



### **BHDDH Offices Are Now Open**

The BHDDH offices are open again! On July 19<sup>th</sup>, all staff in the Division of Developmental Disabilities returned to the offices in Simpson Hall at 14 Harrington Rd, Cranston.

The offices are also open to the public if you need to meet with us. BHDDH staff are able to meet in person if all parties agree. Meetings can also continue to be held virtually.

The contact information section of this newsletter has been changed to provide the list of staff with their direct phone numbers and emails.

BHDDH will be closed on Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup> in observance of the State holiday.

### **Rate Increase for Direct Support Professionals**

The FY 2022 Enacted State Budget designates funding to increase the wages currently paid to Direct Support Professionals employed at Developmental Disability Organizations (DDOs) licensed by the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) as well as Direct Support Professionals employed through BHDDH's self-directed program.

#### **What does this mean?**

When the State Budget increases funding for DSP wages, it means that everyone's service packages will increase to reflect the increased rates.

#### **When will I get more money in my service package?**

The increase was effective as of July 1, 2021. However, it takes some time to make the changes to all the authorizations, so you won't see the additional funds applied to your annual authorization until the end of August.

#### **How can I use these funds?**

The rate increase is designed to stabilize the DSP workforce and to assist provider agencies and self-directed individuals to recruit and keep staff by increasing wages.

#### **When will DSPs see the raise in their checks?**

A number of DD provider agencies have already implemented staff pay increases beginning the week of July 1, 2021. Any wage increase that hasn't happened yet will be retroactive to July 1, 2021.

Fiscal Intermediaries (FI) have not yet made changes for self-directed staff. Individuals who self-direct should work with their FI to increase the wages paid to their DSPs. Please consider that many others who self-direct will also be adjusting wages, so we ask you to be patient. Your FI remains committed to making every effort to implement the changes in a timely manner.

## Questions and Answers

### **Will the Division be approving paid sick and vacation time for self-directed staff?**

Directly paid sick and vacation time is not allowable under Medicaid rules. The Division can only approve the use of Medicaid funds for the time staff are working. However, individuals who self-direct can adjust the hourly rate for staff to account for vacation or sick time.

### **What guidance is BHDDH providing to agencies for off-site visits? Are residents able to go to their family's house without restrictions?**

Providers that have not had any positive COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days may not restrict visitations “without a reasonable clinical or safety cause” consistent with CMS regulations. COVID screening, resident and staff testing, hand hygiene, physical distancing and environmental cleaning should remain in effect, and visitation should be allowed if there are no new cases within the site or the family home in the previous two weeks.

Agencies should also refer to the general recommendations from the RI Department of Health on community activities and mask wearing. See the most recent guidance at <https://covid.ri.gov/> or at <https://reopeningri.com/>.

### **Are there still restrictions on how transportation can be provided by agencies due to COVID?**

DD provider agencies are not required to restrict capacity in their vehicles. BHDDH recommends that one-on-one or small groups traveling in cars determine on a case-by-case basis if masks should be worn depending on each individual’s vaccination status and risk factors. As with masks, however, agencies should determine if there are risk factors among their participants and may continue safety precautions or policies at their discretion.

While Rhode Island has ended business restrictions, actions such as getting vaccinated, wearing a mask, watching your distance, and testing are still important steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Masking: It’s recommended that people who are not fully vaccinated still wear a mask indoors in public settings. Whether or not you’re fully vaccinated, you are not required to wear a mask unless a business, organization, or other entity requires it. Some settings, such as healthcare and transportation, have more restrictive federal masking policies.

Under Federal requirements, masks are required to be worn by public transportation employees and passengers (RIPTA and The Ride Program) until September 13, 2021 on vehicles and in enclosed or semi-enclosed transit waiting spaces such as bus shelters. Public transit no longer has any COVID-related restrictions on vehicle capacity.

## **Congratulations to the Graduates of the Advocates in Action Leadership Series Class of 2021!**

On July 29th, Advocates in Action held a virtual graduation ceremony for members of their 25<sup>th</sup> annual Leadership Series. The class of 2021 was the first ever completely virtual Leadership Series class.

The 9 graduates in this year's class met on Zoom every week from February through July to learn how to speak up for themselves and others. Along the way, they even helped host the first virtual Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference!

