



**May 2024 Caseload
Estimating Conference**
RI Department of Human Services
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Caseload Testimony

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May 2024 Caseload Conference

Rhode Island Department of Human Services

The members of the Caseload Estimating Conference have requested that the Department of Human Services (DHS) provide written answers to various questions in addition to the presentation of their estimates. Red text denotes the start of a question and responses are highlighted throughout the document.

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Rhode Island Works (RIW) Program

RI Works is Rhode Island's name for the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Authorized under Public Law 104-193 in 1996 (the welfare reform legislation "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act" or PRWORA), the TANF program is a block grant to states to achieve the following purposes:

- Assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes
- Reducing the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
- Preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

States create their own programs within the parameters of TANF. RIGL § 40-5.2 authorizes RI Works. It was previously known as the Family Independence Program (FIP) when enacted in 1997. In 2008, it was revised as the RI Works program to align with TANF's employment goals and policies and to help recipient families become employed and self-sufficient. The goal of RI Works is to eliminate or reduce the harmful effects of poverty on families and children by fostering employment and opportunity as a means to economic independence (RIGL § 40-5.2-6 (a)); and to eliminate the stigma of welfare by promoting a philosophy and a perception that the purpose of welfare is to eliminate or reduce the harmful effects of poverty on families and children by promoting work opportunities for all Rhode Island residents (RIGL § 40-5.2-6 (c)).

All activities and services provided through the RI Works program are intended to promote stability and economic progress for families through the provision of supportive services, the development of employment skills and intensive work readiness services. The RI Works program supports adult family members to work by offering the following benefits and services:

- **Cash Assistance** is provided to families experiencing poverty that meet certain regulations
- **Comprehensive Assessment and Service Planning** for families receiving cash assistance
- **Child Care Assistance** is provided to support the family, when needed
- **Employment Supports** which includes assistance with job training, adult education, and obtaining employment at livable wages
- **Food Assistance** is provided by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- **Transportation** reimbursement and/or bus passes are available to support preparation for employment
- Parents are strongly encouraged to apply for **health care** while on RI Works

The TANF Block Grant is the funding source for RI Works. In order to draw Rhode Island's \$94.7 million federal grant, the State is required to maintain an historic level of investment in programs that serve low-income families. This investment is called Maintenance of Effort (MOE), and these expenditures are calculated each fiscal year and must be at least 80 percent of historic "qualified" state expenditures under the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program. In Rhode Island, 80 percent MOE is \$64.4 million.

Profile of RI Works

Household Breakdown	Household Breakdown	
	Households with 1 parent	64.2%
	Households with 2 parents	6.4%
	Households with child-only cases	29.4%

Race and Ethnicity	Race and Ethnicity	
	American Indian or Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	1.2%
	Asian, Non-Hispanic	1.1%
	Black or African American, Non-Hispanic	19.4%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0.3%
	White, Non-Hispanic	27.0%
	Hispanic, including Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban	30.7%
Unable to Determine the Ethnicity or Race	20.3%	

Age	Age	
	Adults aged 18 and older	31.3%
	Children under age 18	68.7%

Recipients per Household	Recipients per Household	
	1 individual	20.6%
	2 individuals	34.5%
	3 individuals	23.8%
	4+ individuals	21.1%

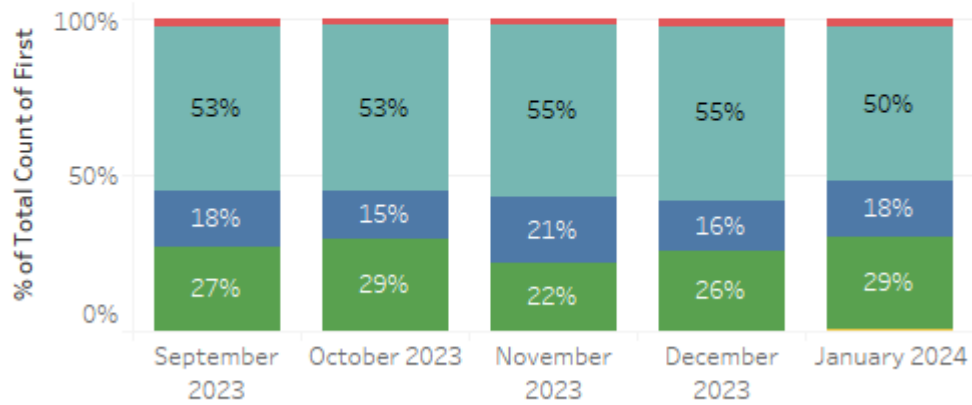
Profile of RI Works (Continued)

Education Levels	Self-Reported Education Levels for Adults	
	Less Than 8th Grade	2.5%
	8th Grade	2.2%
	9th Grade	5.2%
	10th Grade	6.5%
	11th Grade	14.9%
	12th Grade or GED Completed	42.7%
	Some College, Not Graduated	17.0%
	Two Year Degree	4.4%
	Four Year Degree	2.9%
	Post Four Year Degree	0.6%
	Unknown	1.1%

Color Key

- Four Year Degree
- Associates/Some C..
- Masters Degree +
- HS Diploma/GED
- Less Than HS Diplo..

Education Level



City/Town	City/Town	Cases	Individuals
	Barrington	8	27
	Bristol	16	38
	Burrillville	21	57
	Central Falls	146	377

	Charlestown	1	3	
	City/Town	Cases	Individuals	
	Coventry	34	73	
	Cranston	154	378	
	Cumberland	40	104	
	East Greenwich	8	14	
	East Providence	100	250	
	Exeter	2	5	
	Foster	3	9	
	Glocester	3	10	
	Hopkinton	6	12	
	Jamestown	1	3	
	Johnston	51	121	
City/Town	Lincoln	32	80	
	Little Compton	1	2	
	Middletown	45	117	
	Narragansett	5	12	
	New Shoreham	0	0	
	Newport	115	316	
	North Kingstown	37	82	
	North Providence	93	242	
	North Smithfield	10	24	
	Pawtucket	371	924	
	Portsmouth	14	42	
	Providence	1,233	3,330	
	Richmond	6	15	
	Scituate	8	22	
	Smithfield	15	44	
	South Kingstown	13	34	
	Tiverton	21	49	
	Warren	16	36	
	Warwick	112	269	
	West Greenwich	3	4	
	West Warwick	66	164	
	Westerly	15	34	
	Woonsocket	359	938	
	Undetermined	16	42	
		Total	3,200	8,303

City/Town		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Hardships City/Town and Year	Barrington	0	0	0	0	2
	Bristol	7	9	0	0	1
	Burrillville	2	0	0	0	1
	Central Falls	87	68	29	52	21
	Charlestown	0	0	0	0	0
	Coventry	7	4	0	4	2
	Cranston	92	7	7	15	11
	Cumberland	13	7	7	15	6
	East Greenwich	0	7	7	15	0
	East Providence	26	7	7	15	15
	Exeter	0	7	7	15	0
	Foster	0	0	0	0	1
	Glocester	2	0	0	2	0
	Hopkinton	0	0	0	2	1
	Jamestown	3	0	0	8	0
	Johnston	13	25	13	29	6
	Lincoln	4	31	20	31	1
	Little Compton	0	0	0	0	1
	Middletown	14	13	23	19	6
	Narragansett	0	0	0	0	0
	New Shoreham	0	0	0	0	0
	Newport	69	64	62	95	23
	North Kingstown	25	15	7	9	4
	North Providence	14	10	2	23	9
	North Smithfield	0	0	0	0	1
	Pawtucket	135	153	105	132	33
	Portsmouth	3	6	0	1	2
	Providence	1,079	829	524	537	141
	Richmond	3	0	0	0	0
	Scituate	8	9	0	11	3
Smithfield	0	8	4	11	3	
South Kingstown	4	0	0	2	1	
Tiverton	0	0	0	0	4	

Hardships City/Town Yr	Warren	3	0	0	0	3
	City/Town	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Warwick	45	47	42	32	11
	West Greenwich	0	0	0	3	0
	West Warwick	25	14	4	24	5
	Westerly	0	0	0	0	1
	Woonsocket	170	131	74	170	48
	Other/Multiple City	2	0	2	2	0
Total	1,855	1,471	946	1,274	367	

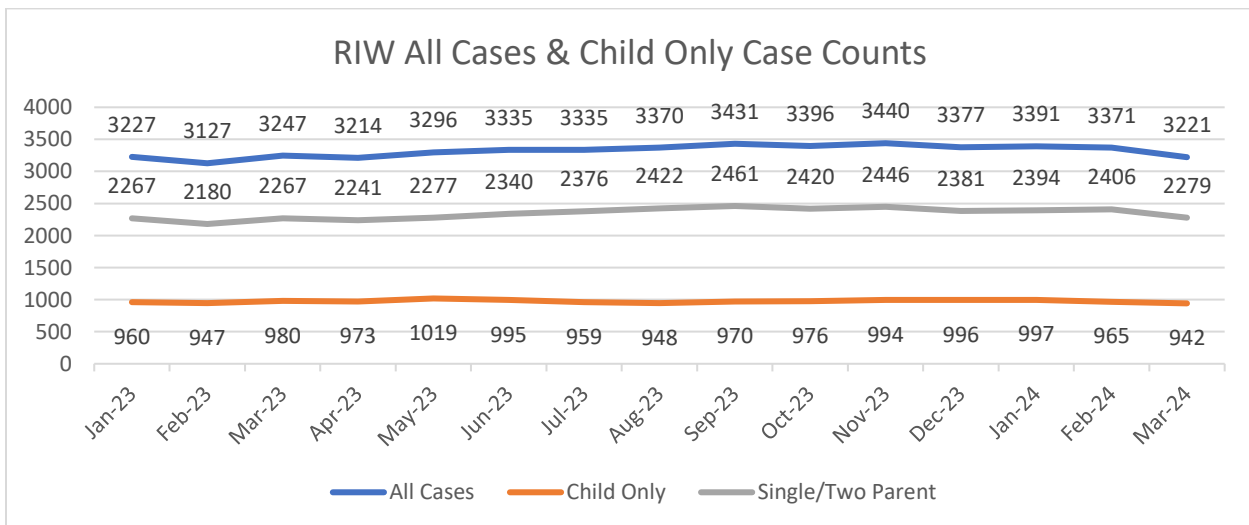
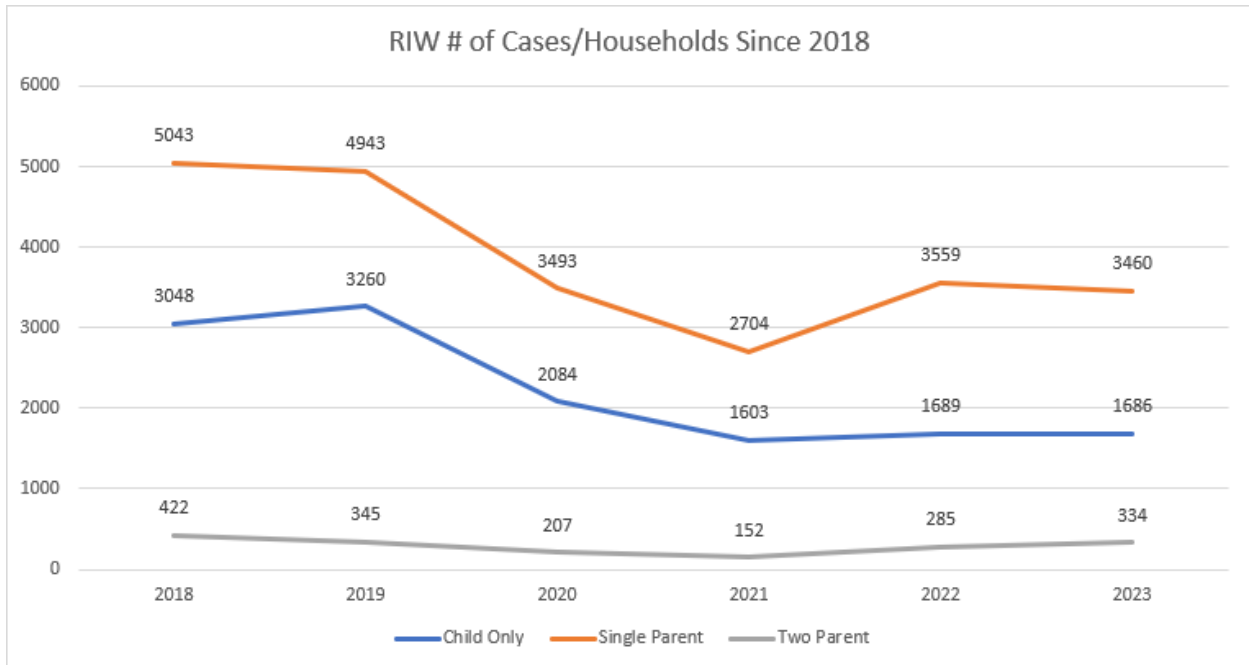
Family Type		Months on RI Works				Total
		0-24	25-48	49-60	>60	
	Single-Parent	826	571	496	162	2,055
	Two-Parent	144	35	16	10	205
	Total	970	606	512	172	2260

Duration of Benefits	Year	Median Duration of Benefits
	2019	35
	2020	40
	2021	44
	2022	36
	2023	36
	2024	40

2024 Cases			
City/Town	Child-Only	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
Barrington	0	8	0
Bristol	3	13	0
Burrillville	6	13	2
Central Falls	51	91	4
Charlestown	1	0	0
Coventry	13	20	1
Cranston	37	105	12
Cumberland	15	21	4
East Greenwich	6	2	0
East Providence	25	68	7
Exeter	0	2	0
Foster	1	2	0
Glocester	1	1	1
Hopkinton	5	1	0
Jamestown	1	0	0
Johnston	16	31	4
Lincoln	9	21	2
Little Compton	0	1	0
Middletown	7	36	2
Narragansett	3	2	0
New Shoreham	0	0	0
Newport	21	92	2
North Kingstown	16	21	0
North Providence	18	65	10
North Smithfield	4	4	2
Pawtucket	104	244	23
Portsmouth	5	8	1
Providence	380	758	95
Richmond	2	4	0
Scituate	2	6	0
Smithfield	2	10	3
South Kingstown	5	8	0
Tiverton	5	16	0
Warren	4	12	0
Warwick	32	71	9
West Greenwich	2	1	0
West Warwick	19	45	2
Westerly	9	6	0
Woonsocket	105	237	17
Undetermined	5	9	2
Total	940	2,055	205

Question: How many child-only cases are included in the estimate for FY 2024 and FY 2025? How many families receive the payment(s)? Please include data for the last five years.

Answer: Thirty percent of the caseload is projected to be child only-cases for FY 2024 and 30 percent for FY 2025. The percentage of child-only cases prior to COVID had been stable at 35 percent. The percentage of child-only cases since COVID have varied from 26 percent to 48 percent. The projection was created using a weighted average of the past 12 months and 6 months respectively.



Question: Please provide for the last five years how many parents are currently without a plan due to:

- a. Exemption from employment planning

Answer: 234 cases are currently active with exemptions

Exemptions	Yearly Data
2019	318
2020	300
2021	121
2022	147
2023	155
2024	234

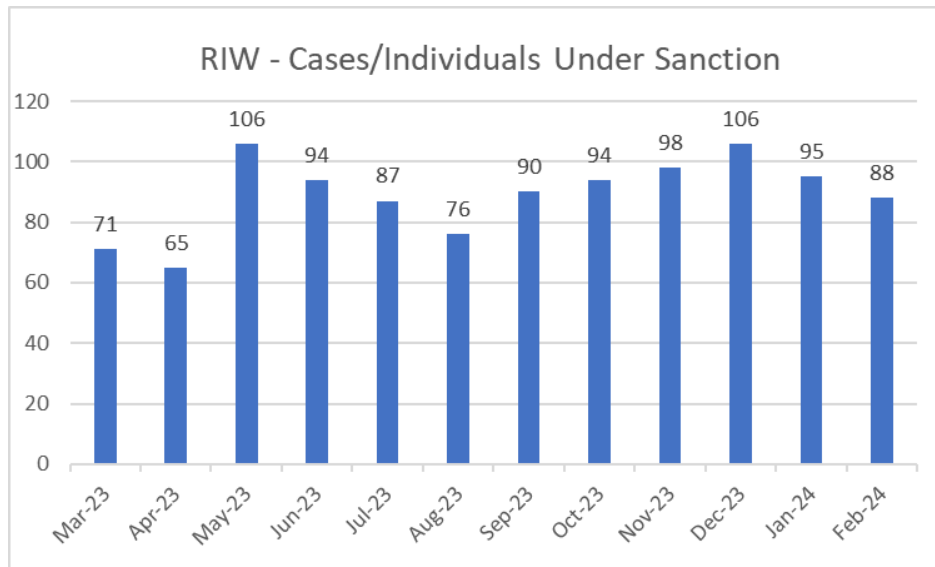
- b. Being between plans

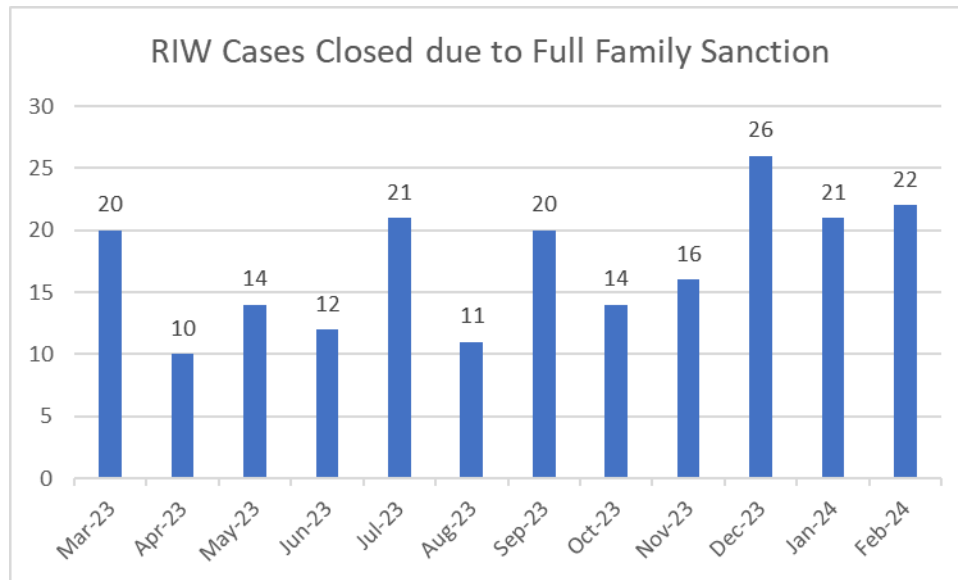
Answer: 134 cases are currently active without a plan

Between Plans	Yearly Data
2019	184
2020	78
2021	95
2022	66
2023	101
2024	134

- c. Sanction—by month, the number of parents sanctioned for not complying with work requirements in FY2023 and FY2024

Answer: Please see graphs and charts below.





