



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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October 18, 2021

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 September 16, 2021 – October 15, 2021. 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



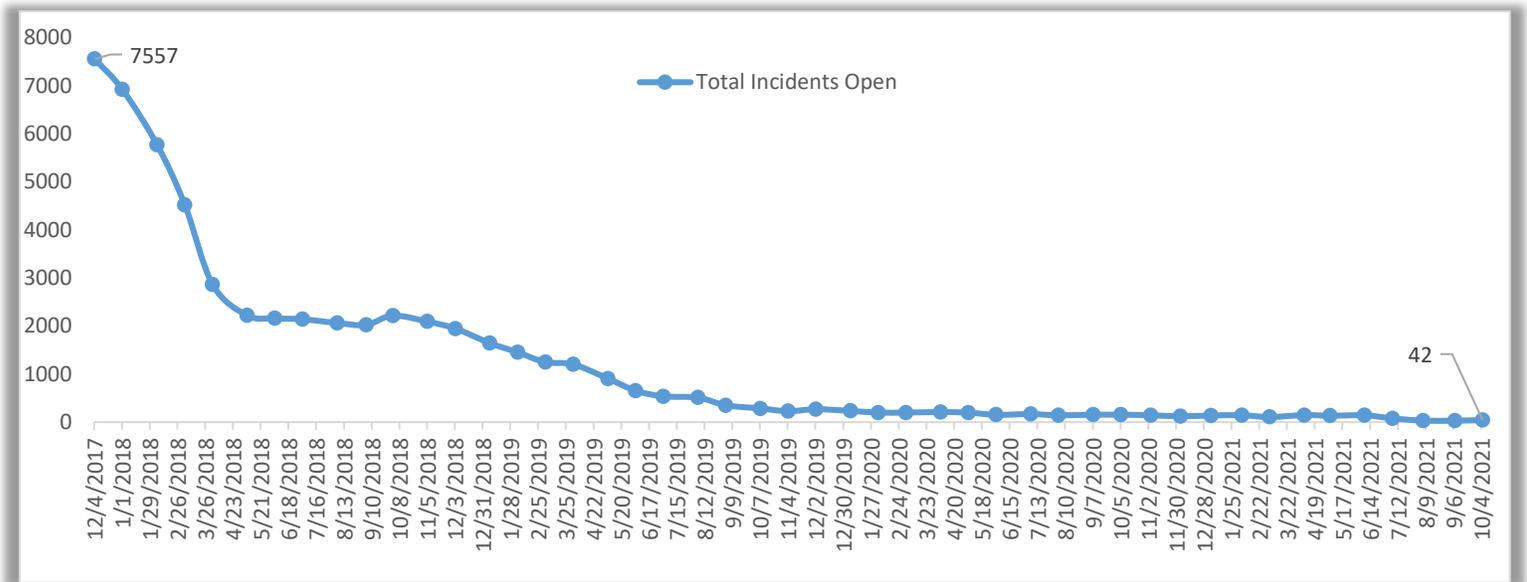
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

October 2021

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 October 5, 2021, there were **42** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

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

- 2 Social Case Worker in the Economic Support Services team
- 1 Customer Service Aide in the Woonsocket Field Office
- 1 Social Case Worker in the Long Term Services and Supports team
- 1 Programming Services Officer in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) team