To stay up-to-date about next year's Leadership Series, get on AinA's mailing list by signing up here:

<https://www.advocatesinaction.org/contact.php>

In the meantime, on behalf of BHDDH and the Division, Congratulations to this year's graduates!



## **The Impact of the Pandemic on the DSP Workforce**

**Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM**

[Register Here](#)

This training will explore the Direct Support Professional's (DSP) experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through information gathered through the National Core Indicators (NCI) Staff Stability Survey, the presentation will highlight current research on the DSP workforce gathered before and during the pandemic. Information will be presented regarding the DSP workforce nationally and its growth and importance to those needing long-term services and supports. Results from two national surveys conducted with DSPs during the pandemic will be shared reflecting the impacts the pandemic has had on individual DSPs. Finally, the training will share the personal stories of six DSPs as they navigated the pandemic.

Following the presentation, webinar participants will have the opportunity to take part in a question and answer session receiving feedback from CMS and the presenters.

## **Section 14(c)**

Many national groups are calling for the repeal of Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows the practice of paying subminimum wage to people with disabilities. They are calling for the Federal government and States to move away from the practice of allowing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other significant disabilities to be paid less than minimum wage. Rhode Island phased out subminimum wage in 2019. All Rhode Islanders with disabilities have a right to earn at least minimum wage, or wages similar to other workers without disabilities who do the same job.

## **30 Years of Community Living for Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD)**

Free Digital Book can be [downloaded here](#)

On July 12, 2021, three Administration on Community Living (ACL) grantees released *30 Years of Community Living for Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities*. The [free digital book](#) features infographics, photos, and accessible language, as well as personal perspectives on community living and inclusion shared by people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) who served as advisors to the project. The book discusses the



30 Years of  
**Community Living**  
for Individuals with Intellectual and/or  
Developmental Disabilities (1987-2017)



progress that has been made since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed 31 years ago and highlights barriers that still need to be addressed in the areas of Housing, Funding for services and supports, Employment, and Technology. It starkly illustrates that although opportunities for community living have significantly expanded, far too many people with ID/DD are still unable to access the supports they need to live – and fully participate -- in their community.

## **Financial Well-Being for Individuals with Disabilities During the Pandemic and Beyond**

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) have collaborated, along with resource contributions from other federal partners, to develop an online [Secure Your Financial Future Toolkit](#).

We all need clear and accurate information to secure our financial well-being. This toolkit provides a path forward, based on where you are in your employment journey. Just click on any of the topic areas — [Preparing for a Job](#), [Starting a Job](#), [Maintaining a Job](#), [Changing or Losing a Job](#), and [Retiring from a Job](#) — for answers to important questions, including tools and resources to help you meet your financial goals.

Nancy Boutot, Manager of Financial Empowerment at the National Disability Institute, Andy Arias, Policy Advisor at ODEP, and Edward Mitchell, ABLE National Resource Center BIPOC Ambassador, provided an overview of the Financial Toolkit during a webinar on July 27<sup>th</sup>. The slides, transcript, and recording will be posted at this website the first week of August: <http://www.leadcenter.org/webinars/archived>.

## 2020 Transportation Trends Report

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) promotes the availability and accessibility of transportation options that meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and communities.

This report reviews 2020's trending topics in transportation. The Trends Report provides an overview of what's trending in the industry, questions we receive at NADTC and important transportation issues in communities across the U.S.

2020 topics include:

- Volunteer Driver Programs in the Age of COVID-19
- Transportation for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- A Fixed-Route Response to Assisting Local Communities During the Coronavirus Pandemic
- Meeting the Transportation Needs of Diverse Older Adults and People with Disabilities
- Medicare Advantage Transportation Programs
- Inclusive Planning for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

The information briefs each address one of the above topics and include a summary of the major issues, challenges, and opportunities, one or more case examples, and a list of resources for additional information. Look for individual Spotlights on each topic in August – December 2021.

[View the 2020 Transportation Trends Report](#)

## Building Disability Equity in Healthcare

Thursday, August 5, 2021 from 1:00 - 2:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

Aspire & Disability Lead are hosting a **60-minute live virtual panel discussion**, which will focus on critical issues around health and wellness for people with disabilities. This panel seeks to raise awareness, share knowledge, and invite advocacy on the topic of quality of healthcare for people with disabilities.

