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Office of the Director
Kimberly Merolla-Brito

November 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 November 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 October 1 through October 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,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director
RI Department of Human Services

RIBridges: Monthly Update
November 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

DHS continues to manage pending application workloads across programs while balancing current caseload demands, evolving federal requirements, and continued efforts to improve processing efficiency.

As of the October reporting period, 2,166 overdue applications were awaiting state action, representing an approximate 3% decrease from the previous reporting period. DHS continues to prioritize reducing overdue workloads through targeted case processing, staffing support, workflow improvements, and increased emphasis on resolving actionable cases at the first point of review.

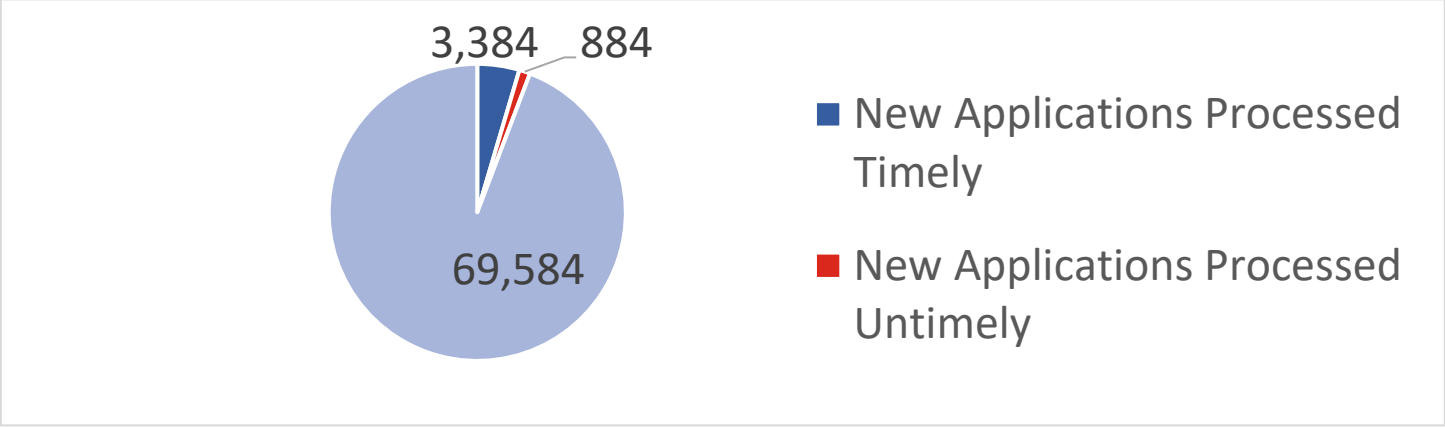
Pending application volumes continue to be driven primarily by Medicaid applications, including Undetermined Medical, Complex Medicaid, and Medicare Premium Payment (MPP) cases. DHS continues to implement federal SNAP policy changes that require training and operational adjustments across eligibility programs within RIBridges. Despite these additional demands, overall application processing timeliness has improved.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
Program	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	Grand Total
CCAP	19	176	195	12	109	121	316
GPA	16	150	166	2	6	8	174
GPA - Burial	0	23	23	0	1	1	24
LTSS	37	295	332	6	185	191	523
Medicaid - MAGI	9	17	26	59	102	161	187
Medicaid Complex - Below 65	1	146	147	6	481	487	634
Medicaid Complex - Over 65	2	34	36	5	78	83	119
Medicare Premium Payments	50	347	397	69	465	534	931
RCA	0	5	5	0	0	0	5
RIW	103	186	289	83	50	133	422
SNAP Expedited	371	70	441	177	53	230	671

SNAP Non-Expedited	1,099	249	1,348	157	105	262	1,610
SSP	0	73	73	0	2	2	75
Undetermined Medical	52	417	469	82	529	611	1,080
Grand Total	1,759	2,188	3,947	658	2,166	2,824	6,771

SNAP TIMELINESS

In October 2026, 69,584 households received SNAP benefits. Of the 4,268 new SNAP applications processed during the month, 3,384 (79%) were processed timely, while 884 (21%) were processed outside established timeframes. DHS continues to focus on improving timeliness through enhanced interview access, targeted processing efforts, and improvements in document collection and verification workflows. While delays may result from outstanding customer information or required processing actions, DHS remains focused on reducing avoidable delays and ensuring eligible Rhode Islanders receive benefits as promptly as possible.



