



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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January 18, 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 December 16, 2022 – January 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



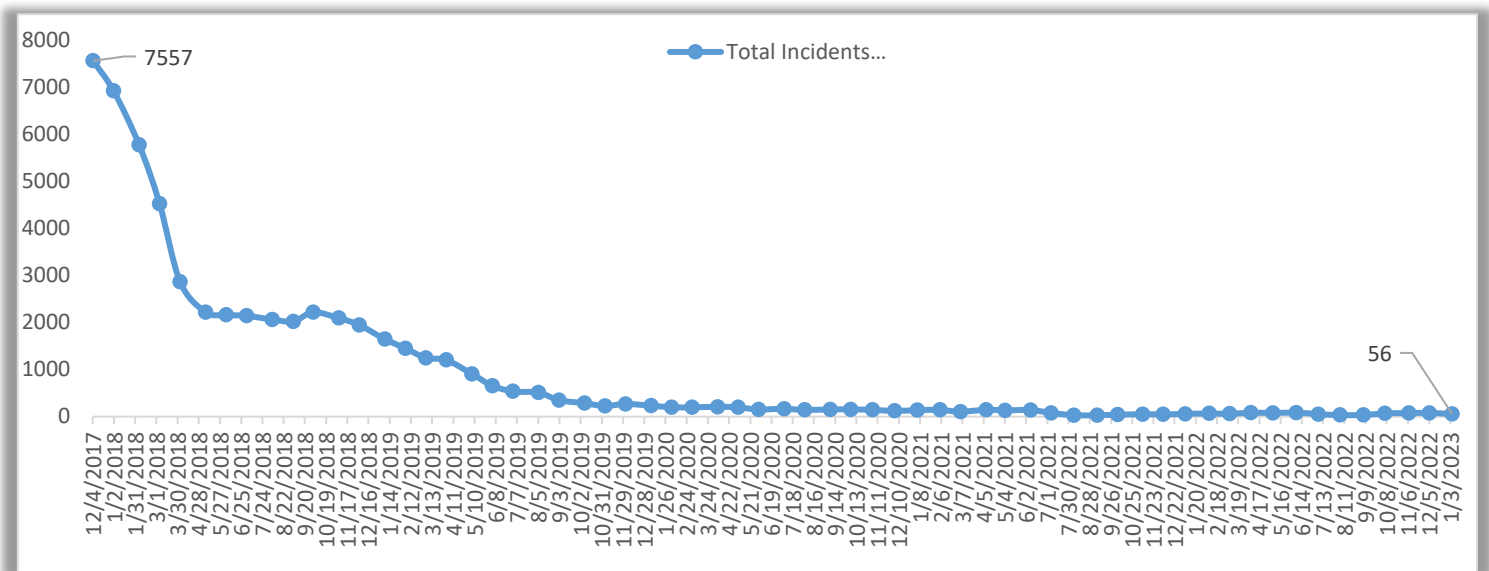
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## January 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 January 5, 2023, there were **56** open incidents.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since December, DHS hired 6 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 1 Eligibility Technician III
- 1 Consultant Public Nurse
- 1 Quality Control Reviewer
- 1 Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services
- 1 Eligibility Technician
- 1 Customer Service Aide

## 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)	1-3-2023 1-4-2023 1-5-2023	11	4	0
SNAP Training Series (Three full day sessions)	12-19-2022 12-20-2022 12-21-2022	15	23	2
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Training Series (Two cohorts) (Four full day sessions for each cohort)	12-27-22 thru 1-5-2023 1-9-23 thru 1-12-2023	40	14	5
Computer Literacy Training: Basic Excel (One half day session)	12-19-2022	3	0	9
Computer Literacy Training: Advanced Excel (One half day session)	12-19-2022	3	0	7
<b>Totals</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>41*</b>	<b>23*</b>
Self-Directed Learning				
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Telephonic Signature' -- 139 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Telephonic Signature - Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD)' -- 57 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Asset Verification System (AVS)' -- 155 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Customer Portal' -- 397 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'SNAP Reinvestment Updates' -- 393 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Visit Record' -- 395 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'RIW Mini-Series Completed' -- 153 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Scheduling Refresher' -- 323 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher' -- 305 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination Results' 284 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge</li> </ul>	Combined total of <b>2,554*</b> staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45 completed 'Telephonic Signature'</li> <li>• 25 completed 'Telephonic Signature EAD'</li> <li>• 115 completed 'AVS'</li> <li>• 281 completed 'Customer Portal'</li> <li>• 181 completed 'SNAP Reinvestment Training'</li> <li>• 222 completed 'Visit Record Training'</li> <li>• 95 completed the 'RIW Mini-Series'</li> <li>• 208 completed 'Scheduling Refresher'</li> <li>• 184 completed 'Medicaid Renewal Refresher'</li> <li>• 188 completed 'SNAP Eligibility Redetermination'</li> <li>• 170 completed 'SNAP Work Registrant and ABAWDS Script Knowledge Transfer'</li> <li>• 193 completed 'Case Notes Refresher'</li> <li>• 185 completed 'Case Maintenance Refresher'</li> <li>• 64 completed 'VCC KT'</li> <li>• 197 completed 'KT September release 7.40'</li> <li>• 188 completed 'KT September release 7.41'</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer' -- 297 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Case Maintenance Refresher' – 295 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Case Notes Refresher' -- 319 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Virtual Contact Center -- 131 staff enrolled</li> <li>• Knowledge Transfer for September release (7.40) -- 448 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'Knowledge transfer for September release (7.41) -- 442 staff enrolled</li> <li>• 'LTSS Telephonic Signature' -- 43 staff enrolled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 completed 'LTSS telephonic signature'</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
- 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

**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.

**Computer Literacy Trainings:** Participants take these basic and advanced excel training sessions to understand the commands and functions available. The courses are designed to help participants understand the tools available within Excel to improve efficiency.

**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

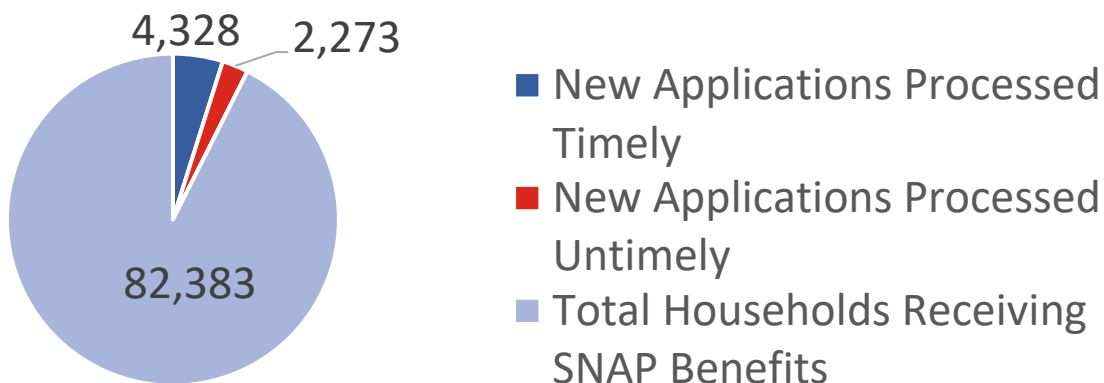
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of January 10, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 8,745. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 4,274. With the November Release intended to archive active pending cases already resolved, 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 (3,057 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. As DHS continues to hire critical front facing and back operations staff, we are also looking at an operational model that builds in time for customer facing staff to be deployed to work back-office tasks one day a week. DHS anticipates a pilot of the initiative in February as details are finalized and federal partners are engaged.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	49	372	421	8	15	23	<b>444</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	561	636	1,197	182	161	343	<b>1,540</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	11	276	287	18	137	155	<b>442</b>
<b>GPA Burial</b>	0	3	3	0	1	1	<b>4</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	66	66	0	21	21	<b>87</b>
<b>GPA</b>	36	49	85	3	11	14	<b>99</b>
<b>RIW</b>	125	263	388	39	110	149	<b>537</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	28	622	650	196	2,861	3,057	<b>3,707</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	15	47	62	161	149	310	<b>372</b>
<b>Medicare Premium Payments</b>	5	290	295	43	425	468	<b>763</b>
<b>Medicaid Complex</b>	2	72	74	46	312	358	<b>432</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	6	238	244	3	71	74	<b>318</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	838	2934	<b>3,772</b>	699	4,274	<b>4,973</b>	<b>8,745</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

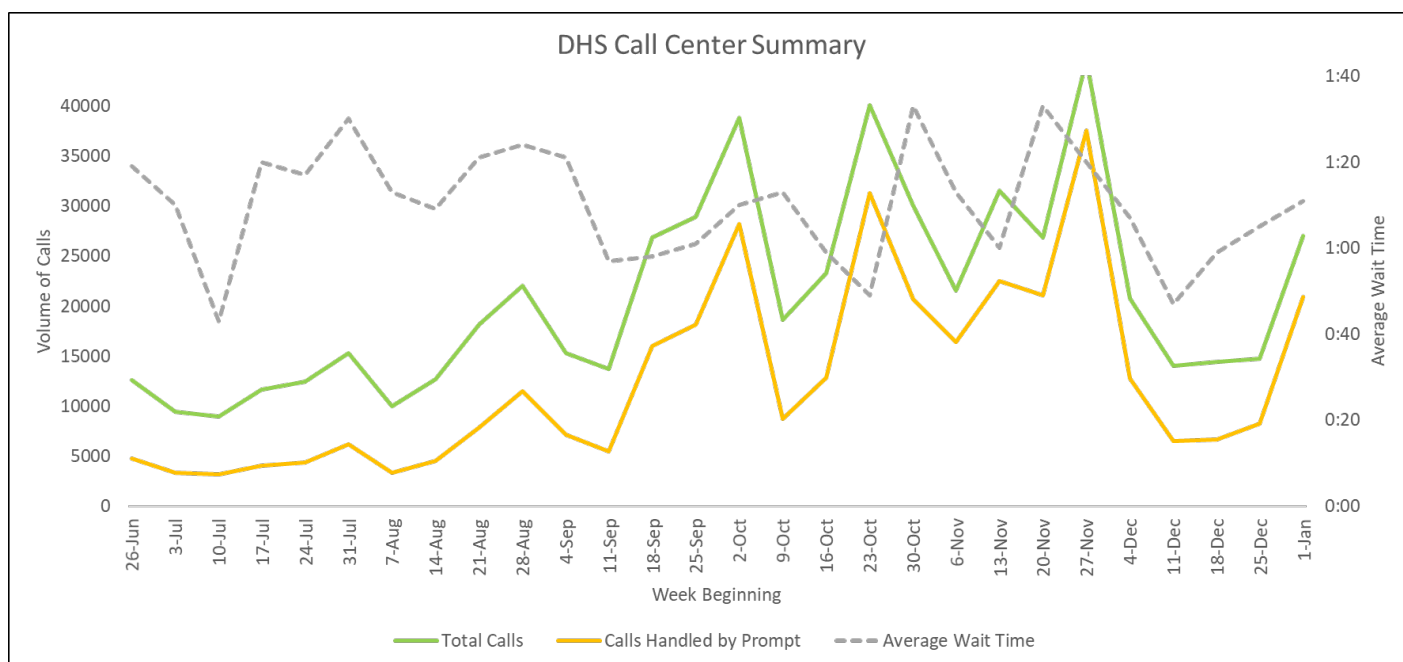
Despite the impact of COVID-19, **82,383** households received benefits in December 2022. About **66** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 34 percent of new applications were processed untimely. SNAP timeliness fluctuates on a month-to-month basis. In an effort to address the current backlog, DHS is initiating plans, engaging federal partners, and making operational changes. Another important consideration impacting December SNAP timeliness could be attributed to seasonality.



## CALL CENTER

For the period between **December 4, 2022, through the week that started January 1, 2023**, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **1 hour and 2 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 **20,941** 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 will be provided for 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 December 16, 2022 through January 15, 2023.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
13	12/1/2022	523	\$2,087,973.46
13A	12/2/2022	22	\$59,994.13
13B	12/9/2022	40	\$91,583.58
14	12/15/2022	537	\$2,138,598.97
14A	12/16/2022	20	\$43,192.26
14B	12/23/2022	31	\$43,724.76
15	12/29/2022	532	\$2,118,922.76
15A	12/30/2022	19	\$51,134.37
15B	1/6/2023	19	\$30,600.39

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (15, 15A, & 15B)	570	\$2,200,657.52
Off-cycle (13A & 13B)	38	\$81,734.76
Provider off-cycle/total	7.14%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.86%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (13, 13A, & 13B)	585	\$2,239,551.17
Off-cycle (13A & 13B)	62	\$151,577.71
Provider off-cycle/total	11.85%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	7.26%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (14, 14A, & 14B)	588	\$2,225,515.99
Off-cycle (14A, 14B)	51	\$86,917.02
Provider off-cycle/total	9.50 %	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.06 %	-

## 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 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.