### Featured Panelists

- **Andrés Gallegos**: National Healthcare Attorney & Chair of the National Council on Disability
- **LaShon Gurrola**: Registered Nurse Care Manager at Rush University Medical Center
- **Rahnee Patrick**: Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services – IL Dept of Human Services  
[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_uY9W2NizR5OqssMqXWq4wQ\\_nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uY9W2NizR5OqssMqXWq4wQ_nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com)

**The event will include real-time captioning as well as ASL interpretation.  
A recording of the panel will be shared with registered attendees after the event.**



## Rental Assistance for Older Adult Tenants



The COVID-19 pandemic has increased housing instability for many older adult tenants. There are tools available to help prevent evictions of older adults, including emergency rental assistance, available across the country through locally run programs.

This week, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) debuted a new tool that helps renters and landlords look up rental assistance in their area and apply for assistance. The [Rental Assistance Finder](#) is designed to help tenants and landlords take advantage of emergency rental assistance that can be used to cover rent, utilities, and other housing costs, with the goal to keep people in their homes.

Many individuals face barriers to accessing rental assistance funds, including lack of knowledge of the programs available, internet connectivity issues, language access issues, and difficulty navigating overly burdensome paperwork. Advocates can learn more about how to help older adults navigate these issues in NCLER's recent training on [Emergency Rental Assistance Programs and Other Tools to Prevent Evictions of Older Adult Tenants](#) and the [Chapter Summary](#) that accompanied the training.

Altruistic August 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Set an intention to be kind to others (and yourself) this month	2 Send an uplifting message to someone you can't be with	3 Be kind and supportive to everyone you interact with	4 Ask someone how they feel and really listen to their reply	5 Spend time wishing for other people to be happy and well	6 Smile and be friendly to the people you see today	7 Give time to help a project or cause you care about
8 Make some tasty food for someone who will appreciate it	9 Thank someone you're grateful to and tell them why	10 Check in with someone who may be lonely or feeling anxious	11 Share an encouraging news story to inspire others	12 Contact a friend to let them know you're thinking of them	13 If someone annoys you, be kind. Imagine how they may be feeling	14 Take an action to be kind to nature and care for our planet
15 No plans day! Be kind to yourself so you can be kind to others too	16 Make a thoughtful gift as a surprise for someone	17 Be kind online. Share positive and supportive comments	18 Today do something to make life easier for someone else	19 Be thankful for your food and the people who made it possible	20 Look for the good in everyone you meet today	21 Donate unused items, clothes or food to help a local charity
22 Give people the gift of your full attention	23 Share an article, book or podcast you found helpful	24 Forgive someone who hurt you in the past	25 Give your time, energy or attention to help someone in need	26 Find a way to 'pay it forward' or support a good cause	27 Notice when someone is down and try to brighten their day	28 Have a friendly chat with someone you don't know very well
29 Do something kind to help in your local community	30 Give away something to help those who don't have as much as you	31 Share Action for Happiness with other people today				

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together

## Contacting DD Staff

See the full Division Contact List attached to this newsletter.

Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00  
for questions or support

**(401) 462-3421**

Para español, llame

**(401) 462-3014**

Send general questions to the  
AskDD email address.

[BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov)

Please do not email critical issues.

## Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates  
and newsletters from BHDDH, you can  
[sign up here](#) or on our website. Go to

<https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/events/newsandupdates/> to sign up or to see  
past quarterly newsletters and issues of DD News.



**SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER**

## **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](http://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](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov)

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

### **Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information**

Website [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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

*Includes a link to ASL videos*

### **RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN)**

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

Call Center (401) 270-0101 or email [callcenter@ripin.org](mailto: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*

# SELF-EMPLOYMENT ONLINE Classes for People with Disabilities and Other Interested Persons



**NEXT CLASS STARTS Tuesday, August 3, 2021**

Do you know a person with a disability or an aspiring entrepreneur who has a hobby or idea for a possible business or who needs more support to really grow an existing business? If so, our **FREE ONLINE ZOOM Business Classes** can help the person to learn all about self-employment, practical steps to start a business, available community resources to build their business idea, improve their financial future and contribute to RI's economy! Small business ownership is a growing market within RI and YOU can be a part of it too!

Entrepreneurship is choosing to do things that have *real meaning* for a person and to sell a product or a service they really love to make a living. It can potentially pay off to start a new business and pursue a better life for yourself. Here's what Michael Coyne, owner of "Red, White and Brew Café" in North Smithfield, RI says:

## WHY START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

1. I love being my own "BOSS", calling all the shots, meeting new people and spending my time working on something I really enjoy every day!
2. I decide my own flexible work schedule, and sell what I want to sell!
3. The Business Classes helped me to learn important business skills for problem solving, marketing, and Business Planning. I met other great people with disabilities and others who also own their own businesses. I received a mini-grant to buy some equipment I needed for my business!
4. I have assistance through my personal support network and my Business Team.
5. I am no longer "volunteering" my time at a job, but instead have MY OWN business making money and I have increased my income!



The RI Developmental Disabilities Council, in partnership with the Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE) and others developed a FREE Business Development Series of 8 Classes and additional ongoing supports, ONLINE through ZOOM Meetings and individualized mentorship. The first online Class starts on **Tuesday, August 3, 2021 from 1:00 pm-2:30 pm** and others scheduled every week or two.

The Classes provide practical business advice, resources (*including mini-grants*) and supportive mentoring to participants, families and agency staff through experienced Business Advisors. Business experts know how to develop good business plans, realistic marketing ideas so people will buy what you have to sell and help set goals so the person can have a competitive advantage in the industry he/she launches for their business.

*The Series includes the following Classes: 1. Is Entrepreneurship (Self-Employment) Right for You?, 2. Steps to Start a Small Business, 3. Identifying Your Target Market, 4. Developing an Effective "Elevator Speech" about Your Service/Product(s), 5. How to Write a Good Business Plan, 6. Finances, Bookkeeping, and Community Resources, 7. Marketing Your Business Idea, and 8. Using Social Media to Promote your Business.*

**To Register for this Class or For More Information Call Claudia Lowe at 738-3960 or Sue Babin at 523-2300. (Participation Is Limited!)**



*This project is funded by DLT's and the Governor's Workforce Board's "Real Jobs RI" initiative.*





# OSCIL CARES

## Technology Assistance Program

Are you feeling isolated or disconnected since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic? Are you a Rhode Island resident and have a disability? Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) may be able to provide you with the technology and training you need to connect to activities such as telehealth, online purchase and delivery of groceries and health/medical supplies. Also to connect to friends and family via email, texting and social media and be able to access information online that will help you in your daily life.



Here are some examples of devices and training (based on the individual's interest & technology needs):

- Apple i-Pad
- Apple i-Phone
- Android Phone
- Laptop & Desktop computers
- Apps for smart phones and tablets
- Smart home technology such as Alexis
- WIFI Hot Spots and data plans

### Who is eligible?

- Rhode Island Residents with a disability.
- Must attest to financial hardship due to COVID-19
- Undergo assessment by OSCIL Staff and be approved.

### How to get started:

- Call us at 401-738-1013 or
  - Send email to [info@oscil.org](mailto:info@oscil.org) or
  - By Video Phone: 401-244-7792
- and mention that you are interested in learning more about OSCIL's Technology and Training program.



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This program is made possible by Federal funding from the CARES Act.



<b>Name</b>		<b>Title</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
<b>Eligibility Unit</b>				
Karen	Lowell	Eligibility Supervisor	462-2209	<a href="mailto:Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov">Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Christine	Harding	Eligibility Caseworker	462-3233	<a href="mailto:Christine.Harding@bhddh.ri.gov">Christine.Harding@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Lori	Lombardi, RN	PASRR	462-0089	<a href="mailto:Lori.Lombardiburns@bhddh.ri.gov">Lori.Lombardiburns@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Kim	Wright	Information Aide	462-2584	<a href="mailto:Kim.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov">Kim.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>SIS Unit</b>				
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Kristen	Miga	SIS Caseworker	462-0449	<a href="mailto:Kristen.Miga@bhddh.ri.gov">Kristen.Miga@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Gail	Reynolds	SIS Caseworker	462-2510	<a href="mailto:Gail.Reynolds@bhddh.ri.gov">Gail.Reynolds@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>Transition Unit</b>				
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<b>Support Staff</b>				
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