This chart does not represent the number of cases actively participating in RI Works while receiving a Full Family Sanction (FFS), but rather the number of non-compliant cases closed due to an FFS.

RI Works Trends

From the beginning of the Rhode Island Works program the number of families participating in the RI Works program decreased year-over-year. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the RI Works caseload never fully recovered back to the prior caseload of about 3,800 cases. All COVID-related leniencies have been removed.

DHS has seen the RI Works caseload stabilize. The average caseload increase runs between 0.75 percent to 1 percent. The Department estimates that for the remainder of FY 2024 and through FY 2025, the caseload will have a slight increase of 0.75 percent per month through June 2024; this is based on statistical review of the past 36 months. The FY 2024 and FY 2025 projections account for the effect of the Medicaid Renewals due to the ending of the Public Health Emergency. In the 2025 projections, caseload is projected to continue the gradual increase of 0.75 percent monthly over time.

DHS has successfully partnered with multiple community agencies to conduct outreach to Rhode Island families who had become disengaged in RI Works. Partnering agencies have increased supports for applicants, as well as existing RI Works customers. The increased access to assistance for both DHS applications and required documentation will contribute to the gradual increase in RI Works cases through FY 2025.

According to the 2023 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook, 15 percent of children in RI are living in poverty and 7 percent of children are living in extreme poverty, which equals nearly 14,600

children¹. The RI Works program is providing benefits to roughly 6,000 children or 41 percent of the children living in extreme poverty. This is only 0.78 percent of the RI population. RI Works and RI Kids Count have begun discussions with providers regarding innovative ideas to outreach residents who may be eligible for services but not accessing the program.

RI Works families often require additional wraparound services, above and beyond those required by the typical job seeker, to secure long-term stability for their family. Families frequently face many barriers including: unstable housing, mental health and substance abuse challenges, low literacy levels, and other challenges associated with living in poverty. DHS and RI Works providers take the necessary time to develop stabilization services and help residents access long-term employment on their pathway out of poverty.

RI Works Recent Legislative Changes

Pregnancy at Onset

The regulatory change is complete, systematic changes are completed.

Question: Please provide an update on field office operations and any staffing challenges and any impact on enrollment from those challenges.

Answer: As of April 1, 2024, field office operations have maintained their commitment to accessibility, with 5,282 pending new applications showing a slight increase of less than 1% from March. The oversight of 1,338 overdue applications reflects ongoing efforts to manage caseloads effectively.

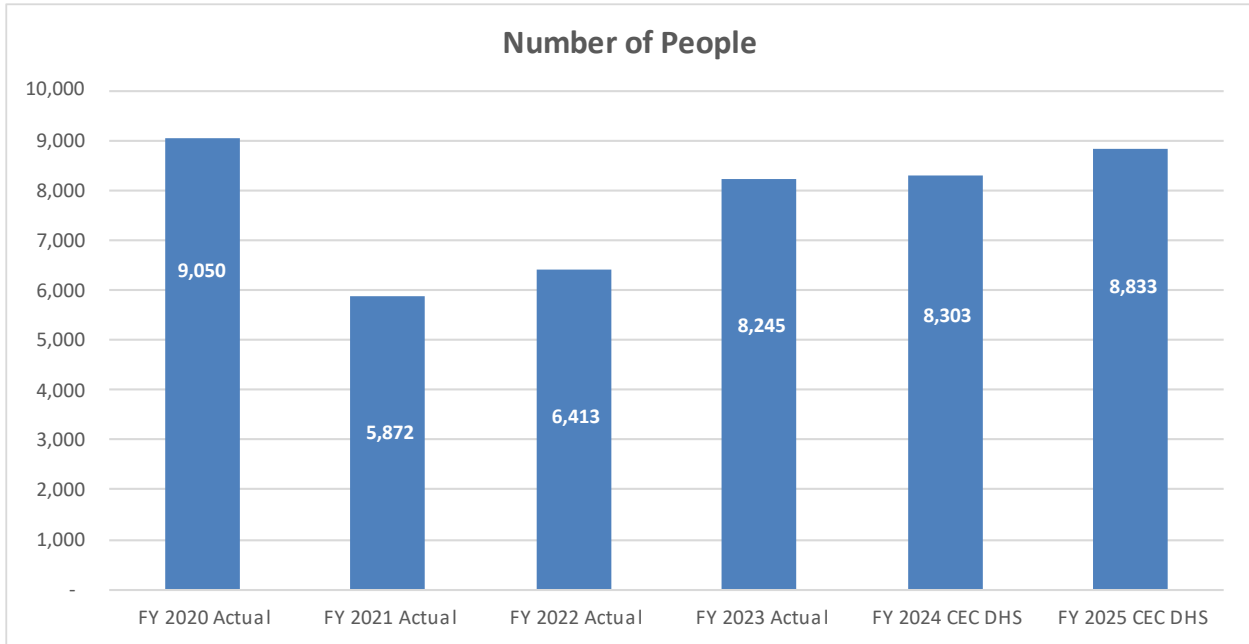
Progress in addressing the Undetermined Medical backlog is notable, with 606 cases, down 75% from last year. DHS actively collaborates to prioritize closure, purge duplicates, and efficiently manage archival cases.

DHS proactively addresses incomplete applications via the Customer Portal, ensuring timely enrollment processing. December 2023 saw the opening of the Holden Street location in Providence, expanding DHS's reach to seven regional offices, offering comprehensive services including document scanning.

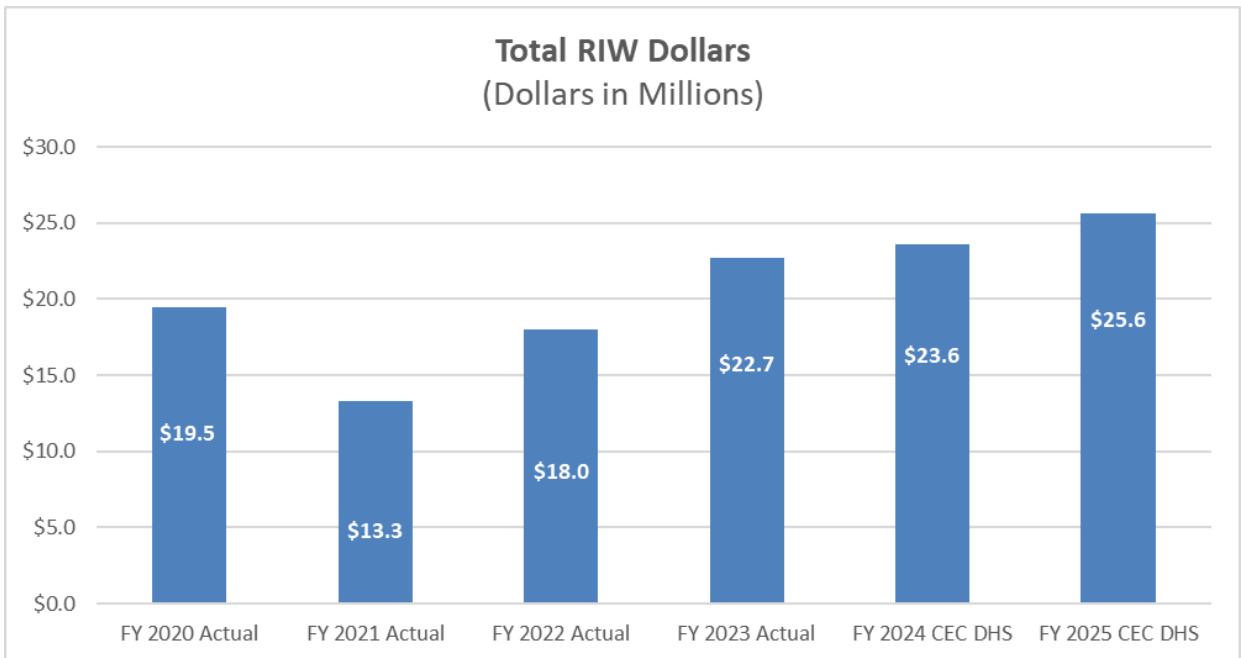
Three Document Scanning Centers further enhance customer convenience, with tasks typically completed in 10 minutes. Online submissions via the Customer Portal or the HealthyRhode mobile app provide additional options.

Currently, DHS operates on a month-to-month basis at One Reservoir Avenue, optimizing infrastructure while negotiating long-term lease agreements with DOA and the landlord. Staffing remains stable at 88% filled FTE counts.

¹ https://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/2023%20Factbook%20Files/2023FB_Economic%20Well-Being.pdf?ver=2023-05-10-100635-760<https://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Factbook2022/Economic Well-being section.pdf?ver=2022-05-12-085913-727>



Over the past 36 months, the RI Works caseload has largely stabilized and maintained a small increase, the remainder of FY 2024 is expected to increase at 0.75 percent per month. Community agencies that have partnered with DHS will continue to provide support to families applying for RI Works. Estimates for FY 2025 include an increase of 0.75 percent throughout the fiscal year. DHS expects to slowly regain the RI Works eligible families lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Additional Dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act

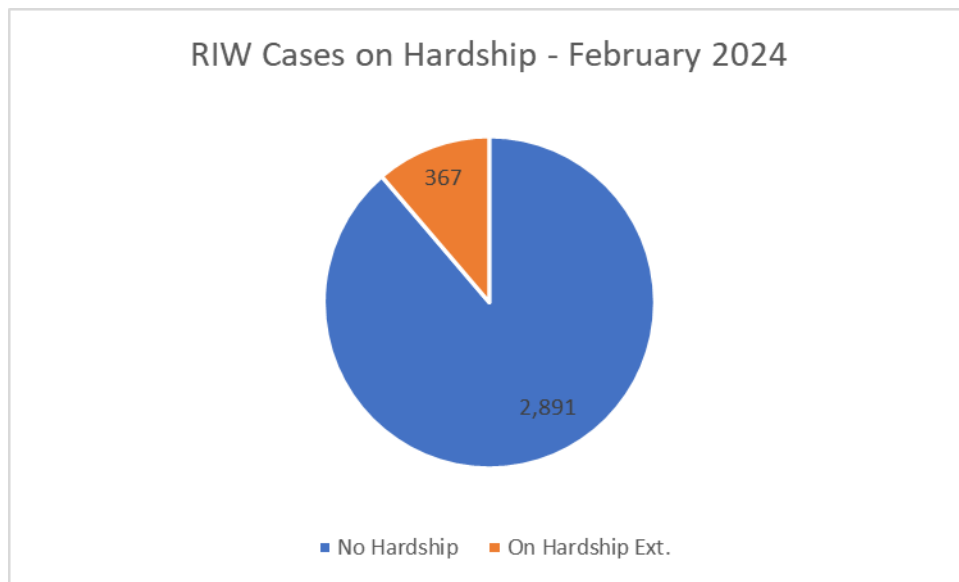
The American Rescue Plan Act provided TANF a Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund (PEAF), which are additional COVID-19 funds. These federal funds, totaling \$2,703,236, were specifically for Non-Recurrent, Short-Term Benefits (NRST) that supported TANF-eligible populations. The use had to satisfy TANF rules including Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) and citizenship requirements. DHS provided funds for a one-time NRST payment to RIW households in early FY 2023.

Question: Please provide an update on the FY2024 allotment of PEAFF funds.

Answer: Additional PEAFF dollars have been provided to Rhode Island, which were distributed in a similar manner as the 2023 PEAFF, this allotment was distributed in December 2023. The PEAFF distribution amount was \$298,277.

Hardships Extensions

Hardship extensions are available to families reaching time limits. There are five criteria in DHS regulations for hardship extensions. Currently, hardship extensions are granted for six-month increments. Cases classified as “hardship” cannot have employment plan exemptions, cannot be “between plans”, and cannot be under sanction.



The number of hardships as a percent of total caseload remains below the federal statutory ceiling of 20 percent. Rhode Island’s hardship cases constitute approximately 11.3 percent of the state caseload. Rhode Island’s hardship cases are now counted only after a case exceeds 60 months on the RI Works benefit. RI Works vendors have begun additional programming to target the cases exceeding 60 months on their state time clock.

Work Participation Rate (WPR) Overview

RI Works parents are required to participate in employment preparation activities and must do so for a minimum number of hours-per-week on average for the month, per Federal TANF regulations. Those required minimum hours differ based on the age of the youngest child and whether there is a second parent in the household.

- Parents whose youngest child is under the age of six must participate for a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Parents whose youngest child is six or older must participate for a minimum of 30 hours per week.
- Two-parent families must participate for a minimum of 35 hours per week.

Not all RI Works parents are required to participate in employment-related activities. Some are exempt for reasons including being disabled, caring for a child under the age of one, caring for a disabled child or family member, or are in the third trimester of pregnancy and medically unable to work. Others are exempt because they are “child-only” cases where the payment is entirely for the child(ren) and the parents or caretaker relatives do not receive a cash payment for themselves (e.g., parent on SSI or children in kinship care).

Unless exempt, parents receiving a cash payment are required to comply with an employment plan. Parents can be sanctioned or closed if they are not meeting the minimum required employment plan hours without good cause. If parents can provide good cause for a failure to comply with their employment plans, their case will not be sanctioned or closed. Occasionally parents have ended their planned activities without new employment plans, also referred to as “between plans.”

Question: Please provide the “all families” and “two-parent families” work participation rate for FY 2023, along with a work participation rate target. Please include data for the past five years.

Answer:

- FY 2018 Required all families: Required 0.0 percent (met 8.2 percent)
Required 2-parent families: Required 30.2 percent (not met 7.1 percent)
- FY 2019 Required all families: Required 0.0percent (met 8.9 percent)
Required 2-parent families: Required 31.2 percent (not met 11.8 percent)
- FY 2020 Required all families: Required 0.0 percent (met 6.8 percent)
Required 2-parent families: Required 27.6 percent (not met 7.3 percent)
- FY 2021 Required all families: Required 0.0 percent (met 6.5 percent)
Required 2-parent families: Required 26.3 percent (not met 8.0 percent)
- FY 2022 Required all families: Required 0.0 percent (met 7.6 percent)
Required 2-parent families: Required 15.2 percent (not met 8.6 percent)
- FY 2023 is not yet available

Federal Work Participation Rate (WPR) data is derived from a quarterly data interface that is reviewed by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The State cannot currently calculate WPR. Instead, ACF provides the State with feedback based on data submissions.

Question: Please provide an update on the status of current or potential federal penalties associated with the work participation rate.

Answer: Through discussions with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), DHS is seeking to finalize reductions in penalties, and fulfillment of all WPR penalties in FY 2025. A total cost saving of \$1,624,778. Total TANF reduction of \$865,532. See Chart Below.

Penalty Year	Reason	Status	Amount
2011	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Denied. Grant Allocation Adjustment FY 2025.	\$130,963.00
2012	Did not met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Denied, Recalculation Granted. Grant Allocation Adjustment FY 2025.	Penalty Reduced by \$1,491,398, Total Due \$137,878.
2013	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Same as Above.	Penalty Reduced by \$123,786, Total Due \$134,929.
2014	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Same as Above.	Penalty Reduced by \$9,036, Total Due \$120,599.
2015	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Same as Above.	Penalty Reduced by \$547, Total Due \$97,998.
2016	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Same as Above.	Penalty Reduced by \$10, Total Due \$29,577.
2017	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Same as Above.	Penalty Reduced by \$1, Total Due \$80,263.
2018	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Denied. Grant Allocation Adjustment FY 2025.	\$ 69,094.00
2019	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Denied. Grant Allocation Adjustment FY 2025.	\$ 64,231.00
2020	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Granted	\$ 0.00
2021	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Appeal Granted	\$ 0.00
2022	Met overall WPR, did not meet 2-parent family WPR	Met Improvement Requirements	\$ 0.00

2024 TANF Budget							
Line Seq	Agency	LIS Name	FY24 Enacted Budget	FY24 Expenditures As of 3/31/24	FY24 Budget Governor's Recommended	FY25 Budget Governor's Recommended	Description of the Services Funded by TANF
2025105	079	TANF/EA- CM Program- Federal Share	\$ 454,338	\$ 984,581	\$ 801,506	\$ 827,024	DCYF for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075106	079	TANF/EA- CW Program- Federal Share	\$ 5,896,576	\$ 5,421,263	\$ 6,229,584	\$ 6,372,345	DCYF for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075145	079	TANF/SSBG Grant	\$ 485,529	\$ -	\$ 359,469	\$ 359,469	DCYF for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075148	079	TANF - HCBS	\$ 1,396,342	\$ -	\$ 1,063,152	\$ 1,063,152	DCYF for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075150	079	TANF - SSBG Transfer	\$ 2,836,512	\$ (522)	\$ 2,653,005	\$ 2,653,005	DCYF for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075155	079	TANF - DCYF Hoteling	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,017,311	\$ 261,383	DCYF Hoteling for TANF eligible youth to be served
2075156	079	TANF - DCYF Hoteling SSBG Transfer	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,156,286	\$ 927,833	DCYF Hoteling for TANF eligible youth to be served
2170182	075	DHS Home Visiting Coop	\$ 200,000	\$ 16,312	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	RIDOH for RIW parents in the Family Visiting
2255108	069	Early Head Start Supplemental Support	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 908,473	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 3,000,000	Funding of head start care with TANF funds
2275116	069	FIP CM and Work Programs	\$ 7,100,000	\$ 5,709,040	\$ 10,100,000	\$ 10,100,000	Contracted vendors engaging in direct services for RIW parents
2275121	069	FIP Administration	\$ 5,666,765	\$ 2,875,264	\$ 5,659,820	\$ 5,256,720	Administrative funds for DHS
2275177	069	TANF - Subsidized Employment Enhancement	\$ 200,000	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	Contract to provide services to homeless families
2275186	069	UHIP - TANF Federal Allocation	\$ 1,583,238	\$ 899,518	\$ 525,807	\$ 704,736	Administrative funds for UHIP
2275202	069	UHIP- Non lapd TANF Federal	\$ 214,507	\$ (20,435)	\$ 696,862	\$ 391,920	Administrative funds for UHIP
2400101	069	FIP/TANF - Regular	\$ 25,264,000	\$ 18,832,243	\$ 25,351,920	\$ 26,891,800	Cost for TANF/RIW benefits to families
2400107	069	AFDC Catastrophic Aid	\$ 2,400	\$ 1,600	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,600	Costs for families who have experienced a catastrophic event like fire or flood
2400110	069	Child Care - SSBG Reallocation	\$ 7,560,000	\$ 1,800,657	\$ 4,560,000	\$ 4,560,000	Funding of low income child care with TANF funds
2400112	069	Child Care - TANF Funds	\$ 20,568,532	\$ 8,048,704	\$ 22,195,918	\$ 35,679,324	Funding of low income child care with TANF funds
2400114	069	RIPTA Transportation Benefit	\$ 716,000	\$ 7,567	\$ 574,544	\$ 605,120	Funding of bus passes for RIW parents
2400115	069	Child Care Assistance Enhancement	\$ 936,544	\$ -	\$ (936,544)	\$ -	Funding of low income child care with TANF funds
2725162	072	Project Opportunity	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 652,925	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	Adult Education (ABE, ESL, GED)
Total			\$85,081,283	\$46,137,189	\$87,411,640	\$101,057,431	

Question: Please update FY2023 and FY2024 TANF block grant estimates. Include the balance of any unspent funds from prior years and report any plans for its use.

Answer: See above. The projected TANF carryforward amounts have remained stable since November 2023 testimony due to the revised estimates for RIW and CCAP caseload and increases in projected contracts supporting the TANF population. Approximately 17% of the annual TANF funding, or \$15.8 million, was carried forward as of FY 2020. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the caseload expenses for both RIW and CCAP have continued to be lower and directly contribute to the increased carryforward balance. Additionally, TANF supported CCAP caseload at an average of \$39.7 million across FY 2019 and FY 2020, but FY 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023 actual TANF support was \$29.8 million, \$15.8 million, and \$18.6 million, respectively. This significant decrease is, in part, attributable to overall caseload decline, but also due to \$30.0 million in COVID-19 direct funding used to support child care costs from FY 2021 through FY 2023. There is \$11.2 million remaining in child care pandemic funding to be expended on CCAP subsidies in FY 2024. As a result, TANF is slated to support CCAP caseload at around \$21.8 million in FY 2024 and \$36.6 million in FY 2025. The current RIW vendor solicitation has been expanded by \$7 million to increase supports around housing insecurity for the TANF population which experiences deep poverty. Another \$500,000 is allocated for a collaborative project with Refugee Services and TANF customers addressing the unique mental health needs. Per § 40-5.2-23, a post-employment benefit to support work retention for those below 200% of the poverty level up to 12 months is being explored. The maximum cost is estimated at \$600,000.

Fiscal Year	Awarded	Expensed	Planned Expenses	Cumulative Carry Forward
SFY 2020	\$94,294,105	\$85,644,437	-	\$15,800,878
SFY 2021	\$94,608,671	\$69,204,618	-	\$41,204,931
SFY 2022	\$95,675,713	\$60,891,460	-	\$75,989,184
SFY 2023	\$94,708,016	\$72,545,481	-	\$98,151,719
SFY 2024	\$94,700,000	\$46,137,189	\$38,139,854	\$108,574,676
SFY 2025	\$94,700,000	-	\$102,874,759	\$100,399,917
SFY 2026	\$94,700,000	-	\$102,626,553	\$92,473,364
SFY 2027	\$94,700,000	-	\$102,835,849	\$84,337,514
SFY 2028	\$94,700,000	-	\$103,046,715	\$75,990,799

Question: Transportation: Please provide the basis for the agency projection for transportation costs? What is the utilization for bus passes and how has it changed in the last five years?

a. Have you seen any impact from the RIPTA R-line free fare pilot program? Please provide any data you have collected about how this may have affected utilization rates.

b. Please provide the Department's assumptions regarding the newly implemented RIPTA voucher program.

Answer: Projected transportation costs are calculated by a presumed usage rate of total RI Works persons multiplied by the adjusted cost of the monthly bus pass. Only about 5.5 percent of persons on RI Works are currently utilizing their bus pass option from MTM. To account for the end of the RIPTA R-line free fare pilot, DHS is projecting a usage at 5.5 percent for the remainder of FY 2024 and FY 2025. Trends over the past five years have significantly dropped the transportation costs, both the increased virtual training with virtual participation hours, as well as an electronic card have added to the decreased usage. Data evaluated was conducted by address or location of RI Works families and locations of RI Works vendors, in proximity to the R-Line. The Request for Quote (RFQ) sent out by RIPTA in early October will be largely for ADA and expanded paratransit, this population is unlikely to affect the RI Works transportation costs.

TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

The TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE) is a requirement that a state must spend at least a specified amount of state funds for benefits and services for families in need each year. A broad array of benefits and services for low-income families with children can count toward satisfying a state's MOE obligation. A state may count any state funds used for TANF program services or any funds that meet the federal TANF purposes as TANF MOE toward the required \$64.4 million benchmark.

Federal Law allows six types of expenditures that can be counted toward MOE requirements:

1. Cash assistance
2. Child care assistance
3. Educational activities designed to increase self-sufficiency
4. Job training and work
5. Any other use of funds reasonably calculated to accomplish a TANF purpose
6. Administrative costs in connection with other allowable purposes

The consequences for not meeting the MOE are that the TANF grant will be reduced the following year on a dollar-for-dollar basis and the state will be required to expend additional state funds in its TANF program to the amount by which the state fell short of meeting the MOE.

Question: Please indicate how the state will meet its maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement and identify which MOE items are state costs and which are in-kind contributions.

Answer: DHS seeks MOE from both state agencies and other philanthropic agencies statewide. MOE is calculated using the methods provided by a previous vendor. DHS exceeded the MOE requirement by \$18.3M in 2023.

State Costs: \$65,491,364

In-kind: \$17,202,809

For FY 2020 and future years, the Department has been instructed by ACF to calculate MOE differently by removing a provision previously allowed due to a prior law grandfathering. The grandfathering has ended. This significantly reduces the amount of allowable expenditures MOE allowed from DCYF Residential. The Department is working on utilizing other avenues to collect the MOE.

	FFY 2021 Reported to ACF	FFY 2022 Reported to ACF	FFY 2023 Reported to ACF	FFY 2024 Projected to ACF
RIW Admin - DHS	\$4,740,191	\$3,855,901	\$4,829,497	\$4,000,000
Child Care MOE DHS	\$5,351,126	\$5,351,126	\$5,321,207	\$5,000,000
Emergency Assistance - DCYF	\$1,635,450	\$1,131,567	\$1,734,050	\$1,100,000
DCYF Other	\$16,084,231	\$15,774,162	\$25,201,254	\$17,000,000
DEFRA (Child Support Pass-Thru)	\$208,803	\$217,814	\$232,095	\$210,000
RIDE Adult Ed	\$1,050,000	\$1,050,000	\$1,151,165	\$1,000,000
CAP Agencies (Leg. Grants)	\$287,820	\$210,180	\$210,960	\$200,000
Head Start	\$1,190,000	\$1,190,000	\$1,188,618	\$1,190,000
SSI	\$2,472,240	\$2,228,503	\$2,209,901	\$2,200,000
GWB-DLT Youth Work Readiness	\$442,080	\$754,407	\$966,433	\$750,000
Earned Income Tax Credit	\$15,963,386	\$19,364,568	\$18,656,693	\$18,000,000
Property Tax Relief Program (Circuit Breaker)	\$120,234	\$121,851	\$164,945	\$125,000
DCYF Residential	\$2,982,641	\$4,174,996	\$3,624,546	\$3,250,000
Weatherization	\$6,979,035	\$5,159,377	\$7,284,662	\$6,250,000
Rhode Island Food Bank	\$3,218,941	\$2,900,173	\$3,537,371	\$3,000,000
Community Organizations (Listed Below)	\$2,338,768	\$2,172,515	\$2,242,561	\$2,365,000
OPC / Promise	\$0	\$4,389,791	\$4,138,215	\$4,000,000
Total	\$65,064,947	\$70,046,931	\$82,694,173	\$69,640,000

The tables below show MOE expenditures by category and community organizations:

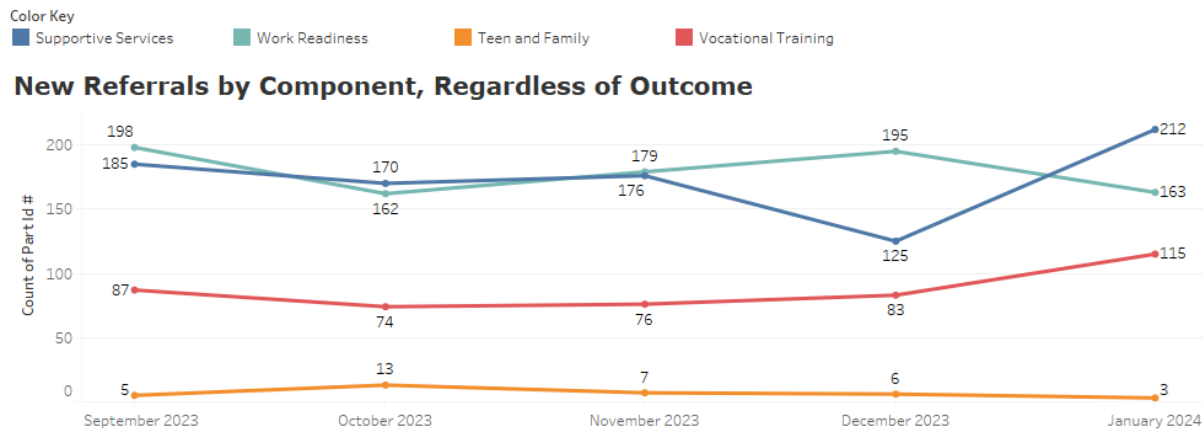
	FFY 2021 Reported to ACF	FFY 2022 Reported to ACF	FFY 2023 Reported to ACF	FFY 2024 Projected to ACF
Roman Catholic Diocese or Providence	\$25,036	\$111,513	\$51,243	\$50,000
The Salvation Army	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
United Way of Rhode Island	\$310,145	\$0	\$284,688	\$200,000
Boys and Girls Club	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,250,000
Rhode Island Foundation	\$480,709	\$466,077	\$236,913	\$400,000
SStarbirth	\$35,363	\$41,999	\$50,386	\$40,000
Crossroads	\$390,104	\$87,227	\$175,871	\$200,000
Dorcas International Institute	\$24,170	\$12,720	\$220,680	\$45,000
Non-Violence Institute	\$0	\$1,080	\$0	\$0
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence	\$2,427	\$390,329	\$149,625	\$125,000
Com CAP	\$70,814	\$8,566	\$5,971	\$5,000
Genesis Center	\$0	\$53,004	\$67,184	\$50,000
Total	\$2,338,768	\$2,172,515	\$2,242,561	\$2,365,000

Question: Please provide an update on the notice of proposed rulemaking issued by US HHS impacting TANF and how those changes would impact the state program.

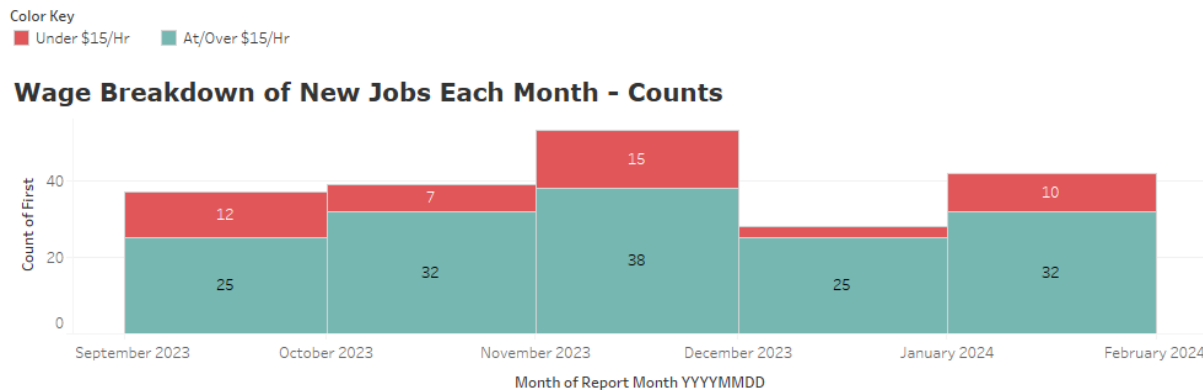
Answer: Full answer is on Page 27. For MOE, the ACF rule change is expected to remove the option for TANF maintenance-of-effort (MOE) expenditures cash donations from non-governmental third parties and the value of third-party, in-kind contributions. With the removal of these MOE options, the Department would still be able to make the MOE requirement. The Department is awaiting the final rule and guidance from ACF. The rule is set to be in effect on October 1, 2025, reported MOE to ACF in December 2026.

RI Works Contracted Vendors

Three contracted vendors support the RI Works customers with their employment plans. These vendors provide support to customers through the four program components: Supportive Services, Youth Services, Vocational Training and Job Readiness, Employment & Retention. The programs provided to RI Works families streamline supportive services, education and/or training programs with the goal of stabilizing families. The vendors' programs result in more parents being engaged in work activities that would be reflected in higher wages and assisting them in obtaining successful employment outcomes.



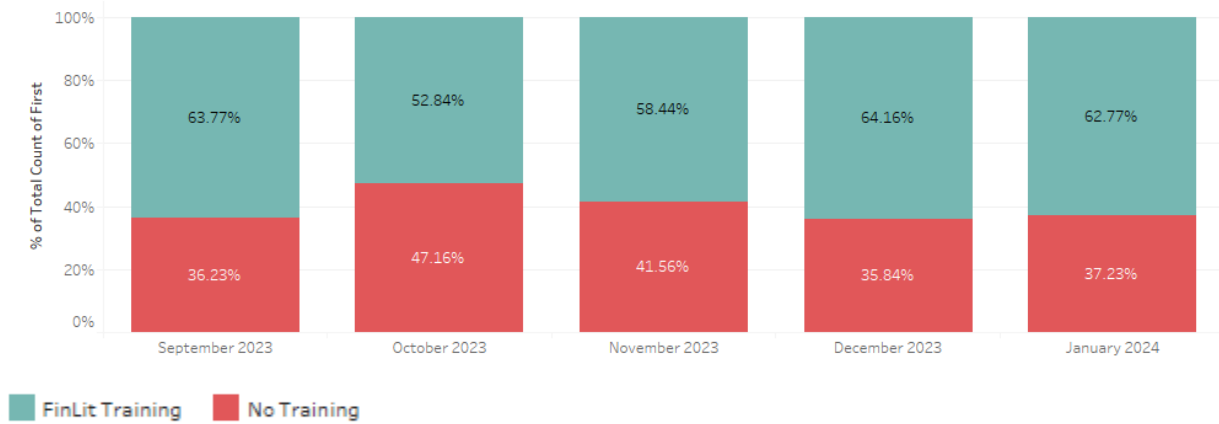
The contracts are based on performance metrics that incentivize the vendors to assist parents in obtaining long-term employment at a living-wage. DHS is utilizing the Grant Management System to solicit new RI Works vendors currently. Like the previous contracts, active contract management will be utilized, including requiring monthly data to analyze vendor services for RI Works families. DHS will continue to request vendors to provide extensive data to the Department on a monthly basis so progress and trends can be tracked, and changes can be put into effect as needed.



Since the roll-out of these past contracts, two very important new services have been implemented:

- **Financial Literacy** to ensure that RI Works families become more aware of financial issues on their path to self-sufficiency. DHS has required all service vendors to integrate financial literacy into their curricula. As of February 2023, approximately 63 percent of the RI Works population attending one of our three providers' programs has started or received financial literacy training.

Financial Literacy: All Participants Monthly

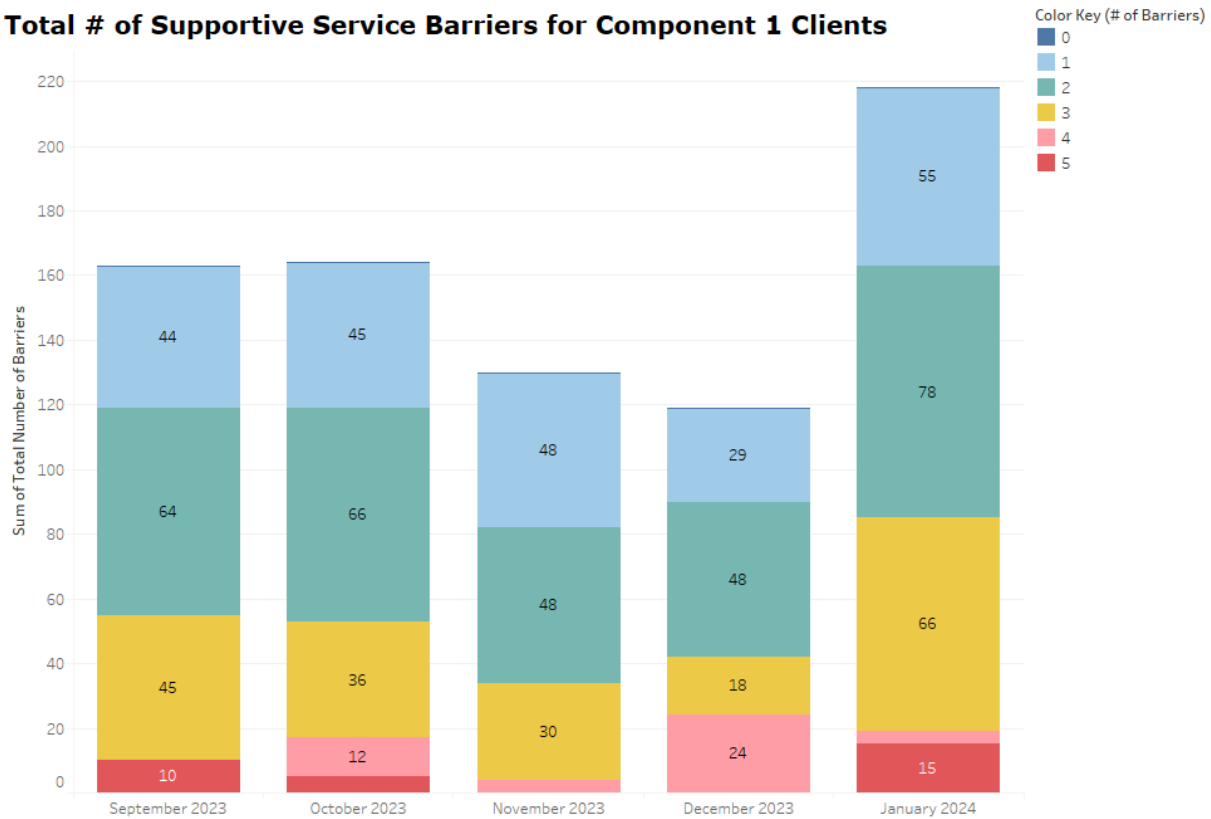


- **Supportive Services** to assist RI Works families in resolving barriers and issues that may be hindering them from becoming employed and on a path to self-sufficiency. The most common problems faced by RI Works customers include:
 - Mental Health Challenges
 - Unstable Housing/Homelessness
 - Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence
 - Low Education Attainment
 - Unaddressed Disabilities
 - Substance Use Disorder



RIW Vendor Data: Supportive Service Barriers

Total # of Supportive Service Barriers for Component 1 Clients



RI Works staff analyze vendor data monthly and can provide immediate feedback to vendors who are either struggling or being highly effective with working with RI Works families. The completion of vocational training programs can have a significant effect on obtaining long-term, sustainable employment.

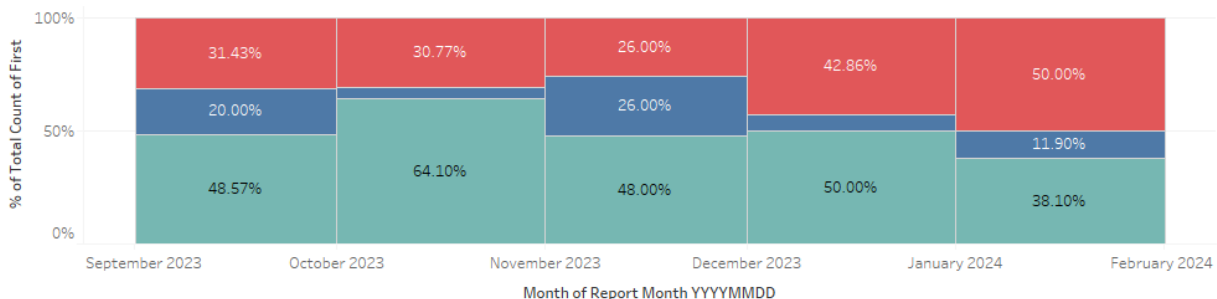
RI Works vendors prepare customers for employment by providing assistance with resumes and cover letters, interview skills, and counsel on appropriate workplace behavior. RI Works vendors also make referrals for customers to acquire appropriate attire for interviews and work. There are multiple work-readiness strategies pursuant to 45 CFR 261.2, including subsidized employment, paid or unpaid work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness activities, and community service. All RI Works customers are required to attend financial literacy counseling, to prepare parents for budgeting their future income. When a customer is placed at a training site or employed, vendors provide job coaching, including performance feedback, to customers and also support employers in order to assure an effective match and maximize job retention.

In the past year, 462 parents have entered employment, and 55 participated in a work experience activity, including both subsidized and unsubsidized work experience. Wages for these job placements vary from minimum wage up to \$50 per hour. Seventy-nine percent of job placements

are for wages at or over \$15 per hour. In the past year, 311 customers retained employment for at least six months, and 561 customers achieved the benchmark of earning over \$4,000 in the 5th quarter after the start of their employment plans, in accordance with WIOA standards. Vendors were paid more than \$726,849 in performance payments due to job retention. Additionally, in the past year, 96 participants have completed their Vocational Training Program. A total of 344 RI Works parents have participated in vocational training programs this past year.

Color Key
 ■ ≤ 20 Hrs
 ■ ≥ 30 Hrs
 ■ Between 20-30 Hrs

Hours Breakdown of New Jobs Each Month - Stacked Column Chart



Question: Please identify the strategies the RI Works Program is preparing its beneficiaries for in workforce readiness.

- a. Please identify the industries in which the RI Works Program beneficiaries receive workforce development.

Answer: Working with RI Works parents includes wraparound supportive services, adult education, vocational training, and job readiness. Depending on the parent or caretaker’s education or work history, the RI Works vendors create a family goal and employment goal. Goals are updated with every new employment plan. Working with this population often means mitigating multi-generational barriers to longtime sustaining employment. In order to ensure success, the RI Works vendors must monitor labor market statistics in critical fields, ensuring job availability and wages high enough to sustain a family.

Approximately 68% of vocational training is medical field-related, including: CNA, Medical Assistant, Dental Assistant, Medical Billing, Nursing, Phlebotomy, Respiratory Therapist and EMT. Approximately 32% of vocational training is in other fields including Commercial Drivers’ Licenses (CDL), Carpentry/Weatherization, Accounting, Human Resources, and Cosmetology.

RI Works vendors commonly help parents secure jobs in the following industries: healthcare/homecare, retail, clerical/office, banking, manufacturing, childcare/early childhood education, community-based organizations, hospitality, food prep/cooking, landscaping, and delivery services (Amazon, Last Mile, Door Dash, Uber Eats, etc.).

Potential Federal Law Changes

TANF has again been temporarily authorized by a continuing resolution. There has been communication from federal partners that continuing resolutions will eventually lead to the replacement of the current TANF law. There is no current movement on the TANF bills in Washington.

Changes from the Fiscal Responsibility Act² (FRA)

Four Key Portions of FRA:

- 1) Work Participation Rate Changes:
 - a) Caseload Reduction Credit (CRC) Reset to 2015
 - b) Elimination of Small Checks Scheme;
- 2) Focus on Work Outcomes:
 - a) Pilots
 - b) Outcomes-Based Reporting.

Rhode Island is not affected by the elimination of small checks. Changes will be effective Federal FY 2026.

The change to the caseload reduction credit will alter the year of comparison from Federal FY 2005 to Federal FY 2015. The Department will have less CRC applied to the WPR penalty to help reduce the federally required percentages of 50 percent for one-parent families and 90 percent for two-parent families. ACF has predicted the single-parent WPR requirement will raise from zero percent to 11 percent after the FRA's implementation to the CRC.

DHS has already been utilizing Work Outcomes according to WIOA since 2018. The FRA will collect data in a pilot, utilizing WIOA and other metrics. The Outcome Based Reporting is already completed through the WIOA and active contract management for TANF. Few changes to system reporting will be required.

ACF Rules Changes³

There are seven proposed rules changes for TANF. ACF has stated these changes are intended to improve the effectiveness and integrity of TANF.

1. Establishing a ceiling on TANF expenditures for families that cannot exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). This further restricts the State's ability to assist families in need as the current FPL threshold is 225% - approximately the difference of \$5,800 a year in salary.

² [TANF Provisions in FRA of 2023 | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\); https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/law-regulation/tanf-provisions-fra-2023](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/law-regulation/tanf-provisions-fra-2023)

³ [NPRM to Strengthen the TANF Program and Increase State Accountability | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\); https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/outreach-material/nprm-tanf-regulations-45-cfr-parts-205-260-261-and-263](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/outreach-material/nprm-tanf-regulations-45-cfr-parts-205-260-261-and-263)

2. ACF will increase scrutiny of TANF expenditures by determining when that expenditure is “reasonably calculated to accomplish a TANF purpose.” The Department has utilized strict controls of spending and does not anticipate an impact to spending.
3. Exclude third party, non-governmental spending as allowable maintenance of effort calculations. Although the state has sufficient spending categories to meet the baseline MOE claiming requirements, this change lowers countable “excess MOE” that is utilized in the Caseload Reduction Credit described above.
4. Ensure the excluded holidays for RIW customers match the number of federal holidays following the addition of Juneteenth. The Department adjusts allowable holidays to match the federal requirements without significant impact.
5. Develop new criteria to allow states to use alternative income and eligibility system (IVES) measures. The Department has begun the process of looking at other systems and state policies that will inform the system of accurate income to determine benefits.
6. Clarify the “significant progress” criteria following a work participation rate corrective compliance plan, allowing for further leniencies. This will be helpful to the Department as the WPR calculations will be a higher threshold due to the changes to the CRC.
7. Clarify the existing regulatory text about the allowability of costs associated with disseminating program information. This clarifies the point that administrative costs exclude the costs of disseminating program information. For example, the cost of providing information pamphlets or brochures about how to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies is allowable under purpose three, and the cost of providing information about community resources to needy families or needy parents, pursuant to purposes one and two, respectively, is allowable, whether or not the described community resources themselves are funded by TANF.

DHS is currently reviewing all possible policy changes allowed to support meeting the WPR and federal requirements. DHS will be working with “Technical Assistance” from federal partners whenever possible. This could include developing a program component to extend RIW benefits to customers who have ongoing employment, based on § 40-5.2-23. Additionally, allowing for more federally recognized employment plan exemptions. Any changes will be focused on WPR compliance while reducing the benefits cliffs which negatively impacts customers as they transition to employment and higher wages. The Department is committed to implementing targeted policy changes that have a positive effect on the WPR while supporting customers long-term.

DHS is seeking assistance from a third party in the MOE calculation, WPR calculation and the CRC calculation through an RFP in Spring 2024.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

The Starting Right Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) supports the dual purpose of promoting the healthy development and school success of children, while also supporting low-income families who need child care to work, attend approved training, or college degree programs. Eligibility for CCAP is based on either participation in the Rhode Island Works cash assistance program (RIW) or based on income-based eligibility for families working or enrolled in an approved training or college degree program.

Families receiving RIW benefits who need child care to comply with their employment and training plan receive child care with no co-payment requirements. Income-based eligibility for child care consists of a two-tiered eligibility structure, with initial eligibility available to families with income of up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (~54 percent of State Median Income (SMI) or \$51,640 for a family of three).

Families who are determined eligible at the first tier (defined as income up to 200% FPL) may then utilize Transitional Child Care to continue to access child care subsidies if their income rises above the initial eligibility threshold of 200% FPL but remains under 300% of FPL (~81 percent of State Median Income (SMI) or \$77,460 for a family of three). Income-eligible families are subject to a graduated co-payment based on family income ranging between zero (for those earning 100% FPL or less) to a maximum of seven percent of a family's income (for those earning between 150% FPL to 300% FPL). As of January 1, 2022, DHS lowered the co-pay cap from 14% to the Health and Human Services general affordability guideline and the national standard 7%.

The Office of Child Care (OCC) continues to track child care trends closely to measure the ongoing state of the child care sector. This includes regular review of CCAP enrollments, licensed capacity, and movement within the quality framework. In addition to information on the caseload trends, DHS continues to provide additional resources and programming to support providers during this time.

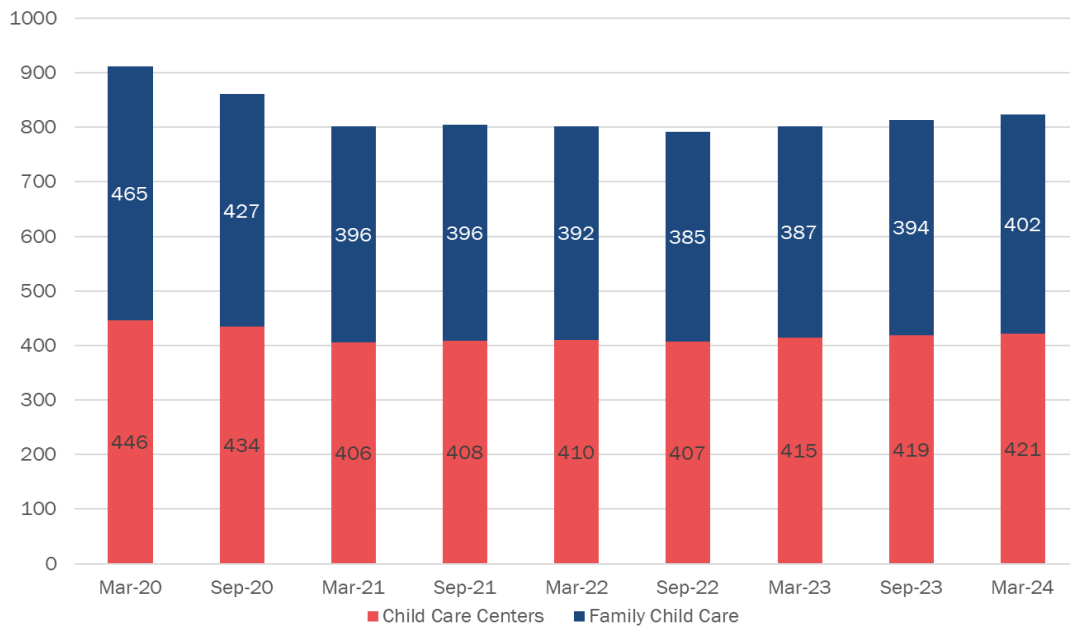
Question: Please provide the total number of licensed child care providers and the number of child care slots in the state, including the providers that do not participate in the CCAP program for the last five years.

- a. Please provide the number of children enrolled in CCAP by age group, provider type, and star rating.
- b. Please provide an update to the federal awards received or anticipated for activities in response to the COVID-19 PHE, or other stimulus funding, as well as any planned uses and how much of each award will be used for such activity. Please provide spend to date and available balance for each award by item (planned use).
- c. Please provide the average timeframe to fully license and establish family child care providers.
 - i. Previous DHS testimony mentioned interest in new strategies to increase FCCP seats including group child care settings and expanding number of seats in an individual setting. Please provide information regarding strategies to expand FCCP slots, the number of FCCP's that are considering expansion, and the criteria needed for a FCCP to expand.
- d. Please, if possible, provide a child to staff ratio.

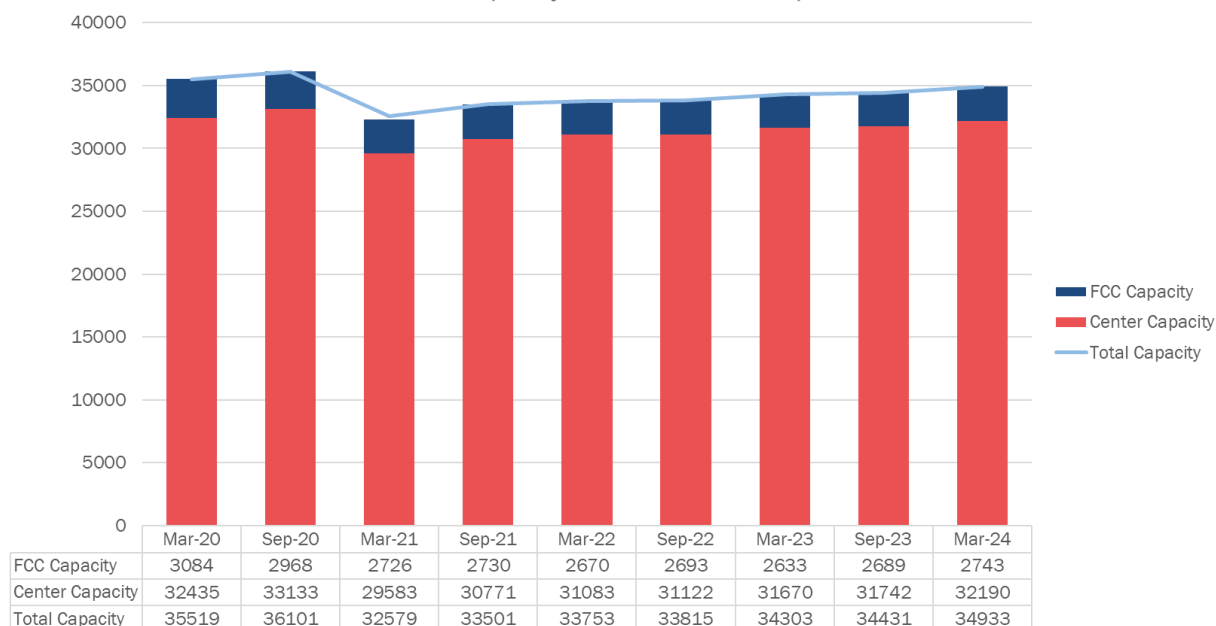
Answer:

The first table below shows the current number of DHS-licensed providers as of March 2024, as well as from Caseloads dating back to March 2020. This provides the current total number of licensed child care providers in the State, including the providers who have not participated in the CCAP program for the last four years. The unit transitioned from the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) at the end of October 2019, so consistent caseload data exists as of March 2020.

Licensed Child Care Providers, 2020-present



Child Care Capacity from March 2020-present



While enrollment declined through the height of the pandemic, child care has stabilized in terms of number of providers caring for children in RI. DHS continues to add both providers and capacity to licensed child care spots, as noted in the chart. Although not at pre-pandemic capacity and number of providers, there is continued growth, particularly in family child care as new providers have been recruited during this time and supported growth in family child care programming. As the child care sector adjusts to the new normal post-covid, capacities are adjusting to support different age groups of children. Providers are working hard to reestablish high-quality programming that was impacted due to health and safety protocols during the pandemic.

It is important to note that in the last year (from March 2023 to March 2024), infant and toddler slots have increased by approximately 500 seats and preschool slots by approximately 900 seats. School-age capacity has declined by almost 1,000 seats. Providers are growing and increasing spaces for the infant, toddler, and preschool communities. In general, providers are doing their best to open spaces for age groups with the most need.