DHS TRAINING & STAFF READINESS

To support the agency's continued efforts to strengthen eligibility accuracy and reduce errors, the Center for Staff Development and Learning (CSDL) implemented targeted training and reinforcement activities.

These efforts included Quality Interviewing training sessions focused on strengthening staff interviewing skills, improving information gathering, and supporting accurate and complete eligibility determinations across DHS programs. Additionally, CSDL delivered two targeted Medicaid accuracy trainings:

Medicaid Accuracy: Rotational Assignment Refresher
This training is designed to reinforce staff knowledge and application of Medicaid eligibility requirements.

Medicaid Accuracy: Hierarchy for Supervisors
This training focused on strengthening supervisors' understanding of Medicaid eligibility hierarchy and their ability to provide effective guidance and oversight to staff.

CSDL also developed a huddle script titled "Medicaid Accuracy: Non-Citizen Assistance Eligibility Changes," which resulted in 44 huddles facilitated by operations supervisors across the agency. These huddles were designed to reinforce staff understanding of policy changes, clarify eligibility requirements, and promote consistent application of Medicaid policy. Together, these initiatives demonstrate a collaborative approach between CSDL and Operations to strengthen staff competencies, reinforce policy knowledge, promote consistent eligibility practices, and improve the accuracy of eligibility determinations.

SNAP OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY

DHS has resumed collection activities related to SNAP overpayments resulting from Inadvertent Household Error (IHE), Agency Error (AE), and Intentional Program Violations (IPV), consistent with applicable federal requirements. These activities, which had been paused since 2017, are part of DHS's broader effort to strengthen program integrity, establish accountability for identified overpayments, and improve the accuracy of benefit administration.

The data below reflects monthly recovery activity. DHS continues to coordinate claims administration with broader payment accuracy improvement efforts, including enhanced quality assurance, case reviews, and preventive controls designed to reduce future errors.

		Agency Error (AE)	Household Error (HE)	Total
October 2026	No. of Claims	18	64	82
	Transaction Amount	$398	$1,858	$2,256

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

SNAP Improvement Plan Spotlight – November 2026

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

Improvement Captain Network
The Improvement Captain Network is a DHS initiative developed to support operational improvements. The network consists of volunteer peer leaders from offices across DHS who have received training and resources to help staff navigate operational changes. Improvement Captains serve as points of contact within their offices, sharing updates, answering questions, and gathering staff feedback to support ongoing improvement efforts.

Medicaid Work Requirement Readiness
DHS continues preparing staff for upcoming federal Medicaid work and community engagement requirements. Staff huddles have provided information on the new requirements and resources available to support implementation. DHS is also directing staff to the StayCovered RI website for updated guidance, frequently asked questions, and screening resources to support customer communications

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. The SNAP PER includes both agency and client-caused errors. Client-caused errors may result from incorrect information being provided at the time of application, failure to report a change in circumstances, or intentional program violations. The SNAP team regards the current, self-reported PER as a

lagging indicator as the most current PER is a reflection of QC cases reviewed for benefits issued four months prior to the review month, based on an eligibility determination that may have been made up to 36 months prior to benefit issuance, depending on the customer's certification period. Because report months reflect QC errors based on eligibility determinations made months prior, they do not adequately reflect the outcomes from current DHS improvement activities.

To illustrate this example, the QC SNAP team worked on errors from December 2025 issuances in April of 2026. December 2025 issuances can be based on eligibility determinations made up to three years in the past, depending on the case type. The official and final PER for Rhode Island is released on an annual basis each June. While RI DHS is forecasting the FY2026 PER on a monthly, self-reported basis from internal SNAP QC reviews, RI DHS will not have the official FFY2026 PER until June 2027 when the Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA), formerly Food and Nutrition Services, reports the final rates to SNAP state agencies. 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.

Application and Recertification Case Reviews

Rhode Island implemented a Pre-Authorization Case Review process to strengthen SNAP payment accuracy by identifying applications with higher potential risk of payment errors before benefits are issued. The process is designed to provide an additional quality assurance review step, allow for timely correction of errors, and help focus supervisory resources on cases more likely to require intervention.

The approach aligns with findings from the FNA risk assessment study, which identified that states commonly develop risk assessment tools to address payment error rates and better allocate available review resources toward higher-risk cases.

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Workflow Diagram

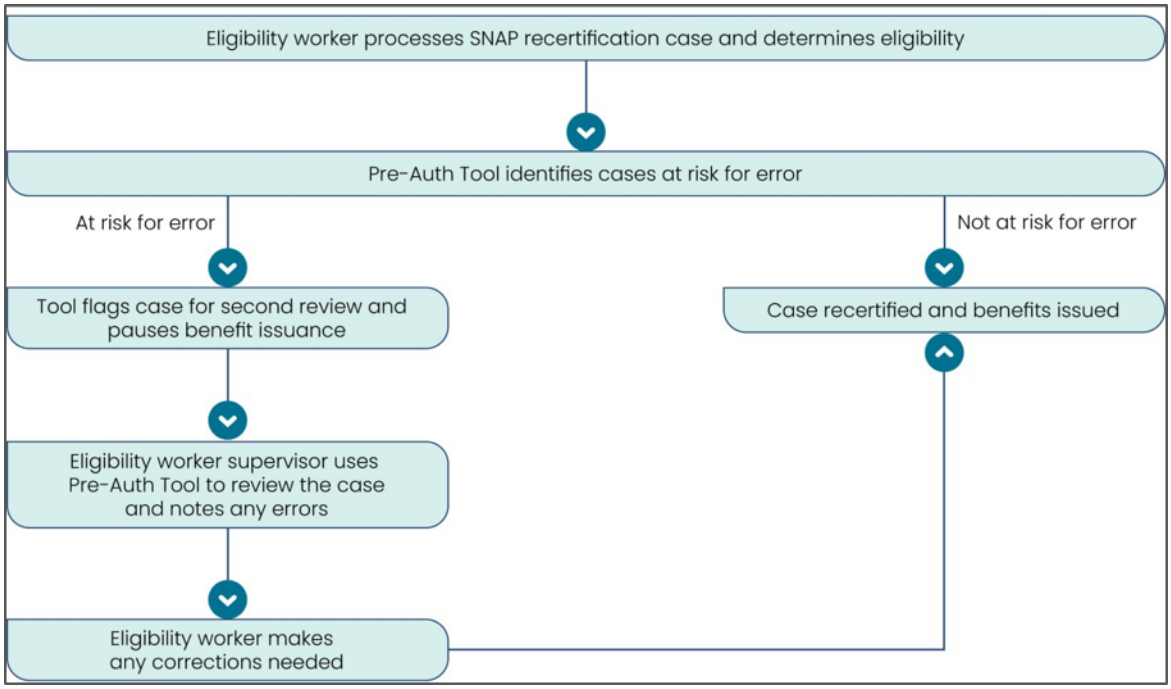


Figure 1: Rhode Island's Pilot of the Pre-Auth Tool
Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Administration, Understanding Risk Assessment in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Payment Accuracy: Final Report (December 2025), Figure 3.4.

The Pre-Authorization Case Review process uses risk indicators to identify applications requiring additional review prior to authorization. Cases identified through the review process are routed for supervisory review before benefits are issued, allowing potential eligibility or benefit calculation issues to be addressed proactively. The review process supports identification of cases with increased likelihood of payment errors, additional review prior to benefit issuance, correction of identified issues before errors impact payment accuracy; and, improved targeting of quality assurance resources.

The FNA Risk Assessment study highlighted that risk assessment approaches can help states identify cases with errors and establish more structured processes for targeted review. Rhode Island was one of the state agencies included in the study that provided additional data regarding the effectiveness of its risk assessment approach.

The study also found that Rhode Island's risk analysis tool was effective at identifying cases with errors, although it also identified some cases as high-risk that ultimately did not contain errors. This highlights the importance of balancing error detection with efficient allocation of review resources.

Rhode Island continues to utilize and enhance the Pre-Authorization Case Review process by leveraging review outcomes and error trends to refine risk indicators, improve targeting of high-risk cases, and maximize the impact of available quality assurance resources.

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. FFY2026 performance is a key factor in Rhode Island's future SNAP benefit cost-share exposure. Although that federal fiscal year ended September 30, QC reviews remain underway, and the final federally determined rate will not be available until June 2027.
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	* 20.53%
February 2026	13.13%
March 2026	8.11%
April 2026	7.15%
May 2026	15.60%
June 2026	5.52%
RI-calculated cumulative FFY26 error rate to date:	**† 12.94%**

** 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.

DHS leadership has already 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.

DHS is also advancing its Knowledge Hub and Agent Ramp initiative to provide eligibility staff with easier access to policy guidance, verification requirements, and processing resources. Initial development and testing activities have focused on SNAP policy and operational support, with opportunities for field staff and supervisors to provide feedback before broader implementation. These efforts are intended to strengthen consistency in eligibility determinations, reduce time spent searching for guidance, and support staff confidence in applying complex program requirements. Future expansion will be informed by pilot results, staff feedback, and operational needs across 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. DHS alongside its implementation partners continue to reprioritize 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.

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

During October 2026, the Department continued its commitment to improving payment accuracy, strengthening program knowledge, and promoting consistency in eligibility determinations through targeted training and ongoing technical assistance. Training activities focused on reinforcing staff understanding of program policies, improving the quality of information collected during eligibility interviews, and supporting accurate application processing across SNAP, Medicaid, Rhode Island Works (RIW), Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS), and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

A key training delivered during this reporting period was the continued implementation of the Quality Interview Training, which included four sessions reaching 66 staff members and supervisors responsible for conducting SNAP eligibility interviews. By strengthening staff members' ability to gather complete and accurate information during the interview process, this training is designed to reduce errors associated with incomplete or inconsistent information and support improved SNAP payment accuracy.

Foundational training also remained a priority, with learning series training focusing on Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Medicaid Eligibility, Rhode Island Works (RIW), and RIBridges system functionality. These sessions supported staff by strengthening their understanding of eligibility requirements, program policies, and accurate processing of applications. Additionally, 52 staff members participated in three Truv training sessions, which primarily focused on the interface used to support verification activities. Strengthening staff ability to use the verification tool contributes to more reliable eligibility information, reducing the potential for case processing errors, and supporting accurate and timely benefit determinations.

To reinforce classroom learning and address emerging operational challenges, DHS continued offering program-specific office hours across SNAP, Medicaid, RIW, LTSS, and CCAP. These sessions provided staff and supervisors with opportunities to clarify policy and system questions, discuss case-processing challenges, and strengthen the consistent application of

eligibility rules. This ongoing technical assistance serves as an important strategy for identifying potential errors before they affect benefit determinations and reinforcing accurate case-processing practices.

Collectively, October's training activities reflect a proactive approach to payment accuracy and program integrity. 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 the 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 November 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:

- A 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.

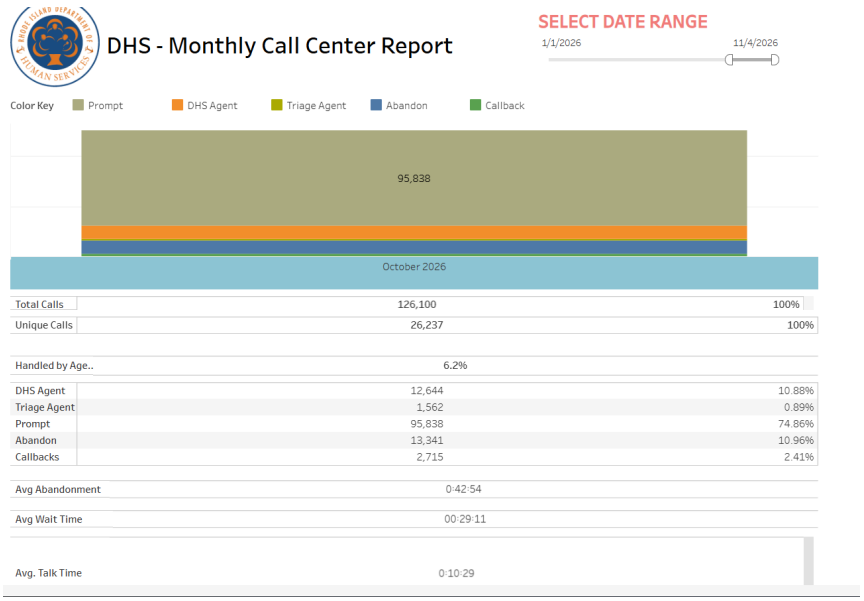
DHS has developed a structured 30-, 60-, and 90-day backlog reduction strategy focused on reducing overdue actionable work, improving system-generated task management, addressing document processing and routing inefficiencies, and strengthening workload accountability. The strategy includes a proposed "Finishing Team" approach to prioritize aging work items and support more timely case resolution. Implementation will be monitored through pending case trends, processing timeliness, and operational performance measures.

CALL CENTER

Performance and Customer Access

In October 2026, the average Call Center wait time was 29 minutes and 11 seconds, within DHS's operational goal of less than 30 minutes. DHS continues to monitor call volume, repeat calls, abandonment, and staffing availability to identify opportunities to improve customer access.

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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 October 16, 2026, with 70,619 calls** to DHS. While this is a higher than usual call volume, the implementation of federal SNAP eligibility changes due to H.R. 1, ABAWD clock restarts, and verification changes may have led to additional inquiries 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:

