

Strengthening Iowa's Eligibility

January 2022

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) is committed to continually engaging in improvement activities to ensure good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. DHS realizes the importance of this issue to Iowa legislators and as such has taken great efforts to improve our processes over the past two years. DHS is proud of the significant strides we have taken to address inefficiencies and ensure accurate eligibility determination.

Business Process Redesign

Nationally states have employed a method called Business Process Redesign (BPR) to improve eligibility determination timeframes, reduce use of staff overtime, and strengthen eligibility integrity across programs. DHS is pursuing BPR to address the agency's SNAP error rate. While the SNAP error rate is the initial focus of BPR, the scope of work also includes Medicaid, Family Investment Program (FIP), and Child Care Assistance (CCA) eligibility processes.

In November 2020, DHS released a request for proposal (RFP) to identify a vendor to support BPR activities. DHS is funding BPR activities through existing state and federal appropriations. PCG was awarded the contract and on-the-ground work began in July 2021. Successful completion of BPR will result in:

- A decrease in the SNAP Error Rate (at or below 6.3%)
- Ongoing success and maintenance of an acceptable Error Rate
- Positive customer service feedback from applicants
- Increased engagement from field staff

IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDE:

SNAP Error Rate Reduction

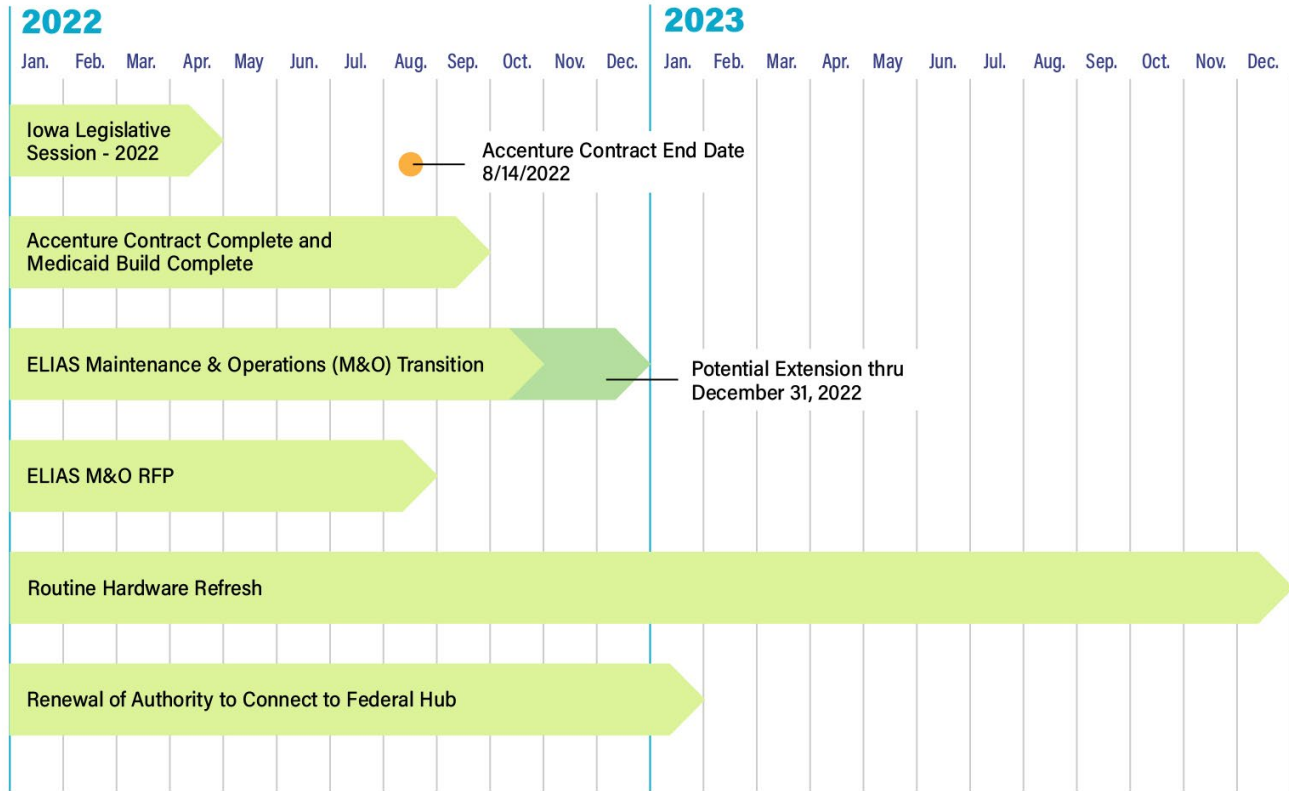
DHS has significantly improved the State's SNAP Error Rate over the past two years. In 2019, the Error Rate was 11.81%. In 2020 it was 9.44%. In 2021 it was reduced to 6.58%.

SNAP Error Rate



Redesigning Medicaid Eligibility System (ELIAS)

DHS is in the process of building a new eligibility system for DHS client services. The first phase focuses on the Medicaid eligibility system known as ELIAS. The goal is to incorporate other programs such as SNAP and TANIF to this system, to have a single eligibility system. Below is the timeline for the Medicaid ELIAS project.



Launched Equifax Pilot

DHS entered into a 60-day contract with Equifax to use their 'Work Number' system to receive and use income verification data to process income eligibility cases. The work began on October 15, 2021. DHS will evaluate the cost effectiveness of committing funds to contract with Equifax for income verification for SNAP and FIP recipients.

Milestone	Completion Date	Implementation Update
DHS Sent Contract to Equifax to Sign	August 11, 2021	Complete
Equifax Sends final Approval of Contract	October 15, 2021	Complete
Begin Proof of Concept	October 15, 2021	Complete
Analysis of Data	November 30, 2021	Complete
Recommendation to Leadership	Target: February 2022	In Progress

National Accuracy Clearinghouse

The December 2018 Farm Bill directed states to join the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC). FNS contracted with the federal General Services Administration (GSA) to begin building an electronic infrastructure to meet anticipated NAC guidelines. FNS notified states during the pandemic that this work would be pushed beyond the December 2021 statutory deadline due to data security risks.

Iowa volunteered and was selected to be a first-round state to help build the infrastructure. Iowa has been working closely with FNS and GSA since Spring 2021 to create processes and help build the system infrastructure that will be rolled out to every state over the next few years. NAC has a target go-live date for initial states, including Iowa, in September of 2022.

Background on Eligibility Verification in Iowa

Currently, households must verify their earned and unearned income for SNAP and FIP:

- at application
- at recertification
- when a new household member is reported
- when new income is reported
- when an income change is reported

For FIP, federal regulations require a state to have a computer matching system that uses an applicant or recipient's SSN to screen for income and assets when determining eligibility or benefit amounts. States conduct the requisite data exchanges with the IRS, state wage information collection agencies, unemployment benefits from IWD, and the SSA.

Current data matching sources include:

- Social Security Administration
- Iowa Workforce Development
- PARIS - National duplicate benefit match database
- Payments made through the Child Support Recovery Unit
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- National Directory of New Hires (SNAP only)
- eDRS (SNAP only) - National database of disqualifications
- IRS (FIP only)

In addition to the data checks that workers complete, information is also automatically system-generated and issued to workers for:

- Social Security (alerts)
- Wage (monthly and quarterly reports)
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits (monthly reports)

Continuous Case Improvement Unit

The Continuous Case Improvement Unit (CCIU) started reading 500 recently-approved SNAP cases per week in November 2020. This immediate case read provides direct feedback right after a case has been processed and also provides up-to-date data on any

emerging error trends. These trends are identified, analyzed, and mitigated at the worker level.

Fraud

The Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) performs fraud investigations related to DHS eligibility programs. If fraud is suspected, an investigation is conducted and results are reported back to DHS. At that point, DHS may request a SNAP household to be given an intentional program violation (IPV) which carries a suspension penalty.

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