CCAP enrollment is an area DHS continues to gather information as part of the child care sector. CCAP enrollments are further broken down by age group below (Infant/Toddler, Preschool and School-Age). For example, of the 2,163 preschool-aged children in center-based care who have CCAP benefits, 528 are enrolled in a center with a BrightStars rating of 4 Stars and 190 are enrolled in a center with a BrightStars rating of 5 Stars. To put it another way, 33% of CCAP preschoolers are part of a high-quality program. Most infants, toddlers and preschool age children are enrolled for full time care, while most school age children are enrolled for three quarter time care. DHS has provided this information as part of caseload testimony since 2020 and will continue to provide it moving forward in this format to highlight patterns.

CCAP Enrollment by BrightStars Rating - Center-Based Providers August 2023 to February 2024												
2023/2024	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb
Age Group	1 Star		2 Star		3 Star		4 Star		5 Star		TOTAL	
Infant/Toddlers	254	270	376	369	169	176	235	231	52	57	1,086	1,103
Preschoolers	485	514	695	596	358	335	576	528	155	190	2,269	2,163
School-Age	462	448	440	389	408	279	410	363	62	103	1,782	1,582
TOTAL	1,201	1,232	1,511	1,354	935	790	1,221	1,122	269	350	5,137	4,848

CCAP Enrollment by BrightStars Rating - Family & Group Family August 2023 to February 2024												
2023/2024	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb	Aug	Feb
Age Group	1 Star		2 Star		3 Star		4 Star		5 Star		Total	
Infant/Toddlers	281	237	190	212	14	30	4	2	1	0	489	481
Preschoolers	336	322	237	241	21	28	4	2	0	0	599	593
School-Age	220	200	185	182	11	21	8	5	0	0	420	408
TOTAL	837	759	612	635	46	79	13	9	1	0	1,508	1,482

CCAP Children Enrolled by Bright Stars Rating, Time and Age Category												
	23-Aug	24-Feb	23-Aug	24-Feb	23-Aug	24-Feb	23-Aug	24-Feb	23-Aug	24-Feb	23-Aug	24-Feb
Brightstars Rating	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
Full Time												
Infant/Toddlers	462	437	518	530	169	187	214	206	48	45	1,411	1,405
Preschoolers	699	631	828	642	334	250	505	374	127	91	2,493	1,988
School-Age	485	224	449	147	334	57	313	90	30	14	1,611	532
¾ Time												
Infant/Toddlers	71	66	43	48	15	19	23	23	5	7	157	163
Preschoolers	106	55	85	126	36	74	68	107	23	49	318	511
School-Age	144	264	132	224	56	141	76	183	17	57	425	869
Half Time												
Infant/Toddlers	3	4	5	3	0	0	1	4	0	2	9	13
Preschoolers	13	42	17	64	6	37	8	46	4	48	48	237
School-Age	49	139	38	182	26	91	20	88	8	28	141	528
¼ Time												
Infant/Toddlers	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	3
Preschoolers	1	7	2	3	3	2	0	3	1	2	7	17
School-Age	3	21	5	17	3	11	5	7	7	4	23	60
Grand Total	2,035	1,990	2,121	1,986	981	869	1,233	1,127	269	348	6,645	6,326

Total Licensed Child Care Participation in Brightstars by Provider Type Through February 29, 2024				
Star Rating	Center-Based	Family Child Care	School Age	Total
1-Star	77	206	27	310
2-star	77	146	20	243
3-star	29	12	23	64
4-star	54	4	11	69
5-star	35	1	6	42
Total	272	369	87	728

Percentage of CCAP Children Enrolled in 4 and 5 Star Programs							
Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020	Dec 2021	Sept 2022	Feb 2023	Sept 2023	Feb 2024
10%	16%	21%	24%	26%	26%	23%	23%

Since the previous Caseload Conference, total CCAP enrollment decreased in both center-based care and family child care, with the only increase being in infant and toddler enrollments in center-based programs. The percentage of CCAP children enrolled in 4 and 5 star programs did remain the same despite decreases in overall enrollment in most age groups and types of care.

Center Based Providers - (Includes DCYF) August 2023 - February 2024				
	Infant/Toddler Enrollments	Preschool Enrollments	SA Enrollments	Total Enrollments
Aug-23	1084	2256	1773	5113
Sep-23	965	2320	1755	5040
Oct-23	1005	2151	1644	4800
Nov-23	1042	2163	1652	4857
Dec-23	1062	2206	1742	5010
Jan-24	1093	2188	1690	4971
Feb-24	1103	2163	1582	4848
Trend: Aug '23 to Feb '24	19	-93	-191	-265

Family and Group Family Providers - (Includes DCYF) August 2023 – February 2024				
	Infant/Toddler Enrollments	Preschool Enrollments	SA Enrollments	Total Enrollments
Aug-23	483	585	412	1480

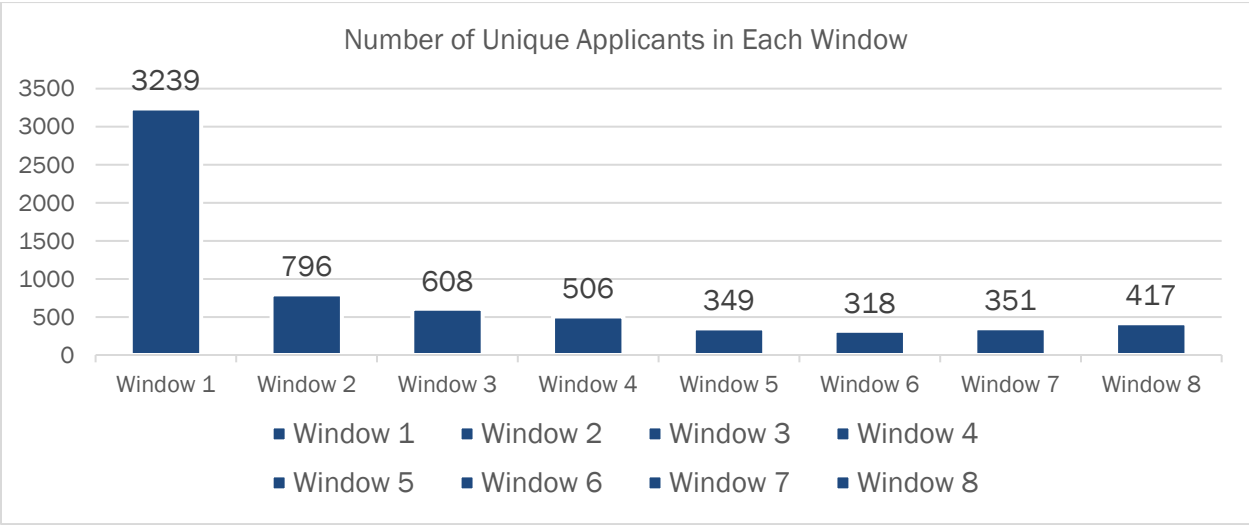
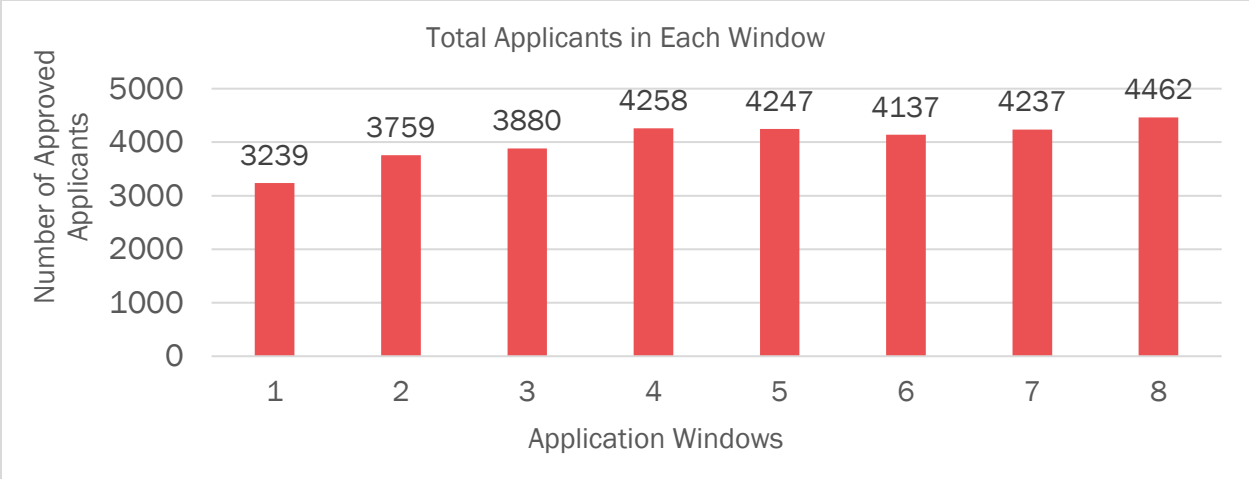
Sep-23	417	675	476	1568
Oct-23	438	607	425	1473
Nov-23	449	610	434	1493
Dec-23	468	595	423	1486
Jan-24	478	588	409	1475
Feb-24	468	573	394	1435
Trend: Aug '23 to Feb '24	-15	-12	-18	-45

Federal Funding and Initiatives to Support Child Care Recovery

The State has been in receipt of pandemic-response federal funding of approximately \$125 million specifically dedicated to child care programming since March 2020. All CRRSA CCDF, CARES CCDF and ARPA Stabilization have been spent as of September 30, 2023. ARPA CCDF is the only bucket of funding that still has an open liquidation period – all of the awarded money has been obligated and will be liquidated by the deadline of September 30, 2024.

Funding Source	Amount Awarded	Amount Liquidated
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)	\$8,165,854	\$8,165,854
Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act	\$23,867,232	\$23,867,232
American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 Supplemental CCDF Discretionary Funds	\$35,795,528	\$35,481,178
American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 Stabilization Grants	\$57,251,352	\$57,251,236
	\$125,079,966	\$124,765,501

DHS is continuing to support providers through the Early Educator Pandemic Retention Bonuses using funds provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF). This program is intended to invest in early educators by offering bonuses to direct care staff employed at DHS-licensed child care providers. These bonuses supplement educator compensation to support retention and recruitment in the early learning sector, as well as recognize the vital work that early educators do in supporting the state’s youngest learners. As of March 2024, there were 6,583 unique applicants (up 763 applicants from the last caseload count of 5,820 unique applicants in September 2023) who have received a Pandemic Retention Bonus, totaling slightly over \$31 million. The most recent window had the highest number of applicants yet at 4,462, and the number of unique, new applicants also has started rising in the last few windows, showing staffing growth in the sector.



The DHS has also received SFRF to support four additional child care projects listed below:

Project	Allocation	DHS spend to date as of March 2024
Child Care Family Provider Support	\$600,000	\$452,171
Child Care Retention Bonuses	\$37,400,000	\$31,583,816
Child Care Workforce Registry	\$1,000,000	\$749,766
Program Quality Improvement Grants	\$1,000,000	\$381,166
TEACH Early Educator Scholarship	\$2,000,000	\$108,803
TOTAL SFRF DOLLARS	\$42,000,000	\$33,275,722

The Program Quality Improvement Grants work is an example of a success story with SFRF dollars. Since the onset of this work, 321 childcare (center based and school age) and family child care educators have engaged with LearnERS. Currently, there are 100 active participants in LearnERS: 79 of these are center-based educators, 21 are family childcare providers. Additionally, 63 participants have graduated from the program.

With the additional support of the LearnERS program, new providers are also able to move up the quality continuum more quickly and generally feel more supported through the process. Since September 2023, there have been an additional 39 star rating increases in BrightStars across child care programs. Of the 39 increases, 21 were enrolled in LearnERS (54% of the rate increases were from participating in LearnERS). Over the course of this project, 994 currently enrolled CCAP children have benefited from their program's participation in LearnERS. BrightStars and DHS are committed to creating a sustainable version of LearnERS using CCDF funds moving forward due to the success of this program.

DHS has continued to implement several strategies to both recruit and support interested parties in becoming Family Child Care Providers (FCCPs), as well as those already licensed to expand their capacity. As mentioned in previous Caseload reporting, DHS has worked closely with the Center for Early Learning Professionals (CELP) to launch both the required orientation and First Steps trainings online as self-paced webinars.

The CELP also provides technical assistance support throughout the process, including on-site visits to assess the environment and assistance in the completion of the licensing application. The timeframe to complete this initial process varies significantly based on the participant and other outside factors, including coordination of a fire marshal inspection, a radon inspection, and a lead inspection. However, we have seen the time significantly reduced and/or found that the applications that are received are either more complete or that the participant has the support needed to get the application completed.

The process can take as little as 30 days from start to finish assuming there are no major issues with inspections. It can take between three and four months for an incoming family child care provider to move through the process at their own pace from starting the orientation through licensure. On average, a person who submits an application to DHS is typically licensed within one to two months of receipt. Delays in approval are typically due to incomplete information or the provider wishing to wait to open on a particular date.

An additional recruitment strategy continued to be start-up grants until 12/31/2023 when the program was sunset. These grants aimed to reduce financial barriers that may prevent an interested participant from moving forward. At the close of the Family Child Care Start Up grant program, 130 new providers received an award. Of those awarded, 74 have fully completed the licensing process.

For currently licensed providers who are looking to expand, DHS has worked closely with larger cities, including Providence, to advocate for a change to zoning laws to allow a family child care

provider to expand beyond eight children. In Providence specifically, where almost half of family child care providers are located, a significant barrier related to zoning laws has historically existed. Through advocacy and partnership with Mayor Brett Smiley's office, Providence updated its zoning laws effective January 1, 2024. This allows family child care providers to have a maximum group size of 12 as opposed to eight.

DHS communicated this change to providers and developed an internal plan to support family child care providers wishing to make this change. In the month between February and March, five Providence-based family child care providers increased their capacity. There are several more who are in the process or expressed an intent to apply for an increase in the future. DHS continues to work with other municipalities, through direct correspondence and advocacy as requested, for providers looking to grow in other towns or cities.

As part of the expansion request, DHS does complete measurement visits to ensure that any space has enough square footage for an increase in capacity to ensure adequate health and safety, as well as the ability to provide quality programming. However, DHS remains committed to working with providers to creatively identify space that is safe, while also meeting space requirements. Over the last six months, DHS has assisted about a dozen providers to expand from six to eight children with an assistant. This allows for expansion, if square footage allows, while also remaining in the FCC category, while avoiding any zoning barriers.

It is important to note that DHS is currently promulgating new FCC and GFCC regulations and plans on eliminating the five-year requirement to make it easier for providers to take more children if space and zoning allows. Request for an increase for a provider who has not been open for five years are being handled on a case-by-case basis to support providers who demonstrate the ability to provide safe, quality care to be able to increase prior to that five year mark.

It is currently not possible to provide a staff-to-child ratio for active children and staff in the ECE community. DHS can provide information on capacity of the entire system based on licensed program data, as well as the number of CCAP children who are enrolled in programs, which are both provided in this caseload.

This CCAP enrollment number does not account for a large portion of the early childhood population, consisting of families who are paying privately for care in more than 800 programs statewide. Currently, DHS does not have the ability to capture private pay attendance and enrollment in any systems, but are looking for a mechanism to, at a minimum, self-report enrollment in the upcoming RI Start Early System (RISES) system.

In addition, the workforce registry went live in February 2024 with about 2500 employees voluntarily registering in the system, which is in excess of 50% of the current workforce. Once added to regulation and ensure everyone who is employed in the early childhood sector is in the system (anticipated to be completed within the next year), DHS will have a much better idea of how many teachers are working in each age group and will be able to get a much stronger sense of how much staff exists, compared to the capacity of children who can be served.

Child Care Caseload Trends and Projections

Question: Please fill out the DHS excel file for the FY 2024 and FY 2025 estimates by fund source and line sequence.

- a. For the Child Care Development Block grant
 - i. Do the general revenues meet or exceed the required match? If required match is exceeded, please explain why.
 - ii. Please include the balance of any unspent funds from prior years and report any plans for use.
 - iii. Would the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) rule change have any impact on spending and general revenue match?

Answer: See the narrative and tables below.

March 2024			
Fiscal Year	Mandatory	Matching	Discretionary
FY2023 Carryforward	\$0	\$0	\$3,898,610
FY2024 Current Balance	\$3,126,291	\$3,641,870	\$19,528,202

The table above represents current FFY2023 and FFY2024 Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding. CCAP administrative and systems costs, quality contracts, and various Family Child Care Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) payment practices, such as reimbursement for paid sick time utilizing DHS-approved emergency assistants are funded with discretionary funding.

Discretionary funding is also utilized to support the Rhode Island Start Early System (RISES) project, which officially began on July 1, 2023. The intent of RISES is to meet the key objective of expanding depth and quality of data accessible to, and used by agencies, programs, and partners to drive outcomes, as well as increased early learning program quality, accessibility, and affordability. To do this, the RISES system creates an online data infrastructure used by providers, educators, and consumers with the goal of achieving long term, early learning initiatives, including universally available RI Pre-K and increased access to high-quality child care.

While discretionary funds were originally allocated to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for Child Care Staff, a one-year pilot was introduced offering CCAP benefits to subsidize the cost of child care for eligible early childhood educators and staff working in DHS-licensed child care programs. DHS determined that 79% of current pilot participants are under 200% of the federal poverty level, making TANF a viable source of funding for this important initiative. It is estimated that \$1.1 million of discretionary funds will be utilized for those participants whose FPL falls between the 200% and 300% FPL level established by regulation.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 included more than \$8 billion in total annual CCDBG discretionary funds, an increase of \$1.9 billion above the previous year’s funding. Rhode Island’s

distribution of these additional federal discretionary funds for FFY 2023 totaled \$4 million, and the additional appropriation is expected to continue each year.

The Further Consolidated Appropriation's Act of 2024 included another significant increase to the discretionary funds for CCDBG. Rhode Island’s distribution of this additional appropriation is \$1,807,055. As concerns about economic recovery, unemployment, and inflation persist—and with the federal child care funding through the American Rescue Plan Act set to expire on September 30, 2024—significant and sustained increases in annual discretionary funding remain a critical support.

DHS’s enacted budget reflects the 27.7% increase in the match requirement from SFY 2023 to SFY 2024. This is due to the increase in CCDF mandatory and matching appropriations as enacted by Section 9801 of ARPA in FFY 2021. Because the state CCDF mandatory fund amount remains fixed in law, the increase in funds appropriated to the state by ARPA are awarded as CCDF matching funds and will be maintained in future years. While COVID-19-related FMAP increases no longer apply as of January 1, 2024, the FMAP increased from 53.96 percent to 55.01 percent in FFY 2024, and Rhode Island will also see an additional increase to 56.31 percent in FFY 2025.

General Revenue	SFY24 Minimum	SFY25 Minimum
Maintenance of Effort (MOE)	\$5,321,126	\$5,321,126
State Match	\$4,835,619	\$4,788,766
General Revenue Total	\$10,156,745	\$10,109,902

General revenues are budgeted to meet the required match, with an additional \$30,000 level funded every year as a sign of the state’s commitment to contribute to the program. The DHS Cash Array Excel file for the FY 2024 and FY 2025 estimates by fund source and line sequence is included with the caseload documents as Appendix A.

The CCDF rule change likely will have an impact on agency spending and any potential state match. The rule goes into effect on April 30, 2024. States and territories that are not in compliance with the provisions of this final rule on the effective date may request a temporary waiver for an extension of up to two years if needed to come into compliance – however, it is important to note that you cannot request a waiver for every rule change.

Rhode Island has already made several changes proposed in the new rule that has impacted spending. This includes capping co-payments at seven percent of a family’s income, posting online current information about the scale for parent co-payments, and expanding sustainable payment practices requiring states to pay based on enrollment or an alternative balanced approach.

There are three major themes as far as CCDF rule final changes and the chart below provides further information on the specific rules that are changing and where the Department stands in terms of implementation of the rules.

Change Theme 1: Lowering Families' Cost for Child Care	
Requires States and Territories to establish co-payment policies for families receiving CCDF assistance to be no more than seven percent of family income to help ensure family co-payments are not a barrier to accessing child care.	Completed
Requires States and Territories to establish and periodically revise co-payment policies that are “not a barrier to families receiving” CCDF assistance.	Ongoing
Change Theme 2: Strengthening CCDF Payment Practices to Child Care Providers and Increasing Families' Options	
Requires Lead agencies use timely and enrollment-based payment practices for child care providers to align with generally accepted payment practices in the private sector.	Ongoing
Requires States and Territories to show how they “provide for timely payment for child care services provided under CCDF”- Including paying in advance of or at the beginning of service delivery. Payments to be based on enrollment or alternative that does not undermine stability.	Waiver Request
Requires Lead Agencies to use some grants and contracts for direct child care services to enable CCDF to better address child care supply issues for participating families - Specifically requires Lead Agencies to use some grants and contracts for children in underserved geographic areas, infants and toddlers, and children with disabilities—populations that the statute identifies Lead Agencies must develop and implement strategies to increase the supply and quality of care.	Starting
Clarifies that Lead Agencies are allowed and encouraged to pay child care providers the full agency established payment rate to account for the actual cost of care, even if it is higher than the price the provider charges private pay families.	Ongoing
Change Theme 3: Easier enrollment for Families through reduced bureaucracy	
Reduce bureaucratic and paperwork burdens for families and Lead Agencies in determining a child’s eligibility to receive child care subsidies including things such as (1) eligibility conditions or priority rules cannot “impact eligibility other than at the time of eligibility determination or re-determination” and (2) recommend Lead Agencies reconsider families’ engagement with other benefits programs, such as child support, as preconditions for CCDF eligibility.	Ongoing
Requires Lead Agencies to implement eligibility policies and procedures that minimize disruptions to parent employment, education, or training opportunities	Ongoing
Lead Agencies must comply with current regulations by offering at least a full 12 months of eligibility to all children receiving CCDF subsidies, even if there are additional children in a family already participating in CCDF.	Ongoing

DHS is currently in the progress of promulgating CCAP regulations that will address a number of these themes and streamline the application process for providers. The specific policy changes for the Child Care Assistance Program regulations include items to streamline the CCAP application process and meet the new federal guidelines that are required as of April 30, 2024. Specific items with a fiscal impact include:

- (1) Adding a 90-day eligibility for job seekers.

- (2) Updating the short-term special approval child care to make an extension of a 12-month certification.
- (3) Adding that eligibility will be extended for other applicant children to align with new applicant child added to a family case.
- (4) Adding an exception to income eligibility section for families with a disabled parent who have a doctor's note stating they cannot work and cannot provide routine care can be eligible for child care.
- (5) Changing the 12-month certification period from the beginning of application to the date eligibility is determined, as required by federal rules. Compliance with federal rules requires certification to begin at application date.
- (6) Removing the restriction on self-employed Family Child Care (FCC) eligibility for CCAP, adding language that they are unable to care for their own children.

The Department is currently finalizing the triennial market rate survey and cost of care survey that is required by the Administration for Children and Families. To establish subsidy payment rates that ensure equal access, the Department, as the lead agency, must collect and analyze statistically valid and reliable data and have the option to conduct either a (1) market rate survey (MRS) reflecting variations in the price to parents of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child, or (2) an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology, such as a cost estimation model, which estimates the cost of care by incorporating both data and assumptions to estimate what expected costs would be incurred by child care providers and parents under different scenarios.

All lead agencies must analyze the cost of providing child care through a narrow cost analysis. The Department expects this to be distributed to the provider community by late spring/early summer of 2024.

In addition, this rule change is timed with the Child Care and Development Fund state plan, which is due July 1 and will detail for the federal government what DHS is planning to do to come into compliance with any of the new regulations.

Question: Please provide an update on the disenrollment trends.

Answer: See narrative below.

Providers have been required to disenroll children who no longer attend their program since pandemic-related payment practices ended in September 2022. Children who are absent with no notice are considered non-attending for the week and providers do not receive payment. If a child is absent with no notice for 10 consecutive days, providers are asked to confirm with the family the intent to return or disenroll the child from their program. In any case, providers will not receive payment for the child showing absent without notice.

Additionally, children are automatically disenrolled from CCAP upon termination/non-renewal of CCAP benefits. They are disenrolled by a provider when a parent withdraws the child from care.

Children are automatically disenrolled from a previous provider when a new provider enrolls the child to ensure the child is not enrolled in overlapping hours with multiple providers. Providers have until the beginning of the school year to adjust their enrollments for school-age children and those not adjusted are disenrolled. Providers do have the option to reenroll for before and after-school care if the child continues to attend.

Over the 12-month period from October 2022 through September 2023, approximately 2,620 children disenrolled from care and did not reenroll during their benefit period. Between October 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, 974 children disenrolled from care and did not reenroll during their benefit period. This could be for the following reasons:

- Fluctuations in parent employment
- Children who no longer need care (school-age children who only need care during summer/vacation hours, Pre-school age children who move to a state Pre-K, non-licensed public preschool program or age into kindergarten)
- Families who are opting to move to a private-pay provider who doesn't accept CCAP benefits through a number of different means (family care combined with part time hours, as an example)
- Families who have moved out of RI
- Families whose benefits are ending soon and families move children to alternate care before their benefit end date knowing they have taken an increase in pay during the 12-month period and will no longer be eligible for recertification

Currently, there is no mechanism for tracking disenrollment reasons other than termination of benefits or failure to recertify. Between October 2022 and September 2023, of the 2,620 children disenrolled, approximately 838 were disenrolled because of the termination/non-renewal of benefits (approximately 31% of the disenrollments). Between October 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, of the 974 children disenrolled, approximately 271 were disenrolled because of the termination/non-renewal of benefits (about 28% of the disenrollments)

Question: Please provide an update to the part-time and permanent closure trends for providers. Are there any new providers that have been or are waiting to be licensed? Please provide the underlying assumptions the Department is utilizing to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the CCAP program with respect to caseload and costs as well as the financial health and stability of child care providers. Please note any changes since the November conference, including details on rates being paid, assumed capacity (including seats and staff lost), and any other impacts on providers.

Answer: See table and narrative below.

Provider type	Provider Opening and Closings in Child Care September 1, 2023- February 29, 2023		
	Openings	Closings	+/-
Family Child Care providers	20	12	8
Center providers	4	2	2
Total	24	14	10

The Department closed out the caseload period with a net gain of 10 programs. While there were 14 closures, there were 24 openings. Some specific data related to this period include:

- Of the 14 closures, only four were due to lack of enrollment (two SA programs and two Family child care providers)
- The remainder of the family child care provider closures are due to an aging workforce and retirement. With double the number of family child care openings, the Department has been working to support the family child care provider community as a way to provide alternative, off-hour care.

In FY2024, through payment cycle 21, an average of 5,715 children were served in the CCAP each week. This represents a two percent increase in the average number of children served since last caseload, and a 2.7% increase from this same time last year. Also, since the same time last year, the Department is seeing a significant increase to infant and toddlers (21% and 16.1% respectively), while preschool and school age categories declined by 2.3% and 1.8%.

CCAP enrollments for preschool age and school-age children have steadily declined in recent years. There are several variables impacting this trend. For both age cohorts, rising wages have likely made many previously eligible families ineligible to continue with CCAP (of note, infants are the most likely age cohort to live in poverty- this is due not only to the family size change upon their birth, but also is the time when families are making less income due either to being out of the workforce or in a more entry-level role. As the child ages, typically the family earns more as they advance in their jobs and earn wage increases.).

For preschool age children, the expansion of RI Pre-K has provided an alternative early learning opportunity that does not require CCAP enrollment. RIDE and DHS have partnered to ensure that CCAP can be leveraged to pay for RI Pre-K and is expanding this braided funding model in the future. For school-age children, there are a number of considerations that lead to a decline in the school-age population in licensed care:

- Post-pandemic, families are less inclined to enroll their children in afterschool programs due to the need to find alternative care (or keep children alone) for a period of time during the peak of the pandemic to avoid multiple exposures.
- Another hypothesis is that staffing for school-age options has declined, so as families have struggled to find options for care, they are not seeking recertification for their school-age children.

- Many programs are eliminating school age options in general – transportation costs and lack of need in many communities are leading larger programs to convert those classrooms to classrooms of need, which include infants and toddlers. Capacity in infant, toddler, and preschool have all increased, whereas school age capacity across the board has decreased.

Number of Children by Age Grouping		
Category	# of Children	% of Total
Infant	539	9.4%
Toddler	1035	18.1%
Preschool	2297	40.2%
School Age	1844	32.3%
Total	5715	100%

Based on average through Batch 21

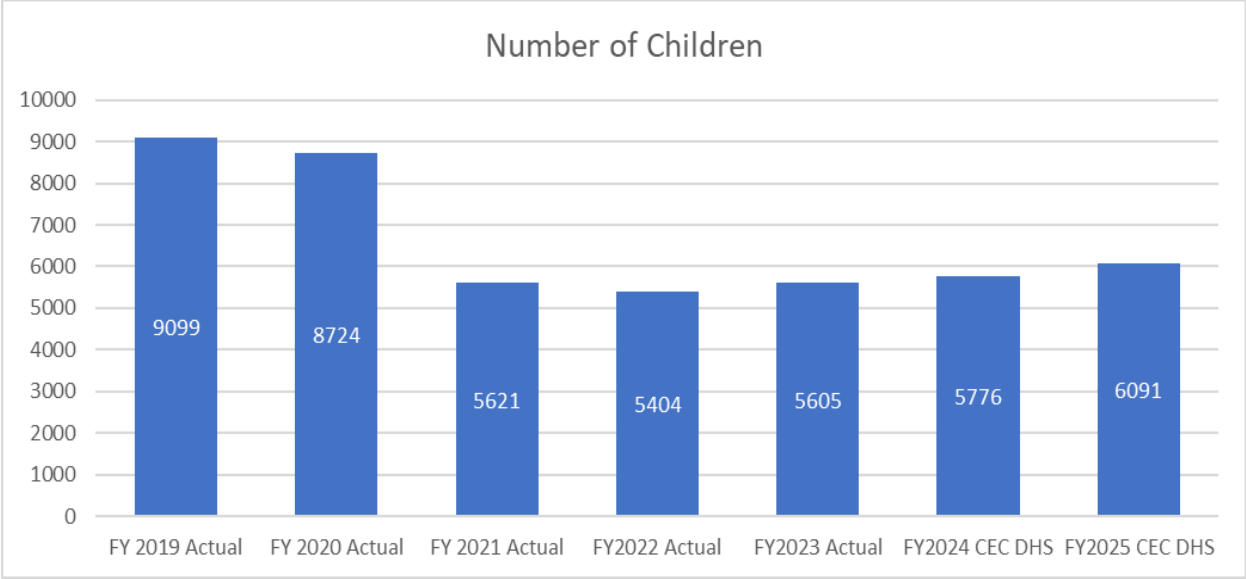
Number of Children by Provider Type		
	# of Children	# of Providers
Family Based	1,341	326
Center Based	4,374	307
Total	5,715	633

Based on average through Batch 21

Overall, the number of providers serving CCAP children increased by 18.8% over the same time last year. Family-based providers serving CCAP children increased by 17.7%, while center-based providers serving CCAP children increased at a rate of 19.9%.

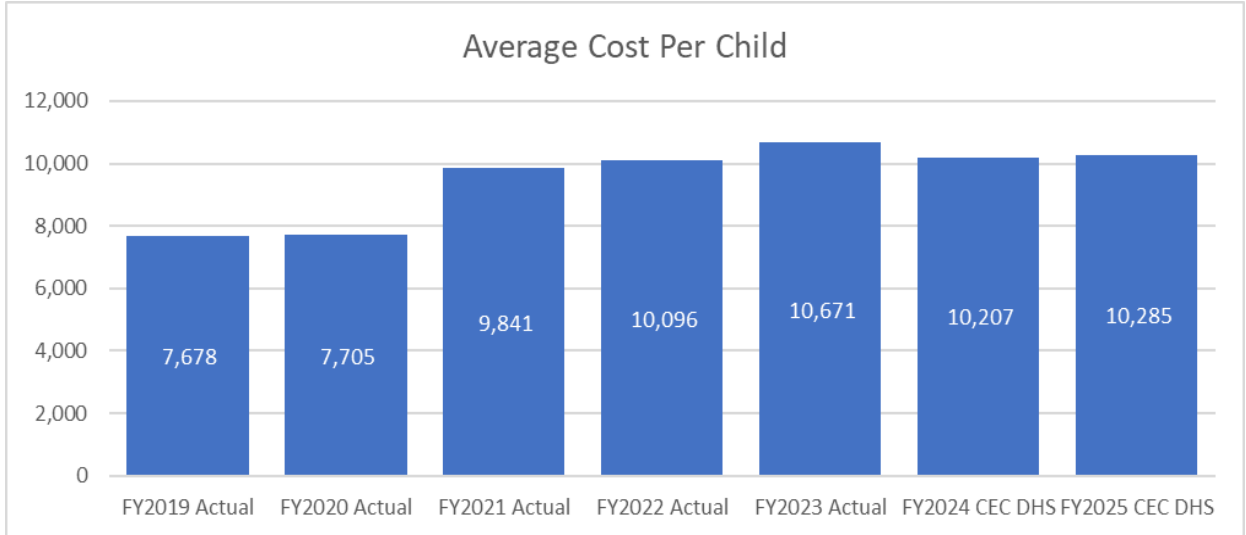
The number of providers serving CCAP children since the end of FY23 has increased by 17.4% or 94 providers. Both center-based care and family child care capacity has increased over the last year as a result of this need. While center-based care is most common, the flexibility a family-based provider offers has long been a factor for families when looking for child care, especially now when centers providing a standard schedule cannot accommodate early and late-day schedules due to staffing issues.

As provided in previous caseloads, families utilize child care subsidy programs for relatively short periods of time, but frequently return to the subsidy program after they exit – although this number is slowly decreasing. The overall number of children enrolled in child care throughout FY 2024 is 29.6% higher than the average amount of children served in any given pay period. Through Batch 21, 8,119 individual children were served by CCAP. Previously, this caseload percentage was 32% and the caseload prior was 36.9%, which does show a decrease in churn.

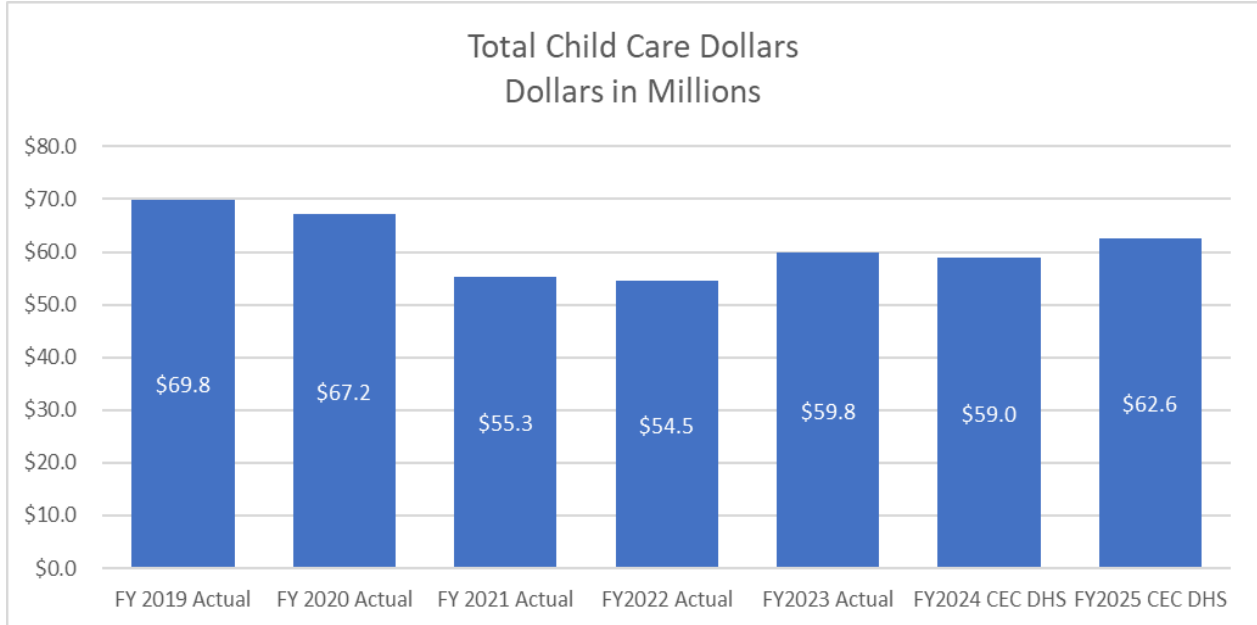


DHS is expecting to see a 3.1% increase in the average caseload in FY 2024, compared to FY 2023. The expansion of eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty level, as well as the increased transitional exit of 300%, and the expansion of child care assistance for college students continues to be a factor in this growth.

DHS has experienced batch-over-batch growth of .5% between Batch 10 and Batch 21 of this fiscal year. This period is critical to the projection analysis as there is a lot of movement at the beginning of a state fiscal year. With the removal of the summer flip, providers are required to disenroll school age children. These children may no longer need care or only need care during summer/vacation hours, or the families may opt to move to a private-pay provider who doesn't accept CCAP benefits through a number of different means (family care combined with part time hours, as an example). It is expected that this growth rate will continue in SFY 2024, resulting in an annual increase of 3.1%.



The cost-per-child stabilized in FY24 after seeing steady increases over the last few years. DHS is expecting a small increase to the cost-per-child in FY25 with the family-based providers receiving a 2.5% rate increase as negotiated in the collective bargaining agreement.



DHS experienced a 0.3% batch-over-batch growth rate in the cost of subsidies in SFY 2024 from Batch 10 through Batch 21. It is expected that this growth rate will continue through SFY 2024; however, due to retro active SFY22 payments being made to family-based providers in SFY2023, the Department will recognize a 1.4% decline in the annual growth rate.

The above DHS projections include the 2.5% family-based provider rate increase as negotiated in the most current collective bargaining agreement.

Shown separately are the projections for the FY 2024 and FY 2025 CCAP for Child Care Staff pilot, the one year pilot offering CCAP benefits to subsidize the cost of child care for eligible early childhood educators and staff working in DHS licensed programs.

FY2024	Amount
Base	\$58,594,842
Child Care for Child Care Workers	\$2,842,638
Family Child Care Provider Rate Increase 1/1/23	\$366,890
	\$61,804,370

FY2025	Amount
Base	\$62,233,734
Child Care for Child Care Workers	\$2,378,438
Family Child Care Provider Rate Increase 7/1/24	\$415,684
	\$65,027,856

Question: What percentage of the families eligible for the state subsidized program have children enrolled in one of the child care settings? Please provide any data on the number of families not using the benefit.

Answer: See narrative below.

There are approximately 4,302 families (6,513 children) who have requested and been approved for CCAP benefits who have enrolled with a CCAP provider and billed for benefit services. There are 285 families (374 children) in RIBridges who have requested and been approved for CCAP benefits but who have not enrolled with a CCAP provider or billed for CCAP benefit services.

This equates to approximately 6.2% of all approved cases not utilizing the benefit. This could be for several reasons such as parent employment patterns, including flexibility to work remotely, challenges finding providers with available slots depending on the age of the children and/or the desired location, or because of reduced capacity related to post-pandemic staffing shortages.

Currently, there is no mechanism for tracking a parent’s reason for not using their CCAP certificate. The Department has prioritized the development of a CCAP parent advisory group as a way of engaging with parents to better understand child care needs and barriers to meeting those needs. Program staff participated in the Whole Family Approach to Jobs Symposium offered by ACF (Administration for Children & Families in partnership with APHSA (American Public Human Services Association) earlier this year to learn how other Region 1 states implement advisories, in addition to other family-focused initiatives. Efforts are underway to identify community partners to support this work and to help engage families, and to develop a recruitment and incentive strategy.

Question: Please provide updated assumptions for child care assistance for individuals enrolled in either URI, RIC or CCRI for FY2024 and FY2025?

Answer: See narrative below.

The FY 2023 enacted budget authorized Child Care Assistance for College. For the period October 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, 43 families (79 children) were approved for benefits under CCAP for College. Currently, there are 34 families (64 children) approved for CCAP benefits with college participation as a need reason. FY 2024 spending to date is \$123,242.

There was an increase in families approved for CCAP for college from 30 families to 34 families and from 64 children to 79 children from Batch 8 as reported in the November 2023 caseload. DHS anticipates increased demand throughout the remainder of FY 24, with increased awareness resulting from the media campaign and partnership with CCRI, RIC and URI. The program allows eligible students to combine part-time work hours with part-time credit hours to meet the approved activity requirements to support the schedule and needs of student parents. With enrollment in the program expected to increase due to extensive outreach, the cost in FY 2024 is estimated to be \$188,101 and \$332,473 in FY 2025.

Question: Please provide updated assumptions on the Child Care Pilot in which childcare educators and administrative staff receive free child care including:

- a. Enrollment and expenses
- b. Details regarding enrollees by occupation and CCAP status
- c. Details regarding applicants that were denied enrollment because of the pilot.

Answer: See narrative and table below.

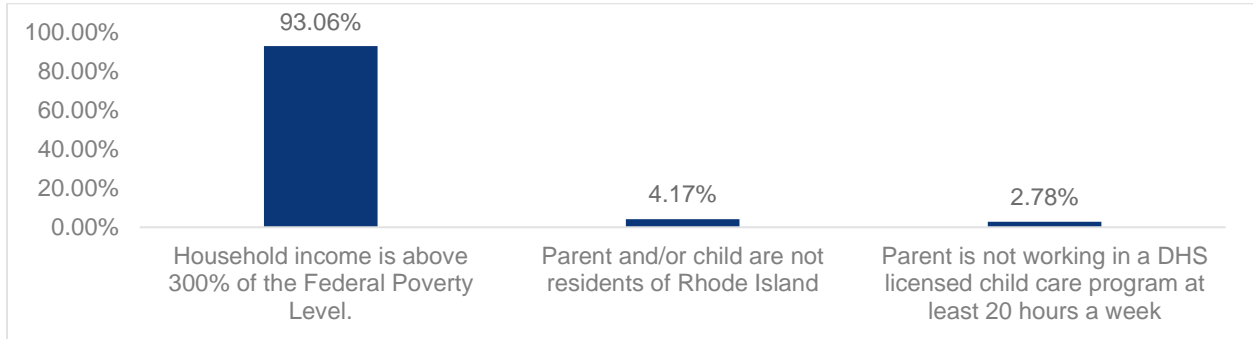
As of March 15, 2024, a total of 438 applications have been received for the CCAP for Child Care Pilot. The following table outlines the total application counts by application status and provider type where the applicant works. Of these, 73.3% (321 applications) have been approved, meaning the applicant met all eligibility requirements and one or more children in their household are eligible to receive the CCAP for Child Care benefits.

Application Status	Child Care Center	Family Child Care Home	Grand Total	Percent of Total
Approved	301	20	321	73.3%
Denied	71	1	72	16.4%
Canceled	30	7	37	8.5%
In Review	8	0	8	1.8%
Grand Total	410	28	438	100%

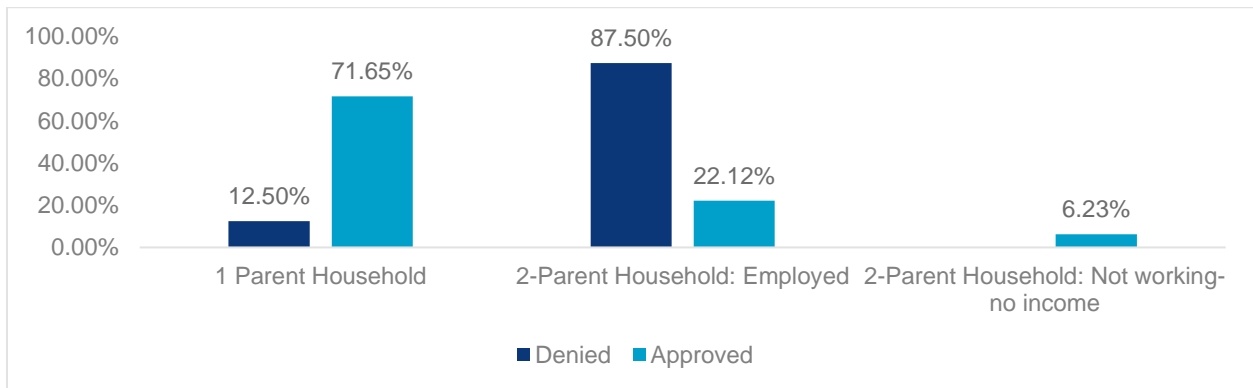
Notes on Status:

- Approved applications include at least one child with an approval to participate in the CCAP for Child Care pilot program.
- Denied applications include applications where all children associated with the application are denied from participating in the pilot.
- PCG conducts two internal reviews of the application before they are routed to DHS for final approval; this includes a first review and a second review.
- One application is flagged as a resubmission request as their application was impacted by a system bug, making attached documentation inaccessible.

Approximately 16.4% of applications received to date have been denied. Of the denied applications, the majority were from early educators working in a child care center (98.6%). The most common reason an application was denied was failing to meet the household income requirement for the pilot.

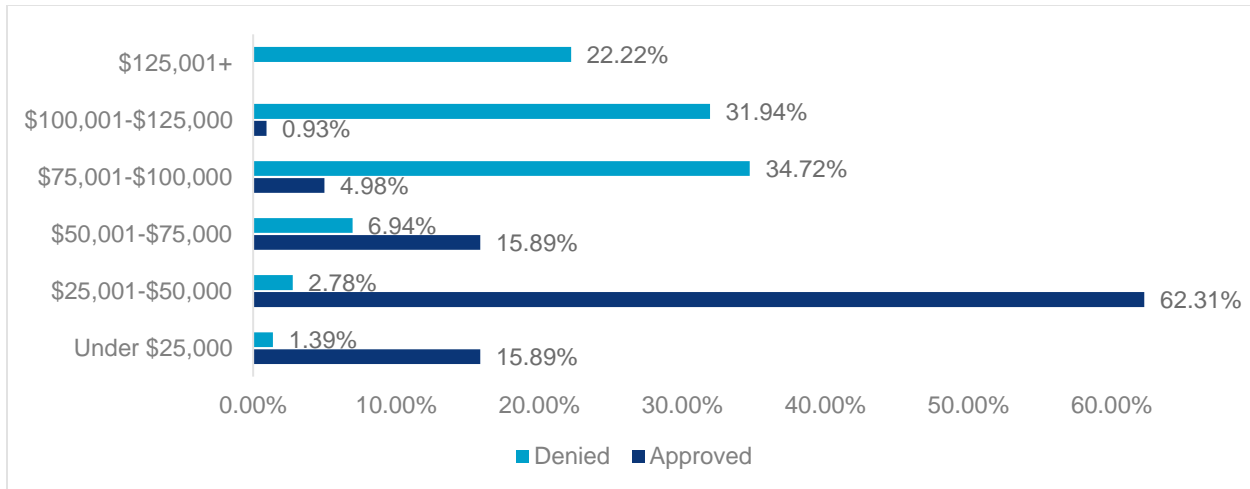


Most denied applications were two-parent households, where both parents were working, and were denied for being over the income requirement.



Count of Parents in Household	Approved	Denied
1-Parent	\$32,739.34	\$55,731.60
2-Parent	\$58,451.67	\$108,908.01

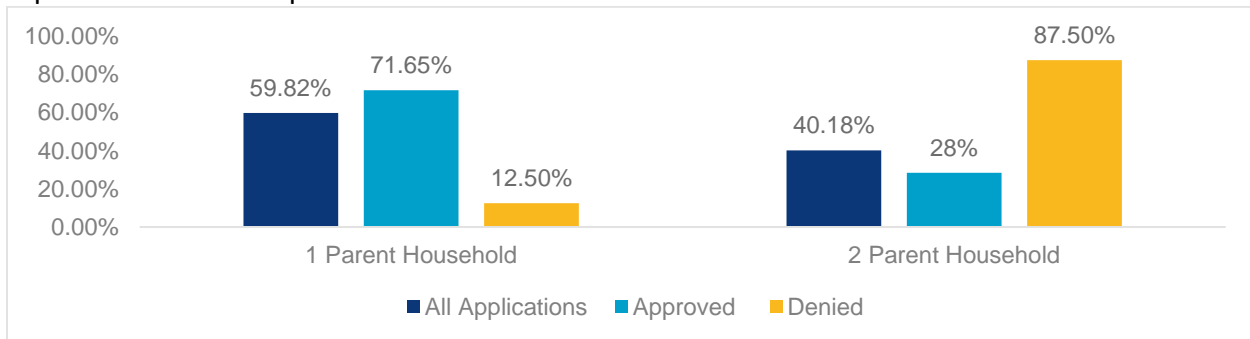
When considering household income, more than half (54.17%) of denied applications represented a household income of more than \$100,000; less than 1% of approved applications (0.93%) represented this household income bracket.



The most common job titles are outlined in the table below:

All Applications (n=438)	Approved Applications (n=321)	Denied Applications (n= 72)
Toddler Assistant Teacher (12.33%)	Toddler Lead Teacher (13.40%)	Infant Lead Teacher (13.89%)
Toddler Lead Teacher (11.42%)	Toddler Assistant Teacher (12.77%)	Toddler Assistant Teacher (13.89%)
Preschool Assistant Teacher (9.36%)	Infant Assistant Teacher (11.21%)	Preschool Assistant Teacher (11.11%)
Preschool Lead Teacher (9.13%)	Preschool Lead Teacher (8.72%)	Director (11.11%)

Most applicants represent a 1-parent household (59.82%). Among approved applications, the representation of a 1-parent household increases to 71.65%.



In two-parent households, the second parent is more likely to be employed than not working (85.79% vs. 14.2%, across all 438 applications).

The most common household size among applicants (438) are as follows:

- 3-person household: 37.67%
- 2-person household: 27.17%
- 4-person household: 21.92%

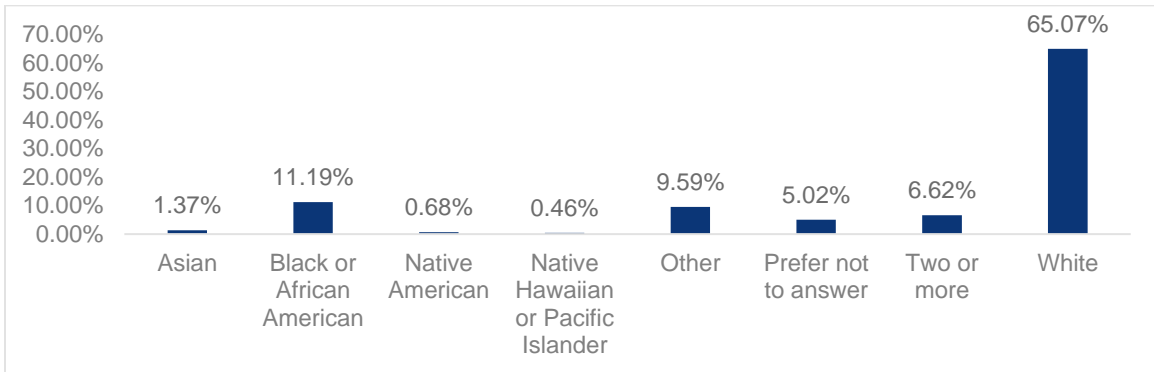
Among approved applications (321), three-person households were more common (36.14%) than two-person households (34.58%)

The majority of all applicants (67.12%) are earning an estimated income of \$50,000 or less. Similarly, 78.19% of approved applicants are earning an estimated income of \$50,000 or less.

Income Category	All Applicants		Approved Applicants	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Under \$25,000	81	18.49%	51	15.89%
\$25,001-\$50,000	213	48.63%	200	62.31%
\$50,001-\$75,000	57	13.01%	51	15.89%
\$75,001-\$100,000	42	9.59%	16	4.98%
\$100,001-\$125,000	26	5.94%	3	0.93%
\$125,001+	16	3.65%	0	0%
Grand Total	435	99.32%	321	100%

Applicants (438) for the CCAP for Child Care pilot most frequently identify as:

- White (65.07%)
- Black or African American (11.19%)
- Other (9.59%)



The majority identify as non-Hispanic (63%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (34.7%).

Overwhelmingly, applicants identify as women (98.86%, or 433 applicants).

For the majority of applicants (62.10%), a high school diploma or GED is their highest level of education.

Highest Level of Education	Count	Percent
Middle School	3	0.68%
High school diploma or GED	272	62.10%
Associate degree	73	16.67%
Bachelor's degree	70	15.98%
Master's degree	14	3.20%
Ph.D. or professional degree	6	1.37%
Grand Total	438	100%

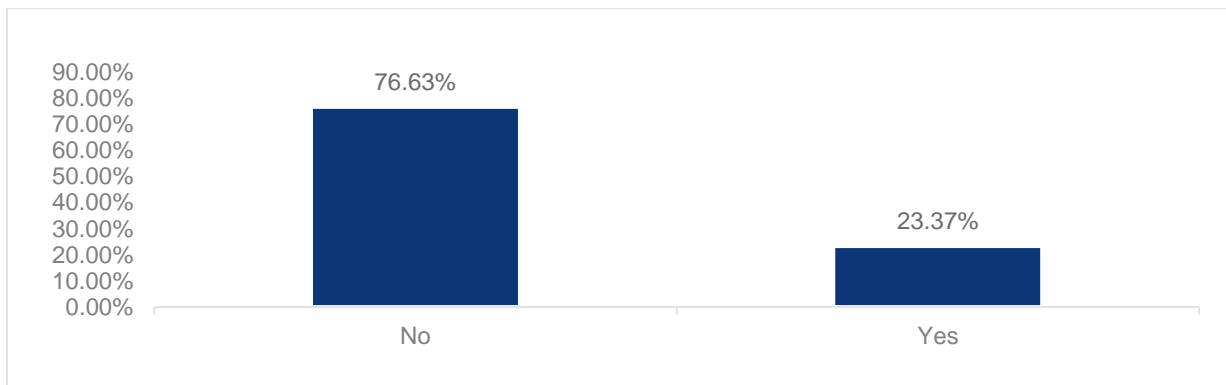
Children approved to participate in the pilot are most commonly Infant/Toddlers (40.21%).

Age Category	Count	Percent
Infant/Toddler	191	40.21%
Preschool	169	35.58%
School Age	115	24.21%
Grand Total	475	100%

Among the 475 approved children, 374 are enrolled in a CCAP program. Most children are enrolled full time (count: 282).

Enrollment Hours	Count
Full Time (30+ hours weekly)	282
Three Quarter Time (20-29 hours weekly)	64
Half Time (10-19 hours weekly)	20
Quarter Time (9 hours or less)	8
Grand Total	374

Approved children are enrolled across 141 DHS licensed, CCAP participating programs; 19 of these (13.48%) are Family Child Care Homes and the rest child care centers. Of the approved children, 23.37% are also participating in regular CCAP (111 of 475).



Based on current enrollment, recent application trends, and approval rates, it is estimated that the pilot will support approximately 518 children at a cost of \$5,248,358; \$2,842,638 in FY 2024, \$2,378,438 in FY 25, and \$27,282 in FY 26.

Full Pilot Forecast			
Type	Copay Only	Tuition	Total
Pilot - > 200% FPL	\$ 150,906	\$ 1,041,891	\$ 1,192,797
CCAP Eligible - < 200% FPL	\$ 78,422	\$ 3,830,386	\$ 3,908,808
Currently CCAP	\$ 146,753	\$ -	\$ 146,753
Total	\$ 376,080	\$ 4,872,277	\$ 5,248,358

The currently enrolled forecast of \$3,611,457 is based on the cost of 407 children enrolled at one point during the pilot. As of March 2024, 374 children are enrolled and 345 are enrolled with a cost. Participants have been categorized for financial analysis in three ways:

- Pilot: Over > 200% FPL and both copay and tuition paid – 23%
- CCAP Eligible: < 200% FPL and both copay and tuition paid – 74%
- Current CCAP: Tuition paid through traditional subsidy process; paying copay only – 3%

Current Enrollment Forecast - March 15, 2024			
Type	Copay Only	Tuition	Total
Pilot - > 200% FPL	\$ 103,840	\$ 716,938	\$ 820,778
CCAP Eligible - < 200% FPL	\$ 53,963	\$ 2,635,735	\$ 2,689,698
Currently CCAP	\$ 100,982	\$ -	\$ 100,982
Total	\$ 258,785	\$ 3,352,673	\$ 3,611,458

Applications received peaked in August 2023 with 105 and has declined every month since with the exception of January 2024 (43 application received versus 40 in December 2023). Approved applications are estimated to be 26 per month, based on the average number of approved applications from November 2023 to February 2024. Factoring in an average child-per-application of 1.26, it is forecasted that an additional 33 children would be approved each month for a total additional 163 children through July 31, 2024.

An average cost-per-child of \$10,023 was calculated factoring the overall enrollments, current enrollments, and copay-only children. Utilizing this methodology, an additional \$1,636,899 is forecasted for children who enroll from March 2024 through July 2024 and use the full 12 month certification.

Future Enrollment Forecast - July 31, 2024			
Type	Copay Only	Tuition	Total
Pilot - > 200% FPL	\$ 47,066	\$ 324,953	\$ 372,019
CCAP Eligible - < 200% FPL	\$ 24,459	\$ 1,194,651	\$ 1,219,110
Currently CCAP	\$ 45,770	\$ -	\$ 45,770
Total	\$ 117,295	\$ 1,519,605	\$ 1,636,900

Finally, based on currently FPL levels of participants, it is expected that TANF can support 79% of the total cost. However, expenses will be allocated based on payments.

FY and Funding Splits			
Fiscal Year	Full Tuition	TANF	CCDBG
FY 24	\$ 2,842,638	\$ 2,245,684	\$ 596,954
FY 25	\$ 2,378,438	\$ 1,878,966	\$ 499,472
FY 26	\$ 27,282	\$ 21,553	\$ 5,729
Total	\$5,248,358	\$ 4,146,203	\$ 1,102,155

Through February 2024, based on coverage dates, \$1,264,030 has been disbursed as payments to CCAP programs. Of which, \$988,635 has been adjusted on to the caseload accounts.

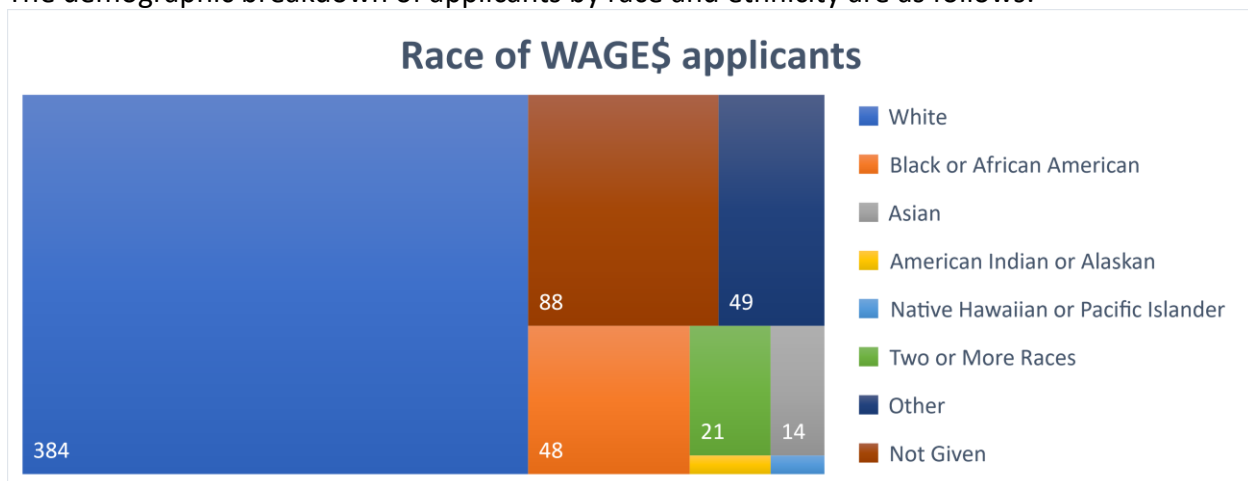
Question: Please provide an update regarding the Step Up to Wage\$ pilot program including, but not limited to,

- a. Number of total applicants
- b. Reasons for denial
- c. Demographic Breakdown of applicants

Answer: See narrative below.

The Step Up to WAGE\$ pilot is an education-based salary supplement for professionals who are working with young children in early childhood settings. It is a demonstration program of Child Care Services Association (CCSA) in North Carolina and is based on the national Child Care WAGE\$ program, which is meant to increase retention, education, and compensation of early childhood professionals. The applications for Step Up to WAGE\$ opened to the provider community on May 15, 2023. The pilot has received 609 applications. It is important to note that DHS purposely put a cap on the number of applications received due to the nature of the pilot and the amount of money awarded. Applications were closed after about one month (6/21/23) due to an overwhelming response.

The demographic breakdown of applicants by race and ethnicity are as follows:

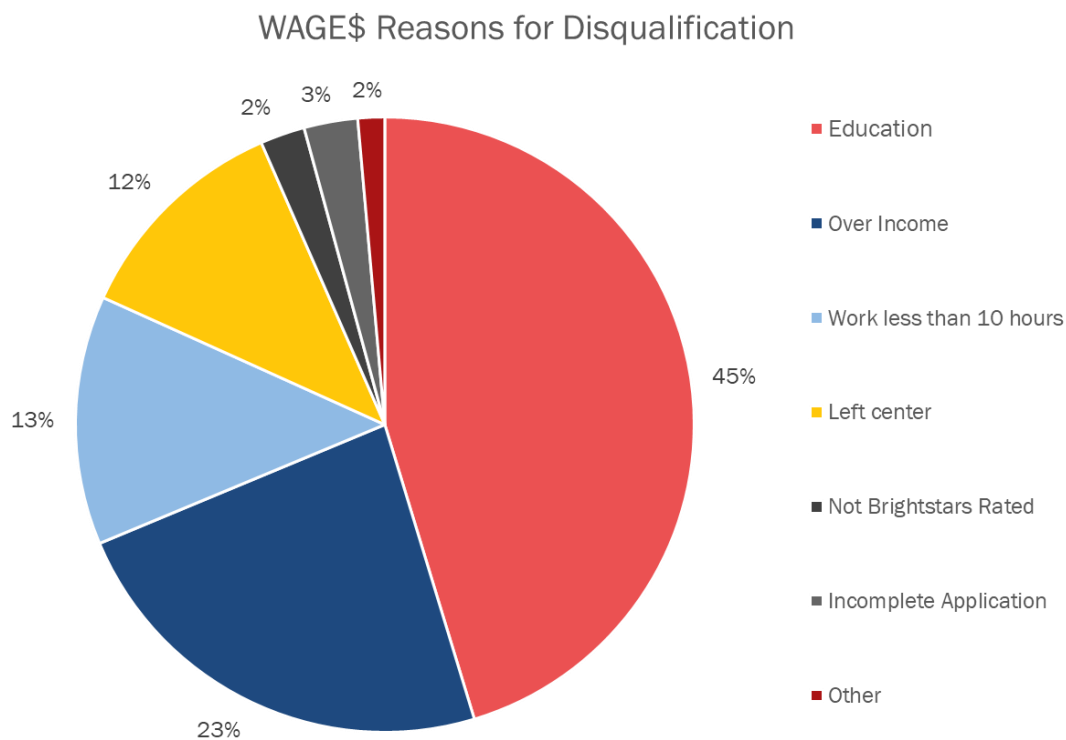


Of the 609 applicants, 64% of the applicants were white. Of the additional races provided, Black or African American and other were both at approximately 8% each of the applicant pool. When looking at ethnicity, 29% of the applicant pool was Latinx.

Other data points around the applicant pool include:

- 99% of the applicants are female
- 40% of applicants have a college degree (AA through MA)
- 29% of applicants have early childhood college credits but no degree
- 11% of applicants have a CDA credential

There were 214 people who applied and did not qualify for a WAGE\$ bonus. Main reasons for denial were (1) applicant did not meet the educational qualifications of any of the levels, (2) the applicant made more than the \$23 per hour cap and (3) the applicant worked less than 10 hours a week directly with children.



Recipient Data

DHS awarded 271 applicants, based on funding available. The total award to-date is \$1,607,000. The average wage of the recipient is \$16.50 per hour. There are 135 different programs in Rhode Island that employ WAGE\$ recipients.

Of the 271 awarded applicants, 26% of the award pool received the Level 1 supplement of \$3,000 a year, in two \$1,500 installments every six months. DHS was able to award a number of early childhood educators in each award level.

Award Level	\$ awarded per year	# of awards	% of award pool
Level One – CDA or 3 college credits in ECE or related field	\$3,000	70	26%
Level Two – 12 or more college credits in ECE or a related field	\$5,000	46	17%
Level Three – 36 college credits, including 12 in ECE or related field OR Associate’s degree, including less than 12 credits in ECE or related field	\$6,000	38	14%
Level Four – Associate’s Degree, including 12-23 credits in ECE or related field, OR Bachelor’s Degree with less than 12 credits in ECE or related	\$8,000	32	12%
Level Five – Associate’s Degree, including 24 credits in ECE or related field, OR Bachelor’s Degree 12-23 credits in ECE or related field	\$10,000	58	21%
Level Six – Bachelor’s degree, including 24 or more credits in ECE or related field	\$12,000	27	10%

Of the 271 awarded applicants, DHS was also able to award supplements to various different educators in a number of different roles.

Awardees by Role	# of awardees	% of award pool
Assistant Teacher	76	27%
Lead Teacher	129	48%
Ed Coordinator	16	6%
Assistant Director	7	3%
Director	11	4%
FCC	32	12%
Total	271	100%

State Supplemental Payment (SSP) Program

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal program that provides monthly cash payments to individuals in need. SSI is for people who are 65 or older, as well as blind or individuals with a disability of any age and includes children. To qualify for SSI, individuals must also have little or no income and few resources. DHS administers the State supplemental portion of monthly SSI benefits to eligible residents of Rhode Island. The Social Security Administration (SSA) sends the Federal portion of SSI benefits. The DHS issues a separate payment for the State Supplemental Payment (SSP).

Question: Please provide the number of SSI recipients in each category (persons, personal needs allowance, assisted living).

Answer: See narrative below.

	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 November CEC Adopted	FY 2024 May CEC DHS	FY 2025 November CEC Adopted	FY 2025 May CEC DHS
SSP							
Persons	33,184	32,695	31,630	31,000	30,916	31,000	30,562
Cost / Person	\$ 46	\$ 44	\$ 44	\$ 45	\$ 45	\$ 44	\$ 44
Cash Payments	\$ 18,300,777	\$ 17,366,916	\$ 16,508,974	\$ 16,554,500	\$ 16,608,832	\$ 16,461,000	\$ 15,975,336
Transaction Fees	\$ 63,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 56,033	\$ 58,500	\$ 59,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
Total Dollars	\$18,363,777	\$17,421,916	\$16,565,007	\$16,613,000	\$16,667,832	\$16,521,000	\$16,035,336

As of March 2024, there are a total of 30,827 SSP recipients. 29,783 individual/couple payments, 665 personal needs allowance payments, and 379 assisted living payments. More detail can be found in Appendix A.

The SSP caseload has seen an average 0.7% decrease since October 2023. The FY 2024 and 2025 projections continue to factor in a small month-over-month decrease of 0.1%. This is based on overall applications received declining by 9% and approved applications declining by 18%. Additionally, the number of closed cases each month has no longer surpassed approvals which helped stabilize the overall net loss of cases each month. These assumptions bring the average number of persons to 30,916 and 30,562 for FY 2024 and FY 2025, respectively.

The administrative transaction fee decreased to \$56,033 for FY 2023. Per the federal SSA and based on the projected caseload, the transaction fee is estimated at \$59,000 for FY 2024 and \$60,000 for FY 2025. The cost-per-person is not calculated to include transaction fees.

The total moving costs were \$197,361 in FY 2023. DHS estimates the cost of \$299,214 and \$282,048 respectively, for FY 2024 and FY 2025.

Question: Please provide the number of individuals residing in a non-Medicaid funded assisted living facility and receiving the \$206 payment and the total cost for FY 2024 and FY 2025.

Answer: See narrative below.

Each month the Department issues cash payments of \$206 for individuals in assisted living facilities. As of March 2024, there are 27 individuals within three such facilities. The FY 2024 projection of \$76,220 is based on year-to-date expenses through December 2023, plus a projected average of 27 individuals for the three remaining facilities.

	FY 2023 Q1	FY 2023 Q2	FY 2023 Q3	FY 2023 Q4	FY23 Total	FY 2024 QE 12/31/23	FY 2024 DHS Projected	FY 2025 DHS Projected
Bristol Assisted Living	\$7,622	\$6,798	\$6,386	\$5,768	\$26,574	\$9,064	\$9,064	\$0
Charlesgate	\$1,648	\$1,236	\$3,090	\$2,266	\$8,240	\$6,592	\$8,240	\$8,240
Community Care Alliance	\$7,622	\$8,034	\$7,210	\$8,034	\$30,900	\$17,098	\$30,900	\$30,900
Forest Farm	\$0	\$2,060	\$0	\$0	\$2,060	\$0	\$0	\$0
Franciscan Missionaries	\$9,270	\$8,446	\$8,034	\$6,386	\$32,136	\$13,802	\$28,016	\$28,016
Total	\$26,162	\$26,574	\$24,720	\$22,454	\$99,910	\$46,556	\$76,220	\$67,156

The number of quarterly cases in each facility is shown below. DHS cost projections align with its methodology for the cash payments in both FY 2024 and FY 2025.

	FY 2023 Q1	FY 2023 Q2	FY 2023 Q3	FY 2023 Q4	FY 2023 Average DHS	FY 2024 Average DHS Projected	FY 2025 Average DHS Projected
Bristol Assisted Living	10	4	12	9	9	4	0
Charlesgate	5	4	3	4	4	4	4
Community Care Alliance	12	12	12	13	12	12	12
Forest Farm	0	3	0	0	1	0	0
Franciscan Missionaries	13	16	15	11	14	11	11
St. Elizabeth	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	40	40	42	37	40	31	27

General Public Assistance (GPA) Program

The General Public Assistance (GPA) program is intended as a program of last resort for the neediest individuals in the state. GPA provides a small cash benefit to adults 18 and over, who have very limited income and resources, and have an illness or medical condition that keeps them from working while they await an SSI determination. To qualify, an individual must earn less than \$327 a month and cannot qualify for other federal assistance programs other than Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In addition, the program provides supplemental assistance for funerals and burials.

As of March 2024, there are 545 GPA Bridge cases. This is 90 cases less than the November 2023 DHS projection for the month of March 2024. Over the last 12 months, the growth has averaged 3% versus the 5% growth experienced the 12 months leading up to November 2023 Caseload Estimating Conference. Additionally, decreases in caseload for two consecutive months occurred for the first time since FY 2021. However, the most recent month of March 2024 shows a significant increase of 28 from the previous month and records the highest GPA caseload count to-date. Applications received and cases closed remained stable, but the approval rate has trended significantly lower in recent months. Due to this volatility, the current projections uses a rolling 12-month average of 3% giving rise to the number of cases reaching an average of 535 in FY 2024 and 725 in FY 2025, at a cost of \$1,034,689 and \$1,479,441 each year, net of recoveries, respectively.

Question: For FY 2024 and FY 2025, please provide an estimate of the expenses for the burial assistance program.

Answer: See narrative below.

The total cost for GPA burials for FY 2023 was \$586,422 for 566 burials, which is slightly less than the \$600,000 FY 2023 Final Enacted. Through March 2024, the cost of GPA burials is \$486,909 for 456 decedents. While GPA burial expenses have consistently averaged around \$600,000 over the last five years, including \$679,746 in FY 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, current caseload projections estimate a monthly average of \$54,000 through FY 2024 and FY 2025. Based on that fact, the FY 2024 and FY 2025 GPA burial costs are estimated at \$648,909 and \$648,000, respectively.

	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 November CEC Adopted	FY 2024 May CEC DHS	FY 2025 November CEC Adopted	FY 2025 May CEC DHS
GPA							
Persons - Bridge	67	114	352	578	535	826	725
Cost / Person	\$ 162	\$ 178	\$ 154	\$ 170	\$ 161	\$ 177	\$ 170
Cash Payments - Bridge	\$ 130,410	\$ 243,731	\$ 651,968	\$ 1,179,120	\$ 1,034,689	\$ 1,754,424	\$ 1,479,441
Burials	\$ 569,269	\$ 589,380	\$ 586,422	\$ 600,000	\$ 648,909	\$ 600,000	\$ 648,000
Total Dollars	\$ 699,679	\$ 833,111	\$ 1,238,390	\$ 1,779,120	\$ 1,683,598	\$ 2,354,424	\$ 2,127,441