



DD Community Forum

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/MayDDForum>

Join BHDDH for a DD Community Forum on Wednesday, May 11th at 3:00 PM.

The forum will be hosted by Advocates in Action and will be held on Zoom. You will also be able to call in.

If you can't join us, the forum will be recorded to watch later.



Happy Spring!



BHDDH Seeks Your Thoughts on the DD Forums

Please take a moment to answer four simple questions about yourself and the Quarterly DD Community Forum.

Your input is extremely valuable as decisions are made about future Forums.

Simply click this link to get started:

<https://tinyurl.com/DDForumSurvey>
[\[tinyurl.com\]](https://tinyurl.com/DDForumSurvey)

Thank you for your time!

Technology Fund

Following the October 2021 Consent Decree Action Plan, a \$2 million Technology Fund was created. This one-time Technology Fund is intended for individuals to purchase hardware or software that will assist, improve, increase and/or maintain their ability to meet the outcomes of their Individual Support Plan (ISP) goals, and will facilitate participation in employment and integrated community activities.

A Technology Workgroup consisting of stakeholders, State agency representatives, and guided by a national technology expert has been meeting since October to develop the program parameters and useful information, including:

- Guidance for what the funding can be used to purchase and how to access the fund
- A 'Frequently Asked Questions' document based on questions asked during the Forum
- A library of information, including accessible apps for travel, safety, work, and learning; training tools for individuals, families and provider agencies; and other helpful technology resources.

All of this information will be kept in a centralized location online. Website information will be shared as soon as it is available.

An informational forum was held on Zoom on April 6th, 2022. Workgroup members gave an overview of the Tech Fund, and several videos of how people are using technology were shared, including a self-advocacy film and video resume. A Rhode Island family also shared their experience with technology and how it works for them. Additional videos can be found on www.ableopps.com. The forum was supported by both ASL and Spanish interpreters. Go to <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/initiatives/technology-fund> to see a recording of the forum.

Making a Request for Purchase

1. Before making a request for funding, individuals should research what technology they might be interested in and that would be beneficial to them.
2. Individuals will need to complete a request form and submit it to their DD Social Caseworker.
 - **Please note: The request form will be made available on the DD website on April 22, 2022 and will be available in both English and Spanish.** Once available, the link will be sent out to the DD Community. Individuals who cannot submit the form electronically will need to print the form and mail it to the Division.
3. A Tech Review Committee will review requests on a quarterly basis. The first review will occur in June 2022.

Research Project

The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College will engage in a research project on use of the Technology Fund in order to understand individuals' experiences with their purchased technology. This will help the State to think about how to address technology needs and supports in the future.

The next Tech Fund Informational Forum will be hosted in July 2022

Your Feedback is Needed for a Transportation Survey

The [Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council](#) is conducting a survey about the following publicly-funded transportation services in our state:

- RI Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA) Fixed Route and Flex Bus
- The Ride Program- RIPTA ADA Paratransit and contracted services for the RI Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Non-Emergency Medical (NEMT) and Elderly Transportation Program (ETP), which are currently provided by MTM
- Local Van Services provided by Cities and Towns
- Rhode Island's Commuter Rail and Train Service

The information you provide will help the Coordinating Council better understand how publicly-funded transportation services meet the needs of ALL Rhode Islanders and identify areas for improvement in our state.

[Click Here to Take the Survey](#)

About the Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council is charged with better integrating and improving transportation programs that support individuals in need of specialized transportation assistance. It was created by the Rhode Island General Assembly in RI Gen. Laws § 39-18.1-5, which established a coordinating council consisting of state agencies responsible for meeting the needs of low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

The following agencies are currently represented on the Council: RI Dept. of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH); RI Dept. of Health (RIDOH); RI Dept. of Human Services (DHS); RI Division of Statewide Planning; RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS); RI Office of Healthy Aging (OHA); RI Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS); RI Office of Veterans Services; RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA); and RI Dept. of Transportation (RIDOT).

Share Your Ideas To Update The Coordinated Transportation Plan

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council seeks your input on the statewide **Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan**! This plan is updated every five years to consider the changing transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those needs; and prioritize services for funding and implementation.

Transportation consumers, providers, representatives of advocacy organizations, and others are invited to participate in one of four virtual public listening sessions on Zoom:

- Monday April 25th, 1 to 2:30 pm
- Wednesday April 27th, 5 to 6:30 pm
- Thursday April 28th, 10 to 11:30 am
- Wednesday, May 4th, 3 to 4:30 pm

ASL interpretation will be available at each session. To RSVP or learn more about the *Coordinated Plan* process, please click [here](#).

Self-Direction Learning Collaborative Seeks People with Lived Experience

A team from Rhode Island is looking for additional team members for a Self-Direction Learning Collaboration to help shape self-directed supports in RI. The NCAPPS (National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems) believes, “Nothing about us without us,” which means that people with lived experience (people who self-direct their supports/services) need to be involved in making improvements and changes to self-direction.

If you are interested, you will be expected to attend 3 learning sessions broken up over two afternoons. The chart below gives the dates and times for each learning session. All sessions will be held virtually (Zoom). Sessions will be recorded if you are unable to attend one.

If you have any questions, want more details, or are interested, please call Crystal Cerullo, Family Support Specialist at the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, at 401-456-8072.

Videoconference Learning Sessions, Team Time, and Action Periods

| When | What |
|----------------------------------|--|
| April 19, 2022, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 1, Part 1 |
| April 21, 2022, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 1, Part 2 |
| October 18, 2022, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 2, Part 1 |
| October 20, 2022, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 2, Part 2 |
| April 18, 2023, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 3, Part 1 |
| April 20, 2023, from 2-5 pm ET | Learning Session 3, Part 2 |

The CDC has approved a 2nd COVID-19 booster for anyone over age 50. Do you need help getting information or scheduling an appointment for a 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. Then we will call back to assist you.



Talking About Dementia With People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Thursday April 28, 2:00 – 3:15 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

We often avoid having challenging discussions with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). However, it is important that an increased health risk or a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) be discussed with people with IDD using language and concepts that are understandable and respectful. Clear communication can help, and be a relief, as the person plans for their future and potentially learns to live with ADRD.

[In this webinar](#), you will learn:

- Myths and truths about aging with a disability
- Why it is critical for people with IDD and their families to discuss ADRDs, whether this is ahead of time as a health risk or if someone has already been diagnosed
- Barriers you may face in discussing ADRDs with a person with IDD and why it is important to overcome them
- Strategies to consider prior to and during these discussions

Access Note: This webinar will be captioned and interpreted in American Sign Language. The recording will be available to view on demand for those who register.

Questions? Email Liz Mahar at mahar@thearc.org.

Microsoft Ability Summit

Tuesday, May 10

[Register Here](#)

Microsoft Ability Summit is a free, community event that brings together people with disabilities, allies, and industry professionals to Imagine, Build, and Include the future of disability inclusion and accessibility. The 2022 Microsoft Ability Summit will feature:

- Keynotes from Microsoft executives, accessibility, industry and disability community experts.
- Expert panels featuring exciting projects and innovations, and debates on hot topics impacting our community.
- Product announcements! Learn about the latest in accessibility and disability inclusive products, services and experiences from Microsoft and across industry.

More to know:

- All sessions will be recorded and available post-event so you can access the content at a time that works for you.
- All sessions will include real time captions, transcripts, and American Sign Language (ASL).



Beyond the Comfort Zone:

Understanding and Eradicating Injustice, Racism and Inequality in the Field of Developmental Disabilities

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

May 18, 2022

AHRC
N A S S A U

The Arc

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Virtual Conference **Wednesday, May 18**

Right now, there is an urgent need for a space where constructive conversations can be held on issues at the intersection of disability and race.

Join The Arc on May 18 for a [free virtual conference](#) to examine the history, challenges, and opportunities impacting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and the staff who work with them.

Meet The Keynote Speaker

Dr. Kimberlé W. Crenshaw is a civil rights advocate and pioneering scholar, who developed the “intersectionality” framework addressing how overlapping identities and experiences can lead to complex, and sometimes under-recognized, issues of inequity and inequality.

Dr. Crenshaw currently serves as Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law at Columbia Law School, as well as Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of California, Los Angeles.



Sessions will provide ideas and inspiration for individual advocates and organizations alike on topics including:

- Setting and defining goals for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in your organization
- The impact of systemic and historical racism and other barriers on the IDD sector
- The intersection of health care disparities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and those with IDD
- Creating a pathway for equity and inclusion of BIPOC at all levels of IDD organizations, including boards of directors
- The rewards and challenges of employing a neuro-diverse workforce

[Featured sessions](#) include leaders with lived experience and industry experts.

April is Autism Acceptance Month

A Shift from Awareness to Acceptance to Foster Change

In 2007, the United Nations declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. April was recognized as World Autism Month and was widely referred to as Autism Awareness Month. For over a decade many people across the world have celebrated the differences of those living with autism using this language.

In recent years, some advocates have called for a change reminding us that although education about autism is important, inclusion is a critical factor needed to show support for their community. In response, there has been an intentional evolution to deem April as Autism Acceptance Month. While building awareness is a good foundation, acceptance and inclusion promotes action.



[Autism Acceptance Playlist](#) by Autistic Self Advocacy Network

[Beyond Autism Awareness... To Acceptance and Appreciation](#); by Autism Explained.

From the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network



Autism Acceptance Month was [created by and for the autistic community](#) to change the conversation around autism, shifting it away from stigmatizing “autism awareness” language that presents autism as a threat to be countered with vigilance. Autism acceptance means respecting the rights and humanity of all autistic people.

It means centering the perspectives and needs of autistic people with intellectual disabilities, nonspeaking autistic people, and autistic people with the highest support needs — not by speaking over them, but by listening and looking to them as leaders. It means fighting to ensure that the universal human rights of all autistic people are respected, including and especially the rights of those autistic people with the most significant disabilities. And autism acceptance means recognizing the ways ableism and racism interact in our society, following the leadership of autistic people of color, and making anti-racism a core part of our work.

We have made real progress over the past ten years of recognizing Autism Acceptance Month. The conversation about autism has changed, thanks to the hard work of the autistic community. But there is more to be done, and words must translate into action. As autistic self-advocates have said from the beginning, we must move beyond acceptance — to representation, celebration, and liberation. Acceptance is not the end goal. It is the baseline, a call to do better, the starting line of the marathon. We can and must go beyond that starting point and run the race, even if we cannot even imagine the finish line. Only by continuing to move forward can we create the world our community deserves.

The [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#) is a nonprofit organization run by and for autistic people. ASAN is a national grassroots disability rights organization for the autistic community. We fight for disability rights. We work to make sure autistic people are included in policy-making, so that laws and policies meet our community's needs. We work to support all forms of self-advocacy and to change the way people think about autism.

Don't Try To Fix Me: Accept Me For Who I Am

By Eric Ascher, appeared in [RespectAbility](#) newsletter 4/10/22

I remember when my parents first told me that I was on the autism spectrum. I was in high school. They gave me a document with typical characteristics of what was then referred to as “[asperger's syndrome](#).” I clearly fit the bill. For example, I am passionate about a small list of things. I have trouble making friends, and I am socially awkward.

But I'm ashamed to admit that I remember not wanting to call myself autistic. I knew other autistic kids at school, and how they “acted out.” I didn't want to be associated with them. As a 16-year-old, I was the exact type of person who might have used the phrase “differently-abled” or some other euphemism to describe myself, had I known that euphemisms were an option. I've previously written about how I was bullied throughout my school years, and how the harassment literally [kept me in the closet](#). I wanted nothing more than to be “normal,” to not be different.

But more than a decade later, I'm proud to be on the autism spectrum. I've been exposed to the perspectives of autistic people that I follow on social media and other autistic people that I've befriended over the years. I've learned that it's not a bad thing, it's simply who I am. I know there are some things I'm never going to be as good at as my neurotypical peers.

I can't give an impromptu speech to save my life, and networking events are super uncomfortable for me. But there are other areas where I excel. I know everything about Apple products that any one person could reasonably know. I do a great job managing websites and precisely editing videos.

I know, and am friends with, other autistic people who aren't proud of who they are. They're ashamed like I was. I understand why. I get weird looks from people all the time for struggling to keep eye contact or for tripping up over my words. Society is constantly trying to “cure” autism, to push autistic people into acting like our neurotypical peers. The world would be in such a better place if everyone instead just asked autistic people what WE want. I obviously can't speak for all autistic people, but I know that I don't want you to try and “fix” my eye contact or my

awkwardness. And I can't stand it when people talk down to me as if I'm not their equal. Put simply, I just want people to accept me for who I am.

There is so much work left to do to ensure that autistic people like myself are treated with the respect we deserve. I'm hopeful that my work at RespectAbility can play some small part in fighting the stigmas and the shame, so that other autistic people can feel comfortable embracing their full selves.



Eric Ascher taking a selfie at Apple Park



Selfie of Eric Ascher in the spin room at the CNN Democratic Debate in Des Moines Iowa

[RespectAbility](#) is a diverse, disability-led nonprofit that works to create systemic change in how society views and values people with disabilities, and that advances policies and practices that empower people with disabilities to have a better future. Their mission is to fight stigmas and advance opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community.

Obtaining a Disability Pass for Parks and Beaches

Disability passes are only issued at the new Rhode Island State Parks and Recreation Headquarters. Please call before your visit.

Parks & Rec Headquarters: 1100 Tower Hill Road North Kingstown, RI 02852

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Closed Holidays

Telephone: (401) 667-6200

Email: dem.riparks@dem.ri.gov

Note:

- All Applicants Must Present a Valid Form of Photo Identification [Birth Certificate for Children]
- All Applicants Must Appear in Person to Obtain Disability Pass
- All Applicants Must request their Benefit Verification Letter from Social Security

First-Time Disability Pass

1. **Applicants under the age of 65** must present their Benefit Verification Letter or a letter from the Social Security Office for the current year stating the following:
 - Your full name and address
 - Current date
 - Letter must state that you are receiving monthly disability benefits
 - The letter must be signed by an authorized social security representative

This pass is required to be renewed each year until the age of 65.

2. **Applicants over the age of 65** must present their Benefit Verification Letter or a letter from the Social Security Office for the current year stating the following:
 - Your full name and address
 - Current date
 - Letter must state that you were receiving monthly disability benefits before the age of 65
 - The letter must be signed by an authorized social security representative

[Click here for more information regarding a disability pass.](#)

Disability passes are valid at the following locations

- Charlestown Breachway State Beach
- East Beach State Beach
- East Matunuck State Beach
- Goddard State Golf Course
(Not Valid for Golf Cart Rental)
- Misquamicut State Beach
- Roger Wheeler State Beach
- Salty Brine State Beach
- Scarborough North & South State Beach

Social Security Offices Reopening

Social Security Administration (SSA) field offices are scheduled to reopen in early April after being closed since 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, and the agency is expecting a rush of visitors. This is welcome news to those who prefer in-person service, but it could create potential problems early on as the SSA returns to in-person services it hasn't provided in about two years.

During COVID, the SSA pivoted mostly to online and phone services. However, many people have complained about long waits on the phone. Reviews have highlighted the fact that SSA lacks formal procedures for processing mail, which caused delays for some applications and services.

"To avoid waiting in line, I strongly encourage people, who can, to use our online services at www.socialsecurity.gov, or call us and schedule appointments in advance rather than walking in without an appointment," acting Social Security Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi said. "Phone appointments can save you a trip to a busy office."

During the transition, SSA recommends people who need help try online first, then phone, before making an in-person visit. The national toll-free number is 800-772-1213.

While you will not need an appointment, it's best to pick your timing to reduce your wait time. The offices tend to be busiest first thing in the morning, early in the week, and early in the month.

If you visit a Social Security office, you will be expected to comply with masking and physical distancing requirements. The agency also asks visitors to monitor their health for Covid symptoms.

When to call

If you choose instead to use the agency's 800 number, you may still experience delays, due to a transition to a more modern phone system that is underway. There are times when you may have more luck getting through, such as before 10 a.m., after 4 p.m. or later in the week. Wait times also tend to be shorter later in the month.

My Disability Roadmap



The new short documentary film [My Disability Roadmap](#) will premier at the [Hot Docs Film Festival](#) on May 1, 2022, in Toronto, Canada. The film is co-directed by Samuel Habib and Dan Habib, and Executive Produced by Sara Bolder and James LeBrecht of *Crip Camp*.

Samuel, 21, wants to date, leave home, go to college. But he drives a 350-pound wheelchair, uses a communication device, and can have a seizure at any moment. Determined to find his path forward, he seeks out guidance from America's most rebellious disability activists. Will they empower him to launch the bold adult life he craves?

The entire lead cast on this project - and the majority of the production and outreach crew - are people with disabilities. The film will be available with closed captions and audio description.

DOCUMENTARY SHORT: available Mid-May 2022 as a [New York Times Op-Docs](#).

FEATURE LENGTH FILM: Coming mid-2023.

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

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 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
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

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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April 2022

Share your ideas for updates to the statewide

COORDINATED PLAN



3 Ways to Participate

1

Attend a Virtual Listening Session on Zoom

2

Review the presentation online and email comments to jkanter@ripta.com

3

Ask a friend or advocate to submit your comments

RIPTA and the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council are updating the Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. The plan is updated every 5 years to consider the changing transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults and people with low incomes. With your input, it will identify strategies and priorities for implementation and funding.

Visit our website to register for a listening session, view the presentations, or to learn more about the plan.

Virtual Listening Sessions:

Monday, April 25
1 - 2:30 pm

Wednesday, April 27
5 - 6:30 pm

Thursday, April 28
10 - 11:30 am

Wednesday, May 4
3 - 4:30 pm