



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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January 21, 2022

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight
101 State House
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, 2021 – 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
- LTSS Interim 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. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Celia J. Blue".

Celia J. Blue, Interim Director



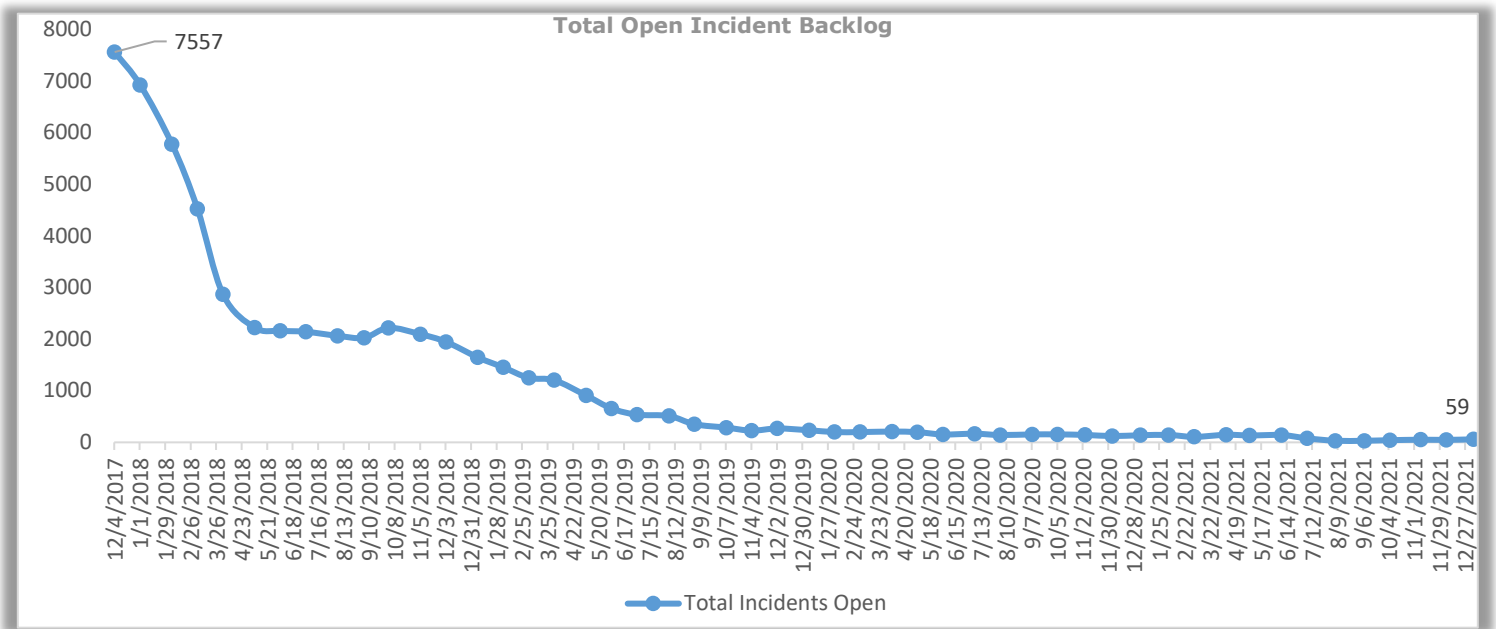
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

January 2022

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. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to focus on ensuring full compliance of the system. 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, 2022, there were **59** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since December, DHS hired 18 employees. This includes:

- 1 Eligibility Technician I
- 12 Eligibility Technician IIs in the Call Center
- 5 Customer Service Aides

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Customer Service Aid Huddle/Knowledge Transfer (Two half-hour sessions)	12-3-2021 12-13-2021	1	0	42
New Hire Orientation (Three full day sessions)	12-6-2021 12-7-2021 12-8-2021	13.5	3	0
Customer Relations Training Series (Two two-hour sessions)	12-7-2021 12-14-2021	4	0	13
Knowledge Transfer (Two half-hour sessions and one full hour session)	12-1-2021 12-3-2021	1	0	21
Fire Safety Training	12-3-2021	1	0	42
Time Management Training Series (Three two-hour sessions)	12-3-2021 12-10-2021 12-17-2021	3	0	21
	Totals	18.5	3	139
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “DHS FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality”- 675 staff enrolled “Telephonic Signature”- 31 staff enrolled “Telephonic Signature - Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD)”- 42 staff enrolled “Asset Verification System (AVS)”- 102 staff enrolled “Customer Portal”- 423 enrolled “SNAP Reinvestment Updates”- 427 enrolled “Visit Record”- 425 enrolled “RIW Mini-Series Completed”- 51 enrolled 	Combined total of 1,309* staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 473 Completed FTI 19 Completed Telephonic Signature 22 Telephonic Signature EAD 78 Completed AVS 282 Completed Customer Portal 184 Completed SNAP Reinvestment Training 223 Completed Visit Record Training 28 Completed the RIW Mini-Series 		
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed) {continued}				

* current number of staff trained is a duplicate number

Workshop Descriptions

Customer Service Aid Huddle/Knowledge Transfer: This session will provide an overview of how to properly conduct SNAP expedited screening and correct scanning processes. Furthermore, we will review recent changes to the expedited SNAP screening process.

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 including the introduction of our new workers to the *RIBridges* eligibility system. New Hire Orientation goals include:

- Understanding organizational hierarchy;
- Learning the mission and vision of DHS;
- Gaining an understanding of DHS' programs and services;
- Reviewing and learning policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code and other practices;
- Learning about the "LEAN" initiative;
- Obtaining mandated training for Federal Tax Information (FTI), civil rights, voter registration, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA); and
- Hands-on basic navigation and data collection training in *RIBridges*

Customer Relations Training: This training provides DHS staff information and strategies to build their customer service skills.

- **Session Two: Communicating Effectively with Your Customer:** This session focuses on effective telephone communication skills when assisting our customers. Participants will learn about styles, perceptions and how communication can be affected by stress.
- **Session Three:** This unit pulls together the key elements of the previous two sessions: understanding what our customers want, understanding what is not helpful, and how to deliver services to them effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore what it takes to demonstrate empathy, be responsive and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the customer expectation, creating an enthusiastically satisfied experience.

Fire Safety Training: This training provides general injury and fire safety re-education reminders for a safer world. Here we introduce the Emergency Response Team (ERT) volunteer program to assure an injury and fire safety team for you, our valued workforce. This protection of well-being approach intentionally combines our work and home environments to maximize safety.

Time Management Training Series: "Time Management" is working more efficiently to maximize client satisfaction. We encourage our workers to prioritize what is truly important. In this series, our workers explore the reality of time and the everyday obstacles of managing time, all while assessing competing and shifting priorities. By the end of the program, participants have tools to maximize their time, prioritize effectively, and most importantly, leave work feeling accomplished.

- **Session One: Understanding the Realities of Time**
There are only 24 hours in a day. This is the first reality. In this session, workers explore the realities of how to spend their time. Discussed are examples of practices that may be costing more time than realized.
- **Session Two: Handling Competing Priorities**
Days are filled with constant competing and shifting priorities including interruptions. Each of these can pull you away from your true priorities. In this session, participants explore tools to help them determine what work is most important, strategies and tactics to remain focused, and tools to handle interruptions.
- **Session Three: How to Leave Work Feeling Accomplished**
With busy schedules at work and home, it is hard to finish the day feeling accomplished because there is always something else to do. In this session, participants discover the difference between large and small to-do lists, how a calendar can help participants feel accomplished, and techniques to recognize small daily accomplishments and why that is important.

Knowledge Transfer Training: The purpose of these sessions is to communicate the system updates and changes. The learning goals include:

- Explaining new knowledge transfer process for releases:
- Reviewing each new/updated QRG, flash, etc. related to the upcoming release in the month of November; and

- Recognizing the end user impact of the system updates

Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings: These trainings are self-directed. Staff are enrolled through the Learning Management System.

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covered 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 for SNAP six-month interim processing. The intent of this course is to review best practices for interim processing.
- **Customer Portal:** A walk-through of the front and back ends of the customer portal.
- **Visit Record Refresher:** This course will provide 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 and enhancing consistency in our processes by appreciating the customer journey.

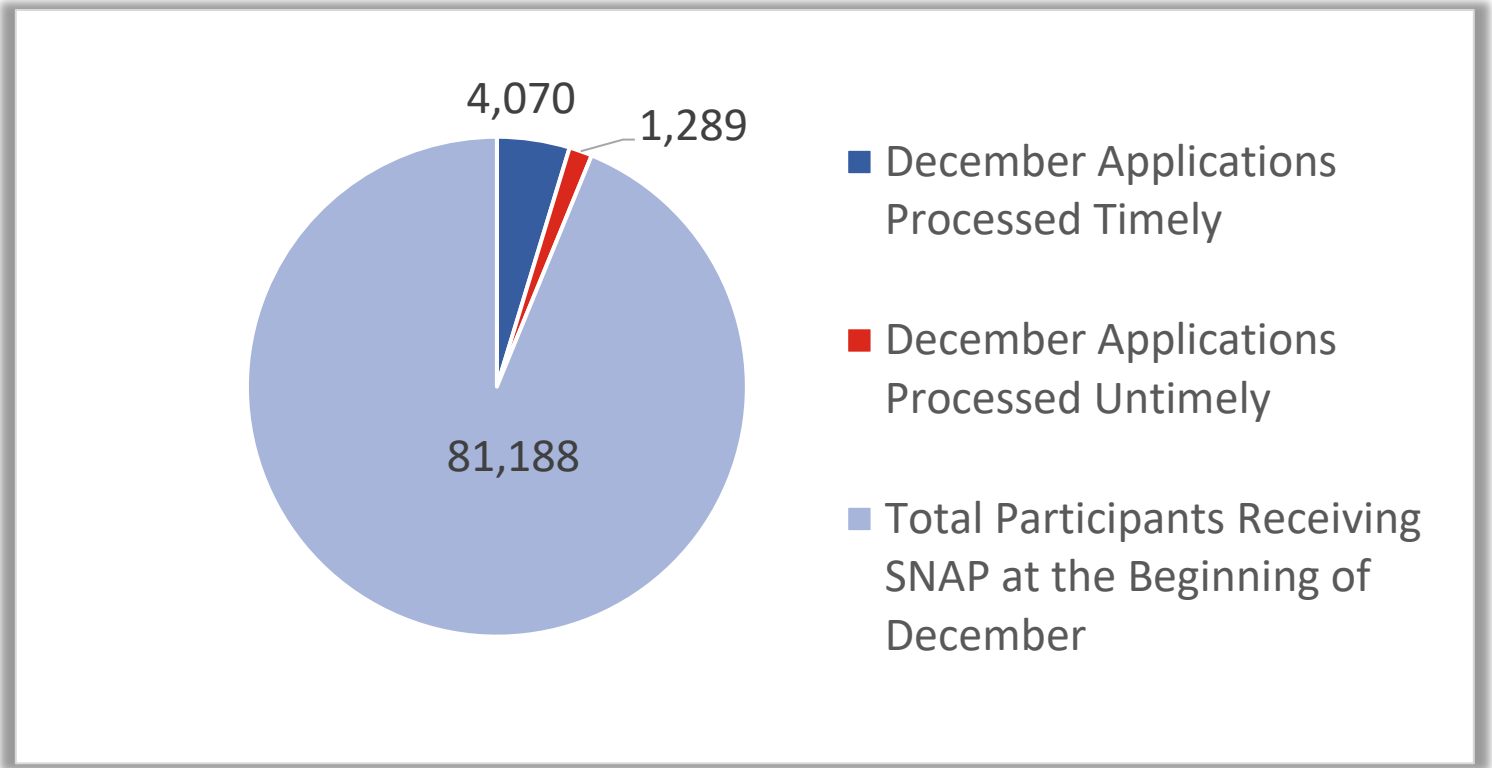
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **January 10, 2022**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **4,006**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,648**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	98	45	143	19	35	54	197
SNAP Non-Expedited	455	248	703	125	116	241	944
CCAP	21	120	141	2	15	17	158
GPA Burial	0	10	10	0	2	2	12
SSP	0	29	29	0	6	6	35
GPA	14	27	41	9	8	17	58
RIW	109	98	207	15	17	32	239
Undetermined Medical	21	202	223	104	1202	1306	1529
Medicaid-MAGI	73	43	116	66	71	137	253
MPP	10	91	101	12	28	40	141
Complex Medicaid	7	34	41	20	112	132	173
LTSS	12	216	228	3	36	39	267
Totals	820	1,163	1,983	375	1,648	2,023	4,006

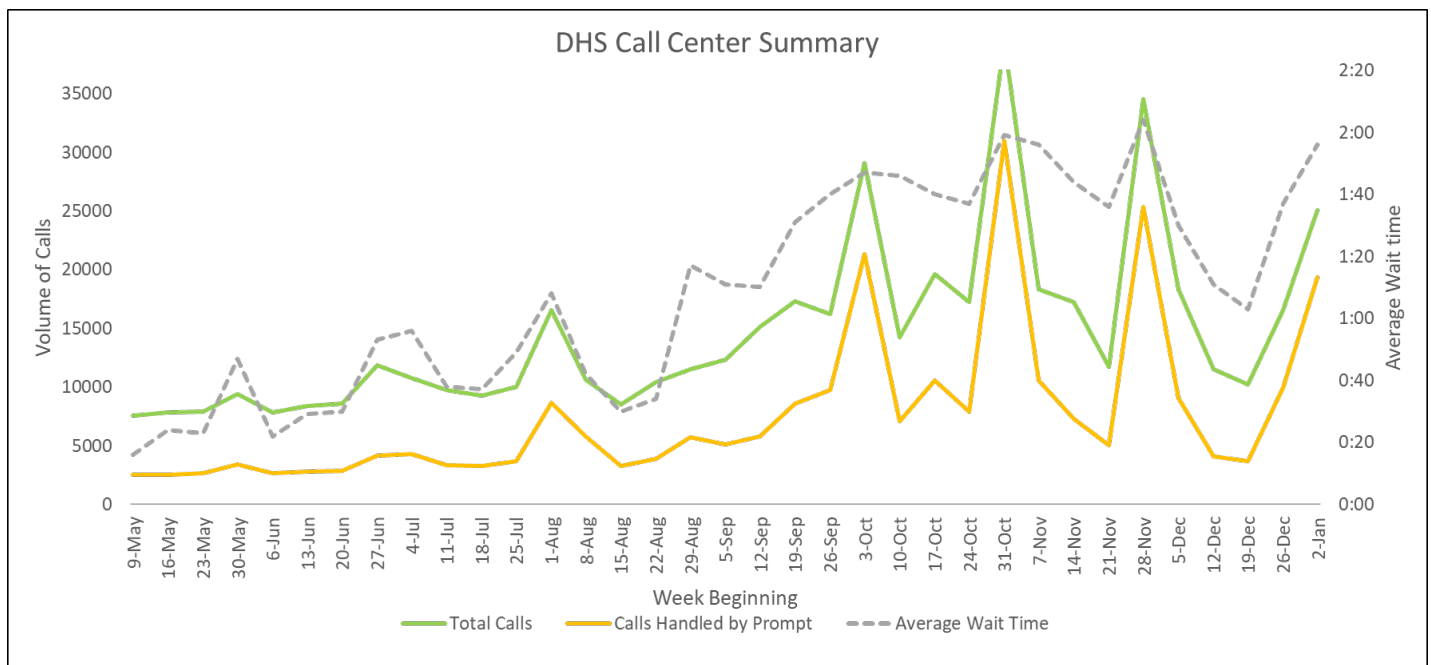
SNAP TIMELINESS

Despite the impact of COVID-19, **81,188** households received benefits in December. **76** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. 24 percent of applications were processed untimely.



CALL CENTER

For the five-week period of **December 5, 2021 through the week that started on January 2, 2022**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **1 hour and 27 minutes**. DHS recognizes this average wait time is an issue, and with understanding the pressure points that are impacting this longer wait, we have implemented operational changes. Additionally, as of January 18, 2022, we have hired 12 additional Call Center staff to address this issue.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between December 16, 2021 through January 15, 2022.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
14	12/16/2021	530	\$2,384,440.99
14A	12/17/2021	9	\$12,937.79
14B	12/24/2021	33	\$66,063.58
15	12/30/2021	519	\$2,195,689.52
15A	12/31/2021	17	\$99,048.77
15B	1/7/2022	25	\$66,271.92

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (14, 14A & 14B)	572	\$2,463,442.36
Off-cycle (14A & 14B)	42	\$79,001.37
Provider off-cycle/total	7.92%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.31%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (15, 15A & 15B)	561	\$2,361,010.21
Off-cycle (15A & 15B)	42	\$165,320.69
Provider off-cycle/total	8.09%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	7.53%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **36** overdue LTSS applications pending State action.

Through the contingency process, which ensures nursing and assisted living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, Rhode Island has paid out approximately \$227,000 in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2022. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021.

Our payment reconciliation process remains ongoing as we continue to meet with long term care facilities across the state. In total, the State has paid approximately \$154 million, and we have collected about \$134 million in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately 87 percent of the total amount of contingency payments made.

UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The State has verified that Medicaid renewals were appropriately initiated by the RIBridges System in compliance with the CMS approved renewal plan.

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 RIBridges system. There wasn't any communication during this reporting period.