



DD Community Forum



The next DD Community Forum will be on

**Monday, March 22
3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

The forum will be hosted by
Advocates in Action
on Zoom.

[Register here](#)

Agenda

- Welcome
- Director Kevin Savage’s Report & Vision
- Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
- Updates
 - COVID
 - Consent Decree
 - Budget
 - Employment
 - Conflict-Free Case Management
 - Self-Direct Changes
 - Transition to Adult Services
 - Housing
- Community Questions

RI Business in FedEx Small Business Grant Contest



Michael Coyne, a graduate of the DD Council's RI Self-Employment Business Incubator Project, is participating in the FedEx Small Business Grant Contest. This national contest is run annually by Federal Express to award twelve U.S.-based small businesses with grants up to \$50,000.

Michael is the owner of both [Red, White & Brew Coffeehouse](#) and [The Budding Violet](#), located at 601 Great Rd, North Smithfield. He is an amazing person and an active entrepreneur, and is involved as a peer mentor with the Self-Employment classes and a participant in the weekly Thursday afternoon Entrepreneur's Forums. He is also involved with the new speaking program on Self-Employment as part of the RI Cross Disability Coalition's Speakers Bureau.

Michael is one of 17 Rhode Island businesses who entered the contest. He is the only business owner who has a disability! The first cut of the contest involves voting by the general public and whoever gets in the top 100 votes nationally will make it to the second round of the contest.

Please assist Michael by sharing this information and voting for his business now and through March 24, 2021! To vote once, or daily through March 24th, and to see Red White & Brew Coffeehouse's narrative entry and short video, click on <http://bit.ly/38Gm7G4>. Search Rhode Island then Red, White & Brew to vote.

Also thanks to the work of Deb Morais, the DD Council PR Director, a news story on Michael was posted in [RI News Today](#). Check it out [here](#).

This is such a great opportunity for Michael! If he becomes a finalist it will also be great publicity for Rhode Island, the Self-Employment initiative, and the collaboration among the DD Council, CPNRI, the RI Department of Labor and Training, and the Governor's Workforce Board.



When you visit
The Budding Violet and
Red, White & Brew,
you'll enjoy delicious coffees
and assorted pastries,
as well as crafts and collectibles
from local artisans!



New Behavioral Health Emergency Unit Opens at Roger Williams Medical Center

The new 9-bed Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Emergency Treatment Unit at Roger Williams Medical Center's Emergency Department is Rhode Island's only fully private site for treatment of drug, alcohol, and psychiatric emergencies. The new unit is the second and final phase of the \$15 million expansion and renovation of the Roger Williams Emergency Department.

The new unit is immediately adjacent to the Roger Williams Emergency Department and allows for direct access from the rescue unit bays of the Emergency Department when appropriate or for convenient transfer from the Emergency Department following medical stabilization when necessary. The new unit is a safe and secure space for the treatment of mental health and substance abuse emergencies and features private rooms with doors to respect the privacy of patients during the assessment, evaluation, and treatment.

During their stay at the new unit, patients are medically monitored by the unit's behavioral health nurses and clinicians. The design of the unit includes reinforced glass walls in each room that allow for line-of-sight observation by clinical and security staff. Behavioral health clinicians are masters-level social workers and licensed mental health workers. The unit is far quieter than a busy emergency room which aids in the de-escalation of the behavior of patients in crisis.

BHDDH Director Kathryn Power praised the opening of the unit, saying, "It is gratifying to see this investment in behavioral health services, because we know it will result in greater access to care for individuals who need help and are seeking recovery. The new unit at Roger Williams Medical Center will help to fill a tremendous need, providing treatment and hope for Rhode Islanders with mental health and substance use conditions."

Clinical evaluation of patients in the units includes a careful assessment of risk factors. Family members are consulted to obtain a history and contextual information, and community-based agencies where the patients have been treated are also consulted. Based on all of this a clinical plan of action is developed which may include admission to an inpatient behavioral health unit or to outpatient clinic care that is also available at nearby Fatima Hospital.

The new unit will provide a higher level of coordinated care than has been possible in the past and will also serve as a relief valve for other metro area hospitals as needed and as appropriate.

Understanding Trauma to Support Your Family Member During COVID

This recorded webinar from October provides 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. [Watch here on YouTube in English](#) or [Mira aquí en YouTube en español](#).

Letter Urges Biden to Address the Needs of People with Significant Communication Disabilities

CommunicationFIRST recently led a letter, signed by 47 additional organizations, urging the incoming Biden-Harris Administration to “take immediate and specific steps to safeguard and advance the human and civil rights of people with disabilities, especially individuals who have little to no understandable speech and rely on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).”

