



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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May 18, 2023

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa
Chair, 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 April 16, 2023 – May 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



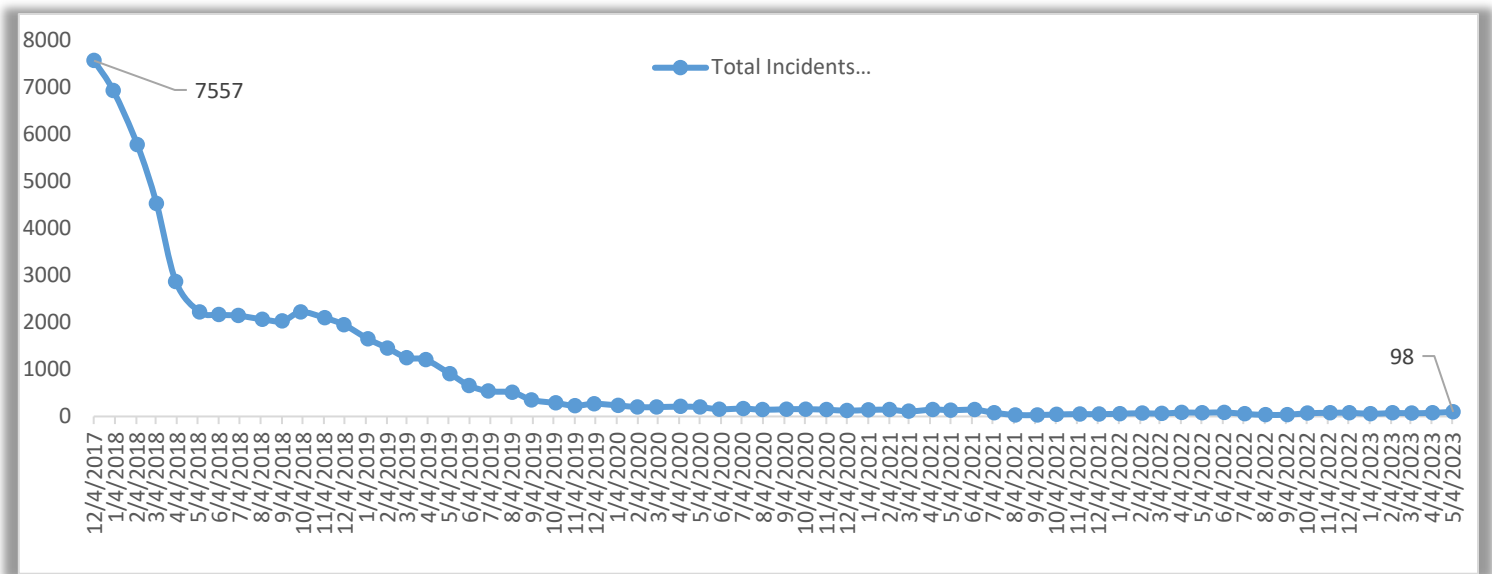
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

May 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 May 5, 2023, there were **98** open incidents. Recent activity is attributed to Rhode Island Works related enhancements implemented in April 2023 –with fixes expected to be completed in May – that have had no impact on customers.



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 66 positions. Since April 2023, DHS hired 19 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 2 Eligibility Technician III
- 10 Eligibility Technician I
- 1 Special Assistant
- 1 Customer Service Aide
- 2 Eligibility Technician II (lobby)
- 1 Human Services Business Officer
- 1 Associate Director Division of Community Services
- 1 Assistant Administrator, Financial Management

DHS TRAINING
Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# Of Training Hours	# Of New Staff	# Of Current Staff
<i>DLT Interface Virtual Learning (1 full Day session)</i>	4/17/2023	4.5	0	20
<i>LTSS Learning Series: Sessions 3 and Processing Lab (2 full day sessions)</i>	4/17/2023 4/19/2023	9	0	10
<i>SNAP Learning Series: Sessions 1-7 and Processing Lab (8 full day sessions)</i>	4/17/2023 thru 4/28/2023	36	0	6
<i>Ex Parte Learning Series (4 full day sessions)</i>	4/18/2023 thru 4/20/2023 5/8/2023 thru 5/9/2023	18	0	28
<i>Multicultural Competency Learning Series (4 - 1.5 hours sessions)</i>	4/17/2023 4/18/2023 4/27/2023 5/8/2023	6	0	36
<i>Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Office Hours (1 – 1-hour session)</i>	4/19/2023	1	0	16
<i>Computer Literacy Training (2- half-day sessions)</i>	4/24/2023 Excel Part 2 (AM) Basic Work Part 2 (PM)	6	0	13
<i>Community Medicaid Learning Series (3 full day sessions)</i>	4/24/2023 thru 4/27/2023	13.5	0	15
<i>New Hire Orientation (2 full day sessions)</i>	5/1/2023 thru 5/2/2023	9	5	0
<i>Childcare Assistance Program Office Hours (1 – 1 hour session)</i>	5/4/2023	1	0	16
<i>NARCAN Training (2 – 1.5 hours sessions)</i>	5/5/2023 5/12/2023	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>PARIS Interface Training (1 – 2-hour sessions)</i>	5/11/2023	2	0	17
	Totals	127	5	233*
	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	887	319	
	Asset Verification System	156	118	
	Customer Portal	383	273	

* This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.	Medical Renewal Refresher	292	182
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	458	211
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	458	207
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	338	154
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	320	157
	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	333	177
	April 2023 Knowledge Transfer	328	129
	RIW Miniseries	177	125
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	342	213
	SNAP: Case Notes	313	196
	RIBridges: Scheduling Refresher	308	205
	RIBridges: Visit Record	380	218
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	378	179
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	285	202
	SNAP: ABAWD	328	194
	SNAP: ESAP	343	241
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	44	12
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	135	44
	VCC: Call Back Functionality	128	64
	Totals	7,170*	3,844*

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

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.

LTSS Training Series: The LTSS Training 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 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.

Ex Parte Virtual Learning Series: The Ex Parte Virtual Learning Series provides participants with an overview of Ex Parte policy and the integrated eligibility system designed to provide clarity when an individual faces possible closure to their current Medicaid and special circumstance questions that are a potential gateway to other forms of Medicaid. Specific topics discussed include pre-screening, age outs, MAGI and complex medical.

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 Bridges 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.

Multicultural Competency Training Series: The Multicultural Competence Modules offer contextualized, scaffolded anti-oppression educational workshops for DHS employees. There are four foundational modules that introduce participants to frameworks, concepts, and strategies so RIDHS personnel are better equipped to advance its diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format for the sessions includes facilitated dialogue with individual and group activities.

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 you are processing. We invite you to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with the LTSS Administrator.

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

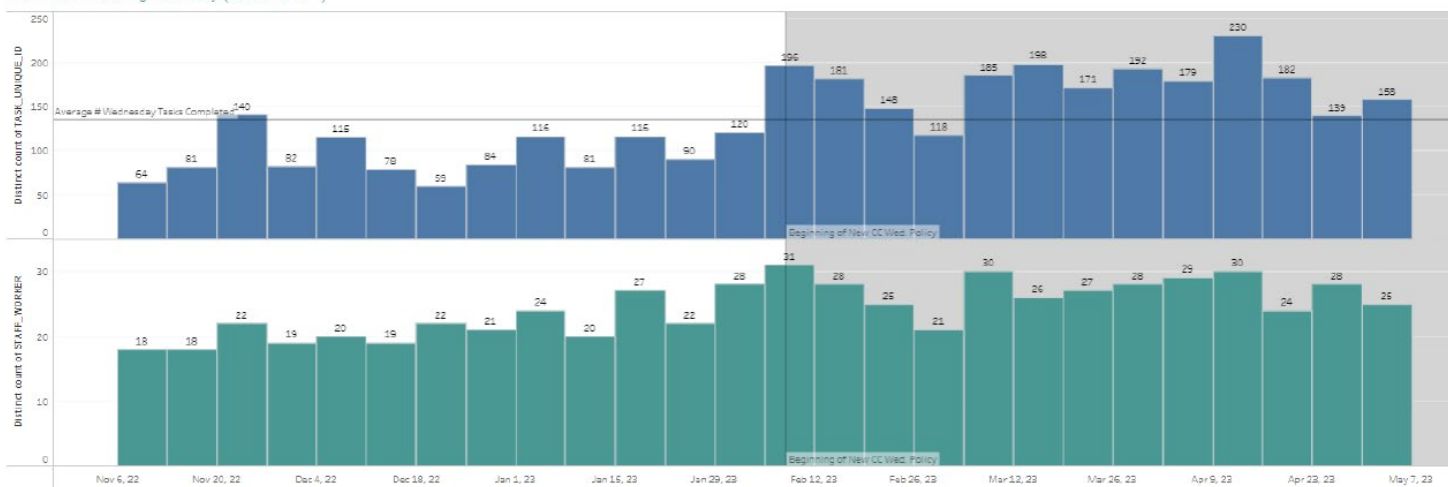
NARCAN Training: This training provides staff with an opportunity to discuss opioid use and mortality across Rhode Island. In addition, the training identifies risk factors for overdose; provides tools to recognize and respond effectively to an incident of overdose; the proper administration of naloxone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

PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of May 10, 2023, the number of pending new applications across all programs was 5,470, representing an approximate 16 percent decline from the pending new applications reported in the April 2023 RIBridges report. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was 2,800. With the rollout of the November Release targeting active pending cases already resolved and needing to be archived, 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 (2,318 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're now targeting 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 May 15, DHS has seen an approximate 75 percent increase in the number of tasks completed, or an increase from 102 to 177 cases completed on average, when comparing data from the last four Wednesdays prior to launch and data from the most recent four Wednesdays. While this only examines the tasks completed, Processing Wednesdays has also increased the number of tasks worked and helped reduce the backlog, which directly helps reduce the need for customers to seek additional support services either by phone or in-person.

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



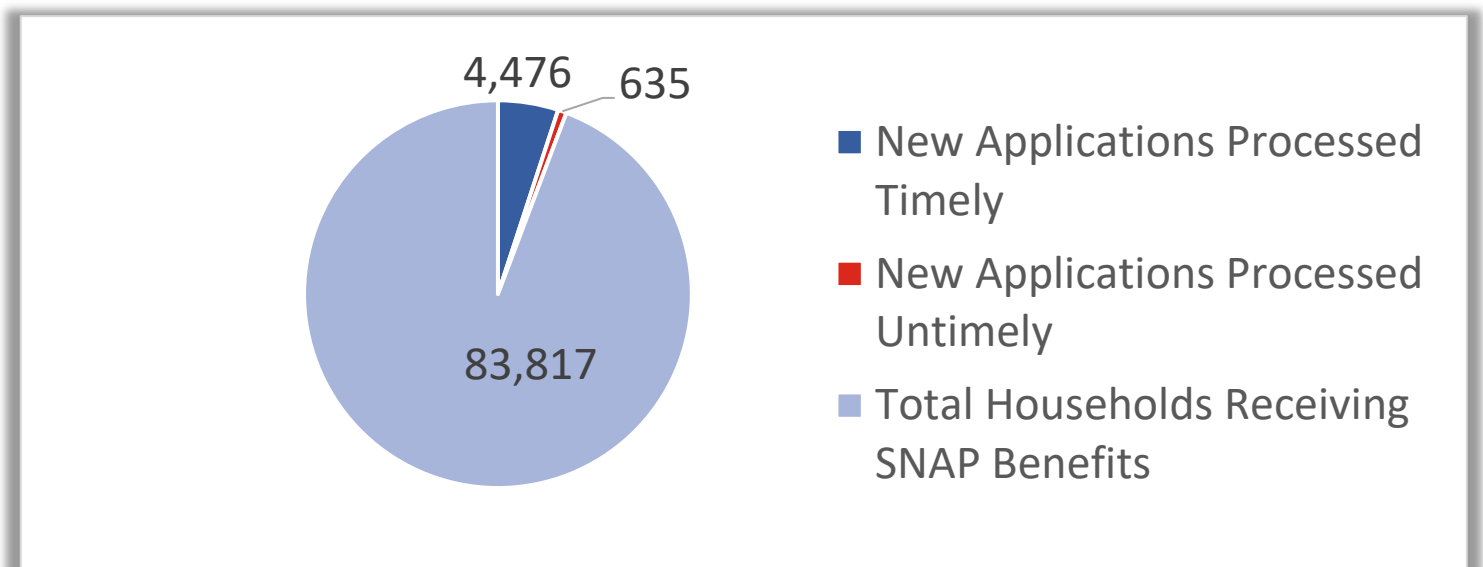
The top bar graph represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. Please note data on Processing Wednesdays that was reported out for the week beginning March 5 was skewed due to a statewide technology disruption that occurred on March 8. The bar graph at the bottom represents the number of available Call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

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
SNAP Expedited	47	260	307	6	24	30	337
SNAP Non-Expedited	469	303	772	41	57	98	870
CCAP	28	161	189	6	37	43	232
GPA Burial	0	8	8	0	5	5	13
SSP	0	50	50	0	5	5	55
GPA	26	58	84	0	3	3	87
RIW	121	108	229	9	13	22	251
Undetermined Medical	21	260	281	128	2,190	2,318	2,599
Medicaid-MAGI	45	57	102	41	70	111	213
Medicare Premium Payments	9	121	130	5	12	17	147
Medicaid Complex	6	56	62	17	330	347	409
LTSS	11	185	196	7	54	61	257
Grand Total	783	1,627	2,410	260	2,800	3,060	5,470

Importantly, 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.

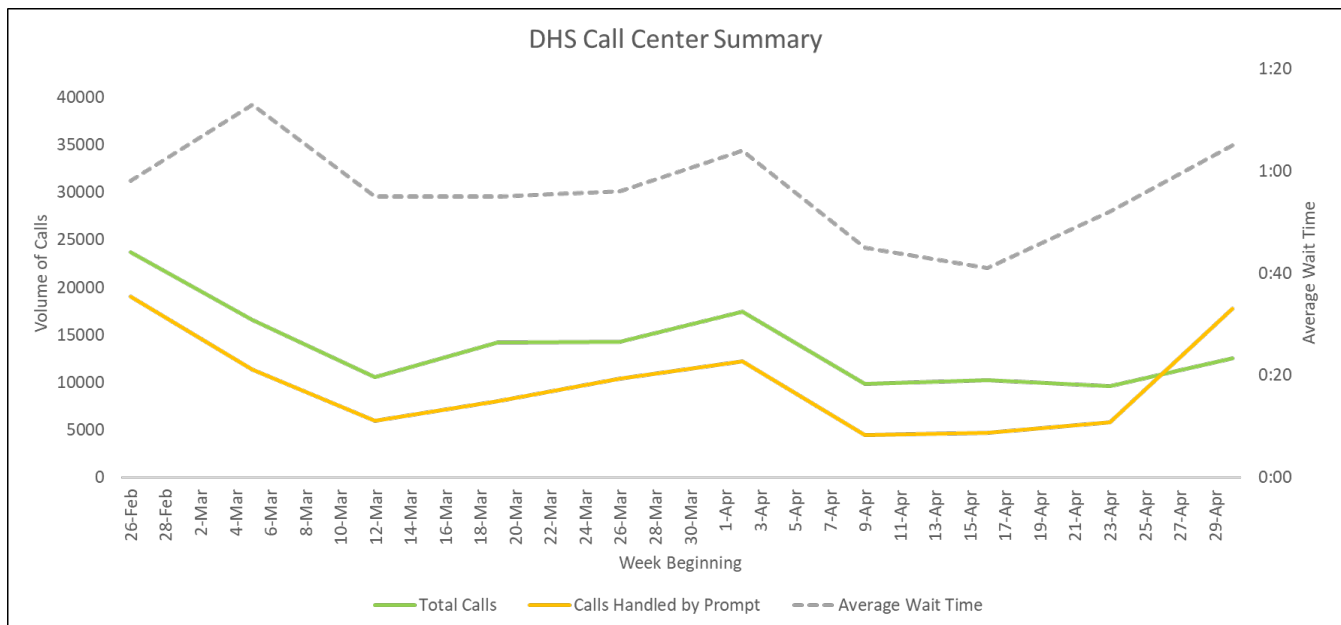
SNAP TIMELINESS

In April 2023, **83,817** households received benefits. Approximately, **88** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 12 percent of new applications were processed untimely.



CALL CENTER

Between the weeks starting April 2, 2023, and April 30, 2023, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **53 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 April 2, 2023, with **17,442** 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 April 16, 2023 through May 15, 2023.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
22	4/6/2023	532	\$2,271,180.77
22A	4/7/2023	16	\$111,161.86
22B	4/14/2023	22	\$52,682.20
23	4/20/2023	537	\$2,374,886.50
23A	4/21/2023	18	\$50,249.74
23B	4/28/2023	21	\$26,647.66

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (22, 22A, & 22B)	570	\$2,435,024.83
Off-cycle (20A & 20B)	38	\$163,844.06
Provider off-cycle/total	7.14%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	7.21%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (23, 23A, & 23B)	576	\$2481896.08
Off-cycle (21A & 21B)	39	\$45,061.57
Provider off-cycle/total	7.26%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.51%	-

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 May, approximately 9,865 passive and active case renewals are being processed by DHS. 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 has also recently 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 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 over the next 10-12 months.

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.