DHS TRAINING
Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Multicultural Competency Training: Modules Two, Three and Four (Seven one-and-half hour sessions)	9-16-2021 9-21-2021 9-22-2021 9-23-2021 9-28-2021 9-30-2021	10.5	0	85
New Hire Orientation (Three full day sessions)	10-12-2021 10-13-2021 10-14-2021	13.5	2	0
September Quarterly Meetings (Six two-and-half hour sessions)	9-21-2021 9-22-2021	15	0	300
Application Registration Refresh (One one-and-half hour session)	9-22-2021	1.5	0	20
Knowledge Transfer (Six one -hour sessions)	10-6-2021 (3 sessions) 10-8-2021 (3 sessions)	6	0	171
STAR Supervisor Training (Three two-hour sessions)	9-21-2021 9-23-2021 9-28-2021	6	0	5
RIW Office Hours (Two one-hour sessions)	9-30-2021	2	0	10
Beacon Health Option Trainings (One one-hour sessions)	9-17-2021	1	0	32
Customer Relations Training Series (One two-hour sessions)	10-13-2021	2	0	26
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHS FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality 673 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature 31 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature -Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD) 41 staff enrolled 		0	Combined total of 851 staff trained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 457 Completed FTI 70 Completed AVS 18 Completed Telephonic Signature 16 Telephonic Signature EAD 265 Completed Customer Portal 25 Completed SNAP Reinvestment Training

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Verification System (AVS) 102 staff enrolled • Customer Portal (422) • SNAP Reinvestment Updates (422 enrolled) 			
Totals				

* current number of staff trained is a duplicate number

Workshop Descriptions

STAR Supervisor Training: This training was designed by supervisor for supervisors. The goals of the trainings are as follows:

- Instill the DHS Guiding Principles in everyday work
- Support supervisors by enhancing leadership, coaching and mentoring skills
- Build professional capacity through the DHS workforce
- Create tools that encourage and support a culture of continuous improvement
- Understand what constitutes good supervision
- Incorporate the DHS Guiding Principles in everyday work and decision making
- Resetting from past experiences and looking to the future of DHS
- Identifying behavioral styles

Multicultural Competency Training: 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 DHS 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.

Module Two: *Understanding Social Identity, Power and Privilege*

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of social identity, power and privilege. Special emphasis will be placed on social identity, power and privilege in human services settings. Objectives in this session include:

- Define the concept of social identity
- Explore the major forms of social identity in the United States
- Describe the three processes of social identity
- Describe the systems of power, privilege and oppression
- Identify one's position on the social identity scale and discuss implications for practice

Module Three: *Disrupting Implicit Bias with Inclusive Behaviors in the Workplace*

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of implicit bias. Special emphasis will be placed on implicit bias in human service settings. Objectives in this session include:

- Discuss the roots of bias
- Differentiate between explicit and implicit bias
- Present the common forms of implicit bias
- Identify strategies to disrupt implicit bias using the multicultural change intervention matrix

Module Four: *Combating Microaggressions with Inclusive Language in the Workplace*

Traditional notions of oppression hold that it is rare, occurring by a handful of rogue agents who intend to inflict harm on targets. However, it also occurs by well-meaning agents who convey unintentional, but no less harmful, “hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults.” The effects of these indignities, coined microaggressions, are cumulative. The purpose of this interactive module will be to present and discuss the contours of microaggressions, offering examples of inclusive language to combat microaggressions as a target or a bystander. Objectives of this session include:

- Describing the origins of the term microaggressions (i.e., identity-based abuse)
- Differentiating between agents and targets of microaggressions
- Identifying the manifestations of microaggressions (e.g., intent vs impact)
- Delineating the three types of microaggressions
- Describing the consequences on targets
- Delineating select microaggression themes
- Outlining strategies for responding to microaggressions as a target or bystander

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. This session also introduces employees to the RIBridges system. In this session, participants will:

- Understand organizational hierarchy
- Learn DHS’ mission and vision
- Gain an understanding of DHS’ programs and services
- Review and learn policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code, and other practices
- Learn about the LEAN initiative
- Obtain mandated training for Federal Tax Information (FTI), Civil Rights, Voter Registration and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA)
- Receive hands-on basic navigation and data collection training in RIBridges

Quarterly Meetings: DHS holds quarterly meetings with staff members to inform staff about upcoming changes, provide program updates, celebrate accomplishments and show appreciation for our staff members.

Rhode Island Works (RIW) Office Hours: The RI Works Office hours is led by a Clinical Training Specialist and the RIW program staff member. This space is created for eligibility staff that process RIW cases with the purpose of having them bring real case examples so that the trainer and program staff member can answer or walk through RIBridges and/or policy questions.