CommunicationFIRST points out that “individuals who require AAC are often institutionalized, isolated, immunocompromised, and wrongly regarded as lacking in the capacity, need, or right to communicate and make decisions about their lives,” and that “the pandemic and racial disparities are threatening the health and lives of these persons in an unparalleled manner.” The letter describes nine steps the new Administration should pursue in its first six months.

1. Investigate and prevent health care discrimination against people with communication disabilities.
2. Assure the effective communication rights of children and adults with speech-related disabilities, especially in public health emergencies.
3. Clarify the ADA’s anti-discrimination, integration, and effective communication requirements for people with speech-related disabilities in all facets of life.
4. Guarantee equal educational access for students with significant expressive disabilities.
5. Ensure safe and equitable access to instruction during the pandemic.
6. Stress and invest in lifelong literacy learning and success.
7. Remove bureaucratic barriers under Medicare and Medicaid that deny people with disabilities access to the AAC they need to communicate.
8. Promote equitable access to AAC more broadly.
9. Improve and expand data gathering and analysis efforts, and encourage data-driven decision making.

You can find the letter at <https://communicationfirst.org/communication-equity-call-to-action/>.



Feds Propose Changes To Disability Employment Rules

by Michelle Diament | Disability Scoop

The Biden administration is reconsidering what should qualify as competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Education said it plans to update a 2017 frequently asked questions document that serves as guidance for the vocational rehabilitation program and the agency is [soliciting public comment \[federalregister.gov\]](#) on its [proposal \[rsa.ed.gov\]](#).

Under federal law, people with disabilities participating in vocational rehabilitation must be given the opportunity to obtain competitive integrated employment. The guidance in question addresses what counts. The Education Department indicated that the update comes in response to requests for more clarification, particularly related to the location where work is conducted, and it represents the culmination of three years of meetings with stakeholders.

Per the new proposal, individuals with disabilities would have to earn at least minimum wage and work in the community in a setting where they interact with people without disabilities to the same extent that typically-developing employees do in order for work to qualify as competitive integrated employment. What's more, employees with disabilities must have similar opportunities for advancement as employees without disabilities who have comparable positions.

Self-employment and telework opportunities can meet the criteria, the document indicates. And, group employment settings like janitorial and landscaping crews should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

However, the proposed guidance is clear that individuals with disabilities are not required to participate in competitive integrated employment and can choose to work in other settings.

“We encourage state VR agencies to continue to work with employers and other community partners to create employment opportunities that meet all criteria in the definition of ‘competitive integrated employment,’ including the criterion for an integrated employment location,” the document states. “Nevertheless, we recognize some VR program participants, represented by family members or others as appropriate, may choose to pursue work that does not meet the definition of ‘competitive integrated employment,’ such as those work opportunities that pay subminimum wage or are not integrated in a manner consistent with the definition.”

The Education Department is accepting comments on the guidance through April 8.

American Rescue Plan Act Provisions Benefitting People with Disabilities

Stimulus Checks

The third round of economic stimulus checks are now being sent out – \$1,400 for individuals with incomes up to \$75,000, and \$2,800 for couples earning up to \$150,000. There will also be an additional \$1,400 for each dependent claimed on tax returns.

In the two previous stimulus bills, only dependents under age 17 qualified for payments. This bill adds **adult dependents**, including adult children with disabilities and older parents with age-related disabilities who are claimed on someone else’s income tax returns. So a significant number of disabled people who didn’t qualify for previous stimulus checks will get this one.

Because this stimulus check is considered a rebate, it will NOT be counted against the asset limits faced by people with disabilities if spent within 12 months of receipt.

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

People with disabilities have been hit hard by the COVID pandemic. As COVID swept through nursing facilities, psychiatric hospitals, and group homes for people with disabilities, it became very clear that isolating in one’s own home is safer than a congregate facility. However, many individuals with disabilities require direct hands-on services to help with bathing, eating, and moving around that make it difficult to isolate. These and other services that help people live and participate in their communities are known as Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Personal care aides and other direct service professionals who provide HCBS may work with multiple clients across various settings (including high risk settings such as nursing facilities), which can increase exposure risk to both the caregivers and their clients.

Despite the elevated risks, the first five federal COVID relief bills failed to provide targeted support that could help people with disabilities isolate safely and maintain access to the HCBS they need to keep living in the community.



The Act provides states with a 10% boost in federal Medicaid matching funds for HCBS through March 2021, which should infuse \$12.67 billion in extra funding. States must reinvest the added federal funding to supplement their annual expenditures on supports and services for people with disabilities.

Additional Support for Behavioral Health Services

A second key change in the Act's provision is that it includes a broad definition of what counts as HCBS. The definition includes service categories that are often used to cover community-based behavioral health services – like counseling, community support services, and assertive community treatment – that sometimes get left out of HCBS initiatives. These essential services for individuals with psychiatric disabilities and substance use disorder will receive a much-needed temporary boost to help people remain in the community. Several studies have shown not only that the pandemic has increased stress and the prevalence of behavioral health conditions, but also that it has decreased access to mental health and substance use disorder treatments

States that want to add a longer term boost to their behavioral health treatment capacity can also take advantage of another Rescue Plan provision that provides an enhanced 85% federal matching rate for three years to fund mobile crisis team services trained in trauma-informed care and de-escalation strategies.

Other Provisions

The American Rescue Plan includes many other funding and emergency economic measures that aren't designed just for people with disabilities, but will be of critical help to many people with disabilities. This includes:

- Continuing \$300 per week unemployment payments through September 6, and making the first \$10,200 “nontaxable” this year for households earning under \$150,000.
- Increasing the Child Tax Credit to \$3,000 per child this year for kids aged 6-17, and to \$3,600 for kids under 6.
- Enhancing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for people without children. For workers without children, the Act raises the maximum EITC from roughly \$540 to roughly \$1,500 and raise the income limit to qualify from about \$16,000 to at least \$21,000. It also expands the age range of workers without children eligible for the tax credit to include younger adults aged 19-24 as well as people 65 and over.
- Funding for small businesses and also nonprofit organizations aimed at keeping workers employed and paid.
- Increasing funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, (LIHEAP), and for various food and nutrition funding, including Women, Infants, and Children, (WIC) and “Food Stamps,” the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP).
- \$25 billion more for emergency rental assistance.

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.

401-462-3421

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

401-265-7461

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

401-265-7461

ON WEEKENDS FOR:

- VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS

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

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

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!



DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

AWARENESS MONTH

Webinar Series

Please join us for this 3-part series where we will explore the intersections of domestic and sexual violence among persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and discuss prevention strategies, supports and services available.

Disability Justice: History & Current Perspectives

March 23rd 5:30-7pm

Connections with Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Sexual Exploitation

March 25th 5:30-7pm

Preventing Violence & Burnout

March 30th 5:30-7pm

Register for free at bit.ly/3q7XZlr

Closed captioning and ASL Interpretation will be provided.



Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Overview

Registration Now Open!
Work Incentive sessions for SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries

SSI Sessions:

March 15, 12-1 pm

April 10, 9:30-10:30 am

SSDI Sessions:

March 27, 9:30-10:30 am

April 26, 12-1 pm

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.

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.



PERSON-CENTERED THINKING FACILITATOR TRAINING

**Online Course
April 5— June 15, 2021**

This free course is available to those supporting persons with I/DD living in R.I.

Register by March 30, 2021

Course Description:

Rhode Island is in the process of expanding and refining Person-Centered practices throughout the state. One of the most important components of Person-Centered Thinking is the facilitator who advises and assists the person to actively participate in developing a plan for all domains of their life.

This course focuses on the knowledge and skills a facilitator needs to help individuals to:

- Prepare for the plan
- Develop the plan
- Implement the Plan

To get the most from this course, it is recommended that learners identify an individual with whom they might engage in person-centered planning. The course will provide the opportunity to practice the skills and knowledge learned and to reflect on learner experiences.

Course Requirements:

Completion of the 11 online modules, assignments and participation in four (4) group sessions via Zoom is required to earn a certificate of completion.

Course Details:

The Sherlock Center is now offering **Person-Centered Thinking Facilitator Training** as an online course. The next course runs from **April 5 to June 15, 2021**.

Learners will use Moodle, an online platform, to independently access course materials and assignments. Learners can access the course starting on April 5, 2021.

Learners will participate in four (4) required group sessions with the instructor. Course readings and assignments will align with the group sessions. These sessions will take place on Zoom from 10:00—11:30 AM on the following dates:

- **April 13, April 27, May 18, and June 15**

Learners are required to complete an orientation to Moodle and initial readings prior to the first group session on April 13. Details will be provided following registration.

Technology Requirements:

To access Moodle and participate in the group sessions, learners will need a computer, laptop or tablet with internet access and a camera. We recommend using the latest version of **Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Microsoft Edge, or Safari** for the best Moodle experience.

All course materials will be provided electronically using Moodle and/or email. It is recommended that learners install a free version of Adobe Reader on the device that will be used to participate in the course.

