



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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July 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 June 16, 2023 – July 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



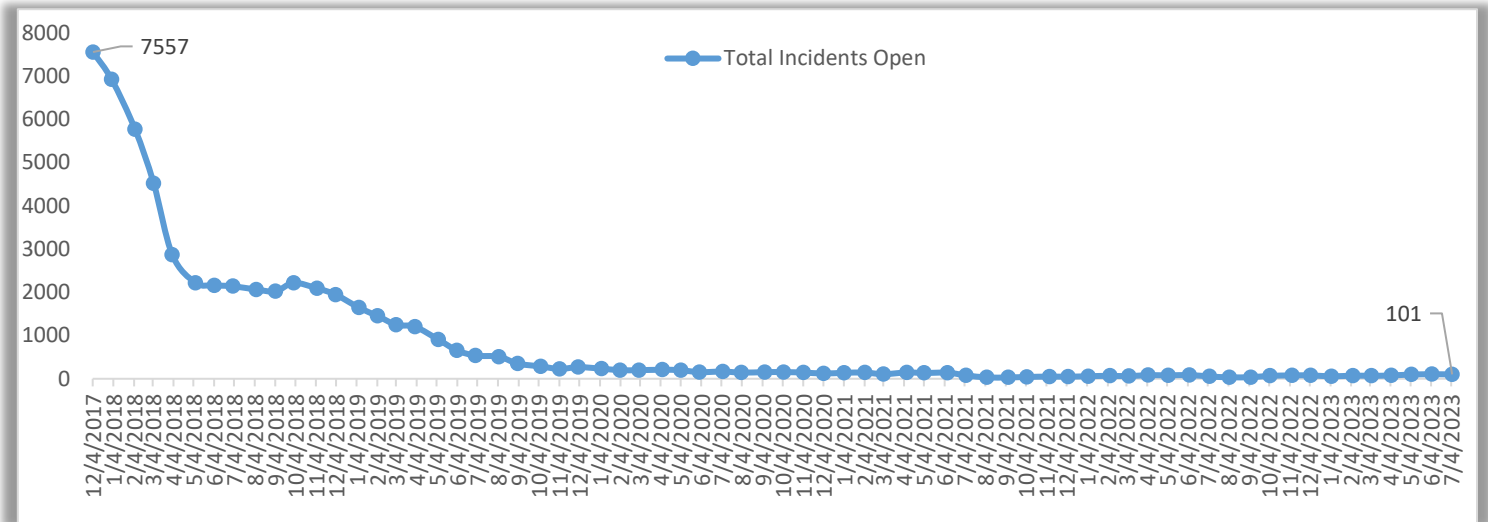
# RIBridges: Monthly Update

## July 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 July 5, 2023, there were **101** open incidents. As part of our ongoing effort to ensure system stability, Rhode Island Works enhancements were completed in May. The update will help reduce open incidents reported, which reflect a point in time and minimal, if any 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 110 positions. Since June 2023, DHS hired 34 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 8 Social Caseworkers
- 2 Eligibility Technician III
- 1 Senior Human Services and Systems Specialist
- 16 Eligibility Technician
- 1 Customer Support Specialist
- 1 Chief Human Services Business Officer
- 1 Employment and Career Advisor
- 2 Quality Control Reviewer
- 1 Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services
- 1 Supervising Eligibility Technician

DHS TRAINING  
Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# Of Training Hours	# Of New Staff	# Of Current Staff
<i>SNAP Learning Series (8 – full day sessions)</i>	6-16-2023 thru 6-30-2023	36	0	11
<i>Ex Parte Learning Series (2- full day sessions)</i>	6-19-2023 thru 6-20-2023	9	0	12
<i>NARCAN Training (1 – one hour session)</i>	6-19-2023	1	0	10
<i>LTSS Learning Series (4- full day sessions)</i>	6-22-2023 thru 6-28-2023	18	0	13
<i>Customer Service Aide Learning Series (2-full day sessions)</i>	6-29-2023 thru 6-30-2023	9	0	11
<i>Mental Health Wellness Trainings (3 – one-hour sessions)</i>	6-28-2023 6-30-2023	3	0	46
<i>New Hire Orientation (2- two-day sessions)</i>	7-6-2023 thru 7-7-2023	9	13	0
<i>MAGI Learning Series (4 – full day sessions)</i>	7-10-2023 thru 7-14-2023	18	0	15
<i>Pre-Eligibility Authorization Knowledge Transfer (9 – one-hour sessions)</i>	7-10-2023 (3) 7-11-2023 (3) 7-14-2023 (3)	9	0	112
<i>Interface Walkthrough Learning Series (2 – one-hour sessions; 1 - two-hour session)</i>	7/10/2023 (2) 7/11/2023	4	0	8
<i>RIW Office Hours (1- one-hour session)</i>	7-13-2023	1	0	17
<i>DLT Interface Walkthrough (1 full day session)</i>	7-13-2023	4.5	0	12
<b>Totals</b>		<b>121*</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>267*</b>

Note: \* projected and/or approximate attendance to trainings that have been scheduled and staff are registered to attend

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	888	345
	Asset Verification System	158	119
	Customer Portal	379	273
	Community Medicaid: Supplemental AVS Video	74	46
	Domestic Violence 101	282	114
	Medical Renewal Refresher	301	191
	OCSS: Child Support Refresher Process	248	157
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	450	215
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	450	210
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	332	163
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	314	168

	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	327	184
	April 2023 Knowledge Transfer	327	170
	June 2023 Knowledge Transfer	317	50
	RIW Miniseries	187	131
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	338	220
	SNAP: Case Notes	310	200
	RIBridges: Scheduling Refresher	305	203
	RIBridges: Visit Record	376	220
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	373	180
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	285	203
	SNAP: ABAWD	323	195
	SNAP: ESAP	338	243
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	44	12
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	133	45
	VCC: Call Back Functionality	127	64
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,042*</b>	<b>4,345*</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

**LTSS Learning Series:** The LTSS Learning 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 of 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.

**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 is a four session training series, where participants must attend all sessions to get the full training scope of the knowledge and skills offered. 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 RIBridges roll-out in 2016.

**Interface Walkthrough Learning:** The PARIS, Bendex, and SOLQ Interface Walkthroughs provide an overview of these system interfaces to familiarize participants with the information typically presented. The training program is designed to help participants become familiar with the information presented with and gain an understanding on how to apply it 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.

**NARCAN Training:** This training provides staff with an opportunity to discuss opioid use and mortality across Rhode Island. In addition, the training identifies risk factors for overdose; provides tools to recognize and respond effectively to an incident of overdose; the proper administration of naloxone to an individual thought to be experiencing an overdose; ways to properly support ventilation, all while monitoring the individual for responsiveness.

**Ex Parte Learning Series:** The Ex Parte Virtual Learning Series provides participants an overview of Ex Parte policy and the Integrated Eligibility System (IES) when an individual faces possible closure to their current Medicaid. It also describes the different forms of Medicaid that could potentially be accessed through special circumstance questions.

**SNAP Learning Series:** The SNAP Learning Series provides participants with an introduction to SNAP policy and RIBridges screens relating to SNAP. This a nine session training series that includes a full day of processing lab, which provides staff with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience.

**Mental Health Wellness:** To promote mental health wellness in the workplace, DHS has offered the following training sessions via our employee assistance program.

- **Self-Care in the Face of Adversity** - Participants learn the history of trauma and racism, trauma symptoms, triggers and how to care for oneself while dealing with these issues. After attending this seminar, participants gain some of the tools needed to set healthy boundaries to maintain optimal self-care.
- **Manager's Guide to Self-Care** - In this session, supervisors and managers re-examine the importance of self-care to be a good role model and effective leader. This session covers the general notions of being a manager and strategies to foster a healthy work-life balance.
- **Mental Health - A Guide for Managers and Leaders** - During this seminar, participants learn more about mental health and the factors that may affect mental health. Participants in supervisory positions also learn the signs and symptoms to look for in employees and what they can do in certain circumstances, with the use of proven techniques to navigate challenging conversations.

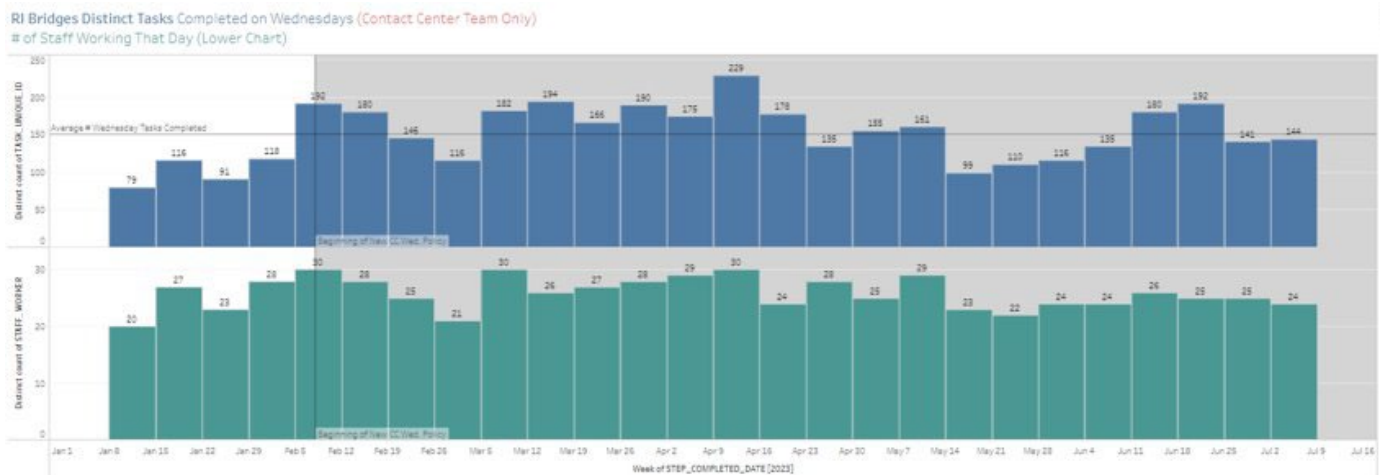
#### **PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS**

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of July 7, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 5,504. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 2,590. Importantly, a technical discrepancy from a June update has artificially inflated the total number of pending applications, particularly for RI Works, with a fix anticipated to be deployed in the next 30 days.

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 (1,852 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 July 10, DHS has seen an approximate 60% increase in the number of tasks completed on Processing Wednesdays (approximately 160 tasks) compared to the last 4 Wednesdays prior to the pilot’s launch (101 average). 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.



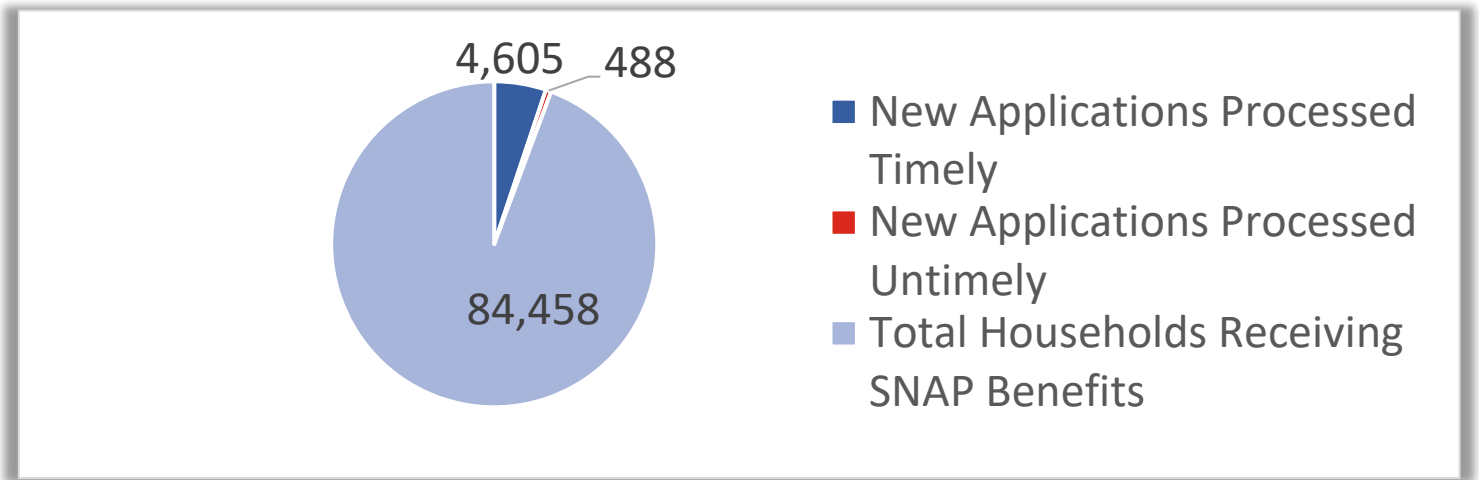
The top bar graph represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. The bar graph at the bottom represents the number of available Call Center staff for the specified Processing Wednesday.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	43	189	232	1	10	11	<b>243</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	538	284	822	39	45	84	<b>906</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	14	182	196	4	31	35	<b>231</b>
<b>GPA Burial</b>	0	32	32	0	8	8	<b>40</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	24	24	0	3	3	<b>27</b>
<b>GPA</b>	29	52	81	6	6	12	<b>93</b>
<b>*RIW</b>	166	156	322	381	220	601	<b>923</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	33	219	252	94	1,852	1,946	<b>2,198</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	27	44	71	22	38	60	<b>131</b>
<b>Medicare Premium Payments</b>	10	74	84	7	10	17	<b>101</b>
<b>Medicaid Complex</b>	10	69	79	11	311	322	<b>401</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	9	144	153	1	56	57	<b>210</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>1469</b>	<b>2,348</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>2,590</b>	<b>3,156</b>	<b>5,504</b>

Analysis continues on the existing overdue undetermined medical (1,852 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. \*A system enhancement for RIW and cash was executed in the RIBridges system in June 2023, which will create efficiencies moving forward. Due to the enhancement, RIW numbers are duplicated, and cannot be adjusted for this report. Numbers will be corrected for the next report.

## SNAP TIMELINESS

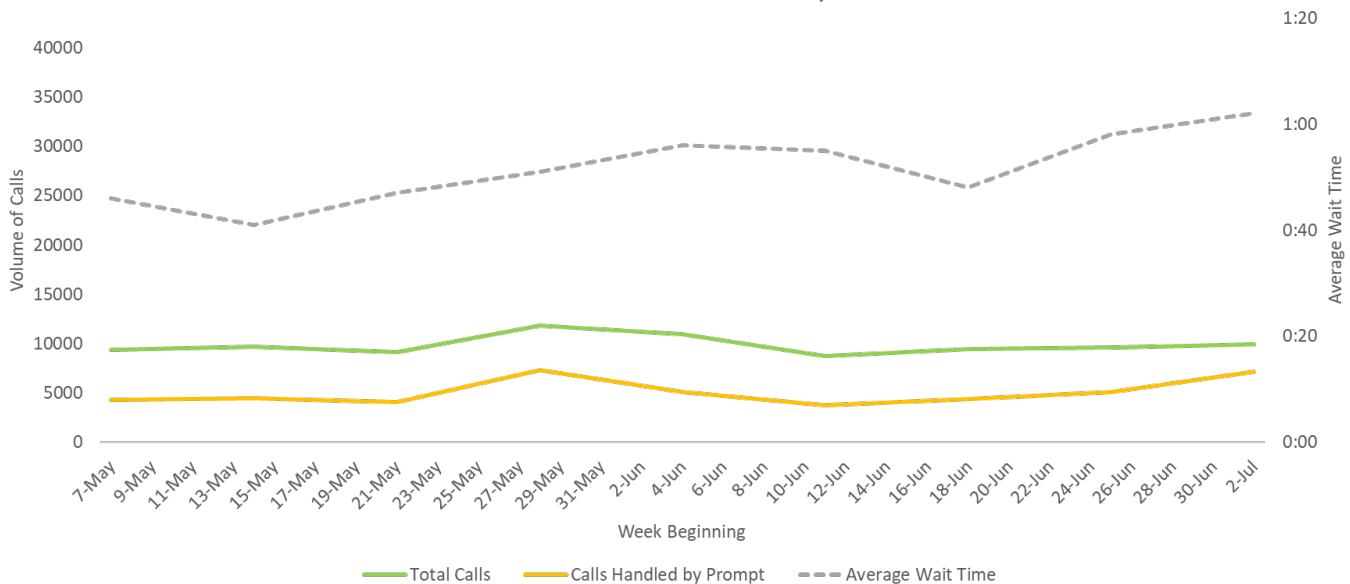
In June 2023, **84,458** households received benefits. Approximately, **90** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 10 percent of new applications were processed untimely.



## CALL CENTER

Between the weeks starting May 28, 2023, and July 2, 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. The call back functionality is available to customers across all programs. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning May 28, 2023, with **11,839** 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.

DHS Call Center Summary



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers for the reporting period of June 16, 2023 through July 15, 2023. Please note off-cycle payments reported for June 2023 is subject to change due to the close of FY23, and beginning of FY24.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
26	6/1/2023	536	\$2,351,165.44
26A	6/2/2023	29	\$128,807.96
26B	6/9/2023	32	\$47,466.27
1	6/15/2023	569	\$2,489,756.10
1A	6/16/2023	17	\$34,572.49
1B	6/23/2023	26	\$33,975.03
2	6/29/2023	552	\$2,357,411.70
2A	6/30/2023	11	\$25,618.13
2B	7/7/2023	17	\$42,636.97

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (26, 26A, & 26B)	597	\$2,527,439.67
Off-cycle (26A & 26B)	61	\$176,274.23
Provider off-cycle/total	11.38%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	7.5%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (1, 1A, & 1B)	602	\$2,558,303.62
Off-cycle (1A & 1B)	33	\$68,547.52
Provider off-cycle/total	5.80%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.75%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (2, 2A, & 2B)	580	\$2,425,666.80
Off-cycle (2A & 2B)	28	\$68,255.10
Provider off-cycle/total	5.07%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.9%	-



## 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 July, a total of approximately 13,418 case renewals are being processed by DHS, with 6,400 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, 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](https://staycovered.ri.gov) website with notices, marketing collateral, and other resources such as a data dashboard to help support the Medicaid renewal process. Additionally, 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.

## 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.