

Letter to All Participants

A version of the following letter was mailed out earlier this month to all participants to let them know about what's happening at the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

The BHDDH Division of Development Disabilities (DDD) made a lot of changes over the last few months. BHDDH has sent you letters in the mail letting you know about these changes. BHDDH is sharing this letter with you to sum up the changes and let you know where you can go to learn more.

DD Community Forums

BHDDH holds virtual DD Community Forums every three months. The last forum was on Tuesday, December 5th from 3:00-4:30 PM. You can watch the recording for this, and other past forums, at the Advocates in Action website: <https://www.advocatesinaction.org/DDCommunityForums.php>.

Consent Decree Update

The goal of the Consent Decree is to make sure you have more control. You should make choices about your life, like the services you want, getting a job, and joining community activities.

The Court updated the Consent Decree on October 2, 2023. The update is called the “Addendum to the Rhode Island Consent Decree (USA v RI)”. An **addendum** is new information that is added to an original document. The Consent Decree Addendum explains that the Court will continue to work with BHDDH through June 2026.

The goal of the addendum is to make sure BHDDH meets all the Consent Decree court orders. **Court orders** are instructions made by the Court that must be followed. The Consent Decree court orders include steps BHDDH must take to make sure people getting DD services continue to have control and make choices. BHDDH must complete these steps by July 2024, and continue to make improvements through June 2026. You can find the Consent Decree Addendum on the BHDDH website at www.bhddh.ri.gov under **Initiatives - Consent Decree – Consent Decree Court Orders**.

BHDDH submitted a plan to the Court that explains how and when the different court orders will be met. This plan is called the “DD Implementation Plan 2023.” You can find the plan on the BHDDH website at www.bhddh.ri.gov under **Consent Decree Status Reports**.

What's New with SIS

BHDDH changed the way it learns about your strengths and needs. When you meet with a SIS social case worker you will be asked two sets of questions:

1. The Supports Intensity Scale-Adult Version (SIS-A, 2nd edition).
2. A new questionnaire called the Additional Needs and Support Questionnaire (ANSQ).

One week after you complete the SIS-A and ANSQ, you will be invited to a second meeting with the SIS social case worker. This meeting is called the Individual Follow-up. The individual follow-up is a meeting between you, your supports, and the SIS social worker. The purpose of this meeting is to give you the chance to share more details about yourself and to talk about other support needs you have. Our goal is

to make sure your voice is heard. When we have more information about you, then we will be better able to decide your individual funding level.

DDD is still rolling out the new SIS-A, 2nd edition, assessment form. Since the SIS-A, 2nd edition is new, we need 500 assessments to be completed before we can finish the new tier scoring. If you had a SIS in the last few months or have one coming up soon, then your tier may be affected when the new scoring is complete. You can find more information about the new SIS on the BHDDH website at www.bhddh.ri.gov on the **SIS page**.

A New Part of ISP Meetings: Facilitating Success Conversations

BHDDH Social Caseworkers (SCW) are starting something new this year. During your Individual Support Plan (ISP) meeting, a SCW will share information with you about any new Division resources, processes, and supports. The SCW will also ask you questions about your services, like:

1. Did you get the services and supports that were in your ISP?
2. How happy are you with the time you spent in the community doing activities?
3. Are you working now or want to work soon?

The SCW will continue to check-in with you each month to see how you are doing. The SCW's goal is to make sure you are getting the supports you want. The SCW will also encourage and support you as you get more active in your community and think about getting a job.

Submitting the Individual Support Plan (ISP)

You must sign all new Individual Support Plans (ISP) and Purchase Orders (PO). If you have a guardian, then your guardian must sign the ISP and PO. Your signature may be written on the ISP and PO, or it may be a digital signature done on a computer or tablet. The date of your signature must be written on the ISP and PO. BHDDH will return any ISP or PO without your signature. A returned ISP or PO may cause a delay or loss of DD services. By signing the ISP and PO, you are saying that you agree with and want what is in your plan.

Please note: ISP or PO changes need 45 days to be processed. BHDDH needs the 45 days to review changes to make sure everything is okay and to enter your changes into the computer system. Since it takes 45 days to make changes, you cannot make changes to your ISP or PO if there are only 90 days left in your plan year. The only exception is if you have an emergency situation and there are only 90 days left in your plan year. In this case, your social caseworker will work with you to make changes you need.

Most people begin talking about their new plan when there are about 90 days left in the plan year. If you have new things you want to add to your ISP or PO at the end of your plan year, you should add those things to your new plan.

Technology Fund Update

We're still accepting requests for the Technology Fund. You can find the online form and more information about the Technology Fund on the BHDDH website at www.bhddh.ri.gov under **Initiatives – Technology Fund**. Remember, **the Technology Fund can only be used once**. If you have received funding through the Technology Fund, you can't apply a second time.

New Rates and Services

New Rates

The new rates started on July 1, 2023. These rates increase how much providers are paid for services they provide to you. With the new rates, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) must be paid at least \$20 per hour.

New Services

BHDDH made changes to the list of services we offer. Service changes include:

- **Community-Based Supports** now includes services that used to be called community-based day, prevocational, and overnight supports. The new Community-Based Supports can be used at any time of day or day of the week.
- **Whole Life Shared Living Arrangement (WLSLA)** lets you choose if you want to get all community-based supports, including traditional day services, from your SLA home provider. The home provider will be paid more for the extra services they provide to you.

New Funding Packages

BHDDH has changed how DD funding information is shown. This used to be called “Tier Packages”. The new name for your DD funding is “Total Budget.” BHDDH will decide what your total budget is by looking at your SIS tier, ANSQ results, and notes from your Individual Follow-up. Your total budget is made of two parts, the Flexible Individual Budget and the Fixed Budget.

1. **Flexible Individual Budget:** This is the part of the budget that you can control based on your plan. You will choose how much of your funding you want to use for the DD services you want. You will make these choices if you self-direct or if you use an agency for services. The services you will make choices about are:
 - Community-based supports
 - Center-based day supports
 - Transportation
 - Respite
 - Assistive technology
 - Professional services
 - Self-directed goods and services
2. **Fixed Budget:** This is the part of the budget that you cannot change. This includes residential (group home, SLA) and fiscal Intermediary (FI) fees that must be paid. If you self-direct your services, your fixed budget also includes fees for the support brokerage service. You can add funding for more support brokerage, but you cannot remove the service.

There is also a new third option called the “**Add On Budget**”. BHDDH will provide funding above your total budget for certain services that aren’t covered by the Flexible and Fixed Budgets. This includes employment, home modifications, and some new services that haven’t rolled out yet, such as vehicle modifications, and peer-to-peer and family-to-family supports.

New Add-On Budget for Employment

Employment supports are no longer included in the Total Budget. Instead, employment supports will be paid for from an **add-on budget**. With the add-on budget, you will not have to take away from your community supports in order to get help finding and keeping a job. There are 5 employment services you can add to your add-on budget:

1. **Job Development** is for help finding a job. You will work with a certified employment specialist to find a job and get hired. Job development is short-term. This means it is not a service that will take many months or years. Instead, job development is limited to 200 hours per year. Job development is limited so you can reach your employment goals sooner.
2. **Job Coaching** is for help learning how to do a new job. It can also be used to learn new job skills if your job tasks change. You will work with a certified employment specialist while you are at work. Job coaching is temporary, which means it will go away once you learn your job tasks. Job coaching does not include transportation to or from your job.
3. **Job Retention** is for help keeping a job. You can get job retention after you finish with job coaching. You will work with a certified employment specialist to keep and grow in your job. The employment specialist will check in with you and your boss to make sure everything is going well. They will talk about any changes to your job or problems you may be having.
4. **Group Supported Employment** can include help finding a job, learning your job tasks, keeping your job, and growing in your job. You will work with a certified employment specialist. You will work in a group with two or more people receiving DD services.
5. **Personal Supports in the Workplace** is for help with self-care activities at work. You will get help with your personal care needs, like hygiene and eating, during your normal work hours. A provider will also help support your medical or behavioral needs.

You can find more information on employment services by visiting the BHDDH website at www.bhddh.ri.gov under **Services for Adults – Employment**.

Another helpful tool is the **Guide to Employment Add-On Budget Requests**. You find this guide on our website at <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/forms-policies-and-brochures/brochures>.

Sign Up for the DD News and Updates Newsletter

BHDDH has a DD News and Updates newsletter. The newsletter has information about things that are changing at BHDDH and other helpful tips. If you would like to sign-up for the newsletter, or read past newsletters, visit <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/events/newsandupdates/>.

The Rhode Island Special Needs Emergency Registry

The Special Needs Emergency Registry helps first responders get ready for emergencies, like hurricanes, storms, and other emergencies. By signing up for the registry, you will let police, fire, and other first responders in your community know how they can best help you in an emergency. To learn more about the registry and to sign-up, visit the Rhode Island Department of Health website at <https://health.ri.gov/emergency/about/specialneedsregistry/>