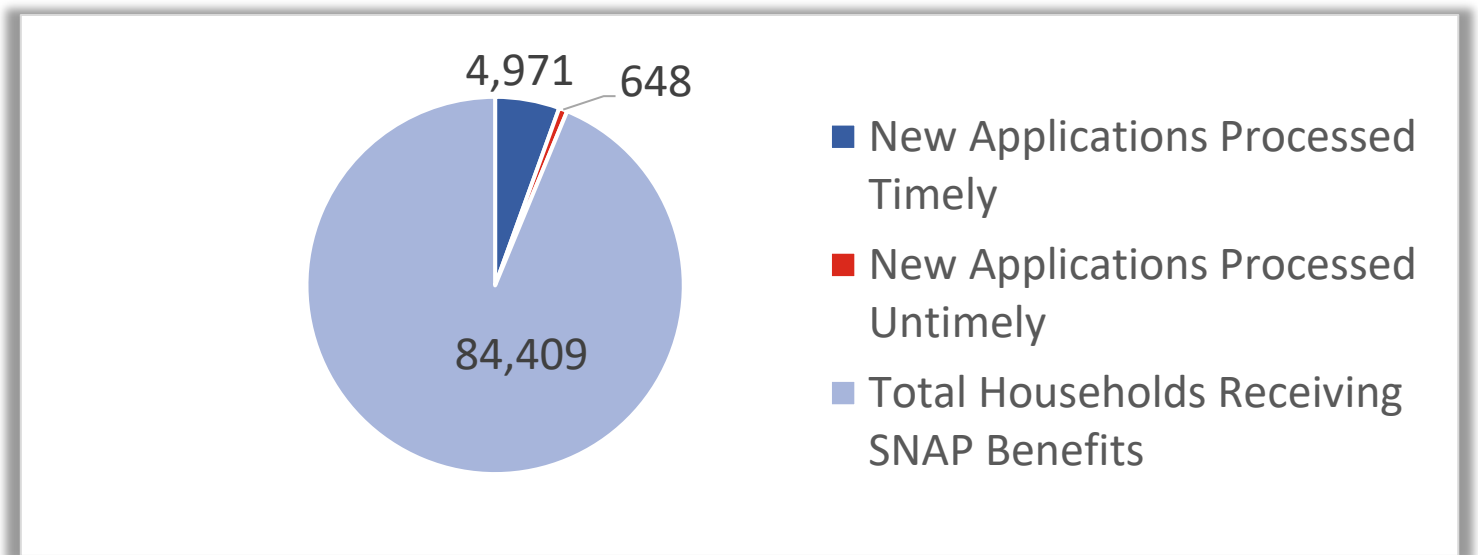

Each bar represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. Please note data on Processing Wednesdays that was reported out for the week beginning March 5 was skewed due to a statewide technology disruption that occurred on March 8.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
SNAP Expedited	50	369	419	9	30	39	458
SNAP Non-Expedited	525	332	857	42	89	131	988
CCAP	24	228	252	5	41	46	298
GPA Burial	0	0	0	0	5	5	5
SSP	0	33	33	0	9	9	42
GPA	23	44	67	7	9	16	83
RIW	146	113	259	19	26	45	304
Undetermined Medical	28	413	441	169	2409	2578	3,019
Medicaid-MAGI	27	42	69	47	86	133	202
Medicare Premium Payments	10	280	290	29	49	78	368
Medicaid Complex	5	57	62	18	360	378	440
LTSS	26	232	258	14	62	76	334
Grand Total	864	2143	3,007	359	3,175	3,534	6,541

Importantly, 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.

SNAP TIMELINESS

In March 2023, **84,409** households received benefits. Approximately, **86** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 14 percent of new applications were processed untimely.

Legend:
- New Applications Processed Timely (4,971)
- New Applications Processed Untimely (648)
- Total Households Receiving SNAP Benefits (84,409)

CALL CENTER

For the month of January, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 1 minute**. 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. The call back functionality is available to customers across all programs. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning April 2, 2023, with **17,442** calls to DHS. DHS continually monitors and reviews Call Center data to effectuate appropriate operational changes in an effort to achieve its goal of reducing wait times to 30 minutes.
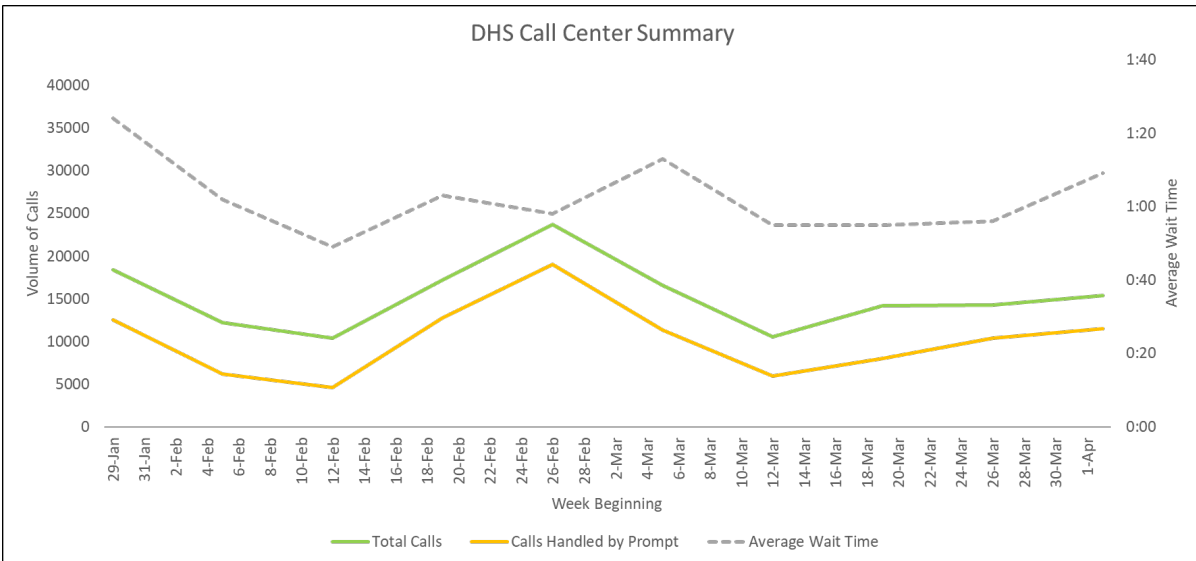
CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers for the reporting period of March 16, 2023 through April 15, 2023.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
20	3/9/2023	533	$2,303,362.26
20A	3/10/2023	19	$68,993.84
20B	3/17/2023	24	$66,243.80
21	3/23/2023	536	$2,369,538.28
21A	3/24/2023	15	$18,413.91
21B	3/31/2023	21	$26,647.66

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (20, 20A, & 20B)	576	$2,438,599.90
Off-cycle (20A & 20B)	42	$135,237.64.
Provider off-cycle/total	8.07%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	5.87%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (21, 21A, & 21B)	572	$2,414,599.85
Off-cycle (21A & 21B)	36	$45,061.57
Provider off-cycle/total	6.72%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	1.90%	-

UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROGRESS

There continues to be significant planning and preparation for the return of Medicaid renewals. DHS is partnering with numerous State agencies and community-based organizations as it continues this effort.   The various State agencies are working with community partners, MCOs, advocates, and other trusted messengers in an effort to reach as many affected Rhode Islanders as possible. Outreach also continues to inform families with children that their renewals will not start until January 2024. Applications have opened for mini-grants to enlist the support of community partners to reach the broadest group of Rhode Islanders, with special attention paid to those most at risk in the renewal process. Some of these groups include individuals that may have barriers to obtaining this information, and those that may need assistance to complete the process fully and appropriately. In addition, the state has continued to update the staycovered.ri.gov website with notices, marketing collateral, and other resources to help support the Medicaid renewal process. For the month of April, there are approximately 9,000 passive and active case renewals that are being supported by our partners through outreach efforts.

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.