



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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February 20, 2023

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 January 16, 2023 – February 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, Acting Director  
RI Department of Human Services



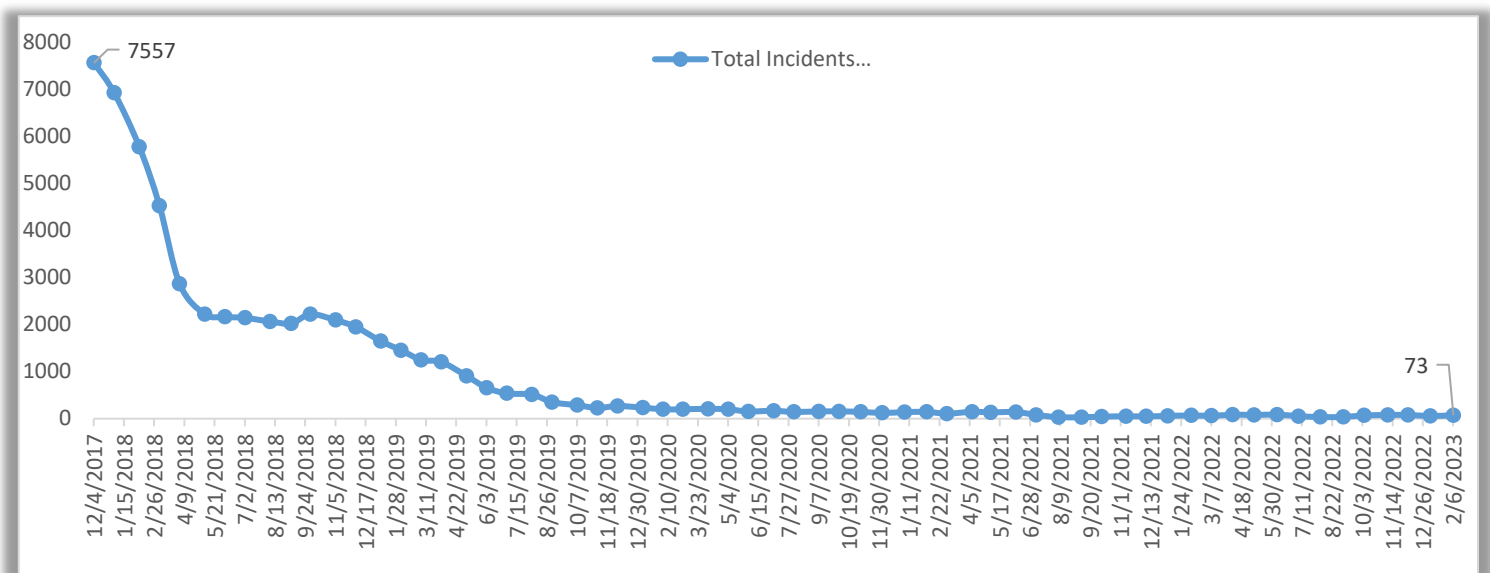
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## February 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 February 6, 2023, there were **73** open incidents.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since January, DHS hired 13 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 3 Customer Service Aide
- 1 Information Services Technician
- 1 Customer Support Specialist
- 1 Social Caseworker
- 3 Eligibility Technician II (lobby)
- 1 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services
- 1 Deputy Director
- 1 Senior Case Work Supervisor

## DHS TRAINING

### Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date		# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
New Hire Orientation (Two half day and one full day sessions)	2-1-2023 2-2-2023 2-3-2023		11.5	7	0
SNAP Training Series (Fourteen full day sessions)	1-19-23 thru 1-31-23 (8 sessions) 2-6-23 thru 2-14-23 (6 sessions)		77	7	10
Medical Office Hours (One hour session)	1-17-23		1	0	7
LTSS Office Hours (One hour session)	1-18-23		1	0	2
	<b>Totals</b>		<b>90.5</b>	<b>14*</b>	<b>19*</b>
<b>Self-Directed Learning: Learning Management System</b>					
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)  <b>* This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Number of staff Enrolled</b>	<b>Number of Staff Completed</b>		
	FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality	846	251		
	Asset Verification System	159	115		
	Customer Portal	392	278		
	Medical Renewal Refresher	301	185		
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	468	199		
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	467	198		
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	339	128		
	RIW Miniseries	168	111		
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	342	199		
	SNAP: Case Notes	320	195		
	RIBridges: Scheduling Refresher	317	207		
	RIBridges: Visit Record	389	222		
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	387	179		
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	293	201		
	SNAP: Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD)	331	111		
	SNAP: Elderly & Disabled Simplified Application Project (ESAP)	345	174		
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24		
	VCC: Long Term Services & Support (LTSS) Telephonic Signature	44	12		
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	136	44		
VCC: Call Back Functionality	131	64			
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>6,231*</b>	<b>3,097*</b>		

## 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 (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.

**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 staff are processing. Participants are invited to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with a Clinical Training Specialist.

**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 staff are processing. Participants are invited to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with the LTSS Administrator.

**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 February 8, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 8,614. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 4,179. 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 (3,000 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. Importantly, this system fix is only part of the solution to address the increase in pending cases.

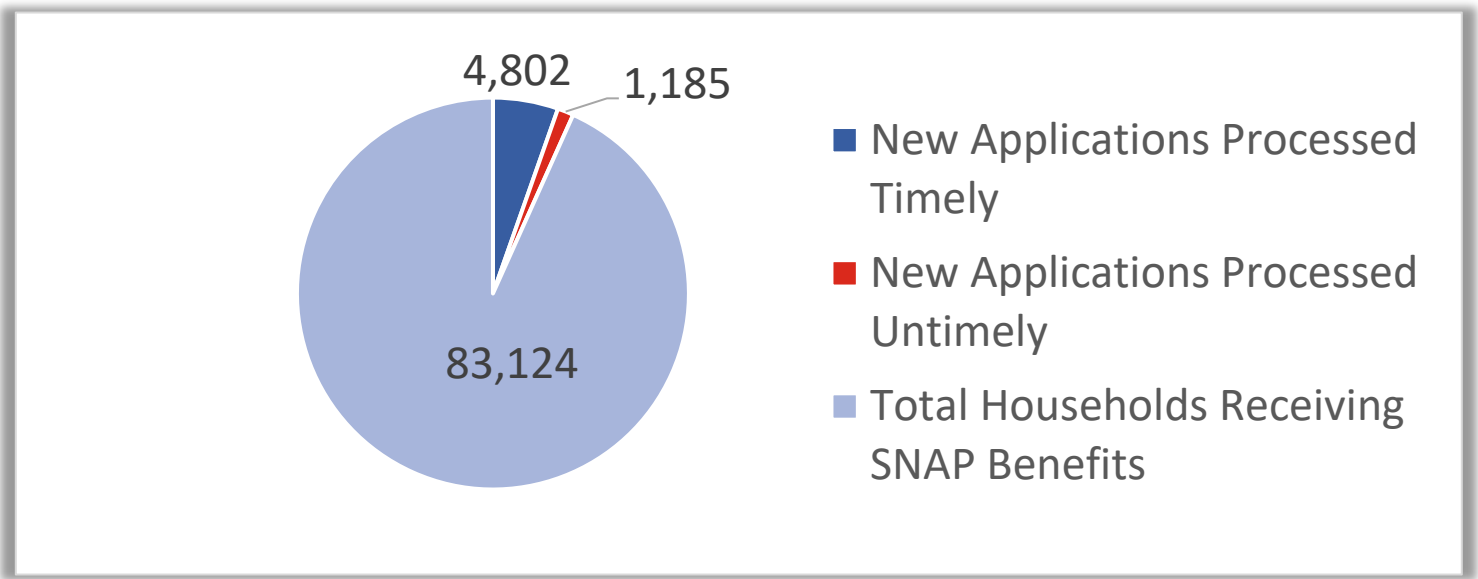
On February 8, 2023, DHS launched a pilot called Processing Wednesdays intended to prioritize call center staff to process applications, update customer files, reports and other operational tasks, which will support efforts to reduce the backlog. All regional offices remain open with regular services available according to their posted schedule. As of February 15, it remains too early in the pilot's implementation to provide an analysis of the program. DHS will continue to monitor the program closely until the completion of the pilot in approximately 6-8 weeks— from launch—and will then assess early findings.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	53	502	555	31	141	172	<b>727</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	629	551	1,180	82	96	178	<b>1,358</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	16	272	288	11	59	70	<b>358</b>
<b>GPA Burial</b>	0	4	4	0	2	2	<b>6</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	67	67	0	27	27	<b>94</b>
<b>GPA</b>	27	64	91	16	20	36	<b>127</b>
<b>RIW</b>	141	214	355	34	35	69	<b>424</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	31	512	543	188	2,812	3,000	<b>3,543</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	33	48	81	157	163	320	<b>401</b>
<b>Medicare Premium Payments</b>	4	354	358	49	395	444	<b>802</b>
<b>Medicaid Complex</b>	3	62	65	53	364	417	<b>482</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	11	214	225	2	65	67	<b>292</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	948	2,864	3,812	623	4,179	4,802	<b>8,614</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.*

## SNAP TIMELINESS

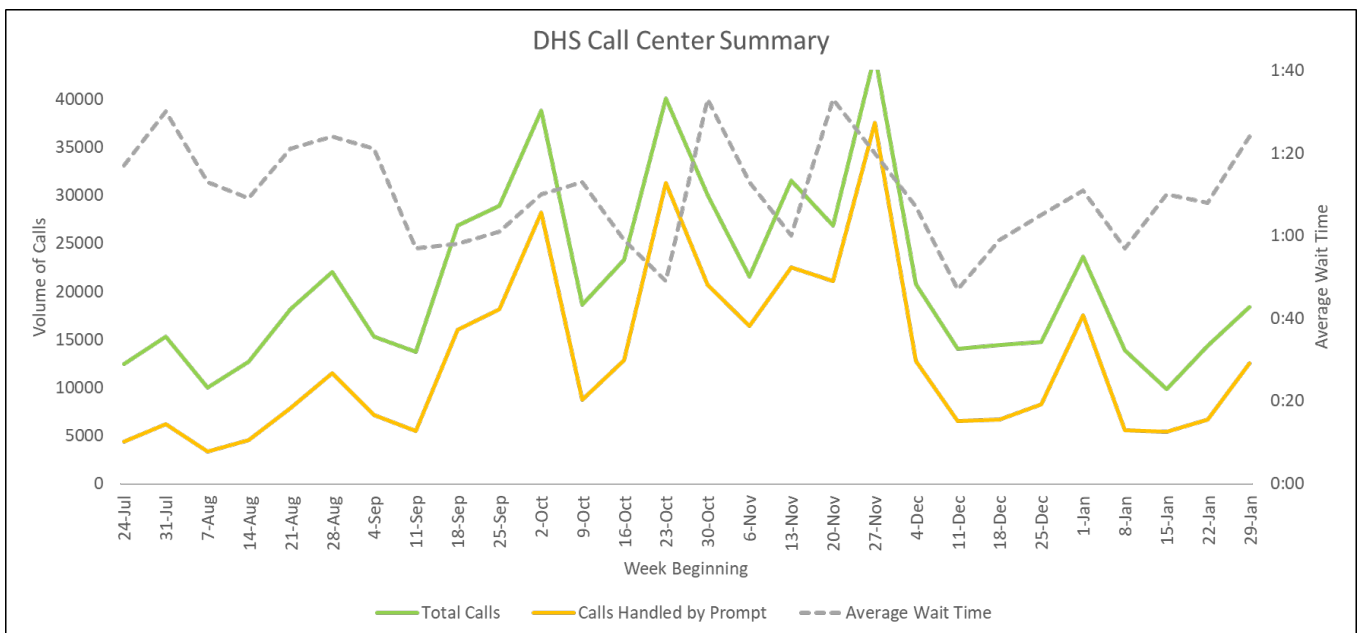
Despite the impact of COVID-19, **83,124** households received benefits in January 2023. About **80** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 20 percent of new applications were processed untimely. SNAP timeliness fluctuates on a month-to-month basis. In an effort to address the current backlog, DHS is initiating plans, engaging federal partners, and making operational changes.



### CALL CENTER

For the month of January, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 10 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 January 1, 2023, and there were **23,574** calls. DHS has changed its scope of work in the Call Center and continues to implement operational changes to achieve its goal of reducing wait times to 30 minutes.

The RI Department of Human Services anticipates receiving more calls than usual in February and March due to the federal government ending [COVID-19 SNAP Emergency Allotments](#). Additional resources including a poster, a social media toolkit, and partner messages ([available online](#)) were provided to regional office staff, community partners, and other state agencies to help customers seeking assistance.



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
16	1/12/2023	534	\$2,161,496.36
16A	1/13/2023	19	\$32,204.28
16B	1/20/2023	21	\$61,069.13
17	1/26/2023	544	\$2,249,371.19
17A	1/27/2023	13	\$19,006.02
17B	2/3/2023	29	\$62,339.15

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (16, 16A, & 16B)	574	\$2,254,769.77
Off-cycle (16A & 16B)	40	\$93,273.41
Provider off-cycle/total	7.49%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.32%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (17, 17A, & 17B)	586	\$2,330,716.36
Off-cycle (17A & 17B)	42	\$81,345.17
Provider off-cycle/total	7.72%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.62%	-

## UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

In accordance with federal guidance, RI Medicaid will restart its renewal process on April 1, 2023, by sending out renewal packets monthly over the course of 12 months to redetermine eligibility for over 300,000 beneficiaries. RI Medicaid will be employing several methods designed to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries and workforce, promote continuity of coverage through “ex parte” renewals, and transition those found ineligible for Medicaid to a state-based health insurance plan. In order to avoid potential gaps in coverage, RI Medicaid strongly encourages beneficiaries to update their contact information (physical and mailing address, phone number, and email address) to ensure they receive important renewal information and other notices.

## 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.