



Questions & Answers from BHDDH

What are annual authorizations?

You may have heard that DD Services are changing from quarterly to **annual authorizations**. People who self-direct their services have had annual authorizations for a long time, but now people getting agency-based services will too. Right now, we're testing the changes in our fiscal system and finalizing the new procedures. You don't need to do anything differently yet. We'll be sharing more information soon about what this means and the benefits to everyone.

Why are anniversary dates for ISPs being changed?

Another change for people getting DD services is that the anniversary date for the **Individualized Service Plan (ISP)** is being replaced by plan **start and end dates**. This means there won't be an anniversary date anymore. A new plan will be valid for one year. New plans should still be submitted 45 days in advance, but now it will be 45 days before the end date of the existing plan instead of before the anniversary date. We'll be providing more detailed information about this soon as well.

When do I have to submit a new ISP if I have a COVID IISP?

COVID Interim Individual Service Plans (IISPs) are interim plans that can be submitted if a regular plan can't be done due to COVID. It extends the current plan. If someone doesn't have a current plan, such as youth just entering the adult system, they can't submit a COVID IISP. However, youth in transition just entering the adult system can still use the regular IISP before developing a full plan.

The COVID IISP is valid until 90 days after the COVID State of Emergency ends, or for one year, whichever comes first.

The State of Emergency was initiated by the Governor's [Executive Order 20-02](#), and most recently extended in [Executive Order 20-81](#) until November 2, 2020. As of today, the COVID IISPs expire 90 days after November 2, which is January 31, 2021. However, if the Executive Order is extended again, the COVID IISP end date will also be extended.

Under Medicaid rules, a plan must be submitted every 365 days. Therefore, the COVID IISPs will expire after one year even if the State of Emergency has not ended. The first COVID IISPs will be coming up on one year in March 2021. As we get closer to that time, we will be developing new guidance if the State of Emergency is still in effect.

If you have a COVID IISP, no matter what the end date of it is, we recommend that you move forward with doing a new plan once you feel ready to do it. Consider the RI Department of Health's recommendations about meetings and protecting yourself and those you want to invite to your meeting. Meetings can be held virtually or in-person (following physical distancing and other recommendations), or a combination with some people in person and others online. The most important thing is that your plan reflects what you want and need.

**Supporting Decision-Making:
Assisting People to Make Better Decisions**

Date: October 22, 2020

Time: 4:00-4:45pm EST

[Register for this webinar here](#)

While Supported Decision-Making (SDM) has become increasingly recognized as an option, there remains much work to be done to foster the widespread use of SDM in the day to day lives of people with disabilities. This session will explore practical strategies for working directly with people who have disabilities to develop the skills and experience needed for decision-making. The presenters will identify and explore key concepts that professionals can use as guidance when they are assisting people to strengthen their decision-making abilities.

This webinar is presented by The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), an interdisciplinary organization of professionals and others concerned about intellectual and developmental disabilities. See more at <https://www.aaid.org/>.

**Addressing Challenges of Social Media for
Individuals Living with IDD and Mental Health Issues**

October 13, 2020 at 2pm

[REGISTER \[uichicago.webex.com\]](https://uichicago.webex.com)

With the social restrictions surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, connecting with others via virtual and social media platforms has become much more prevalent. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) may have barriers in accessing social media platforms, including experience in navigating and knowing appropriate ways of interacting and making connections virtually. [aSuggestion for Wellness & Care](#), working in a collaborative partnership with The Arc Gloucester, offers a unique combination of features and services that allows for the provider to leverage Direct Support Staff to manage and moderate social media platform that includes healthy group discussions in an anonymous, secure, and private manner with the individuals they serve.

The application of this concept has shown to be a one-of-a-kind solution to social engagement and education in a virtual context to support individuals with IDD. The platform allows for personal choice, independence, safe (moderated) social engagement, anonymity, staff facilitation, and (non-prescribed) 24/7 access 365 days per year. This presentation will share The Arc Gloucester's experiences with the aSuggestion platform and present ways to get involved.

For disability accommodations email Jasmina Sisirak (jsisirak@uic.edu). These webinars will be held on Webex platform. You can test your connection with Webex before joining the meeting [HERE \[webex.com\]](#). Webinars and materials will be recorded and archived on YouTube.

*The **COVID-19 Webinar Series** is presented by [HealthMatters Program \(https://www.healthmattersprogram.org\)](https://www.healthmattersprogram.org), Department of Disability and Human Development, College of Applied Health Sciences, University of Illinois at Chicago through continued partnership with [Project SEARCH \(https://www.projectsearch.us\)](https://www.projectsearch.us) funded by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, Grant # 17CH03FA20 and [Aspire \(https://aspirechicago.com\)](https://aspirechicago.com).*

Community of Practice (CoP) in Autism in RI

Here are some CoP updates and possible resources, guidance, and professional development options. All face-to-face CoP events for this fall semester are cancelled, but a number of webinars will be offered.

Registration details are not yet available, but hold the date for upcoming webinars.

Wednesday, October 21 from 4:00 – 6:00

Tuesday, November 17 from 4:00 – 6:00



Web Resources

- The Autism Project’s Training and Education options: <https://theautismproject.org/training-education> [r20.rs6.net]
- UNC AFIRM’s toolkit - Supporting Individuals with Autism During Uncertain Times: <https://bit.ly/3bkY5Pw> [r20.rs6.net]
- A fact sheet from the Office of Civil Rights about COVID-19 and civil rights: <https://bit.ly/33DhrNa> [r20.rs6.net]
- Autism Society’s Tool Kit: <https://www.autism-society.org/covid-19> [r20.rs6.net]
- USDOE’s webinar on Online Education and web accessibility: <https://www.youtube.com/USDOE-OnlineEducationWebAccessibility> [r20.rs6.net]
- Virtual teaching resources from the Young Educators Society of RI: <https://www.yesri.org/virtual-teaching-ri> [r20.rs6.net]
- Administration for Community Living’s Information on COVID-19 for People with Disabilities and Older Adults: <https://acl.gov/COVID-19> [r20.rs6.net]
- OCALI’s free online learning modules: <https://autisminternetmodules.org/> [r20.rs6.net]
- AFIRM’s free online learning modules: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/> [r20.rs6.net]
- IRIS free online learning modules: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/> [r20.rs6.net]
- RIPIN new resource: <https://ripin.org/calendar/ripin-special-education-weekly-3/> [r20.rs6.net]
- Autism Project Social Skill Groups: <https://bit.ly/3ietcPN> [r20.rs6.net]

The goal of the CoP in Autism in RI is to bring diverse educators into a working relationship around a common interest in autism spectrum disorders to share information and improve practice. The CoP meets 3 to 4 times a year at Rhode Island College and hosts a variety of speakers who have presented on topics such as inclusion, social skills instruction, improving outcomes, and addressing challenging behavior. While the majority of group members are educators (teachers, related service providers, administrators, etc.), we also welcome individuals with disabilities, family members, community providers, clinicians, students and any other interested stakeholders.

It's Okay Not To Be Okay

From: <https://youmatter.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/ok-not-ok/>

Sometimes it feels like society says you should be always happy, and that showing your sadness is a sign of weakness. This is far from true – if you were to hold in all your sadness or anger you would explode. **We all have good and bad days. No one can be perfectly happy all of the time, that is not human.** One day you feel on top of the world, the next you are down. While I am still trying to accept this myself, I know that it is part of life and whether or not others choose to show it, it still happens.

For those who are struggling with mental illness and/or grief, dealing with this pressure to always seem happy can be even more challenging, as a lot of days are low. Sometimes when we are feeling down, we put on a mask to hide the darkness that lies behind the smile. Getting out of bed can be a major task by itself. With depression at times there is no apparent reason for why you are feeling this way. When it feels as though a cloud is hanging over our heads, those are the days we push people away the most. We do this because it is easier to try and forget about what is going on and not bother others with our problems. But getting through your problems and ignoring your problems are two completely different things.

A piece of handwritten text in black ink on a white background. The text reads "it's okay not to be okay" in a cursive, slightly slanted font. The words are arranged in three lines: "it's okay" on the top line, "not to be" on the middle line, and "okay" on the bottom line. The ink has a textured, charcoal-like appearance.

Whether that is talking to someone about what is going on, finding answers to what is causing that emotion, or using coping skills such as drawing, yoga, mindfulness, and so many other healthy ideas, there are ways to help you get through the bad days. It's okay to feel down.

Here are 3 tips for those days when you feel trapped:

Try to be social: This can be very hard, especially if you don't want others to know what is going on but it can help. This could be as simple as starting a small conversation with your friends, teachers, family, or anyone else.

Use coping skills: The list of coping skills could go on for pages and they are unique to each individual. Some healthy coping strategies include journaling, coloring, playing a sport, going on a run, yoga, deep breathing, and so many more. Once you find a few or maybe even just one it can help tremendously.

Let yourself feel: When a low day hits that doesn't mean you have to shut out what you are truly feeling inside. While this may be uncomfortable at times, acknowledging your feelings can help you move through them.

Remember you are not alone and you are not bothering others: Everyone in life has problems. That doesn't mean you are adding to another person's own problems if you share how you are feeling. **You are not a burden.** I have found that when I do share those thoughts and feelings a weight is lifted off my shoulders and a sense of relief comes over me.

The journey of life is filled with ups and downs, which is what shapes us into the people we are. When you're having a bad day or a good day, **remember that people do care about you, you are here for a reason, and the world would not be the same without you.**

Silver Linings



How The Coronavirus Pandemic Has Birds Changing Their Tune

by [Linh Anh Cat](#) from [Forbes.com](#)

A [new study](#) released this week revealed fascinating changes in bird song as a result of reduced urban car traffic from the Covid-19 pandemic. Traffic slowed to 1954 levels, giving biologists an opportunity to see how birds would respond to a 50+ year step back in time.

To put this in perspective, bird song in urban zones has to carry over background noise that is three times as loud as rural areas.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, scientists compared bird songs from the white-crowned sparrow (pictured at right) between 2015 and the start of the shelter-in-place order in March and April 2020. They returned to the same sites and covered four different bird song populations, or dialects.

How did white-crowned sparrows change their behavior? Check out these four discoveries below:

- 1) Birds doubled their distance of communication. If you think bird songs sound louder now during the pandemic, it might not be your imagination!
- 2) Bird song stands out more, or is more salient, than it was before, when birds had to adapt to the traffic soundscapes.
- 3) Traffic noise is lower frequency, so birds had been singing at higher frequency to stand out from the background noise. Without the low frequency background noise, bird songs became lower in pitch.
- 4) Even after half a century of increased noise, birds are able to rapidly respond to changes in the environment.

There have been a few silver linings to the Covid-19 pandemic, including the rapid return of less urbanized birdsong.



Finding the Silver Lining of COVID-19 as Someone with a Disability

by [Morgan Faith Neumann](#) from: <https://themighty.com/2020/09/covid-19-silver-lining-disability/>

Every pandemic has a silver lining. Fortunately, we don't have the history to truly back up this statement, but the silver I have found is a gleaming sliver of faith in my personal growth and future. Social distancing is impossible if you have disabilities as severe as mine. Without physical contact, I would be unable to use the bathroom, get dressed, shower or even roll over. When the fear of COVID-19 started to ravage New Jersey, I was frightened and anxious. Not only because I knew I wouldn't be strong enough to fight the virus, but because it meant contact with my personal care aides was too dangerous. I would have to leave my apartment and my version of independence and go home to my parents for my care.

College students all over the world will never forget the Spring Term of 2020. I had a great schedule and an internship I worked so hard to get. My responsibilities included improving the accessibility of our website for the disabled population and to create ways to increase the utilization of it within our community. As an intern, I was invited to attend weekly training sessions and staff meetings at Rutgers. Unfortunately, as with any activity that requires transportation sitting in my wheelchair for extended periods, the reality of attending those events was slim.

And then, COVID-19 hits! Effective immediately, all offices are closed and all meetings, training sessions, and conferences will be held virtually. Instantly, I went from making excuses and wishing I could go, to signing up for every lecture, networking event, and meeting I could fit into a calendar. Meetings with my supervisor also increased because she had more availability. I know this time with her was invaluable and helped me secure an offer for a second internship with her in the fall to continue my research.

Back at school, remote learning is a blessing for me. My chronic pain, inability to regulate my body temperature, and weak immune system make in-person classes very challenging. I love school and my grades and degree mean so much to me, but many times each semester my health will keep me from making it to class in person. While I understand how disappointing the current situation is for so many, I have enjoyed attending all my classes and learning from the professors directly.

Utilizing technology and maximizing its potential is critical for me. I need to rely on technological tools for my health, work, independence, emotional well-being and social integration. The pandemic has put the world's reliance on technology into overdrive and fast-forwarded our academic and medical fields into so many new ways of normal. Allowing doctors to treat patients over Zoom or enabling children to visit a virtual zoo are all examples of how technology can improve our lives. For me, it is a door that has been opened.

I am truly sorry for all the lives lost, the pain the sick endures and the economic suffering we all are facing. My mother was laid off, my younger sister had to leave her happy freshman life away at school, and my twin brother is graduating into a horrible job market and with no big graduation ceremony to mark his achievement. My entire family remains in constant fear that I will catch the virus or that one of them will catch it and not be able to care for me. I know our fear is felt worldwide and is a deep source of pain we will never forget.

I have always been told to look through all the bad, all the pain, and all the reasons why life is unfair to see the good. I have been given the gift of time with my brother and sister and parents. Under normal circumstances, the new memories we have made would have never happened. For me, this a gift that truly could never be replaced or replicated. Zoom meetings with my extended family and friends allow connections that were fading and have been reignited. I've realized my silver lining is a silver rectangular object some call a laptop.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, BH Link is here for you

BH Link's mission is to ensure all Rhode Islanders experiencing mental health and substance use crises receive the appropriate services they need as quickly as possible in an environment that supports their recovery. Call 911 if there is risk of immediate danger. Visit the BH Link website at www.bhlink.org or for confidential support and to get connected to care:

CALL (401) 414-LINK (5465)

If under 18 CALL: (855) KID(543)-LINK(5465)

Visit the 24-HOUR/7-DAY TRIAGE CENTER at 975 Waterman Avenue, East Providence, RI

Stay Informed with Information on COVID-19

Rhode Island Department of Health COVID-19 Resources

Hotline (401) 222-8022 or 211 after hours;

Email RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov

Website <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information

Website cdc.gov/coronavirus

Videos <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/videos.html>

Includes a link to ASL videos

BHDDH Information on COVID-19's Impact on DD Services and the DD Community

Website bhddh.ri.gov/COVID

RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

Website <https://ripin.org/covid-19-resources/>

Call Center (401) 270-0101 or email callcenter@ripin.org

Advocates in Action – for videos and easy to read materials

Website <https://www.advocatesinaction.org/>

Website offers BrowseAloud, which will read the website to you

Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from BHDDH, you can sign up on our website. From the main BHDDH page at bhddh.ri.gov, select **What's New**, then go to bottom and click on **DD Community Newsletter**. The link to sign up for the BHDDH Newsletter is directly below the title, as shown in the picture at right.

DD Community Newsletter

[SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER](#)

Contacting DD Staff

DDD has put extended hour phone coverage in place with a central business hour phone number and an on-call number for nights and weekends.

If you have a vital need, please call the numbers on the next page. If you have any general questions or concerns, please email them if you can, in order to try to leave the phone lines free for those who need to call. We will do our best to address your questions directly or through future newsletters.

AM **M T W Th F** PM
401-462-3421

8:30 AM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 4:00 PM

WEEKDAYS DURING BUSINESS HOURS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**
- **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DD SERVICES**

During business hours
 (Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00),
 for questions or support
(401) 462-3421
 Para español, llame
(401) 462-3014

PM **M T W Th F** PM
401-265-7461

4:00 PM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 10:00 PM

AFTER HOURS ON WEEKDAYS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

For emerging or imminent care
 related questions,
 Mon - Fri 4pm-10pm and
 weekends 8:30am-10pm
(401) 265-7461

AM **SAT SUN** PM
401-265-7461

8:30 AM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 10:00 PM

ON WEEKENDS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

Send general questions to the
 AskDD email address. Please
 do not email critical issues.
BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

E-MAIL THE DIVISION

BHDDH.AskDD
@BHDDH.RI.GOV

HELP US KEEP THE PHONE LINES OPEN FOR
 THOSE WHO ARE CALLING WITH A VITAL NEED!

WHEN POSSIBLE, PLEASE SEND AN E-MAIL FOR:

- **NON-CRITICAL CONCERNS** about Your Services and Supports
- **GENERAL QUESTIONS** about Your Services or the RI DD System

911

FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES
CALL 911
RIGHT AWAY. DON'T WAIT!

For medical or
 healthcare related
 emergencies, call
 your Primary Care
 Physician or 911

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR

CALL FOR:

- **ROUTINE Healthcare Questions**
- **NON-EMERGENCY Medical Care**

FOLLOW YOUR DOCTOR'S ADVICE
DON'T go to their office
unless they tell you to!

RIPIN

[\[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

Free Virtual Wellness Programs from RIPIN



Virtual Community Conversation

CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

October 15, 2020 | 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

tinyurl.com/RIPINChronicCare

[\[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

Chronic Care Management During COVID-19

Presented by the American Heart Association and Neighborhood Health Plan of RI

Thursday, October 15th

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Managing chronic conditions like hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes has become more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. Join RIPIN and experts from Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island and the American Heart Association to learn more about how to take care of yourself and others with chronic conditions.

[Register \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

New Chronic Pain Self-Management Classes from the Community Health Network

FREE virtual workshops designed for adults living with chronic pain. These six-week classes will provide you with the tools to manage medications, fatigue, nutrition and more. Click one of the class times below to register.

[Mondays at 9:00 AM; Beginning October 19th \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

[Wednesdays at 4:30 PM; Beginning October 28th \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)



Community Health Network

Your link to evidence-based health and wellness classes

For more information and a complete listing of classes, visit www.ripin.org/chn [\[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

[\[r20.rs6.net\]](https://r20.rs6.net)

Addressing Hidden Wounds: Trauma Informed Care



Register today (here)

Addressing Hidden Wounds: Trauma Informed Care
A Virtual Forum

October 28, 2020
12:00pm to 1:30pm

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (Neighborhood) and the Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) are hosting a free webinar on delivering trauma informed care. With everything going on in the world right now, we believe there has never been a more urgent time to consider the impact of trauma in the populations we serve. Join us to hear from national experts in the field on how to better understand the impact of trauma on populations and examples of how healthcare organizations have made changes to deliver more holistic restorative care.

Speakers



Ken Epstein, PhD, LCSW
Trauma Informed Systems Specialist
Easy Bay Agency for Children, Oakland,
CA



Anita Ravi, MD, MPH, MSHP, FAAFP
*CEO, Co-Founder, Purple Health
Foundation*

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Understanding Trauma to Support Your Family Member During COVID-19: Positive Behavior Strategies for Caregivers

A free webinar for caregivers of adults with IDD living with family. Register today!



This presentation is designed for family caregivers to better understand trauma responses they and their loved ones may be experiencing during this time of COVID-19.

Presented by: **Christine Hathaway, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA**

This webinar will provide proactive strategies that may help maintain well-being for family caregivers and others in their home as we all settle into fall and winter routines that provide for safety while adding meaning to our lives.

OUTLINE:

1. Basics of trauma
2. What trauma responses look like
3. Prevention: setting up environments that are trauma sensitive
4. Strategies to minimize the impact COVID related trauma on you and your loved ones

**October 24, 2020
10:00-11:00 am**

ZOOM WEBINAR

Advance registration is required using link below.

<http://bit.ly/2Yh25hS>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Accommodation Requests and Registration Assistance: Contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu 401-456-2764

TTY or Spanish via RI Relay: 711

Workshop Questions: Claire Rosenbaum, crosenbaum@ric.edu

Webinar details are available at www.sherlockcenter.org



The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, RI College, is offering this webinar with the assistance of a Community Enhancement grant from the RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Overview

Registration Now Open!

October Work Incentive sessions for SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries

Each Session:
9:30-10:30 AM

SSI: October 17, 2020

SSDI: October 30, 2020

Sessions will be offered on Zoom with subtitles in English.



REGISTER ONLINE at <https://bit.ly/2KkUCVQ>

The Sherlock Center provides Work Incentive Information and Benefits Counseling services to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries and those that support them (family, guardian, rep payee, professionals). These sessions will be of value to anyone looking for a basic introduction to disability-related work incentives and/or has related questions. Along with providing an overview of basic SSI or SSDI and related information, these sessions provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the following topics:

- Ticket to Work
- SSI or SSDI Work Incentives
- Resources about Work Incentive Information
- Access to Benefits Counseling
- Working and Impact on Health Insurance Medicaid/Medicare
- Other questions related to benefits and working

Upon registration please share your questions.

NOTE: These sessions will not address how to apply for SSI or SSDI benefits.

TIP: Unsure if you receive SSI or SSDI? You can confirm which benefit you have at <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>

Presented by Certified Work Incentives Counselors:

SSI Session: Laura Elderkin, SSDI Session: Jeanne Fay

REGISTRATION IS LIMITED! Advance registration is required. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the session. You can access the session by computer, mobile device or listen using a cell or landline phone.

Accommodation requests or registration questions: Contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu.

Session questions: Contact Vicki Ferrara at vferrara@ric.edu.

