



Become a Member of a DD Advisory Group

The Division of Developmental Disabilities is seeking members for three new advisory groups:

- Self-Directed Advisory Group
- Agency-Directed Advisory Group
- DSP Advisory Group

This will be a voluntary position that meets several times a year on Zoom to help with the Statewide Workforce Initiative. Volunteers who are selected and participate in an advisory group will receive Gift Cards to thank them for their time.

[To Request to Be On An Advisory Group, go to www.tinyurl.com/AdvisoryGroupInvitation](https://www.tinyurl.com/AdvisoryGroupInvitation)

If you're interested in serving in one of these groups to help our State support and expand its DSP workforce, and make a difference in the lives of Rhode Islanders who have an I/DD, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/AdvisoryGroupInvitation> to complete a short form and someone will contact you soon.

As a member of one of these groups, you'll be responsible for offering experience-based advice that will help RI develop, strengthen, and maintain a well-trained and diverse statewide DSP workforce to serve individuals who receive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, and their families.



For the **Self-Directed Advisory Group**, the members must be individuals who self-direct services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities.



For the **Agency-Directed Advisory Group**, members must be individuals who use an agency to direct services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities.



For the **DSP Advisory Group**, the members must be Direct Support Professionals, working either through a provider agency, or for an individual who self-directs the services they receive through the Division of Developmental Disabilities. *Please note: DSPs must be recommended by at least one of the individuals or families they've worked for, or the Provider Agency they worked for.*

Membership for each Advisory Group is limited to 6 members who have real-life experience.

Please send any questions to ri.workforce@sagesquirrel.com

Webinar on Love and Disability:
Exploring Person-Centered Supports and the Marriage Penalty

Thursday, December 15, 2022

3:00-4:30 PM

[Click Here to Register](#)

Marrying someone you love is one of the most basic human rights that people have. However, for people with disabilities, marriage can mean the loss of potentially life-sustaining benefits due to the disability “marriage penalty” which reduces Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid benefits when people marry and jointly report income. As a result, many people with disabilities remain unmarried against their own personal wishes out of fear of losing their benefits.

In this webinar, couples with disabilities will share their experiences of marriage and partnership and how to support and advocate for people with disabilities who want to get married.

This webinar is sponsored by The National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS). NCAPPS webinars include ASL interpretation, live English captions, and live Spanish interpretation. If you require any additional accommodations, please contact Saska Rajcevic (srajcevic@hsri.org). Please note that some accommodation requests made less than one week before an event may not be possible.



LOVE AND DISABILITY: EXPLORING PERSON-CENTERED SUPPORTS AND THE MARRIAGE PENALTY

NCAPPS

DECEMBER 15, 2022
3:00 PM ET/2:00 PM CT/1:00 PM MT/12:00 PM PT

The Applied Self-Direction National Conference **Will Be Virtual and Free This Spring**

Applied Self-Direction hosts the only national conference dedicated to self-direction. The National Self-Direction Conference brings together state and federal government, managed care organizations, Financial Management Services entities, people and families who self-direct, support brokers, and other key stakeholders from across the country to collaborate on one goal: advancing self-direction.

With interest in self-direction at an all-time high, Applied Self-Direction is excited to announce the 2023 Self-Direction Conference: Virtual Series will be offered this spring.

The 2023 Self-Direction Conference: Virtual Series is not your average virtual conference. This one will not try to recreate a traditional conference in a virtual setting. There are many elements of an in-person conference—networking, exhibit booths, a full day of sessions—that just don't work on a virtual platform.

The 2023 Self-Direction Conference: Virtual Series will include weekly sessions throughout the spring months. By scheduling sessions over time, attendees can participate without blocking-off extended time on their calendars or spending their whole day in front of the computer.

The virtual series will offer the same caliber of sessions as the Applied Self-Direction in-person conference with a variety of speakers including federal agencies, state programs, individuals who self-direct, and other experts in the field. The virtual series sessions include an even wider array of speakers given the flexible scheduling and ease of presenting virtually. And thanks to generous sponsors, the 2023 Self-Direction Conference: Virtual Series is FREE to attend!

Schedule

Sessions for the 2023 Self-Direction Conference: Virtual Series will be offered throughout the spring on Thursdays from 2-3 PM (EST). Sessions will be virtual, using a variety of different meeting platforms.

Registration

Registration will be FREE to all attendees so that anyone interested in learning more about self-direction will be able to participate.

For More Information

For more information, see the [Self-Direction Conference web page](#).

[Sign-up](#) for the mailing list to receive the latest information related to the conference.



Applied
Self-Direction

Transition Information Session **Recording Available**

An informational session on the DDD eligibility criteria and application, Supports Intensity Scale, and overview of adult services was held virtually on November 15.

Recordings of this meeting are available in [English](#) and with [ASL interpretation](#). A Spanish version will be posted soon. Click here to [view the PowerPoint presentation](#).

Asking for Accommodations

By Arianna Montano, [RespectAbility](#)

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that all employers, including government entities, faith-based organizations, and employers in both the public and private sector, provide reasonable accommodations in the workplace. Offering and asking for accommodations can be complex. It can be hard for some people to ask for accommodations. It can also be hard to receive accommodations in a timely and consistent manner. I interviewed two early career professionals currently participating in RespectAbility's National Leadership program about their past experiences asking for accommodations.

Depending on who you ask, asking for accommodations can be easy or hard. Some disabled workers feel comfortable asking their employer for accommodations, like Erica Mones, Entertainment and News Media Apprentice. Erica has had very positive experiences with accommodations in the past. She says both of her previous employers have been good about it. However, she notes that her past work experience has been in the social justice space, and that is why she has felt comfortable asking. She thinks that if she were to work somewhere else, such as a customer service job, she would not be as comfortable asking for accommodations. She might even be scared to ask for accommodations there. Other disabled workers, like McKenzie Stribich, Faith Inclusion and Belonging Apprentice, might feel bad about asking for accommodations because they feel like they are a nuisance. She says she feels somewhat comfortable but a little anxious asking employers for accommodations because she feels like she is being annoying by asking for them. In their experience, she said they "[found] it hard to confront bosses" about accommodations not being met.

Both Erica and McKenzie often struggle with not knowing what accommodations to ask for. It sounds counterintuitive that a disabled worker does not know what accommodations they might need. But in reality, it makes sense, and it can be a common occurrence. Even if you have lived with your disability your whole life, every job and every work environment is different. Employees will need different accommodations for different jobs and many workers with disabilities will not know what they need to succeed until they have worked at the job for some time. For workers with disabilities who struggle with not knowing what accommodations they might need, a valuable resource is the [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#). Their website has a list of possible accommodations for different disabilities.

Getting the employee's perspective on accommodations is important, but accommodations in the workplace constitute a two-way street. Graciano Petersen, Senior Director for Training, Culture, and Leadership at RespectAbility, believes it is "100% the responsibility of the employer to make their employees comfortable asking for accommodations." Employers need to create a safe environment in which employees feel comfortable enough to advocate for their accommodation needs. Employers also need to understand the urgency for accommodations to be met. Graciano states that there are different steps employers need to take that will help create this comfortable space. Regularly talking to employees about disability and letting employees know you can't assume no one around you doesn't have a disability just because you don't see it. Having an employee resource book and doing intense DEIA work are just a few steps.

What is Graciano's advice for workers with disabilities when asking for accommodations? Ask for accommodations in writing. Save a copy you have easy access to. When asking for accommodations verbally, you run the risk of people forgetting or making assumptions. Plus, if you ever need to follow up on your accommodations, you can refer to the written accommodation request. Another piece of advice: don't be afraid of HR, in fact, make them your friend. While your direct supervisor is the one who needs to meet your accommodation request, HR is there to help facilitate. If you're afraid to go to the HR person, find someone else who works in HR that you feel more comfortable opening up to, they can help you as well.

Accommodations in the workplace can be tricky. It starts with the employer and their ability to create a comfortable space where workers with disabilities can ask for accommodations; disabled workers need to advocate for themselves however they can. Graciano said it best, "make sure you are fighting for your ability to do the work."

Providence Place Mall Holiday Events

Santa Cares

Sunday, December 4, 2022 from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

[Reservations are required](#)

Visit Santa in a sensory-friendly environment. Celebrate Santa Magic in an inclusive atmosphere. Exclusively for children & families with special needs. Reservations are required for this private photo experience. Donations will be collected on behalf of Autism Speaks.

Pet Night

Monday, December 5, 2022 from 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

[Reservations are encouraged](#)

Capture Santa photos with your pets. Everyone is welcome, even without pets. During Pet Night events, we're collecting donations on behalf of The Humane Society of the United States at participating locations.

Happy Holiday Tips for People with Disabilities & Those Who Love Them

<https://ablelight.org/blog/9-holiday-tips-for-people-with-disabilities-and-loved-ones/>



The holidays are a time of joy but they can still be a time of stress. New foods, fancy clothes, schedule changes, sparkling holiday lights and too many choices all add strain to the holidays.

Let's look at how you can minimize holiday stress while celebrating the joy and wonder of Christmas with your loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD). It's a balancing act that you've likely been through multiple times. Here's a reminder and

some tips to keep your Christmas celebrations festive and sane.

Tips for minimizing holiday stress:

Talk to your loved one:

We can't say it enough. Involve your loved one with I/DD in holiday planning and decision making. If activities and choices include them, make sure you involve them in the conversation, but keep it age appropriate.

Prioritize traditions:

The holidays are a time of celebration and joy. Enjoying special foods, activities or decorations with family and friends are often part of a tradition that many of us treasure. But, even in the best of times, we can't do it all. Speak with your family about favorite traditions and prioritize the top two or three.

Avoid triggers:

Parents and guardians often understand their loved one's triggers better than anyone. Triggers can include a new situation, specific foods, new people, loud noises or something unique to your loved one. Taking potential triggers into account when planning for holiday activities and traditions will go a long way toward minimizing inappropriate behavior and even meltdowns.

Keep it comfortable:

Family or society norms often demand that we dress in our finest for special occasions. While Christmas may call for a new holiday outfit, consider whether your loved one finds clothing with more structure to be uncomfortable. Maybe new outfits are stiff or scratchy. Imagine discomfort grating on you all day.

If dressing for the holiday is a must for your celebrations and traditions, talk to your loved one about their specific clothing preferences. Armed with this understanding you can balance their preference with clothing choices that fit the occasion. You may find they love to dress up, but dressy clothing that doesn't fit is uncomfortable. You might only need a tailor.

Schedule, schedule, schedule:

Holidays disrupt everyone's schedules. At the same time, and as you've probably experienced, people with I/DD tend to thrive on routine. Stick with your routine as much as possible. Continue regular, healthy meals; don't skip time set aside for physical activity; and follow regular sleep schedules as much as you can.

When it comes to celebrations, make every effort to plan them around your existing routine. If you must disrupt your loved one's routine, try adjusting their schedule by a few minutes every day leading up to the "off schedule" celebration. Alternatively, you can add the celebration to your daily schedule and use the time to prepare for all the celebration will entail. And don't forget to schedule some down time. We all need time to decompress every day, and especially throughout the busy and active holidays.

Manage expectations:

Talk to your loved one about what they will experience. Whether it's new people, places, foods, sounds or another experiences, talk about what they can expect, discuss their concerns, and prepare them with expected behavior.

Plan for transitions:

Transitioning to new activities or from exciting or beloved activities can be challenging for all of us. Whether thrilling or difficult, you can help your loved one transition from one activity to another by preparing them in advance. Share the schedule so they know what comes next. Provide advance notice for upcoming transitions with a minimum 10-minute countdown or more depending on their needs. Simple cues such as, "We will leave in 15 minutes," or "We have only 10 minutes left," help to prepare your loved one for the coming change.

Be prepared:

Think ahead to all that might go wrong and right. Be prepared by planning for quiet space, whether at your home or someone else's. Do you need to bring headphones or sunglasses? Should you plan downtime or an exit strategy? Think about the menu. Will your loved one have options, or do you need to bring a few favorites? Consider potential challenges and come prepared. You may even need a reward or kind words for your loved one when they come through the celebration without a single mishap.

Take care of yourself:

As a caregiver, holiday preparations add to your workload. Make sure you get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, and plan time for yourself as well. If you're stressed, holiday celebrations can become exponentially more difficult for you and your loved one.

Finally, when planning for the holidays, remember, less can be more. Sometimes our greatest experiences and fondest memories come out of quiet times alone with loved ones. Don't miss out on the opportunity to experience and treasure quiet moments in the hustle and bustle of holiday celebrations.

Additional Resources

Here are some additional resources that can help you navigate the holidays and help your loved one enjoy the magic of the season.

Christmas celebrations encourage indulgence. If you need some help with healthy eating, check out: [Nutrition tips for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities](#)

Are you spending time with extended family members who don't know what to say? This post may help: [Helping others communicate with people with disabilities](#)

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

Main Phone #: (401) 462-3421 **TDD:** (401) 462-3226 **Website:** <https://bhddh.ri.gov/>
Fax: (401) 462-2775 **Spanish Line:** (401) 462-3014 **BH Link:** 401-414-5465

**To report abuse/neglect:
 (401) 462-2629**

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Melissa Greenlief	Administrator, Community Services	462-2459	Melissa.Greenlief@bhddh.ri.gov
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Vacant	Administrator, Employment	462-3857	

Case Management Units

East Providence/Pawtucket/Central Falls region

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LUNCH AND LEARN: Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Sessions

Working with Benefits - Yes, You Can!

November 30, 2022, 12-1 pm

SSDI Overview:

December 14, 2022, 12-1 pm

SSI Overview:

February 1, 2023, 12-1 pm

Work Pays! An Introduction to YOUTH Work Incentives

January 4, 2023, 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, 401-456-2764.

Session questions: Contact Vicki Ferrara at vferrara@ric.edu, 401-456-8092 or Joshua Hughes at jhughes@ric.edu, 401-456-4734.

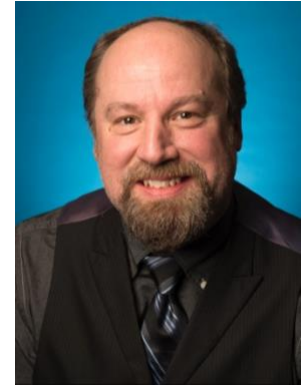


FREE 3 Day Employer Engagement Training

“From Traditional Job Development to Engaging Employers Economically”

Dates: Tuesday, December 6, Wednesday, December 7,
and Thursday December 8, 2022

Time: 9:00 am -3:00 pm **Location:** TBD



Join us for an interactive and creative 3 day gathering with Doug Crandell where we will facilitate a community of practice to further develop our skills sets related to employer and business engagement. Doug will share information on model employer initiatives at the Provider, City/County, and State Levels and concrete strategies for developing continuous quality improvement in employment services. This training is a mixture of knowledge transfer, group work, and purposeful planning for developing more effective employer connections in RI. Major topics Doug will cover are listed below:

- Economics 101
- Business Development versus Job Development
- Developing Public-Private Partnerships
- Informational Interviewing with Employers to Identify Employer Workforce Needs
- Visioning for 2023 (Putting it all together and tracking metrics)

Participants will be involved on a team to work together to research a local business, schedule an informational interview visit with an employer, create a brief presentation on the business and workforce needs, and share their experience/presentation with everyone for feedback and refinement. We will talk about next steps for continuing this work with employers in collaboration with Skills for RI's Future.

Participation is Limited: Contact Sue Babin at 523-2300 or email at suebabin@riddc.org to reserve space!



Doug Crandell, M.F.A. has worked in employment services for 30 years, has been the Project Director for national grants funded through the U.S. DOL, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the SSA. He directed Georgia's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funded by CMS, is on the faculty of the Institute on Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia, and a Senior Consultant with Griffin-Hammis. He has provided training and TA to GA's employment providers. He is a Subject Matter Expert (SME) with states to restructure their employment supports to include evidence-based supported employment, customized employment, and self-employment. He is Project Director, GA's Training and Technical Assistance Center for Employment funded by the Georgia DD Council: Advancing Employment. Doug has also published eight books and is a regular contributor to the SUN Magazine, where he publishes essays on labor, health and disability. His most recent book published by Cornell University Press is: "[Twenty-Two Cents an Hour: Disability Rights and the Fight to End Subminimum Wages.](#)" www.abolish14c.com

**Training sponsored by the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC).
This initiative is funded by DD as one of the DD Transformation Grants.**