

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2016

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Sophie O'Connell, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
401-462-0854 (o), 401-275-3837 (c)
sophie.oconnell@ohhs.ri.gov

Brenna McCabe, Department of Administration
401-222-2277 (o), 401-464-1194 (c)
Brenna.McCabe@doa.ri.gov

**Transition to New Health and Human Services Eligibility System Begins
September 8**

Clients encouraged to report any changes to personal information before September 8 to ensure timely processing; some services will be limited

CRANSTON, R.I. (September 1, 2016) – Rhode Island's new integrated eligibility system for health and human services is launching on Tuesday, September 13 to provide greater convenience for clients and new safeguards for taxpayers. To prepare for this launch, the State must convert clients' data from a 30-year-old system to the new one. As a result, some customer services will be limited from Thursday, September 8 through Monday, September 12.

"In advance of the transition period, we are encouraging Rhode Islanders who need to update their account information or request replacement EBT cards to do so as soon as possible and before September 8 to ensure timely processing of these changes," said Department of Human Services Director Melba Depeña-Affigne. "The transition period is a necessary step in our efforts to improve access to high-quality health and social services and make government work better for all Rhode Islanders. While some services will be limited during this time, we will have a team in place to connect anyone in an emergency situation with other sources of assistance."

Clients already eligible for and receiving benefits will not be affected.

During the transition period, Department of Human Services (DHS) field offices and the HealthSource RI (HSRI) Contact Center will remain open during regular business hours. Those who come to a DHS office will still be able to drop off an application or redetermination packet, report a change, complete an assessment, or submit a request for a replacement EBT card. However, DHS will not be able to process those requests, issue new EBT cards or provide final eligibility decisions until the new system is up and running. Similarly, HSRI will process new applications and changes reported by existing customers once the system is available.

New and existing DHS clients who are in an emergency situation will be connected with other sources of assistance during the transition period. Their paperwork will also be prioritized for processing when the new system launches.

“This is the largest technological implementation the State has ever undertaken,” said Department of Administration Director Michael DiBiase. “We have dedicated considerable time and resources to making this transition as smooth as possible, but we know that we will encounter some issues in the immediate days, weeks and months after the launch. This is normal with any IT system this large and complex. We have a team in place to quickly identify, prioritize and fix any issues that arise. We also have well-trained staff committed to minimizing any inconvenience to clients during the transition period and after the new system launches.”

The software supporting Rhode Island’s current health and human services eligibility system must be replaced to comply with the Affordable Care Act. The new integrated eligibility system will improve customer service by making it easier and more convenient for Rhode Islanders to apply for and track their benefits such as SNAP (food assistance), cash assistance, Medicaid and child care assistance. It also provides the best possible value for taxpayers by expanding protections against waste and fraud, and more efficiently connecting people to the services they need.

Clients may visit the HSRI Walk-in Center at 401 Wampanoag Trail in East Providence Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. for in-person health coverage enrollment assistance. They may also call 1-855-840-4774 or visit healthsourceri.com. Clients may visit any DHS field office to receive in-person assistance to enroll in Medicaid or other human services programs. DHS clients can also call the DHS Information Line at 1-855-MY-RIDHS (1-855-697-4347) or visit www.DHS.ri.gov for a complete list of DHS field office locations.

###