Knowledge Transfer Training: The purpose of these sessions is to communicate the system updates/changes to the attendees. Learning goals include:

- New knowledge transfer processes for releases
- Reviewing each new/updated QRG, flash, etc. related to the upcoming release in the month of November.
- Recognizing the end user impact of system updates

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP): The SNAP training is designed to introduce Eligibility Technicians (ET) to SNAP program policies and RIBridges.

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

- **Session One: Understanding Your Customer:** Every customer brings unique and standard expectations. In this session, the participants will begin to understand what internal and external customers expect. They will explore how change effects their customers and begin to explore the role empathy plays in every interaction.

- **Session Two: Communicating Effectively with Your Customer:** This session focuses on what it takes to communicate effectively with customers with an emphasis on communicating by phone. Participants will learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and what happens to communication during stress.
- **Session Three:** This unit pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand what customers want and what they don't want and how to deliver 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.

Application Registration Refresh: The purpose of this training is to provide DHS' clerical staff an overview of practices within the application registration process in RIBridges

Beacon Health Option Trainings:

- **Compassionate Leadership:** This training will give participants an in-depth look at how to lead with compassion. Attendees will learn the positive impact created by empathizing with the workforce. This course will illustrate how genuinely caring for the people you lead fosters better feedback, professional development and overall productivity.

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

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a 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 on SNAP six-month interim processing. The intent of this course is to review best practices for interim processing.
- **Customer Portal:** A walkthrough of the front and backend of the Customer Portal.

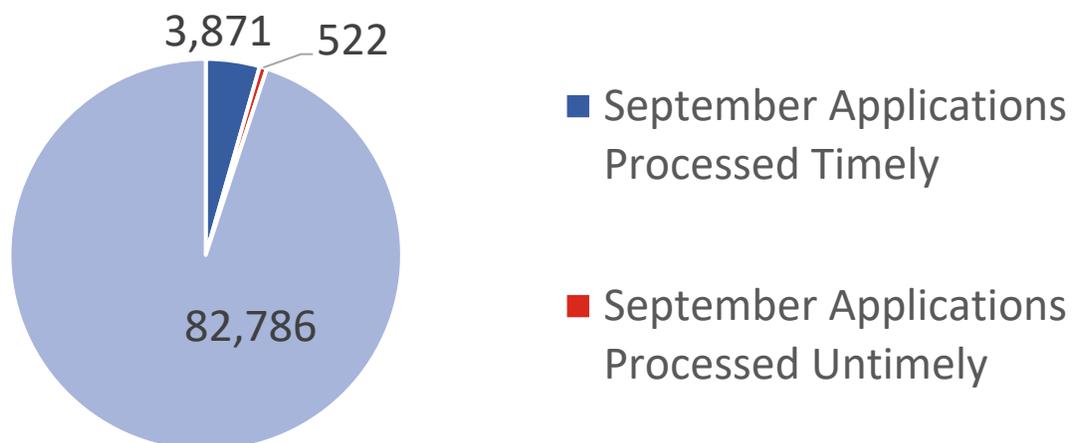
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **October 6, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **4,494**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,623**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	6	24	30	7	10	17	47
SNAP Non-Expedited	638	528	1,166	11	13	24	1,190
CCAP	36	297	333	1	9	10	343
GPA Burial	0	3	3	0	0	0	3
SSP	0	48	48	0	6	6	54
GPA	27	29	56	3	10	13	69
RIW	229	172	401	13	9	22	423
Undetermined Medical	27	194	221	42	1,051	1,093	1,314
Medicaid-MAGI	41	56	97	26	41	67	164
MPP	14	66	80	6	364	370	450
Complex Medicaid	15	36	51	12	81	93	144
LTSS	16	246	262	2	29	31	293
Totals	1,049	1,699	2,748	123	1,623	1,746	4,494

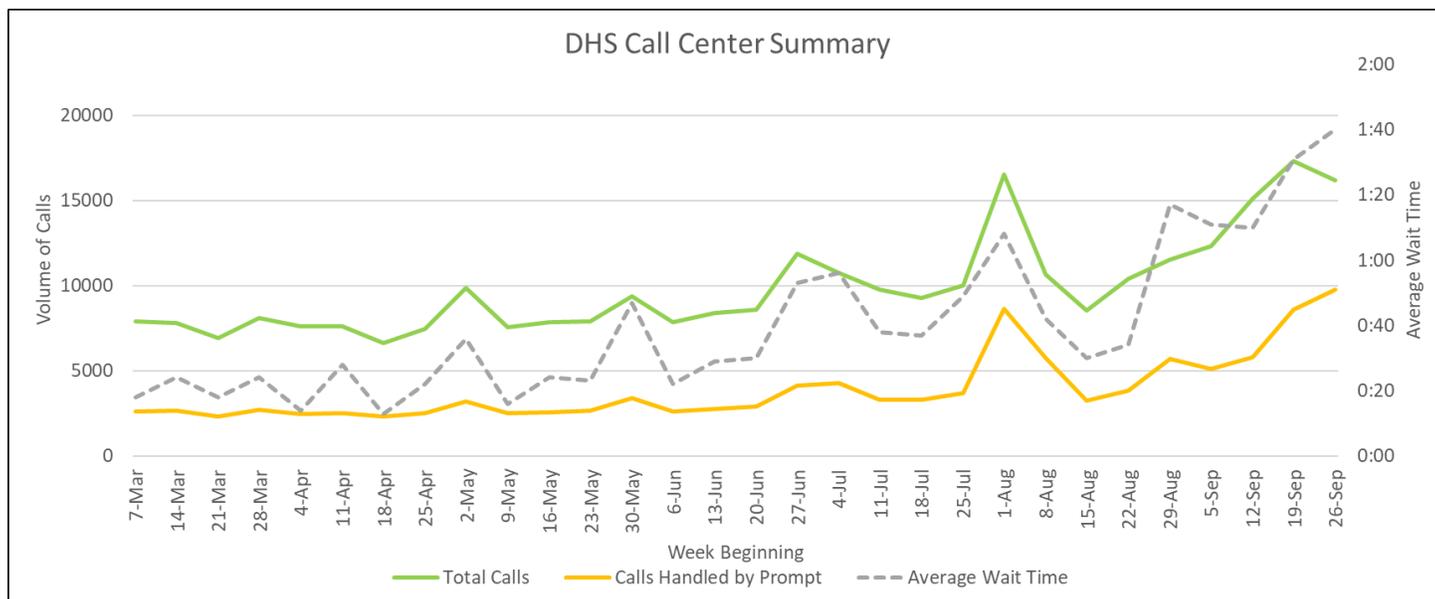
SNAP TIMELINESS

In September 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **82,786** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **88** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than **1** percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



CALL CENTER

For the five-week period of **August 29, 2021 through the week that started on September 26, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **1 hour and 22 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 and we are in the process of increasing Call Center staff to address this issue. The busiest week was the week beginning September 19th, and there were **17,299** calls then.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

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

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
7	9/9/2021	477	\$2,250,923.53
7A	9/10/2021	20	\$50,457.56
7B	9/17/2021	21	\$30,824.19
8	9/23/2021	484	\$2,152,062.33
8A	9/24/2021	16	\$63,337.74
8B	9/3/2021	26	\$176,151.85

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (7, 7A, & 7B)	518	\$2,332,205.28
Off-cycle (5A & 5B)	41	\$81,281.75
Provider off-cycle/total	8.6%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.61%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (8, 8A & 8B)	526	\$2,391,551.92
Off-cycle (6A & 6B)	42	\$239,489.59
Provider off-cycle/total	8.68%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	11.13%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **29** 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 paid out approximately **\$1.75 million** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2021. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021. We have made approximately **\$135,000** in interim payments to long term care facilities since 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 **\$152.5 million** and we have collected about **\$130.5 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately **85.5%** 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.