



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

September 18, 2026

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

Dear Chair Serpa:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, please accept the attached August report as the most recent monthly update on RIBridges-related operations and SNAP performance improvement activities.

This report focuses on the operational areas most directly tied to current performance, customer access, SNAP accuracy, and federally required payment error rate improvement activities.

Below, you will find monthly updates for the period of August 1 through August 31 on the following topics:

- Pending New Applications
- SNAP Timeliness
- Training and Staff Readiness
- SNAP Overpayment Recovery
- SNAP Accuracy / Payment Error Rate Improvement Activities
- Call Center Performance and Customer Access

DHS will continue to refine this report with new dashboards, data tools, and internal performance-monitoring structures. We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of Rhode Islanders and your interest in DHS's efforts to serve Rhode Islanders.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Merolla-Brito".

Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director
RI Department of Human Services



RIBridges: Monthly Update

September 2026

Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. This report provides a focused update on current operational performance across the RIBridges system, with an emphasis on application timeliness, SNAP accuracy, customer access, and program integrity. In alignment with ongoing improvement efforts, this report highlights key performance indicators, actions underway to strengthen case processing, and planned efforts to reduce payment error risks. Across these areas, DHS's strategy is increasingly focused on preventing errors and delays at the point of action rather than identifying and correcting them after they occur.

PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The number overdue applications awaiting state action increased to 2,515, as anticipated while the agency builds out the One Touch Processing Model. The accompanying table in this section provides a snapshot of the pending application volume, but it is important to recognize that cases regularly transition between customer action and state action throughout the eligibility process. DHS is actively managing this increase through targeted backlog reduction, expanded staffing capacity, workflow redesign, and increased focus on resolving actionable work at the first point of review.

The increase in pending applications continues to be driven primarily by new Medicaid applications including Undetermined, Complex and MPP cases. DHS has continued the implementation of recent federal SNAP policy changes, requiring additional training and operational adjustments for all eligibility staff due to our integrated eligibility system.

In an effort to improve timeliness and accuracy, DHS is making progress on several key efforts:

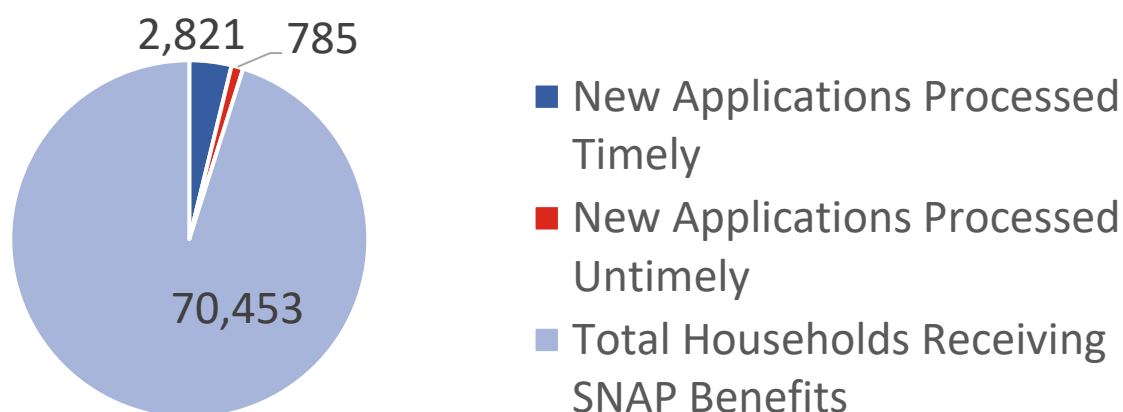
- The Program Integrity Unit, established by DHS operations, continues to focus on identifying and improving quality assurance, error trends, and implementing corrective actions. With a focus on accuracy and efficiency, the unit aims to improve first-touch accuracy thereby helping reduce payment error rates and minimizing rework.
- Building on the first-touch accuracy measure, DHS is now in the fourth month of implementation of its One Touch Processing Model. This approach is designed to resolve applications as completely as possible during the initial review by obtaining all necessary verifications up front, reducing the number of applications that would later be pending and awaiting customer action. This reduces the need for repeat processing and multiple customer contacts. During the initial phases of these initiatives, DHS anticipates a temporary increase in application processing times and pending workload. Over time, this investment will significantly reduce workflow churn, and the number of times a case is touched without a resolution. It will also lead to a decline in verification requests, reducing DHS' overall pending applications awaiting state or customer action.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
SNAP Expedited	305	91	396	104	132	236	632
SNAP Non-Expedited	1,200	414	1,614	180	288	468	2,082
CCAP	28	215	243	3	87	90	333
GPA - Burial	0	14	14	0	0	0	14
SSP	0	75	75	0	0	0	75
GPA	24	163	187	0	2	2	189
*RIW	133	206	339	25	25	50	389
Undetermined Medical	50	450	500	106	540	646	1,146
Medicaid - MAGI	12	19	31	37	79	116	147
Medicare Premium Payments	22	267	289	394	623	1,017	1,306
Medicaid Complex	7	263	270	10	535	545	815
LTSS	42	341	383	16	204	220	603
Grand Total	1,823	2,518	4,341	875	2,515	3,390	7,731

