



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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September 18, 2023

The Honorable Patricia A. Serpa  
Chair, House Committee on Oversight  
State House, Room 101  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the state's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period August 16, 2023 – September 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



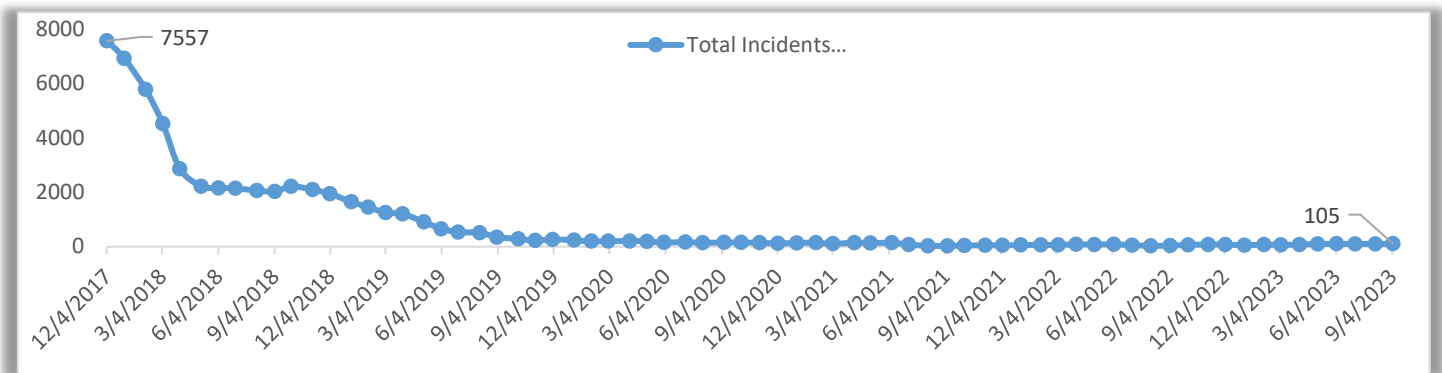
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## September 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 September 5, 2023, there were **105** open incidents, of which a small proportion resulted from an IT enhancement that has no 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 143 positions. Since the last report in August 2023, DHS hired 23 employees who have started in their new roles. These include:

- 1 Principal Human Services Business officer
- 3 Social Caseworkers
- 5 Eligibility Technician
- 1 Programing Services Officer
- 3 Supervising Eligibility Technician
- 1 Assistant Administrator Community and Planning Services
- 1 Eligibility Technician III
- 1 Information Services Technician
- 1 Employment and Career Advisor
- 2 Customer Service Aide
- 4 Eligibility Technician II (lobby)

**DHS TRAINING**  
**Training Overview**

Training Topic	Training Date	# Of Training Hours	# Of New Staff	# Of Current Staff
Computer Literacy Training (2 – three-hour sessions)	8-21-2023 (AM and PM)	6	0	14
Medicaid Office Hours 1 – one-hour session)	9-14-2023	1	0	18
RIW Office Hours (2 – one-hour session)	8-24-2023 9-14-2023	2	0	33
SNAP Office Hours (1- one-hour session)	9-13-2023	1	0	25
SNAP ABAWD Office Hours (2 – one-hour session)	8-29-2023 9-5-2023	2	0	25
RIW Learning Series (4 full day sessions)	9-11-2023 thru 9-15-2023	18	0	19
CCAP Office Hours (1- one-hour session)	9-7-2023	1	0	13
New Hire Orientation (3 full day sessions)	9-7-2023 thru 9-11-2023	13.5	5	0
DLT Interface Walkthrough (1- full day session)	8-28-2023	4.5	0	16
SNAP ABAWD In-Person Learning Session (8 – two-hour session) 2 per day	8-21-2023; 8-22-2023; 8-24-2023; 8-25-2023	16	0	125
Active Threat Training (3 – one-hour sessions)	8-17-2023; 8-22-2023	3	0	83
Immigration Training (1 – two-hour session)	8-29-2023	2	0	54
LTSS ET Learning Series (5 – full day sessions)	8-24-2023 thru 8-31-2023	22.5	0	10
SNAP ET Learning Series: Sessions 6-8 (3 – full day sessions)	8-17-2023 thru 8-21-2023	13.5	0	20
MMIS Interface Walkthrough (1- one-hour session)	9-15-2023	1	0	20
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>475*</b>
<b>Note: the asterisk number included projected attendance to trainings that have been scheduled and staff are registered to attend</b>				
	<b>Self-Directed Learning: Learning Management System</b>			
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Number of staff Enrolled</b>	<b>Number of Staff Completed</b>	
	FTI-2023	1021	500	
	HIPAA, and Confidentiality-2023	1021	519	
	Asset Verification System	151	116	

<b>* This number is duplicated. Our participants are enrolled in various trainings.</b>	Customer Portal	365	262
	Community Medicaid: Supplemental AVS Video	100	49
	Domestic Violence 101	325	175
	Medical Renewal Refresher	288	183
	OCSS: Child Support Refresher Process	285	172
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.40	466	218
	Sept. 22 Knowledge Transfer 7.41	466	216
	Nov. 22 Knowledge Transfer	368	170
	Dec. 22 Knowledge Transfer	363	186
	March 2023 Knowledge Transfer	366	191
	April 2023 Knowledge Transfer	371	185
	June 2023 Knowledge Transfer	372	138
	RIW Miniseries	184	128
	SNAP: Case Maintenance	367	232
	SNAP: Case Notes	299	194
	RI Bridges: Scheduling Refresher	295	197
	RI Bridges: Visit Record	363	210
	SNAP: Reinvestment Updates	360	173
	SNAP: Eligibility Determination	276	195
	SNAP: ABAWD	337	202
	SNAP: ESAP	366	248
	VCC: EAD Telephonic Signature	56	24
	VCC: LTSS Telephonic Signature	53	15
	VCC: Telephonic Signature	130	45
VCC: Call Back Functionality	125	64	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,539*</b>	<b>5,207*</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

**MMIS Interface Walkthrough:** The MMIS Interface Walkthrough provides an overview that familiarizes participants with the information typically presented in the interface, intended to help participants gain an understanding on how to apply it to program eligibility calculations.

**DLT Interface Walkthrough:** The DLT Interface Walkthrough provides a general overview of the four individual records attached to DLT interface (State Wage Information Collection Agency (SWICA), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI), and Worker's Compensation), and how to access each interface, breakdown the data and utilize the data for case processing within RIBridges.

**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.

**Rhode Island Works (RIW) Learning Series:** The RIW Learning Series provides participants with information on program policy and related systems. This training also provides additional information regarding the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS), motivational interviewing and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Participants are required to attend all training sessions.

**SNAP Office Hours:** SNAP Office Hours is an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case specific questions related to SNAP cases they are processing. Participation is encouraged among staff that attended SNAP training in 2022.

**SNAP ABAWD Office Hours:** Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) Office Hours is an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or ABAWD specific cases being processed.

**CCAP Office Hours:** CCAP Office Hours provide an open forum for staff to ask general system and policy questions or case-specific questions related to Child Care that are being processed

**From Arrival to Integration: Learning Immigration Laws for Newcomers Training:** This session provides an opportunity to collaborate and engage in discussions with experts and professionals in the field of immigrant and refugee services to gain insights and best practices for screening and determining eligibility for public assistance. Participants gain an understanding of the refugee resettlement processing, resettlement services in Rhode Island, the various immigration statuses, demographic trends, cultural perspectives, and available resources for refugees and immigrants offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

**Active Threat Training:** The Rhode Island State Police Active Threat Awareness Training enhances pre-incident preparedness by providing an hour-long threat awareness training, aimed to help stakeholders prepare for and respond to an active threat incident. This course of instruction will better prepare attendees if ever faced with an active shooter situation, focusing on behaviors that represent pre-incident indicators and characteristics of active shooters, potential attack methods, and the actions that may be taken during an incident.

**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.

**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.

**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 being processed. Participants are invited to bring specific cases and/or questions for discussion with a clinical training specialist.

**SNAP ABAWD In-Person Learning Session:** The purpose of this learning session is to provide a learning experience that will help participants understand the SNAP ABAWD changes, specifically, age categories, qualifying ABAWDS and new exemption definitions. Through scenario-based learning, participants will engage in situations and issues based on real cases that are intended to also help participants improve their decision making, problem solving and communication skills.

#### PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of September 14, 2023, the total number of pending new applications across all programs was 6,371. The total overdue, pending applications awaiting State action has decreased by approximately 1.4% from August 2023 despite shifts in federal policies and the ongoing Medicaid Redetermination work. The total current pending caseload is within the typical range DHS processes, but some variances should be expected as the workload associated with Medicaid Redeterminations steadily increases.

With regards to RI Works (RIW), the chart below only shows estimated pending applications for the program. An estimate is necessary after a system enhancement, which will create efficiencies in the future, to the system used for gathering RIW related caseload data started reporting incorrect data. The technical discrepancy has no impact on the customer experience and a fix is expected by the end of the year. Importantly, the customer experience is not impacted by the RIW associated technical discrepancy, currently in the process of being addressed, and is expected to be resolved by the end of the year.

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 (1,877 cases) and prioritizing recommendations for closure, purging and merging of duplicate cases. DHS has cleared the majority of cases needing to be archived, and Department continues to target incomplete applications – submitted via the Customer Portal – while performing outreach to customers.

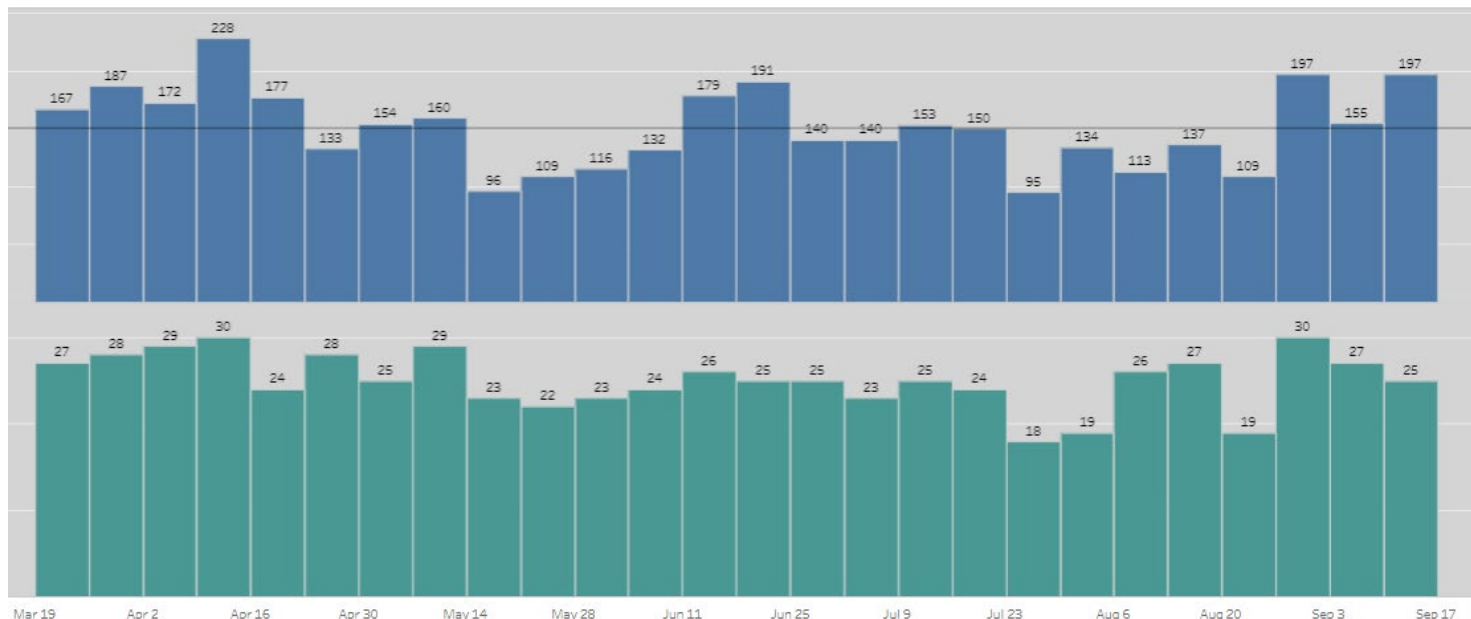
On February 8, 2023, DHS launched a pilot called Processing Wednesdays intended to prioritize call center staff to process applications, update customer files, complete reports and other operational tasks, which supports efforts to reduce the backlog. All regional offices remain open with regular services available according to their posted schedule.

As of September 11, 2023, DHS continues to see more cases completed or worked on Processing Wednesdays when compared to cases worked on regular Wednesdays (about 100 cases) prior to launch. 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.

DHS's operational adjustments and initiatives have contributed to an overall 43% reduction in overdue pending applications awaiting state action since January 2023 (Jan 2023: 4,274 vs Sept 2023: 2,404). Please refer to the chart below for the latest available data regarding the pilot and caseload.

- See next page -

## TASKS COMPLETED ON WEDNESDAYS



The top bar graph represents tasks completed on a Wednesday. Please note cases worked on Processing Wednesdays for July 2023 saw a decline because eligibility technicians were attending critical training related to Long Term Services and Support (LTSS). The bar graph at the bottom represents the number of available Call Center staff for the specified Processing Wednesday.

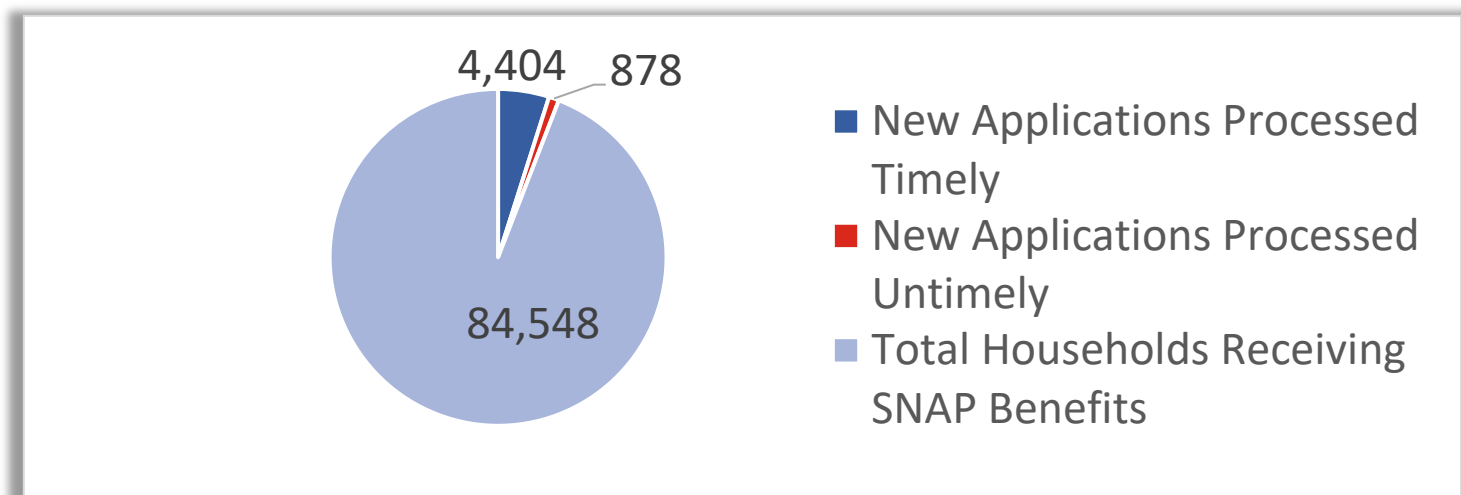
	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	60	551	611	13	45	58	<b>669</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	614	546	1,160	43	47	90	<b>1,250</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	10	380	390	13	46	59	<b>449</b>
<b>GPA Burial</b>	0	18	18	0	0	0	<b>18</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	31	31	0	0	0	<b>31</b>
<b>GPA</b>	42	83	125	8	4	12	<b>137</b>
<b>*RIW</b>	198	228	426	26	31	57	<b>483</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	31	425	456	56	1877	1933	<b>2,389</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	20	42	62	13	19	32	<b>94</b>
<b>Medicare Premium Payments</b>	8	192	200	8	8	16	<b>216</b>
<b>Medicaid Complex</b>	5	108	113	9	279	288	<b>401</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	11	173	184	2	48	50	<b>234</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>2,777</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>2,404</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>6,371</b>

Analysis continues on the existing overdue undetermined medical (1,877 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.

\*This is an estimate as of September 14, 2023, of pending applications for RI Works and is subject to change.

## SNAP TIMELINESS

In August 2023, **84,548** households received benefits. Approximately, **83** percent of new SNAP applications were processed in a timely manner. Approximately 17 percent of new applications were processed untimely.

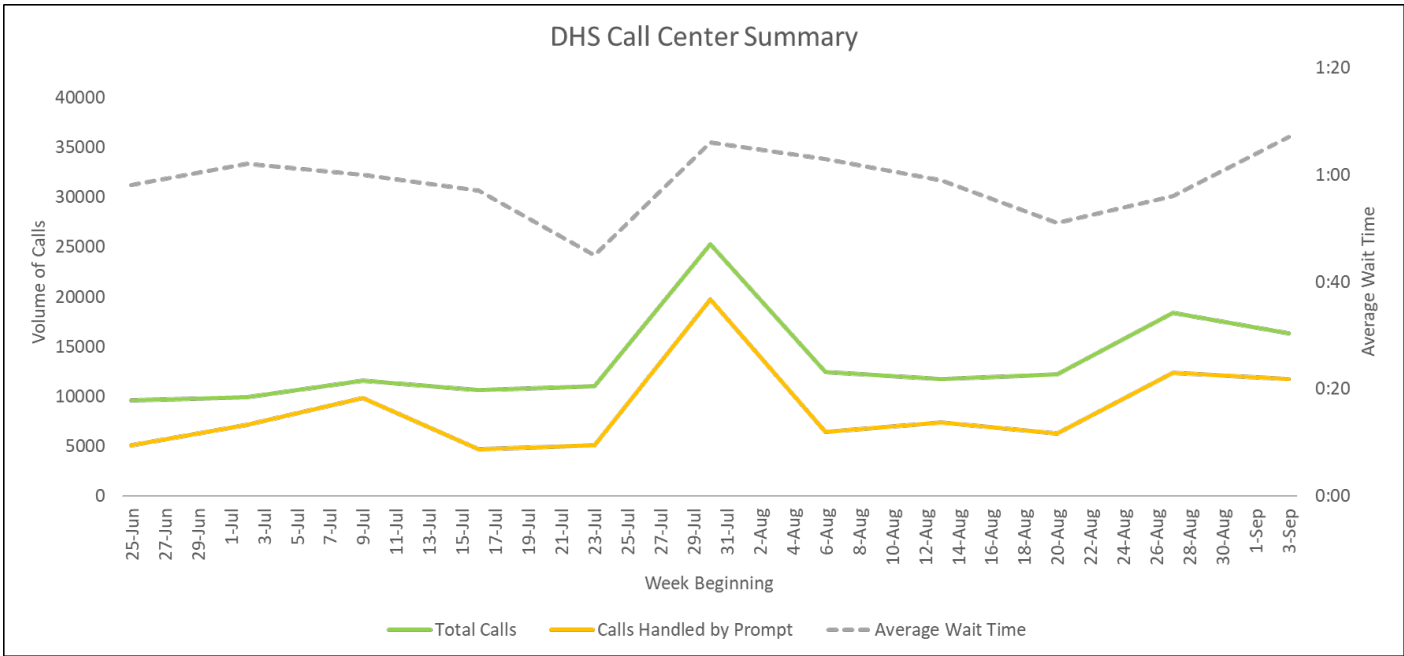


## CALL CENTER

***This report has been amended to correct the time frame of the reported Call Center data.***

Between August 16, 2023, and September 15, 2023, the average wait time to connect to DHS staff was approximately **59 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. To assist with managing increased Medicaid call volume, DHS launched a pilot on August 15 to support Medicaid Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) callers by routing appropriate Medicaid calls from the DHS Call Center to the HSRI contact center. Initial reports are showing increased customer service through decreased wait time for MAGI callers. DHS continually assesses its available resources and has started to shift additional resources to manage the SNAP volume through the initial success of this pilot. The busiest week at the Call Center was the week beginning August 27, 2023, with **18,390** 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.





Recent changes in average Call Center wait times reflect the ongoing Medicaid Redetermination efforts statewide and aligns with the increased cohort of active renewals requiring action from the customer.

### CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS (PENDING)

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
5	8/10/2023	513	\$2,674,216.37
5A	8/11/2023	10	\$12,579.74
5B	8/18/2023	26	\$47,865.62
6	8/24/2023	507	\$2,708,390.05
6A	8/25/2023	19	\$61,284.49
6B	9/1/2023	50	\$78,215.66

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (5, 5A, & 5B)	549	\$2,734,661.73
Off-cycle (5A & 5B)	36	\$60,445.36
Provider off-cycle/total	7.02%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.26%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (6, 6A, & 6B)	576	\$2,847,890.20
Off-cycle (6A & 6B)	69	\$139,500.15
Provider off-cycle/total	13.61%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	5.15%	-

## 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 August, DHS is processing a total of 16,499 case renewals, with approximately 7,900 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, Managed Care Organizations, 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 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](http://staycovered.ri.gov) website with notices, marketing collateral, and other resources such as a data dashboard to help support the Medicaid renewal process. In May 2023, DOA awarded a contract to Deloitte to provide data processing support so that DHS eligibility technicians can focus on Medicaid redeterminations through July 2024. Currently, all temporary support staff have been recruited and onboarded to provide data processing support to the DHS Eligibility Technicians working on Medicaid Redeterminations.

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service are important partners to the State. DHS continues to communicate regularly during the monthly touchpoints to review progress made.

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