



## March Is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month was established in 1987 through a presidential proclamation. Over the decades, it has grown into a national movement to raise awareness about the lives of people with developmental disabilities and help address topics such as inclusion, opportunity, accessibility, independence, and so much more.

[The Council on Quality and Leadership](#) (CQL) provides a variety of resources including free webinars, guides, research, articles, etc. These can help raise awareness about people with developmental disabilities and share insight into a wide range of issues that are important in people's lives. See resources by topic:

- [Rights](#)
- [Person-Centered Practices](#)
- [Community Living](#)
- [Self-Determination](#)
- [Self-Advocacy](#)
- [Ableism/Prejudice](#)
- [Positive Behavior Supports](#)
- [Sexuality](#)



The [Association of People Supporting Employment First](#) (APSE) is the only national membership organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community. The Rhode Island APSE Chapter has created a series of videos titled What's Working: An Untapped Workforce promoting the hiring of people with disabilities through discussion with employers who have hired people with disabilities.

[What's Working! An Untapped Workforce - We Share Hope and Corey](#)

[What's Working! An Untapped Workforce - Ocean State Job Lot and Charlie](#)

[What's Working! An Untapped Workforce - Ocean State Bookbinding](#)

[What's Working! An Untapped Workforce – Adam TurnTo10 Show Us Something Good](#)

## **The Director is IN: Advocates in Action Conference Encore**

**Thursday, March 17th, 1:00pm-2:00pm**

**[Click Here to Register](#)**



Learn about what it means to Self-Direct Your Services and how to do it. This session was one of the workshops at RI's 2021 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference. [View the presentation page](#) for additional information and resources.

## **Self-Directed Supports Network Online Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

**7:00 - 8:30 PM**

**[Click Here to RSVP](#)**

**Dialogue with: Andrew McQuaide and Mary Madden**  
**On Sustaining the Direct Support Professional Workforce**  
*(Invite your Direct Support Professionals to join!)*

This meeting will take place online using Zoom. When you RSVP, you will receive an email with the directions and a password to join the meeting. You can connect by computer, mobile device or listen using your telephone. You may be prompted to download an app depending on the device you plan to use.

**A NETWORK OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY MEMBERS USING  
SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORTS IN RHODE ISLAND**

The Self-Directed Supports Network is a resource for individuals and families using self-directed supports through the Division of Developmental Disabilities. Meetings provide an opportunity to share experiences and learn from others.

### **Do you need help getting information or scheduling an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccination or booster?**



We can help you get the information you need to decide when, how and where to get a vaccination or booster.

We can help you arrange an appointment at a pharmacy, clinic or drive thru site to get your vaccination or booster. If going to one of these sites is very difficult for you, it is possible to arrange to be vaccinated in the comfort of your home.

If you need assistance or have questions about getting access, scheduling an appointment or finding transportation for a vaccine or booster shot, you can call 401-216-9660 or email [vaxhelp@AccessibleRI.org](mailto:vaxhelp@AccessibleRI.org). Then we will call back to assist you.



**Disability Rights**  
RHODE ISLAND



## **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Listening Sessions**

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) is hosting three upcoming listening sessions about non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to gather input regarding potential practices for improving Medicaid program integrity for NEMT. The topics and dates of the following sessions are below.

- **NEMT Listening Session 2:** Program Integrity, Correct Billing Concerns, Documentation and Data Requirements for NEMT Providers.
  - This session will be held on **Thursday, March 31, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET.**
- **NEMT Listening Session 3:** Economic Factors and Cost Containment Challenges in NEMT.
  - This session will be held on **Thursday, April 7, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET.**
- **NEMT Listening Session 4:** NEMT Coordination Topics – Brokers, MCO's Community Transportation and Paratransit Services.
  - This session will be held on **Wednesday, April 13, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET.**

In Rhode Island, NEMT is contracted by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to MTM. These listening sessions are about the federal program practices, not about RI's program of MTM.

## **Understanding and Addressing Unmet Needs in HCBS** **Through the Lens of Person-Centered Practices** **Thursday, March 31, 2022, 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM** **[Click Here To Register](#)**

High-quality Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) allow people with disabilities to direct their services in a person-centered manner, live independently, and participate in the community. However, many individuals who receive HCBS still have unmet needs for services and supports. While studies have found a connection between unmet HCBS needs and adverse outcomes, including hospitalization, institutionalization, and death, few have examined user-reported perspectives about the quality and sufficiency of HCBS and their relationship to key health and community living outcomes.

Researchers at the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy conducted a study to learn how many people who use HCBS need more services than they receive and understand the connection between unmet HCBS needs and health and community living outcomes. Panelists will discuss what implications the results of the study have in regard to person-centered planning in HCBS, highlight opportunities for improvement, and discuss how to overcome challenges to advancing person-centered practices.

*National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS) webinars include ASL interpretation and live-captions in both English and Spanish. If you require any additional accommodations, please contact Saska Rajcevic at [srajcevic@hsri.org](mailto:srajcevic@hsri.org). Please note that some requests made less than one week before an event may not be possible.*

## **“Employment Matters: You Can Make It Work”**

### **Public Affairs Series via RI Cable Access TV and MA TV9**

Seven Hills Rhode Island, a Woonsocket-based comprehensive health and human services organization, announced today the creation of ***Employment Matters: You Can Make It Work***, the first in a series of 30-minute public information television programs focused on communicating the concept of a customized employment program, and how it benefits the participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as local small business in need of workers, and the state’s economy. The informational series shares the unique facets of this comprehensive program, including how and why it works, and the journeys of some its participants.