**This is an estimate of pending applications for RI Works and is subject to change.*

SNAP TIMELINESS

In **August 2026**, there were 70,453 households that received benefits. For new SNAP applications in August, approximately 78% (2,821) were processed timely. Approximately 22% (784) of new SNAP applications were processed untimely. Importantly, cases needing to be processed that are awaiting customer or state action (such as completion of interviews or receipt of requested documents) may become overdue, leading to the untimely authorization of benefits that is not reflective of the overall customer experience.



DHS TRAINING & STAFF READINESS

During this reporting period, the Center for Staff Development and Learning (CSDL) continued to strengthen workforce readiness through targeted training initiatives designed to broadly improve SNAP payment accuracy and program integrity.

Training activities included the continued development of staff onboarded in July. Newly hired staff who attended New Hire Orientation were introduced to RIBridges through the RIBridges Basics Learning Series, a critical training course that provides a foundation for program training. CSDL is also preparing to offer mandatory Quality Interviewing training for all eligibility staff and supervisors. The training was developed in part to address the payment error rate and strengthen consistent interviewing skills, which are needed to reduce errors across DHS programs.

SNAP OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY

DHS has resumed the collection of SNAP overpayments due to Inadvertent Household Error (IHE), Agency Error (AE), and Intentional Program Violations (IPV). While collections are part of a process that had been paused since 2017, DHS has been directed by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to resume collections in instances of overpayments that would, if left unaddressed, lead to higher payment error rates for the agency. The initial notices were issued to households with most collections dating back to September 2023.

The data in this section shows collections on overpayments on a **month-to-month basis**. Prior cumulative totals and historical data remain available in earlier oversight reports.

		Agency Error (AE)		Household Error (IHE)		Total
		SNAP	TANF	SNAP	TANF	
August-26	No. Of Claims	23	1	60	3	87
	Transaction Amount	\$1,352	\$43	\$1,615	\$107	\$3,117

These collections are required under federal guidance and are aligned with the goal to reduce payment error rates as mandated in H.R. 1.

-see next page-

SNAP Improvement Plan Spotlight – September 2026

DHS continues to make operational adjustments to improve SNAP payment accuracy. Since the August report, DHS has made progress in the following areas.

- **April Payment Error Rate:** The preliminary PER for April was 7.15%. This result is only an indicator of payment accuracy for the month, and should not be interpreted as the overall PER.
- **Updated Verification Matrix:** DHS shared an updated Verification Matrix with staff that provides standardized guidance on what eligibility information must be verified, acceptable documentation, and when self-attestation or additional follow-up is appropriate.
- **Supervisory Practices Survey:** DHS is using survey findings to inform operational improvements. The survey gathered supervisory practices, coaching, and staff development best practices, which will be used to create opportunities for greater consistency across the agency.