Every effort has been made to create this course and course documents in an accessible format.

Registration: <http://bit.ly/2xeV6pT>

Register online by **March 30** using the link above. You will receive a confirmation by email when your registration is processed. Registration and course information is also available on the Sherlock Center website at www.sherlockcenter.org.

If you need a reasonable accommodation (e.g., ASL/CART) to participate in this course, please indicate your request on the registration form as soon as possible.

The Sherlock Center will use the email provided with your registration to create an account in Moodle and to provide course information and updates.

For registration questions, contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu or Leave a message at 401-456-2764. Due to COVID-19 the Sherlock Center is open limited hours. Please allow extra time for staff to respond to messages.



RIPIN

Free Virtual Health and Wellness Classes

A Matter of Balance Managing Concerns About Falls



Many older adults experience concerns about falling and restrict their activities. A Matter of Balance was developed to address the fear of falling in older adults. This evidence-based program has been shown to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels.

This evidence-based program has been adapted to a virtual format, so participants can join online from the safety of their own home.

Wednesdays, 1:00 PM–3:00 PM
Begins March 24th

[Register for Free!](#)

Powerful Tools for Caregivers



Powerful Tools for Caregivers is an evidence-based education program offering a unique combination of elements designed to help reduce the burden of stress caregivers experience while providing tools and strategies that can be immediately put to use.

Wednesdays, 9:00–10:30 AM
Begins March 24th

[Register for Free!](#)

Diabetes Self-Management Program

This workshop teaches you how to manage diabetes symptoms and medications, communicate with family and doctors, relieve



stress, eat well, exercise, and set attainable goals.

You will learn how to be more physically active, eat healthier, and make other changes today that will keep you healthy for tomorrow. Open to adults age 18 and older.

Thursdays, 4:00–6:30 PM
Begins March 25th

Register for Free!

Clases virtuales en español

Programa de prevención de la diabetes

Este es un programa de cambio de estilo de vida saludable para personas con prediabetes o con riesgo de diabetes tipo 2. Aprenderá a ser más activo físicamente, comer saludablemente sin renunciar a todos los alimentos que ama, hacer cambios hoy que lo mantendrán saludable mañana. Presentado en español.

cada miércoles
4:30 PM–5:30 PM
comienza en 24 de marzo

Regístrate gratis

Diabetes Prevention Program

This is a healthy lifestyle change program for people with pre-diabetes or at risk for type 2 diabetes. You will learn how to be more physically active, eat healthy without giving up all the foods you love, make changes today that will keep you healthy tomorrow.

Wednesdays
4:30 PM–5:30 PM
Begins March 24th

Register for Free

Alzheimer: 10 señales de advertencia

La detección temprana importa. Conozca las primeras señales de advertencia de la enfermedad de Alzheimer. Presentado por la Asociación de Alzheimer de Rhode Island. Presentado en español

Miércoles, 14 de abril
1:00–2:30 PM

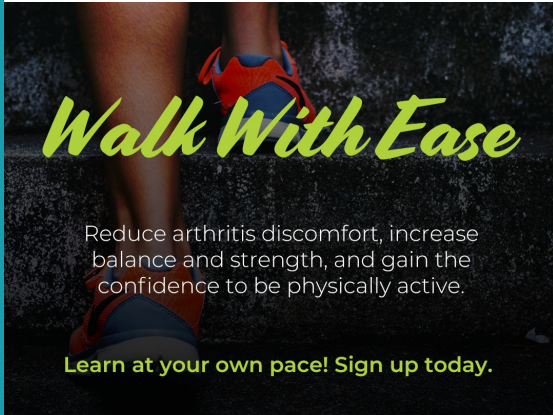
Alzheimer's: 10 Early Warning Signs

Early detection matters. Learn about the early warning signs of Alzheimer's. Presented by the Alzheimer's Association of Rhode Island. Presented in Spanish.

Wednesday, April 14th
1:00–2:30 PM

Registrate gratis

Register for Free



Improve your balance and increase your activity level with the self-directed Walk With Ease virtual program from the Arthritis Foundation.

Receive a free guidebook when you register!

Join Walk With Ease

Presented in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health



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



Take our health assessment survey

#WeAskEveryone

Need Help?
Have Questions?

Call RIPIN: 401-270-0101

inform

support

educate

advocate

empower

RIPIN is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that uses a peer support model to help thousands people every year navigate healthcare, special education, and disability support systems in Rhode Island. Combining firsthand experience with expert training, RIPIN peer professionals are uniquely equipped to help families and individuals access the services and information they need to thrive. Learn more at www.ripin.org.

Stay in touch with us:

