



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

25 Howard Avenue, Building 57

Cranston, RI 02920

Phone: (401) 462-2121 Fax: (401) 462-6594

August 18, 2023

The Honorable Patricia A. Serpa  
Chair, House Committee on Oversight  
State House, Room 101  
82 Smith Street  
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 July 16, 2023 – August 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,

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

Kimberly Merolla-Brito, Director  
RI Department of Human Services



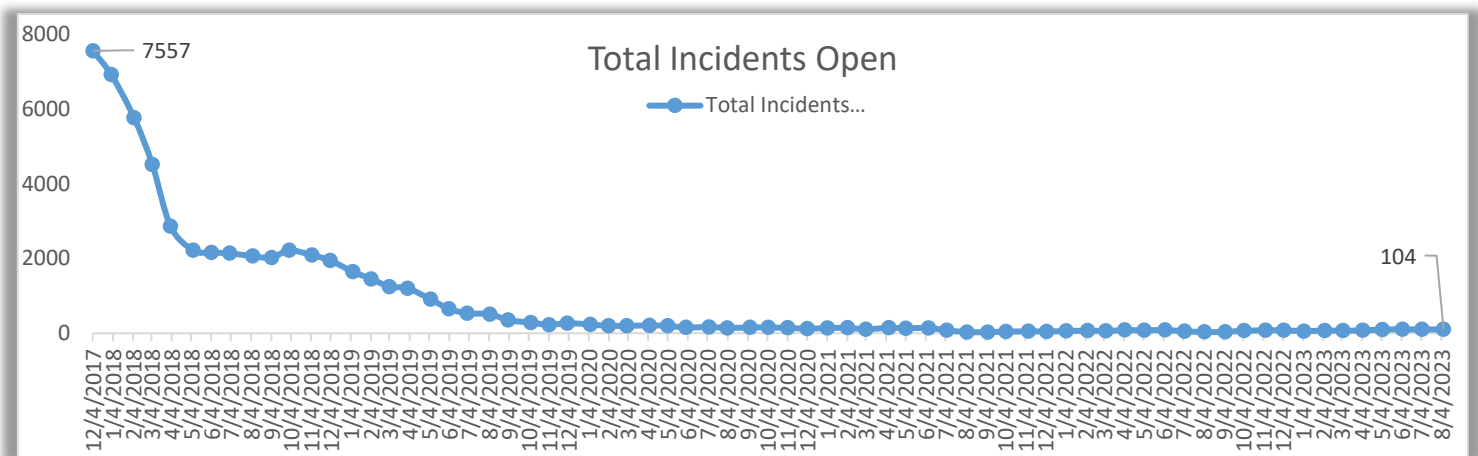
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## August 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 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 August 7, 2023, there were **104** open incidents, of which a small proportion resulted from an IT enhancement that has no impact on the customer experience.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to progress in hiring candidates for identified critical positions. From January 2022 through December 2022, DHS filled 196 positions through a combination of promotional opportunities, lateral transfers, and new hires. The cumulative hiring count beginning January 1, 2023, at DHS is 131 positions. Since July 2023, DHS hired 21 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 5 Social Caseworker
- 4 Eligibility Technician
- 1 Eligibility Technician II (Call Center)
- 2 Principal Human Services Business Officer
- 3 Employment and Career Advisor
- 1 Supervising Eligibility Technician
- 1 Principal Clerk
- 1 Summer Intern
- 1 Implementation Aide
- 2 Customer Service Aide

**DHS TRAINING**  
**Training Overview**

**DHS TRAINING**

<b>Training Topic</b>	<b>Training Date</b>	<b># Of Training Hours</b>	<b># Of New Staff</b>	<b># Of Current Staff</b>
Computer Literacy Training (2 – three-hour sessions)	7-17-2023 (a.m. and p.m.)	6	0	14
Medicaid Office Hours (2 – one-hour session)	7-18-2023 8-15-2023	2	0	24
RIW Office Hours (2 – one-hour session)	7-18-2023 8-10-2023	2	0	37
LTSS Office Hours (1- one-hour session)	7-19-2023	1	0	19
Stress Reduction (1 – one-hour session)	7-20-2023	1	0	6
Courageous Conversation (1- one-hour session)	7-20-2023	1	0	14
RIW Learning Series (4 full day sessions)	7-24-2023 thru 7-28-2023	18	0	24
SNAP Office Hours (2 – one-hour session)	7-26-2023 8-9-2023	2	0	25
Managing Stress for Managers (1 – one-hour session)	7-27-2023	1	0	2
CCAP Office Hours (1- one-hour session)	7-28-2023	1	0	3
LTSS for CSAs (1 – three-hour session)	7-28-2023	3	0	14
New Hire Orientation (2 – full day sessions)	8-3-2023 thru 8-4-2023	9	11	0
PARIS Interface Walkthrough (1 – two-hour session)	8-7-2023	2	0	2
SNAP ABAWD Office Hours (1 – one-hour session)	8-8-2023	1	0	18
Active Threat Training (6 – one-hour sessions)	8-8-7-2023; 8-8-2023; 8-10-2023; and 8/15/2023	6	0	113
Immigration Training (1 – two-hour session)	8-15-2023	2	0	59
Effective One on One Conversation (1 – one-hour session)	8-15-2023	1	0	7
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>381*</b>
<b>Note: the asterisk number included projected attendance to trainings that have been scheduled and staff are registered to attend</b>				
<b>Self-Directed Learning: Learning Management System</b>				

	Course Title	Number of staff Enrolled	Number of Staff Completed
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)  <b>* This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.</b>	FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality (Archived)	888	345
	FTI-2023	1,015	373
	HIPAA and Confidentiality-2023	1,016	387
	Asset Verification System	151	116
	Customer Portal	368	268
	Community Medicaid: Supplemental AVS Video	93	43
	Domestic Violence 101	289	161
	Medical Renewal Refresher	291	184
	OCCS: Child Support Refresher Process	253	164
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	451	214
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	451	210
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	340	165
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	324	173
	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	336	184
	April 2023 Knowledge Transfer	339	174
	June 2023 Knowledge Transfer	336	50
	RIW mini-series	179	126
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	346	224
	SNAP: Case Notes	301	195
	RIBridges: Scheduling Refresher	297	199
	RIBridges: Visit Record	365	211
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	363	174
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	277	196
	SNAP: ABAWD	323	198
	SNAP: ESAP	345	242
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	55	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	48	13
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	130	45
	VCC: Call Back Functionality	126	65
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,096*</b>

### Training 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

**Interface Walkthrough Learning: The Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS):** This training program provides an overview of the PARIS system interface and helps participants gain an understanding on how to apply information to program eligibility calculations.

**LTSS Office Hours:** LTSS Office Hours are designed to be an open forum to ask system and policy questions related to non-LTSS Medicaid cases being processed. Participants are encouraged to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with the LTSS Administrator.

**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.

**Mental Health Wellness:** To promote mental health wellness in the workplace, DHS offers the following training sessions via our Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

- **Stress Reduction** – This session explores the latest research on stress and how to recognize types of stress to manage it effectively.
- **Courageous Conversation** – Courageous Conversations provide a forum for participants to share their thoughts, without judgement, on cultural or societal issues that may be impacting their lives. These sessions allow participants to hear the perspectives of others in order to build comradery among staff, and compassion and understanding for the general public that DHS serves.
  - **Brief History of Affirmative Action:** A Courageous Conversation topic, this session explores the personal, group, and institutional impact of recent Supreme Court decisions. Participants shared their thoughts, comments, concerns, and experiences in a constructive setting.
- **Managing Stress for Managers** – This seminar equips managers with the tools needed to identify and address stressors, and the physical manifestations resulting if bad habits are left unchecked. In order to develop a healthy lifestyle for both home and work, participants examine many areas of life including work expectations, relationships, nutrition, exercise, sleep, finances, and time management.
- **Effective one-on-one Conversations** – In this session, participants learn how to be understood in one-on-one interactions. The session places an emphasis on examining the reason for the conversation and the next action steps to achieve the desired goal.

**Rhode Island Works (RIW) Learning Series:** The RIW Learning Series provides participants with information on program policy and related systems. This training also provides additional information regarding the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS), motivational interviewing and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Participants are required to attend all training sessions.

**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.

**SNAP ABAWD Office Hours:** Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) Office Hours is an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or ABAWD specific cases being processed.

**CCAP Office Hours:** CCAP Office Hours provide an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case-specific questions related to Child Care that are being processed

**LTSS for CSAs:** This training is intended to provide a systems and policy overview of Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS for) Customer Service Aides (CSA). A three-hour session, the training also examines the processing of application registrations for LTSS, and provides insights into other back-office administrative tasks such as case association, scanning and indexing, case notes, scheduling appointments and asset verification.

**Immigration Training:** This session provides an opportunity to collaborate and engage in discussions with experts and professionals in the field of immigrant and refugee services to gain insights and best practices for screening and determining eligibility for public assistance. Participants gain an understanding of the refugee resettlement processing, resettlement services in Rhode Island, the various immigration statuses, demographic trends, cultural perspectives, and available resources for refugees and immigrants offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

**Active Threat Training:** The Rhode Island State Police Active Threat Awareness Training enhances pre-incident preparedness by providing an hour-long threat awareness training, aimed to help stakeholders prepare for and respond to an active threat incident. This course of instruction will better prepare attendees if ever faced with an active shooter situation, focusing on behaviors that represent pre-incident indicators and characteristics of active shooters, potential attack methods, and the actions that may be taken during an incident.

### PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

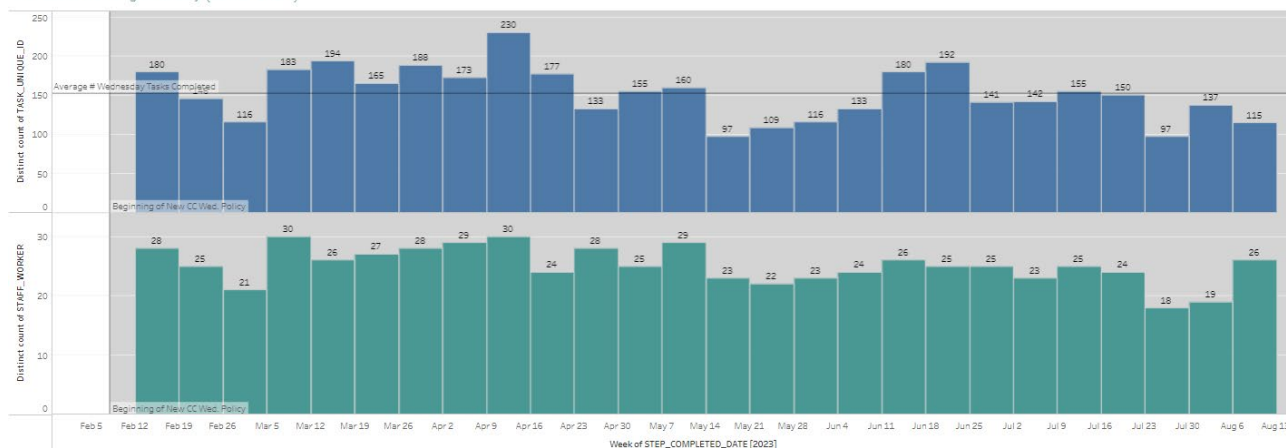
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of August 14, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 5,695. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action has decreased by approximately 5.8% from July 2023 despite shifts in federal policies and the ongoing Medicaid Redetermination work. Pending applications for RI Works is an estimate based on received and currently processing applications, as IT continues its work to address a technical discrepancy with no impact to the customer experience.

DHS also continues to see 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 (1,845 cases) and prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. DHS has cleared the majority of cases needing to be archived, and we continue to target incomplete applications – submitted via the Customer Portal – while performing outreach to customers.

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 August 7, 2023, DHS continues to see more cases completed or worked on Processing Wednesdays when compared to cases worked on regular Wednesdays (about 100 cases) prior to launch. The increased number of tasks completed on average, aided with the support of Processing Wednesdays, have helped reduce the backlog and directly reduced the need for customers to seek additional support by phone or in-person. Please refer to the chart below for the latest available data regarding the pilot.

RI Bridges Distinct Tasks Completed on Wednesdays (Contact Center Team Only)  
# of Staff Working That Day (Lower Chart)



The top bar graph represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. Please note cases worked on Processing Wednesdays for July 2023 saw a decline because eligibility technicians were attending critical training related to Long Term Services and Support (LTSS). The bar graph at the bottom represents the number of available Call Center staff for the specified Processing Wednesday.

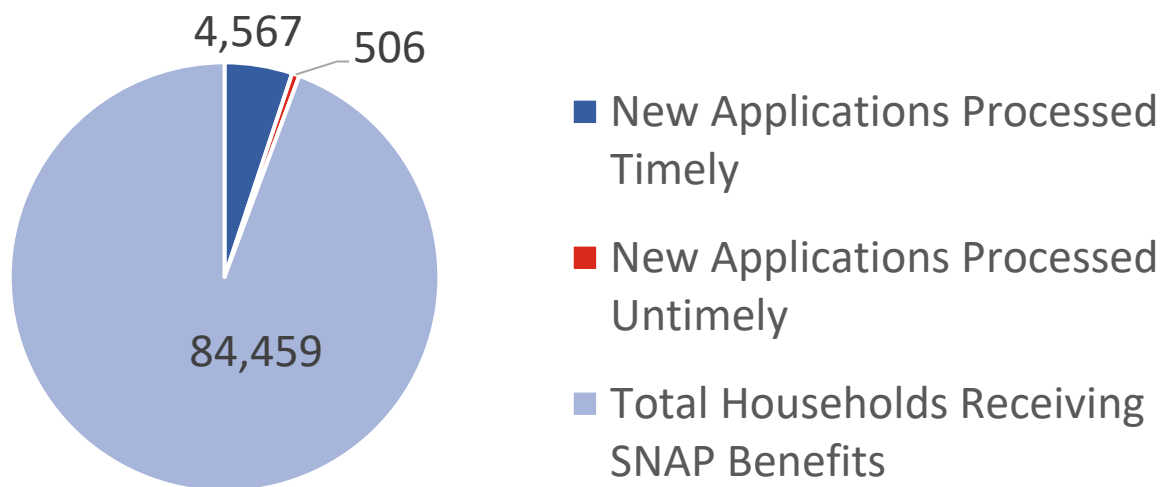
	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
SNAP Expedited	42	443	485	20	94	114	599
SNAP Non-Expedited	546	428	974	37	53	90	1,064
CCAP	15	232	247	7	38	45	292
GPA Burial	0	6	6	0	1	1	7
SSP	0	30	30	0	0	0	30
GPA	30	68	98	3	2	5	103
*RIW	86	273	359	23	27	50	409
Undetermined Medical	21	389	410	60	1,845	1,905	2,315
Medicaid-MAGI	24	43	67	26	24	50	117
Medicare Premium Payments	15	138	153	4	10	14	167
Medicaid Complex	7	101	108	6	296	302	410
LTSS	11	120	131	2	49	51	182
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>2,271</b>	<b>3,068</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>2,439</b>	<b>2,627</b>	<b>5,695</b>

Analysis continues on the existing overdue undetermined medical (1,845 cases) and the state team and vendor are prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. DHS is also targeting incomplete applications submitted via the Customer Portal.

\*This is an estimate as of August 14, 2023, of pending applications for RI Works and is subject to change. IT is currently working to address a technical discrepancy that has no impact on the customer experience following an initiated system enhancement in June 2023 for RIW and cash that has created efficiencies moving forward.

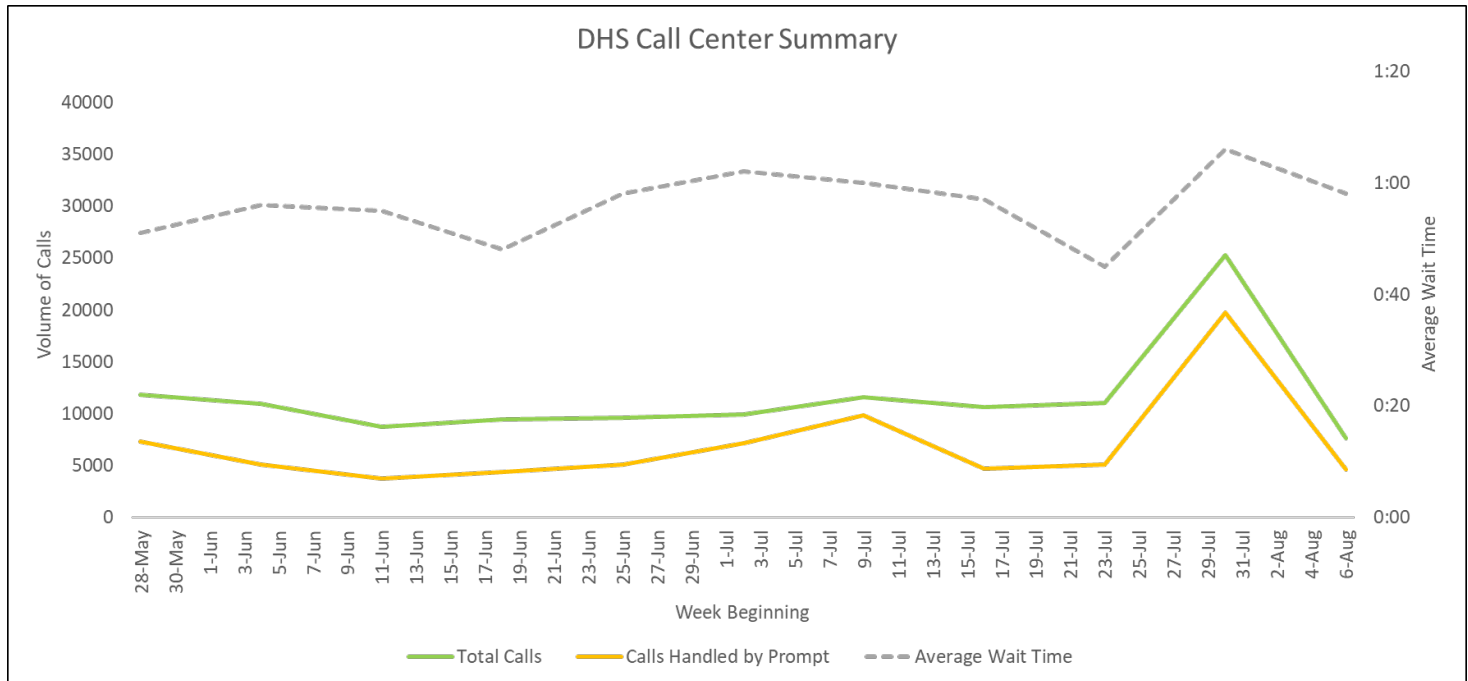
## SNAP TIMELINESS

In July 2023, **84,459** households received benefits. Approximately, **90** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 10 percent of new applications were processed untimely.



## CALL CENTER

Between the weeks starting July 9, 2023, and August 6, 2023, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **57 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. The call back functionality is available to customers across all programs. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning July 30, 2023, with **25,313** 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.



Recent changes in average Call Center wait times reflect the ongoing Medicaid Redetermination efforts statewide and aligns with the increased cohort of active renewals requiring action from the customer.

## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
3	7/13/2023	545	\$2,349,768.62
3A	7/14/2023	16	\$45,667.47
3B	7/21/2023	22	\$60,921.05
4	7/27/2023	498	\$2,352,440.61
4A	7/28/2023	21	\$88,544.06
4B	8/4/2023	30	\$168,350.92



	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (3, 3A, & 3B)	583	\$2,456,357.14
Off-cycle (3A & 26B)	38	\$106,588.52
Provider off-cycle/total	6.97%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.54%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (4, 4A, & 4B)	549	\$2,609,335.59
Off-cycle (4A & 4B)	51	\$256,894.98
Provider off-cycle/total	10.24%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	10.92%	-

## UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROGRESS

Medicaid recertifications began on April 1 with a cohort of approximately 9,400 recertifications sent to customers. For the month of August, a total of 15,229 case renewals are being processed by DHS, with approximately 7,300 case renewals requiring action from the customer.

Medicaid renewal cases are anticipated to steadily increase in alignment with the increase of passive renewals, which require no action from customers. DHS continues to work with numerous State agencies, Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), advocates, and community-based organizations to reach and inform as many affected Rhode Islanders as possible. Outreach also continues to inform families with children that their renewals will not start until January 2024.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) awarded 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.

In addition, the state has continued to update the staycovered.ri.gov website with notices, marketing collateral, and other resources such as a data dashboard to help support the Medicaid renewal process. On May 12, 2023, DOA awarded a tentative contract to Deloitte to provide data processing support so that DHS eligibility technicians can focus on Medicaid redeterminations through July 2024. Currently, all temporary support staff have been recruited and onboarded to provide data processing support to the DHS Eligibility Technicians working on Medicaid Redeterminations.

## 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 during the monthly touchpoints to review progress made.