SNAP Accuracy and Payment Error Rate (PER) Improvement Activities

This section provides a monthly update on implementation progress and performance related to the SNAP Payment Error Rate (PER), as required under the Enacted FY 2026 Budget. DHS continues to advance a coordinated strategy across policy, operations, technology, workforce, and communications, with a focus on reducing high-impact error drivers and strengthening accuracy in an increasingly complex federal environment. This section includes key indicators on:

- Payment timeliness and accuracy;
- The status of PER-related technology modernization and system improvements;
- Staff training, readiness, and change management activities;
- Customer service enhancements; and,
- Any correspondence with federal partners related to SNAP PER.

Collectively, these updates are intended to promote transparency, minimize administrative burden, and align PER oversight with the State's fiscal, operational, and policy planning cycles.

Accuracy and Timeliness

DHS continues to monitor monthly Quality Control (QC) findings alongside historical trends to assess performance and identify primary error drivers. Additionally, Quality Assurance (QA) measures have been strengthened to identify errors before case approval. QA includes case reviews in error-prone areas, enhancements to eligibility screens to identify potential errors, and ongoing support to understand how system actions affect errors. Current analysis confirms that earned income, shelter/SUA, household composition, and Elderly & Disabled Simplified Application Project (ESAP) case characteristics continue to account for a disproportionate share of payment error and associated financial risk.

DHS is aligning corrective actions to these high-impact areas, with a focus on improving accuracy at the point of entry and reducing preventable errors through stronger case processing practices. RI DHS's official PER for FFY25, as calculated by the USDA, is 12.42%. Early FFY26 indicators showed improvement; however, as a lagging indicator, the state's overall PER for FFY26 continues to exceed the federal threshold despite recent QC and QA interventions. Sustained progress through September 30, 2026, remains critical, as this performance period will determine future federal cost-share exposure.

Current, self-reported FFY26 Payment Error Rate:

Sample Month	Combined Error Rate
October 2025	7.64%
November 2025	*17.72%
December 2025	*21.62%
January 2026	*19.48%
February 2026	13.13%
March 2026	8.11%
April 2026	7.15%
RI-calculated cumulative FFY26 error rate to date:	† 13.21%

** DHS processes and procedures were disrupted during this time frame due to the federal shutdown. During the shutdown, DHS and sister agencies prioritized minimizing benefit disruptions for vulnerable RI households while implementing policy and operational adjustments due to H.R. 1.*

† Please note the cumulative error rate cannot be derived from the sample averages shown above. The cumulative rate relies on underlying quality control figures and the number of sample cases reviewed each month. Sample sizes vary by month.

Technology Modernization Efforts

Technology modernization remains a core component of the PER reduction strategy. DHS continues implementation planning tied to the SNAP PER Improvement Plan, including development of a Performance Monitoring Framework, Business Process Redesign (BPR) readiness activities, and governance structures to oversee system-related improvements.

During this reporting period, DHS leadership formally approved several system enhancement initiatives to enter the 2026 system runway for scoping, design, development, and phased implementation. These initiatives are intended to strengthen decision support, reduce data entry and budgeting errors, and address QC error drivers at the point of entry and action. Approved initiatives include:

- Enhanced contextual help text within the Customer Portal and Worker Portal to clarify verification requirements, reporting expectations, and key eligibility definitions;
- Development of a Navigator Tool to guide eligibility staff through high-risk policy areas (e.g., household composition, earned income, shelter deductions) with structured prompts and embedded policy references; and
- Expanded BOT integration within RIBridges to automate routine inquiries, support discrepancy identification, and reduce unnecessary task generation associated with common customer-reported changes.

These initiatives will be scoped in alignment with PER priorities and incorporated into the 2026 technology roadmap. Implementation sequencing will be informed by QC findings, operational risk areas, and system capacity planning.

Additionally, DHS is preparing to enhance its intranet to provide easier searchability of the agency's extensive collection of published policy documents and user guides. The intranet enhancements will be launched in the coming weeks. Additionally, a new policy tool is under development to support staff with SNAP policy and processing questions so they can make the best eligibility decisions with a high degree of accuracy. The tool is presently in a testing phase and will soon be ready for small groups of field staff to explore and provide feedback that will help shape its continued development. Full rollout will occur later this year. Over time this tool will support staff across all DHS programs.

DHS continues to evaluate system-generated task volume, document handling constraints, and routing inefficiencies that contribute to operational workload and potential delays in case action. During this reporting period, DHS and implementation partners continued reprioritization of system enhancement requests based on operational impact, implementation feasibility, and available system capacity. Certain initiatives continue to require coordination across system capacity, federal guidance, and policy implementation timelines to support phased and operationally aligned rollout activities.

In parallel, DHS is operating during the statewide Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP/Workday) transition led by the Department of Administration (DOA). While ERP reporting refinements are ongoing, this transition has not disrupted core eligibility operations, caseload processing, or call center performance. DHS is coordinating closely with DOA to ensure continuity of data reporting and anticipates improved efficiency and visibility while system refinements are being completed.

Collectively, these efforts shift us away from manual processing to guided, system-supported decision-making, improving consistency and reducing error risk at the point of entry.

Staff Training and Readiness

DHS continues to prioritize workforce readiness as a key driver of sustained PER improvement, particularly in the context of increased complexity under H.R. 1. Training and readiness efforts are focused on building staff capability in high-risk areas and reinforcing consistent case processing practices, including:

- Targeted huddles on immigration policy changes.
- Ongoing training programs that take a blended learning model (awareness, knowledge, and practice) to strengthen the application of policy in real-world scenarios
- Continued supervisor-led coaching, reinforcement of one-touch processing, and interview quality expectations
- Additional implementation readiness activities underway include development of standardized interview guides, case note tools, simulated interview training models, and targeted huddle scripts aligned to high-risk QC findings. DHS is also launching supervisor-focused workgroups to strengthen coaching consistency, implementation readiness, and reinforcement of operational expectations across offices.
- Ongoing onboarding and development of newly hired staff

DHS has formally implemented its SNAP PER Change Management Plan, establishing:

- Clear governance and decision-making structures across policy, operations, QA, and technology
- Structured communication cadence to ensure consistent messaging
- Integrated feedback loops connecting QC findings to training, policy clarification, and system enhancements
- Performance monitoring tied to measurable outcomes

Additionally, DHS continues to advance staff engagement through the Improvement Captain Network, cross-functional implementation teams, town halls, and feedback channels to support adoption and continuous improvement.

This approach reinforces a culture of confidence, consistency, and shared accountability, which is critical to sustaining improvements in accuracy and performance.

Customer Service Enhancements

DHS continues to modernize service delivery to improve customer access while supporting accuracy and compliance.

Operational enhancements include:

- Expansion of SNAP Connect and phone-based service delivery, increasing access to interviews and reducing missed appointments
- Continued shift toward appointment-based service models, improving predictability and reducing lobby congestion
- DHS is also advancing refined lobby and triage practices in pilot office locations, including updated signage, scripts, workflow testing, and routing approaches intended to improve customer navigation, reduce unnecessary transfers, and support for one-touch processing objectives
- Increased use of digital and self-service tools, allowing customers to access services through multiple channels (phone, online, in-person)
- Ongoing monitoring of call center performance, including wait times, callback utilization, and service levels

These efforts reflect a transition to a multi-channel access model, improving customer experience while aligning staffing resources with demand.

Updates related to work requirements, eligibility changes, and benefit adjustments are being incorporated into operations, training, and customer communications. In addition, DHS maintains ongoing engagement with community partners and stakeholders to support coordinated implementation, minimize customer confusion, and to ensure continued access to services.

Federal Correspondence

During this reporting period, DHS continues routine engagement with federal partners regarding SNAP administration and payment accuracy. There is no federal correspondence related to SNAP PER penalties to report for the September 2026 Oversight Report. DHS remains committed to transparency and will promptly report any future federal communications related to PER as part of this monthly oversight framework.

Ongoing PER Governance and Next Steps

PER oversight is coordinated through a structured governance model that includes:

- Monthly SNAP Accuracy Oversight Working Group to review performance trends, corrective actions, and key decisions
- A QA Governance and Collaborative model to analyze QC findings, identify root causes, and drive cross-functional corrective actions
- An Office of Program Integrity (OPI) to integrate QA, QC, appeals, and claims and shift toward proactive error prevention

- Executive Leadership Team (ELT) oversight to align PER efforts with H.R. 1 implementation and budget strategy

This structure ensures error trends are translated into actionable improvements with clear ownership and accountability.

DHS continues to strengthen its Performance Monitoring Framework, with a focus on:

- Tracking top error drivers (earned income, shelter/SUA, household composition, ESAP) and financial exposure
- Monitoring case-level accuracy and timeliness
- Differentiating between agency and client-caused errors
- Integrating QC and operational data to prioritize high-impact actions

This supports a shift toward targeted, data-driven decision-making focused on reducing overall PER and financial risk.

DHS is prioritizing high-impact actions in alignment with key error drivers to focus on:

1. Point-of-Entry Accuracy

- Reinforce one-touch processing and interview quality
- Expand supervisor coaching and QA-aligned reviews
- Advance real-time decision support tools

2. ESAP Corrective Actions

- Complete caseload validation and eligibility review
- Correct misclassified cases and assess structural changes
- DHS continues implementation of ESAP find and fix activities, including data validation, State Wage Information Collection Agency (SWICA) integration review, and refinement of closure logic. Early implementation activity has also identified process gaps and manual processing constraints that are being addressed prior to broader scaling efforts. DHS continues to coordinate QA, QC, policy, and operational teams to improve targeting accuracy and reduce unintended impacts during implementation.

3. Policy Alignment

- Finalize updates to household composition and reporting rules
- Align policy, system logic, and training

4. Technology Sequencing

- Advance Navigator, help text, and automation initiatives
- Prioritize tools that improve accuracy at intake

5. Program Integrity Integration

- Expand pre-authorization reviews for high-risk cases
- Strengthen QA feedback loops and OPI monitoring

DHS will continue to support adoption and operational consistency through the following activities:

- Expansion of the Improvement Captain Network and implementation teams
- Targeted, error-driver-based training and coaching
- Reinforcement of standardized expectations across offices

- Sequenced training and communication ahead of policy and system changes

Organizational Change Management activities continue to expand through ongoing SNAP Scoop communications, Improvement Captain engagement, and development of the PER Knowledge Hub intended to centralize operational guidance, training resources, implementation updates, and reinforcement materials for staff. DHS is also increasing in-person engagement and implementation readiness activities as workstreams transition from planning to operational rollout.

DHS has finalized a structured 30-, 60-, and 90-day backlog reduction strategy focused on actionable pending work, system-generated task volume, document handling, lobby routing, and a “Finishing Team” model for aging work items.

CALL CENTER

Performance and Customer Access

The volume and duration of calls for the month of August 2026 resulted in an approximate wait time of **29 minutes and 31 seconds**, which is consistent with the operational goal of keeping wait times below 30 minutes. The recorded wait time remains a key metric to help ensure we are prioritizing customer access—supported by ongoing initiatives such as SNAP Connect, Technology Adoption Days, and IVR enhancements that together reduce abandonment rates.



DHS - Monthly Call Center Report

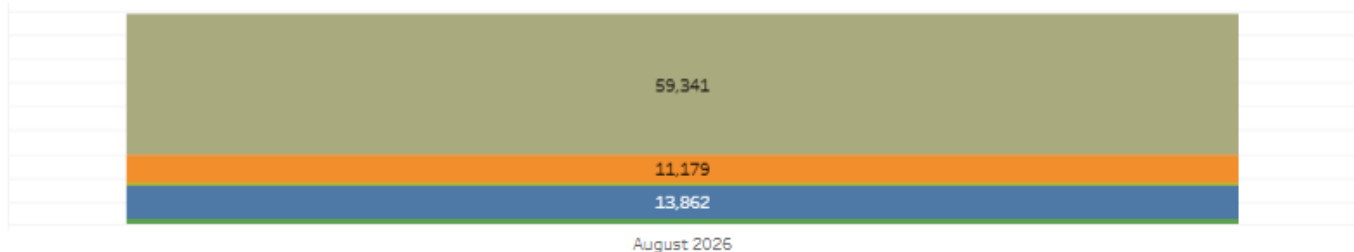
SELECT DATE RANGE

8/1/2026

8/31/2026

GD

Color Key Prompt DHS Agent Triage Agent Abandon Callback



Total Calls	88,860	100%
Unique Calls	20,417	100%
Handled by Age..	8.5%	
DHS Agent	11,179	12.58%
Triage Agent	1,577	1.77%
Prompt	59,341	66.78%
Abandon	13,862	15.60%
Callbacks	2,901	3.26%
Avg Abandonment	0:36:59	
Avg Wait Time	00:29:31	
Avg. Talk Time	0:09:23	

As part of our efforts to improve efficiency, in alignment with federal PER requirements, the agency is prioritizing Call Center modernization efforts that will also improve service delivery for customers. DHS has established a cross-agency Call Center

and Policy Engine Modernization Working Group to plan for, identify and procure the technology enhancements needed to boost worker accuracy, improve customer service, and lower the PER.

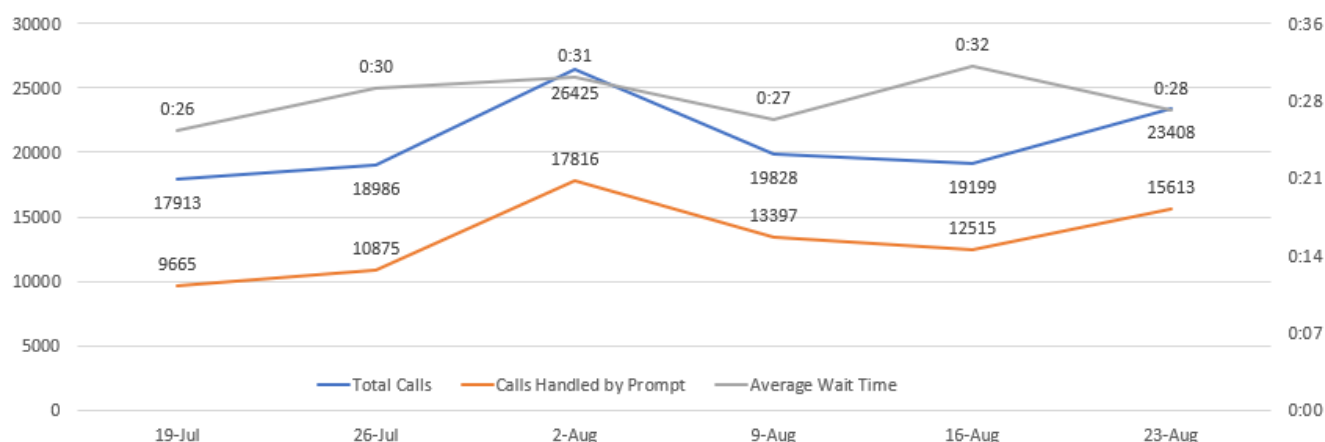
These modernization efforts seek to create more efficient and customer-centric services while ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds. Working with the Enterprise Technology Strategy and Services division, DHS is currently in the process of reviewing bids for vendor engagement to acquire enhanced technology.

The busiest week at the Call Center is the **week beginning August 2, 2026, with 26,425 calls** to DHS. While this is a higher than usual call volume, it aligns with increased call volume typically seen near the beginning or end of a month. Additionally, the implementation of federal SNAP eligibility changes due to H.R. 1 have led to additional inquiries about the changes and calls to report new information.

The federal changes have been communicated to customers by direct mail, shared on staycovered.ri.gov, and posted on DHS’s social media channels. DHS continually monitors and reviews Call Center data to effectuate appropriate operational changes.

A chart visualizing a summary of Call Center activity is available here:

Call center summary 7/19 – 8/31



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