These public service programs run throughout Rhode Island on PegRI, (Public, Education and Governmental access television), which focuses on creating community programming, and will be carried through the statewide Interconnect A on Wednesdays at 4:00pm, in Northern RI on Wednesdays at 8:00pm and on Saturdays at 12:00pm. Additionally, they will be published on [Seven Hills RI’s website](#). The program will also run on TV 9, in nearby Seekonk, MA, where the programs are produced.

The program is about 30 minutes, but if you can’t watch the whole thing, the part from about 12 minutes until about 17 minutes highlights what customized employment can do.

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS is the person-centered supported employment performance program (PCSEPP 3.0) led by Seven Hills Rhode Island, in partnership with the J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center Inc., with collaboration and consultation with RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC), the RI Cross Disabilities Coalition, Seven Hills Assistive Technology Department, in addition to family engagement and communications specialists. Funding for this PCSEPP project has been made available from the State of Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH).

“This television series provides a new opportunity to create awareness of customized employment,” notes program director Melissa Charpentier of Seven Hills Rhode Island, an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation headquartered in Worcester, MA. “It comes at a key time providing screened, trained and well-matched workers with small businesses in need of help”.

The [US Department of Labor](#) describes customized employment as a process for achieving competitive integrated employment or self-employment through a relationship between employee and employer that is personalized to meet the needs of both.

The first segment provides an overview of customized employment, explores the process, and anchors its importance in the workplace and larger community in which it serves. Formatted as an informal discussion, Melissa Charpentier of Seven Hills Rhode Island, and Charlotte Higham, vice president of adult services at the Trudeau Center, in Warwick, RI, and host Debra Morais, of Communication Works, Inc. and communications specialist for the Employment Matters Project program are featured in the first segment.



## **Shared Living Arrangements**

For DD Awareness Month, we're highlighting shared living arrangements (SLA) as a community living option for people with developmental disabilities. SLAs involve a DD participant and a person providing paid services living and sharing a life together in a private home.

### **You Never Know!**



At first glance you might think these two people had nothing in common. One was born and raised in the United States, the other immigrated from Africa. Their native language, customs and race were different, but if you look beyond where they came from, there were so many things that they have in common. They both are people of faith who enjoy Church community. They both have a very strong sense of family and enjoy great food. They are connected by their belief of helping others and spirituality.

Dallas selected his Shared Living family several years ago. After many visits to get to know each other, it was a decision by both parties to live together. It was also the first time in Dallas's life that he had a choice about where he wanted to live. It was a big adjustment to go from congregate care to living with a family, but now this is Dallas's family. After a challenging childhood and adolescence, Dallas now has a family of choice and one he is proud to call his own.

### **Keeping it Healthy in Shared Living!**

While many of us found comfort on our sofas during Covid, and may have put on a few pounds, Chris was determined to keep himself healthy. Chris has been living in Living Innovations, Shared



**At Dunkin**



**At the Gym**

Living Arrangement for several years now and with the help of his Shared Living provider, he continued his healthy living by going to the gym. He has been practicing social distancing at the gym and outside. He wears a mask in stores, and especially when visiting his favorite place, Dunkin! He enjoys working out and has had an amazing weight loss during quarantine. Congratulations to Chris on all his weight loss and inspiration!

## RI Secretary of State Invites Graduate of RIDDC Business Class To Panel

Katie Lowe – the owner of [Cheetah Greetings](#) and graduate of the [RI Developmental Disabilities Council \(RIDDC\) Self-Employment Business Class](#) – and her mother, Claudia, were recently invited to participate in the State of Rhode Island Secretary of State’s third annual virtual series, “From Passion to Profit: Transforming Your Hobby into a Business.” Katie was a panelist during the first session. You can watch it here: [https://youtu.be/-t\\_W10IbJIU](https://youtu.be/-t_W10IbJIU)



## Skills For RI’s Future WorkAbility Initiative

Collaborating with various Rhode Island state agencies and their service providers to identify new sources of underrepresented talent, [SkillsRI’s WorkABILITY initiative](#) is designed to help meet employer’s hiring needs while also considering their goals for diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. Visit the WorkAbility web page for videos and information about this project, including a video on [Addressing the Needs of Jobseekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#).



### BENEFITS OF A WORKABILITY FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT



Increased Access to  
Pool of Candidates



Higher Employee  
Retention Rates



Increased  
Organizational Diversity



Increased Productivity  
for Employees



Financial Incentives &  
Other Differed Upfront  
Costs



Recognition as a  
Community Leader

**SKILLSRI**  
**WORK BILITY**  
Initiative

*A diversity and inclusion initiative that spotlights Rhode Islanders for their workABILITY, and not their disability.*

## **HealthMatters Program:** **Employment, Health, and Wellness Webinar Series**

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is no cost for these webinars. CEUs are not offered for these webinars.

- Webinars will be archived on [HealthMatters Program YouTube Channel](#)
- For disability accommodations email Jasmina Sisirak ([jsisirak@uic.edu](mailto:jsisirak@uic.edu)) at least 10 days before the webinars.

### **REGISTER for Understanding SSDI, SSI, and Work Incentives**

**April 6th, 2022, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

We've all heard the myths about work and social security benefits, but the truth is that there are work incentives that are designed to support a beneficiary's effort to obtain, retain, and enhance employment. This presentation will provide an overview of how work impacts SSDI, SSI, Medicaid & Medicare, and the work incentives that are available to support working people with disabilities.

### **REGISTER for Building Healthy Relationships at Work**

**April 20th, 2022 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

We all want to live full and satisfying lives with the ability to learn new skills, live independently, work, and have healthy relationships with friends and significant others. This is true for young adults with developmental disabilities as well, and one place they can form relationships with others is in their workplace or at a Project SEARCH host site. Many times, our interns and graduates lose their jobs due to their interactions with co-workers, managers or even customers for example, touching coworkers, following others around or sending too many emails can be problematic. Workplace relationships are unique in that they require certain ways of interacting and interns need to learn how to navigate these relationships in order to be successful in the worksite and keep their jobs. In this workshop, we will review the "Building Healthy Relationships at Work Curriculum," explore a lesson plan to use with interns, and discuss barriers to discussing healthy relationships at work.

### **REGISTER for Fitbits for Full Lives**

**May 4th, 2022, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

Individuals with disabilities are at a higher risk for obesity and developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease because of a more sedentary lifestyle than their typical peers. Only 24% of individuals with intellectual disabilities are physically active three to four days per week compared with 51% of the general population. Responding to this need, our team wrote a grant for each student in our program to receive a Fitbit. Students used Fitbit data to gain more awareness of their personal health and wellness, increase their physical activity and have fun. In addition to the Fitbits and the Project SEARCH Health & Wellness lessons, our school year included monthly health challenges, student led group meetings, and a cycling fundraiser. Come and learn how to implement this fun program for your interns!

***The Employment, Health, and Wellness Webinar Series for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities** is funded by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council under a grant from the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The Healthy Brain Initiative.*



## **RIPTA Seeks Public Input from Passengers to Improve Service in West Bay and Newport Virtual Public Workshops March 15 – March 16, 2022**

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) is hosting three community-focused virtual workshops on proposed service improvements in West Bay, Pawtucket and Newport. RIPTA is proposing the addition of three new routes, as well as service improvements to Routes 1, 13, 29, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80 and the R-Line. These proposed service changes will be implemented over the year. RIPTA encourages passengers to view the proposed changes at [RIPTA.com/MovingTransitForward](https://www.ripta.com/MovingTransitForward) and submit their feedback at a virtual workshop.

### **WEST BAY WORKSHOP Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

RIPTA will discuss proposed service changes to Routes 13 and 29, as well as the creation of two new routes – Route 16 and Route 23. New Route 16 would provide service between CCRI Warwick and Quonset Industrial Park in North Kingstown while also serving Bald Hill Road, New England Tech and East Greenwich. Route 23 would service Warwick CCRI to Center of New England.

#### **JOIN ON ZOOM:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87590608200?pwd=MGphUmYrc0VOU2NXVHJIN3gvZ01vQT09>  
[\[email.cloud.secureclick.net\]](mailto:secureclick@cloud.email)

**JOIN BY PHONE:** +1 (646) 558-8656 • Meeting ID: 875 9060 8200 • Passcode: 406221

### **NEWPORT WORKSHOP Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

RIPTA will discuss the new Route 68, which would connect neighborhoods in northern Newport with local beaches. Trips would travel from CCRI Newport to Middletown Department of Human Services stopping at the Newport Transportation Center and First Beach.

#### **JOIN ON ZOOM:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89479522340?pwd=L2FTQXNhUml2R0hjVmJvaVI3M0tvZz09>  
[\[email.cloud.secureclick.net\]](mailto:secureclick@cloud.email)

**JOIN BY PHONE:** 1 (646) 558-8656 • Meeting ID: 894 7952 2340 • Passcode: 317765

There was also a workshop on Pawtucket on March 14<sup>th</sup>. For more information, visit <https://www.ripta.com/MovingTransitForward/>.

These workshops are part of continued public conversations as RIPTA looks to improve service in Pawtucket, West Bay, and South County. The long-term goal of improving service in these areas is guided by passenger needs as well as the State's Transit Master Plan. The changes will build on new transit centers at the Community College of Rhode Island's Warwick campus and the main campus of the University of Rhode Island in South Kingstown.



**Join ATAP to Celebrate**  
**National Assistive Technology Awareness Day!**  
**Wednesday, April 6**  
**3:00 PM-6:00 PM**  
**[Click Here to Register](#)**

Join the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) to celebrate National Assistive Technology Awareness Day! ATAP will be hosting an Open House at the [Warwick Public Library](#) on April 6th from 3-6 pm. Visit ATAP partners and state agencies that support and promote the AT movement. Gather resources and grab some refreshments.

**The first 100 people to register will receive an AT Swag Bag filled with AT gadgets!**



The Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

ATAP's main initiatives include Device Demonstration, Device Loan, Device Re-Use, and Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information & Referral. ATAP Partners include [Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program](#) (ATEL), [East Bay Educational Collaborative](#) (EBEC), [Ocean State Center for Independent Living](#) (OSCIL), and [TechACCESS of RI](#).

**TechAccess RI Resources**  
**Smart Home Technology\***

The new [Echo Show 15](#) is Amazon's newest Echo Show. It features a 15.6-inch smart display that was designed to hang on a wall (in portrait or landscape mode), but can also be mounted on a stand if you prefer to place it on a table.



This device would be a great support for reminders and supporting executive functioning. Widgets include shared calendars, personal sticky notes, to-do lists, shopping lists, and assigned reminders. Individuals can also create personal profiles and use visual ID and voice ID to see their specific appointments, reminders, recently played music, and more.

The Echo Show 15 is currently priced at \$249.99

**\*TechACCESS has access to this equipment and is able to  
provide evaluations for smart home technology.  
Please [contact TechACCESS](#) for more information.**

## Technology for Vision

[The Dot](#) is a braille smartwatch for people who have visual impairments. It allows them to learn the time and date in braille. By connecting the watch to a smartphone over Bluetooth, they can also read notifications, messages, memos, and other types of content in braille.

Its display comprises 24 dots, which automatically move up and down to provide four braille letters. Other features include alarms, timers, a stopwatch, a braille dictionary, the capability to answer and reject phone calls, a 5-day battery life, find my phone functionality, and lots more. The aluminum smartwatch works with both Android and iOS devices and is priced at \$299.



[WeWalk](#) is a high-tech handle that is installed on the top of a white cane. Its built-in sensor identifies elevated obstructions that users may encounter as they walk outside, like street signs and tree branches, and vibrate to alert them.

Users can also connect their smart cane to a smartphone app to determine where they are, find their way to different locations, and receive public transport information. The device provides voice responses through a built-in speaker or a pair of Bluetooth headphones.

Should users ever misplace their cane or phone, they can also get voice alerts to help locate it. WeWalk continues to add new features and integrations by regularly updating its smartphone app. The smart cane currently costs \$539.

## Technology for Deaf/Hard of Hearing

[Live Listen](#) from Apple is an excellent piece of assistive tech for the hearing impaired. It essentially turns iPhones, iPads, and iPad Touches into microphones that monitor sound in noisy environments and replays those sounds on a pair of AirPods or Powerbeats Pro.



Apple claims that the solution can help deaf and hard-of-hearing users listen to conversations in loud spaces and listen to people talking from the other side of a room more clearly.

To use this feature, you need to add it to the Control Center in settings, tap the ear symbol in the Control Centre, tap Live Listen, and place your phone close to the person who's speaking.



**TechACCESS of Rhode Island**  
Independence and Achievement Through Technology

## Seeing AI

Seeing AI is a free app that narrates the world around you. Designed for the blind and low vision community, it harnesses the power of AI to open up the visual world and describe nearby people, text and objects. Optimized for use with VoiceOver, the app enables you to recognize:

- Short Text - Speaks text as soon as it appears in front of the camera.
- Documents - Provides audio guidance to capture a printed page, and recognizes the text, along with its original formatting.
- Products - Scans barcodes, using audio beeps to guide you; hear the name, and package information when available.
- People - Saves people's faces so you can recognize them, and get an estimate of their age, gender, and emotions.
- Scenes (early preview) - Hear an overall description of the scene captured.
- Currency - Recognizes currency notes.
- Color - Identifies color.
- Handwriting - Reads handwritten text like in greeting cards
- Light - Generates an audible tone corresponding to the brightness in the surroundings.
- Images in other apps - Just tap "Share" and "Recognize with Seeing AI" to describe images from Mail, Photos, Twitter, and more.
- Photo browsing experience - Describes photos on your phone

For more information, [click here for Apple](#) or [here for Microsoft](#). Check out tutorials with this YouTube playlist: <http://aka.ms/SeeingAIPlaylist>

## Virtual Literacy Resources

**Bookshare** is a free, federally-funded library of ebooks designed for students with learning differences. Students who struggle to read traditional books are empowered to read in ways that work for them with specialized ebooks in audio, audio with highlighted text, large font, and braille.

<https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>

**Tar Heel Reader** is a free virtual library of open-source, accessible texts for individuals with disabilities of all ages. Tar Heel Reader provides access to easy-to-read books on topics that appeal to older students. Books are contributed to the site by teachers, students, parents and others from around the world. <https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/> or <https://tarheelreader.org/>.



## **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

## **For Information on the Consent Decree**

For information on the Consent Decree and BHDDH, see <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/consent-decree>.

## **COVID-19 Information**

### **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/>  
*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*



## Division of Developmental Disabilities - All Staff Contacts

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<b>Case Management Units</b>				
East Providence/Pawtucket/Central Falls region				
Marguerite	Belisle	Casework Supervisor	462-0714	<a href="mailto:Marguerite.Belisle@bhddh.ri.gov">Marguerite.Belisle@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Amie	Adams	Social Caseworker II	462-2480	<a href="mailto:Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov">Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Carl	Desjarlais	Social Caseworker II	462-1555	<a href="mailto:Carl.Desjarlais@bhddh.ri.gov">Carl.Desjarlais@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Stacey	Perry	Social Caseworker II	462-2418	<a href="mailto:Stacey.Perry@bhddh.ri.gov">Stacey.Perry@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Suzanne	Porter	Social Caseworker II	462-1972	<a href="mailto:Suzanne.Porter@bhddh.ri.gov">Suzanne.Porter@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Mary Beth	Silveria	Social Caseworker II	462-2438	<a href="mailto:Marybeth.Silveria@bhddh.ri.gov">Marybeth.Silveria@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Heather	Soares	Social Caseworker II	462-6097	<a href="mailto:Heather.Soares@bhddh.ri.gov">Heather.Soares@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Northern RI/West Bay/Kent Region				
Janice	Bijesse	Casework Supervisor	462-4290	<a href="mailto:Janice.Bijesse@bhddh.ri.gov">Janice.Bijesse@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
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Megan	Gilbert	Social Caseworker II	462-2524	<a href="mailto:Megan.Gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov">Megan.Gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Dayna	Hansen	Social Caseworker II	462-2505	<a href="mailto:Dayna.Hansen@bhddh.ri.gov">Dayna.Hansen@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Natalie	Sam	Social Caseworker II	462-2529	<a href="mailto:Natalie.Sam@bhddh.ri.gov">Natalie.Sam@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Erin	Simonelli	Social Caseworker II	462-2502	<a href="mailto:Erin.Simonelli@bhddh.ri.gov">Erin.Simonelli@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
South County/West Bay/Kent Region				
Meredith	MacDonald	Casework Supervisor	462-1329	<a href="mailto:Meredith.Macdonald@bhddh.ri.gov">Meredith.Macdonald@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Lauree	Champagne	Social Caseworker II	462-2728	<a href="mailto:Lauree.Champagne@bhddh.ri.gov">Lauree.Champagne@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Timothy	Cronin	Social Caseworker II	462-1721	<a href="mailto:Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov">Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jennifer	Gouveia	Social Caseworker II	462-0098	<a href="mailto:Jennifer.Gouveia@bhddh.ri.gov">Jennifer.Gouveia@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jill	Murphy	Social Caseworker II	462-2409	<a href="mailto:Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov">Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Lena	Sousa	Social Caseworker II	462-1834	<a href="mailto:Lena.Sousa@bhddh.ri.gov">Lena.Sousa@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Joseph	Tevyaw	Social Caseworker II	462-2474	<a href="mailto:Joseph.Tevyaw@bhddh.ri.gov">Joseph.Tevyaw@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Providence/West Bay/Kent Region				
Kelly	Petersen	Casework Supervisor	462-3402	<a href="mailto:Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov">Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
JoAnn	DiMuccio	Social Caseworker II	462-2523	<a href="mailto:JoAnn.DiMuccio@bhddh.ri.gov">JoAnn.DiMuccio@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Meaghan	Jencks	Social Caseworker II	462-2113	<a href="mailto:Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov">Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Souphalak	Muriel	Social Caseworker II	462-2512	<a href="mailto:Souphalak.Muriel@bhddh.ri.gov">Souphalak.Muriel@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Yolande	Ramos	Social Caseworker II	462-1059	<a href="mailto:Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov">Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Judy	Smith	Social Caseworker II	462-1327	<a href="mailto:Judith.Smith@bhddh.ri.gov">Judith.Smith@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Vacancy		Social Caseworker II	462-2563	
<b>Eligibility Unit</b>				
Karen	Lowell	Eligibility Supervisor	462-2209	<a href="mailto:Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov">Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Marisa	Abbruzzi	Social Caseworker II (RICLAS)	462-6099	<a href="mailto:Marisa.Abbuzzi@bhddh.ri.gov">Marisa.Abbuzzi@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:Kimberly.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov">Kimberly.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>SIS Unit</b>				
Donna	Standish	SIS Supervisor	462-2628	<a href="mailto:Donna.Standish@bhddh.ri.gov">Donna.Standish@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Wendy	Cormier	SIS Caseworker	462-1302	<a href="mailto:Wendy.Cormier@bhddh.ri.gov">Wendy.Cormier@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Kristen	Miga	SIS Caseworker	462-0449	<a href="mailto:Kristen.Miga@bhddh.ri.gov">Kristen.Miga@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Vacancy		SIS Caseworker	462-2510	
<b>Transition Unit</b>				
Susan	Hayward	Administrator, YIT	462-2519	<a href="mailto:Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov">Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Carolee	Leach	Prof. Services Coordinator	462-1723	<a href="mailto:Carolee.Leach@bhddh.ri.gov">Carolee.Leach@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>Support Staff</b>				
Stephanie	Andreozzi	Implementation Aide	462-1859	<a href="mailto:Stephanie.Andreozzi@bhddh.ri.gov">Stephanie.Andreozzi@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Lori	Vandall	Clerk Typist	462-6086	<a href="mailto:Lori.Vandall@bhddh.ri.gov">Lori.Vandall@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

# TECHNOLOGY FUND GUIDANCE

▶ ASL TRANSLATION: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceiyBWubaDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceiyBWubaDE)

## What is the Technology Fund and how you can use it

In early 2022, people receiving services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) will be able to purchase technology using a one-time Technology Fund. This fund will be in addition to each person's current funding.

**"Technology" includes hardware and software.**

**Hardware** is a computer or other electronic device, like:

- ✓ A tablet or cell phone
- ✓ A "smart home" appliance with automatic features
- ✓ An electronic watch

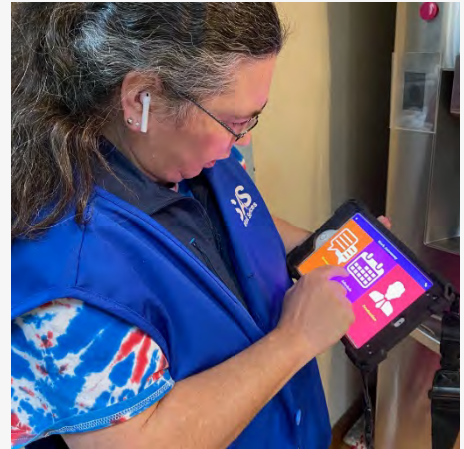
**Software** tells a computer what to do, like:

- ✓ An app that reminds a person to stay on task at work
- ✓ An alarm to remind a person to take their medication
- ✓ A screen reader that turns words into sound

## ❖ How technology can work for you

Technology can support a person's desire for more independence at home, in the community, and at work, and reduce reliance on others. Technology can help a person with communicating, pursuing a passion, remembering, getting from one place to another, and many other things.

## Technology Meets Different Needs



*"My iPad, AirPods, and Work Autonomy App are important to me at work because they help to keep me organized, on time, and increase my independence."*

— Diane



*"I'm really excited to use my community map through Google My Maps to visit all of the record stores in RI to see which one I like the best!"*

— Gloria

# TECHNOLOGY FUND GUIDANCE

▶ ASL TRANSLATION: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceiyBWubaDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceiyBWubaDE)

## ❖ How to get started

Think about what technology will be used and how it will help the person. Talk about how technology will meet a person's needs during the person-centered planning process. The person may also choose to update their Individual Support Plan (ISP) to include a new goal or expand upon an already existing goal.



**Virtual Informational Meeting**

**April 6, 2022 @ 4:30 – 5:30pm**

**Meeting ID: 816 5768 5015 | Passcode: 441462**



See a recording: [www.bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/initiatives](https://www.bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/initiatives)

## ❖ How to make a purchase

**A request form will be made available in April 2022.**

This form will ask the following:

- ✓ Name of the technology selected
- ✓ Cost of the technology selected
- ✓ Identify barrier(s) and the functional solution offered by the technology selected
- ✓ Identify its connection to an ISP goal

## ❖ Questions

For all questions, please contact the person's DDD Social Caseworker.

If the DDD Social Caseworker is not known, call the DDD main phone line at (401) 462-3421.

## Technology Meets Different Needs



*"My iPad has helped me to do different types of art and I can communicate with my friends, family and even my doctor through video."*

— Alton



*"I enjoy using my iPad to film puppet shows. I also use technology to collaborate with writers and storytellers to create the content for my puppeteering."*

— Jillian



# 2022 Access for All Abilities Mini Grant Opportunity!

**Submission Deadline - Friday, March 25, 2022**

Online Application - <https://bit.ly/aaaminigrant22>

## **Purpose:**

The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College is soliciting applications from local businesses and organizations for the 2022 Access for All Abilities Mini Grant cycle. The Sherlock Center will award grants with the purpose of increasing access for people with disabilities to social, leisure, recreational, and cultural activities. Non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, and city and town government agencies in Rhode Island, or primarily serving Rhode Island communities, are encouraged to apply.

*Three (3) grants will be awarded. Businesses and organizations may apply for up to \$5,000. The Sherlock Center reserves the right to award additional grants as funds permit.*

## **Eligibility:**

All businesses and organizations that engage the public in social, leisure, recreational, and/or cultural activities in Rhode Island, or primarily serving Rhode Island communities, are eligible to apply. Eligible entities include non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, schools, and city or town government agencies. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals sufficient resources to complete the proposed project within one year of receipt of the grant award.

Entities whose primary missions or client base is disability focused are not eligible for a grant award, however, are encouraged to support eligible businesses and organizations to develop a proposal that meets the established criteria.

New for 2022, the Sherlock Center will prioritize applications submitted by eligible businesses or organizations (as defined above) that demonstrate a high degree of engagement with minority communities or diverse populations (e.g., veterans, refugees, L.G.B.T.Q.I.A+).

## **Review Criteria:**

A panel of representatives from the Sherlock Center, including individuals with disabilities, will evaluate applications according to the following criteria:

- Degree to which the applicant provides social, leisure, recreational, and/or cultural activities to the public.
- Degree to which proposal will result in increased participation or access of people with disabilities in leisure, recreational and/or cultural activities provided by the business / organization.
- Degree to which the applicant engages with diverse populations or communities.
- Degree to which proposal meets a demonstrated or unmet need.
- Degree to which the proposed project demonstrates sustainability or long-term impact.
- The proposal demonstrates an effective plan for outreach to people with disabilities to engage with the activities available at the business or organization and to evaluate the impact of the project.
- The proposal demonstrates sufficient resources to implement the proposed project within one year of receipt of the grant award.

*Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities - A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities*

Phone: (401) 456-8072 • TTY Via RI Relay: 711 or 800-745-5555 • Fax: (401) 456-8150 • [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org)



## Funding Examples:

The Sherlock Center encourages applicants to think creatively! Examples of the type of projects that may be funded include, but are not limited to the following:

- Purchase or development of specialized equipment or product to enable or enhance accessibility.
- Technical assistance or specific skills training.
- Scholarships or reduced fees.
- Modifications to an existing space or materials.
- Funding of an initial but measurable stage of a larger project (e.g., architectural plan), etc.

*Applicants may propose combining funds from other sources to support a larger project that meets the required one-year timeframe for completion.*

## Grants will not fund:

- A new or current service or program that is designed to primarily or only engage people with disabilities (e.g., karate for kids with autism, dance classes for adults with disabilities, hiking for the visually impaired)
- A service or product that will only benefit a single individual (e.g., equipment needing to be custom fit for a particular person, funding a one-on-one assistant) or only people with disabilities served by one specific program or organization.
- A service or program focused on employment or the development of employment-related skills (e.g., training programs, volunteer activities).
- A service or program focused on education or academic training.

## Application Process:

Applicants are encouraged to apply using the Online Application. Applicants may also submit a proposal in-person or by email, mail, or fax. All applications and materials are available at [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org). Click “Access for All Abilities Mini Grant” from the main menu.

Online Application - <https://bit.ly/aaaminigrant22>

## Timelines:

- Grant applicants must submit a complete application online, postmarked, faxed or in-person, by 3/25/22.
- The Sherlock Center will notify recipients by 4/15/22.
- The Sherlock Center will request that each grant recipient submit an invoice for the funds awarded and will subsequently issue a check within 4-6 weeks.
- Grantees must complete the proposed project within one year of the grant award.
- Grantees are required to submit a report documenting the project outcomes within 30 days of completion.

*For more information or to request an application in an alternate format, contact Crystal Cerullo at 401-456-8915 or [ccerullo@ric.edu](mailto:ccerullo@ric.edu). Information and forms are also available on the Sherlock Center website at [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org).*

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The mission of the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities is to promote membership for all in school, work and community. The Sherlock Center, Rhode Island’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), receives funding for this initiative administered by the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD).

*The Sherlock Center is located at Rhode Island College. Rhode Island College departments are not eligible to apply.*

*Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities - A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities*  
Phone: (401) 456-8072 • TTY Via RI Relay: 711 or 800-745-5555 • Fax: (401) 456-8150 • [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org)

# LUNCH AND LEARN: Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Sessions

**Registration Now Open!**  
**Work Incentives sessions for SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries**

## **Working with Benefits - Yes, You Can!**

March 16, 2022, 12-1 pm

### **SSI Overview:**

April 27, 2022, 12-1 pm

### **SSDI Overview:**

May 18, 2022, 12-1 pm

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## **Work Pays! An Introduction to Youth Work Incentives**

April 6, 2022, 12-1 pm

*ALL 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. The Work and Benefits Introduction is for those starting to think about working and have general questions. The SSI or SSDI sessions provide details about the specific work incentives and other related information. All 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](mailto:esollecito@ric.edu).

**Session questions:** Contact Vicki Ferrara at [vferrara@ric.edu](mailto:vferrara@ric.edu).



# PERSON-CENTERED THINKING FACILITATOR TRAINING

**Online Course**  
**March 29 – June 14, 2022**

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

**Register by March 24, 2022**

## 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 **March 29–June 14, 2022**.

Learners will use Moodle, an online platform, to independently access course materials and assignments. Learners will also participate in four (4) scheduled virtual group sessions with the instructor.

**The required group sessions will take place from 10:00–11:30 AM on the following dates:**

- **April 5, April 26, May 17, June 14**

Learners are required to complete an Orientation to Moodle and initial readings prior to the first group session on **April 5**. 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.

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

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

Register online by **Thursday, March 24**, using the link above. You will receive a confirmation by email once your registration is processed. Registration and course information is also available on the Sherlock Center website at [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://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](mailto:esollecito@ric.edu) or Leave a message at 401-456-2764.



# Supporting Meaningful Employment Training Series

*A Person-Centered Approach to Career Planning, Job Development and Retention*



## In-Person Training

All sessions will be held in person at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities. See **SME Training Schedule** below for details. The Sherlock Center follows RI College in-person COVID guidance. Masks are required. In the event of a COVID resurgence, training will revert to an online format.

### ACRE Certificate

To earn an ACRE Certificate, learners must attend an orientation session, 12 instructor-led modules, 3 mentor/fieldwork sessions and successfully complete fieldwork assignments. SME Training Schedule is below.

The Sherlock Center offers two paths to earn an ACRE Certificate. The recommended path is to register for the full ACRE series, which allow learners to complete the required modules and fieldwork assignments within 6 months.

**The alternative path** is to build an ACRE Certificate by completing three SME mini-series and required fieldwork assignments within a 24-month period. Complete details are available on the SME Training page of the Sherlock Center website [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org).

### Learner Technology Requirements for Online Mentor/Fieldwork Sessions

Learners will participate in instructor-led sessions using Zoom. To participate, learners will need a computer, laptop or tablet with reliable internet access with sufficient bandwidth, and a camera. It is recommended that learners have dedicated time and space when attending sessions.

### Learner Time Commitment

Each training module is 3.5 hours. Learners are also required to participate remotely in an orientation session (1 hour) and three mentor/fieldwork sessions (1 hour each), in addition to satisfactory completion of fieldwork assignments.

*To support course completion, learners are expected to begin fieldwork during the course and meet projected assignment due dates. Learners are encouraged to access 1:1 fieldwork support offered through the Sherlock Center.*

## REGISTRATION

**Register Online:** <http://bit.ly/2Lt4vTP>

Registration and training schedule are also available on the Sherlock Center website [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org). Register by **March 24**.

**Fees:** Sessions are offered free of charge to participants working for a RI organization/school, including Self-Directed Supports staff/representatives.

**Requests & Questions:** If you need a reasonable accommodation (e.g. ASL Interpreter, large print), please make your request known when you register. For registration questions, email Elaine Sollecito at [esollecito@ric.edu](mailto:esollecito@ric.edu) or leave a message at 401-456-2764. For training questions email Vicki Ferrara at [vferrara@ric.edu](mailto:vferrara@ric.edu).



## Build an ACRE! SESSION MODULES

**Module 1:** Foundations in Community Employment Services and Supports

**Module 2:** Work Incentives to Support Employment and Retention

**Module 3:** Vocational Assessment I - Getting to Know the Job Seeker

**Module 4:** Vocational Assessment II - Person-Centered Employment Planning - the process

**Module 5:** Vocational Assessment III - Strategies for Community Exploration & Individualized Job Search Planning

**Module 6:** Employment Law, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Disability Disclosure

**Module 7:** Job Development I - Job Search Practices to Support Meaningful Employment

**Module 8:** Job Development II - Employer Assessment and Individualized Approach to a Job Match

**Module 9:** Job Development III - Employer Relationships and Negotiations

**Module 10:** Job Retention and Coaching I - Foundations in Job Retention Success

**Module 11:** Job Retention and Coaching II - Teaching the Job - Task Analysis and Systematic Instruction

**Module 12:** Job Retention and Coaching III - Fading Support, Quality Services and Career Development



Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities / RI College, 600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Providence, RI 02908  
Voice: 401-456-8072 | TTY: Via RI Relay at 711 or (800) 745-5555 | [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org)





## Thinking Outside the Four Walls: Age-Friendly Housing Ideas for How and Where You Want to Live

Presented by AARP Rhode Island

It's time to reframe how we think about housing as we grow older. Aging in place is possible if homes are designed or modified to accommodate for changing needs or if communities have housing options that are suitable for differing incomes, ages and life stages.

AARP Rhode Island's recent Vital Voices survey of adults age 45-plus found that 85% believe staying in their own home is important. Nearly half consider the availability of affordable housing a very serious problem in our state.

**Join AARP Rhode Island for a FREE virtual forum as we explore exciting housing possibilities and trends.** National and local experts will discuss housing choices such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), tiny homes, intergenerational home sharing, communities of mutual support and popular modifications you can make to your current home.

### Who Should Attend?

- State and local elected officials and policy makers
- City and town department leaders (i.e., housing, planning, parks, transportation)
- Community organizations (i.e., neighborhood associations, faith-based, urban developers)
- Age-friendly advocates
- Citizens interested in improving their communities
- Residents planning for their futures

### Keynote Speaker

**Danielle Arigoni**, Director of Livable Communities, AARP Government Affairs

### Panel

- **Andrea Burns**, Director, Age-Friendly Boston
- **Caroline Gangji**, Executive Director, The Village Common of Rhode Island
- **Mark Kravatz**, Executive Director, Habit for Humanity of Greater Providence
- **David Salvatore**, Councilman, City of Providence; Government Affairs Director, RI Association of Realtors

## JOIN US

**Tuesday, April 26**  
**10 a. m. – 11:30 a.m.**



*Keynote Danielle Arigoni*

This event is free, but  
registration is required.  
**Register Online**

<https://aarp.cvent.com/RI/LivableApril2022>

# Preserving Access to Utility Service

TIP SHEET • February 2022

Olivia Wein, National Consumer Law Center

NATIONAL  
CENTER ON  
**LAW &  
ELDER  
RIGHTS**

Utility service is a necessity of life, yet many families and individuals struggle to stay current with their utility service. This tip sheet lists steps that can help households keep the utilities on.

## Utility Disconnection Crisis Programs and Protections

- **Is there a serious illness protection?**
  - » If you have a client who is seriously ill (e.g., on chemotherapy) or has a chronic condition (e.g., diabetes or heart disease) or whose health, safety, and well-being are at risk if utility service is disconnected, check with the utility to see if there is a serious illness protection rule that can keep the utility service connected at least long enough to secure additional funds to address the utility debt. You will likely need a note from a medical professional. NCLC's report [Protecting Seriously Ill Consumers from Utility Disconnections: What States Can Do to Save Lives Now](#) (Feb. 2021) summarizes state serious illness protections.
- **Is the disconnection risk during a period of extreme temperatures?**
  - » Many states have either [date-based or temperature-based disconnection protections](#) that prohibit disconnection of energy service (and sometimes water) during the winter or during extreme cold or hot temperatures.

## Federal Utility Assistance Programs

- **The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):** Primarily an energy bill assistance program, but it includes a crisis assistance component that can address disconnections. State LIHEAP programs vary, but many also include heating or cooling system repairs, low-cost weatherization and home-energy counseling. To find your local Low Income Energy Office, call the National Energy Assistance Referral (NEAR) toll-free at 1-866-674-6327 for an energy assistance referral, or email NEAR at [energyassistance@ncat.org](mailto:energyassistance@ncat.org).
- **The Low Income Weatherization Program (WAP):** Weatherization reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety. Examples of possible weatherization program measures include: modifications to reduce drafts around doors and windows; upgrades to energy efficient appliances; servicing heating or cooling equipment; and removal of hazardous conditions. Here is a [tool to find your state or local WAP agency](#).
- **The Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP):** An emergency program established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help low-income households, particularly those with a high water burden, with their water and wastewater bills. It addresses both reconnections and arrearages. State LIHWAP programs are on the [U.S. Health and Human Resources website](#).

- **The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):** A benefit program that helps low-income households afford essential broadband service. Eligible households receive a discount on broadband service of up to \$30 per month (and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands and high cost areas). Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute between \$10 and \$50 toward the purchase price. For more information go to the [Federal Communications Commission's ACP webpage](#).
- **Lifeline:** Currently provides eligible households with \$9.25 per month for bundled voice and data or broadband-only service, or \$5.25 per month for voice-only service. Households enrolled in Lifeline do not need to apply for ACP, as they are automatically eligible. Households can have *both* Lifeline and ACP benefits, and can use them in combination. Lifeline and ACP are administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company. Here is a webpage for more information about [Lifeline](#).

## Additional State and Local Utility Assistance

Utilities and local organizations may have charitable giving programs to help customers facing disconnections. The LIHEAP Clearinghouse has resources on [utility and charitable programs](#) and runs the [National Energy Assistance Referral](#) service (NEAR).

Finally, once the risk of disconnection is mitigated, consumers should check to see if the utility has special low-income rates, discount programs, or [arrearage management programs](#). These are programs that can help lower the bills and provide arrearage forgiveness. NCLC works with advocates in the states to implement these utility affordability programs. For more information, please visit the [Telecommunications webpage](#).

## Additional Resources

- [NCLER Webinar: Programs to Keep Older Adults Connected to Energy and Utility Services](#)
- [NCLER Tip Sheet: Connecting Older Adults to Emergency Rental Assistance Programs](#)
- [National Consumer Law Center: Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Resources](#)