



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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June 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 May 16, 2023 – June 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

Kimberly Merolla-Brito, Acting Director
RI Department of Human Services



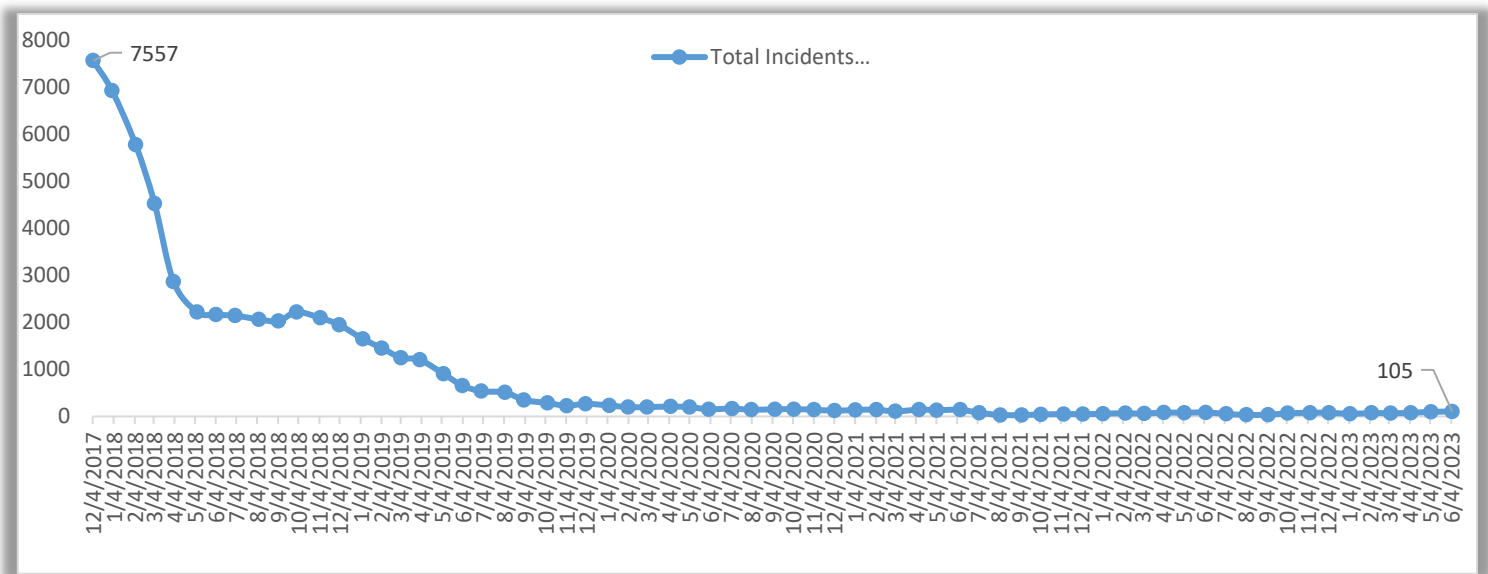
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

June 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 June 5, 2023, there were **105** 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 make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. 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 76 positions. Since May 2023, DHS hired 10 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 3 Customer Service Aide
- 1 Implementation Aide
- 1 Office Manager
- 1 Interdepartmental Project Manager
- 1 Community Relations Liaison Officer
- 3 Supervising Eligibility Technician

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# Of Training Hours	# Of New Staff	# Of Current Staff
<i>DLT Interface Virtual Learning (2 Full Day sessions)</i>	5/30/2023 6/9/2023	9	0	40
<i>LTSS Learning Series: Sessions 1-3 and Processing Lab (4 Full Day sessions)</i>	5/23/2023 thru 5/31/2023	18	0	7
<i>RIW Office Hours (1 – 1-hour session)</i>	6/1/2023	1	0	7
<i>SNAP Office Hours (1-1 session)</i>	6/13/2023	1	0	21
<i>Mental Health Wellness Trainings (2 – 1-hour sessions)</i>	6/13/2023 6/15/2023	2	0	25
<i>Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Office Hours (1 – 1-hour session)</i>	5/17/2023	1	0	7
<i>Computer Literacy Training (2- Half-Day sessions)</i>	6/12/2023 Basic Outlook Part 2 (AM) Basic PPT Part 2 (PM)	6	0	13
<i>Community Medicaid Learning Series (2-4 Full Day sessions)</i>	5/16/2023 thru 5/19/2023 6/12/2023 thru 6/16/2023	36	0	35
<i>New Hire Orientation (2 Full Day sessions)</i>	6/5/2023 thru 6/6/2023	9	11	0
<i>Childcare Assistance Program Office Hours (1 – 1 hour session)</i>	6/2/2023	1	0	12
<i>NARCAN Training (2 – 1.5 hours sessions)</i>	5/22/2023	3	0	46
<i>Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Learning Series (4 – Full Day sessions)</i>	5/8/2023 thru 5/12/2023	18	0	10
<i>Interface Walkthrough (Bendex, Paris and SOLQ (4 – 1-hour sessions and 1 -2-hour session)</i>	5/26/2023 6/9/2023	6	0	54
	Totals	111	11	277*

Note: the asterisk number included projected attendance to trainings that have been scheduled and staff are registered to attend

Self-Directed Learning: Learning Management System			
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	Course Title	Number of staff Enrolled	Number of Staff Completed
	FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality	894	327
	Asset Verification System	158	119
	Customer Portal	380	272

* This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.	Community Medicaid: Supplemental AVS Video	301	41
	Medical Renewal Refresher	292	185
	OCCS: Child Support Refresher Process	251	154
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	455	216
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	455	210
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	336	161
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	320	157
	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	331	183
	April 2023 Knowledge Transfer	326	165
	RIW Miniseries	183	127
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	341	219
	SNAP: Case Notes	311	198
	RI Bridges: Scheduling Refresher	308	205
	RI Bridges: Visit Record	378	218
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	375	180
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	283	201
	SNAP: ABAWD	325	195
	SNAP: ESAP	341	243
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	44	12
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	133	45
	VCC: Call Back Functionality	127	63
Totals	7,704*	4,120*	

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

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.

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).

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 RIBridges roll-out in 2016.

Computer Literacy Trainings: This training provides participants with a tutorial on using Word and Excel. Aimed at helping participants understand the commands and functions available within these programs, the training program helps participants learn functions that help improve their efficiency when using these programs.

Interface Walkthrough Learning: The DLT and PARIS 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.

CCAP Office Hours: The CCAP Office Hours are designed to be an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case specific questions, related to CCAP.

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.

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.

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.

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.

PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

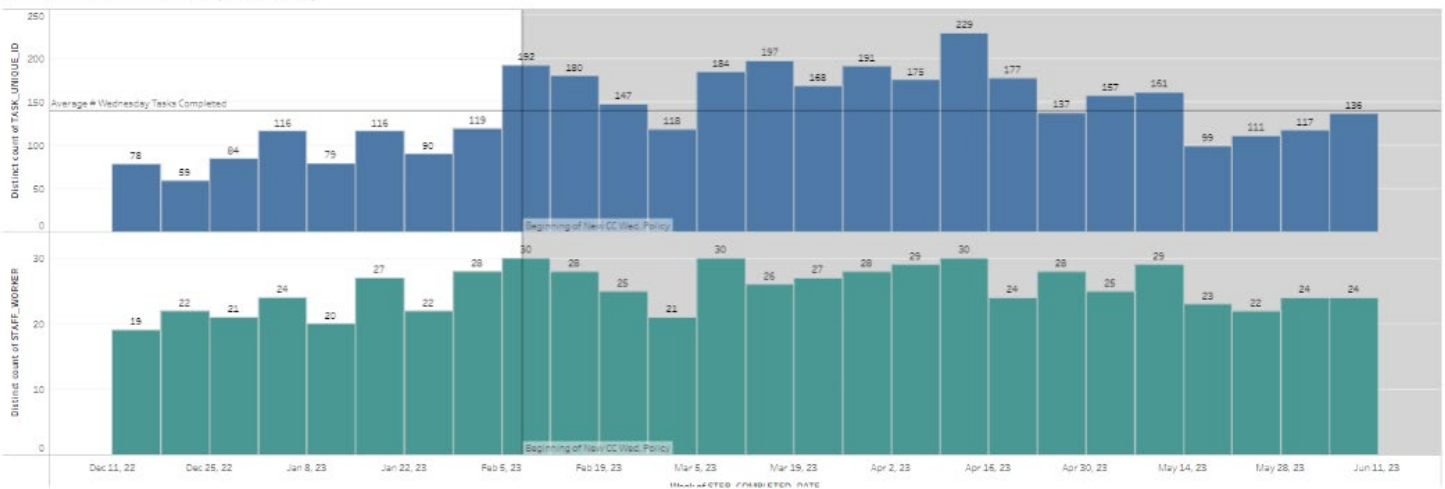
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of June 11, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 4,682, representing an approximate 14% decline from the pending new applications reported in the May 2023 RIBridges report and a 48% decrease reported at the end of 2022. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 2,371.

DHS 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 (1,828 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 June 15, DHS has seen an approximate 60% increase in the number of tasks completed on Processing Wednesdays (160 average) compared to the last 4 Wednesdays prior to the pilot’s launch (101 average). While the latest four Processing Wednesdays resulted in lower tasks worked or completed than the average for Processing Wednesdays overall, the Call Center performed back office tasks with fewer available staff. Additionally, as the data shows below, more tasks were completed or worked on Processing Wednesdays even on days when the staff count was the same at the Call Center pre and post pilot launch. On the four days where staff counts were equal, there was a 26% percent increase in tasks worked or completed on Processing Wednesdays, which has helped reduce the backlog and directly reduced the need for customers to seek additional support by phone or in-person.

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



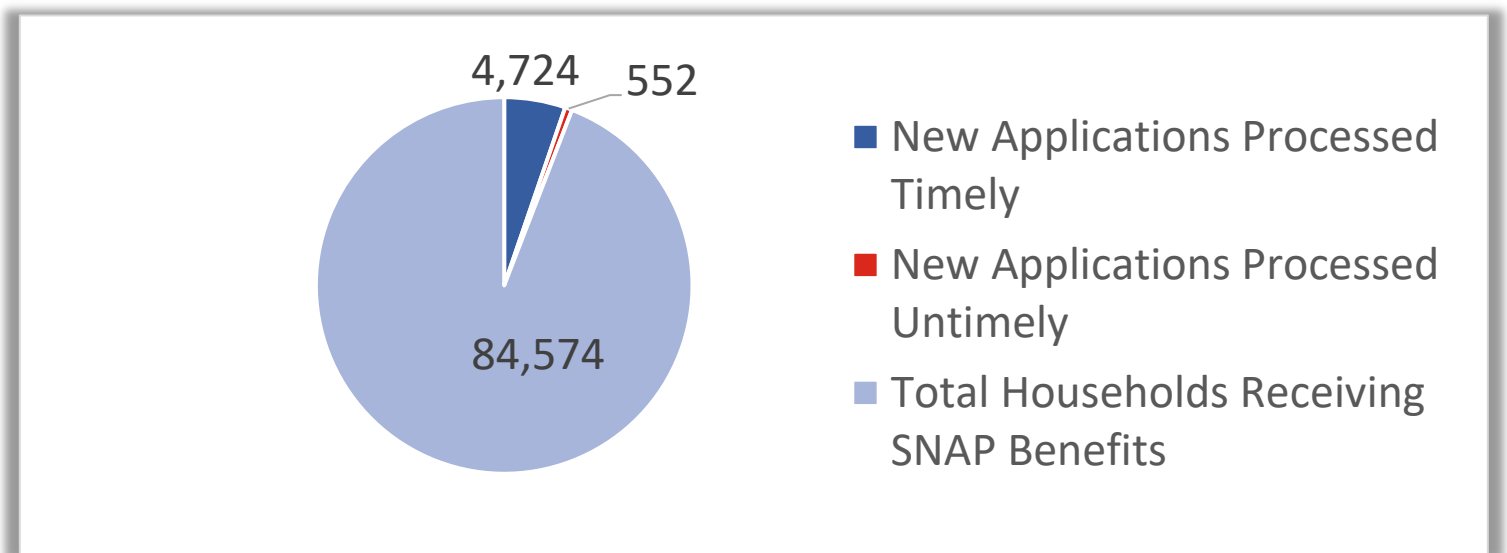
The top bar graph represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. Please note data on Processing Wednesdays that was reported out for the week beginning March 5 was skewed due to a statewide technology disruption that occurred on March 8. The bar graph at the bottom represents the number of available Call Center staff for the specified Processing Wednesday.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
SNAP Expedited	31	198	229	1	2	3	232
SNAP Non-Expedited	518	292	810	34	44	78	888
CCAP	23	135	158	5	30	35	193
GPA Burial	0	14	14	0	5	5	19
SSP	0	8	8	0	2	2	10
GPA	25	42	67	1	3	4	71
RIW	134	78	212	12	17	29	241
Undetermined Medical	18	230	248	86	1,828	1914	2,162
Medicaid-MAGI	26	34	60	17	49	66	126
Medicare Premium Payments	10	77	87	6	8	14	101
Medicaid Complex	10	64	74	14	331	345	419
LTSS	5	161	166	2	52	54	220
Grand Total	800	1,333	2,133	178	2,371	2,549	4,682

Analysis continues on the existing overdue undetermined medical (1,828 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.

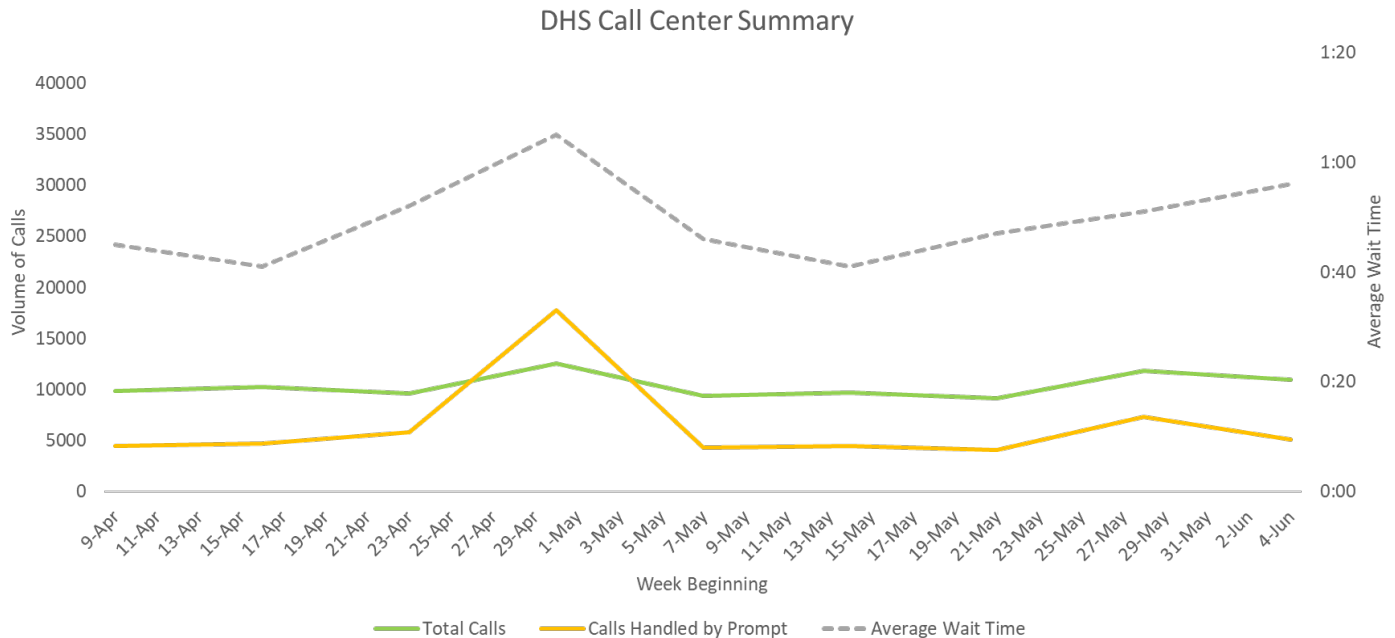
SNAP TIMELINESS

In May 2023, **84,574** 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 7, 2023, and June 4, 2023, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **49 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.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
24	5/4/2023	546	\$2,232,962.12
24A	5/5/2023	12	\$17,969.82
24B	5/12/2023	26	\$75,527.29
25	5/18/2023	541	\$2,210,333.36
25A	5/19/2023	15	\$36,189.88
25B	5/26/2023	28	\$85,466.83

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (24, 24A, & 24B)	584	\$2,326,459.23
Off-cycle (24A & 24B)	38	\$93,297.11
Provider off-cycle/total	6.96%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.19%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (25, 25A, & 25B)	584	\$2,331,990.07
Off-cycle (21A & 21B)	43	\$121,656.71
Provider off-cycle/total	7.95%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	5.50%	-

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 June, a total of approximately 9,981 case renewals are being processed by DHS, with 3,412 case renewals requiring action from the customer. DHS is partnering 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 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.