



Volume 3
February 16
2024

DD News and Updates Newsletter

HELLO

FEB
RUA
RY

Inside This Issue

- DDD Updates
- DD Service Bill of Rights
- Community News
- Reporting Abuse
- BHDDH Staff Contact List
- Shared Resources



Black History Month

This year's theme is African Americans and the Arts. Focusing on fields of visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, and more. To learn more about Black History in Rhode Island go to [the Visit Rhode Island website](#).



We want to learn from you!

We want to continue to learn from the community. Share your feedback about our newsletter by completing our [online newsletter survey](#). We will keep the survey open to make sure we keep getting your feedback.

DDD Updates

DDD Community Forum Dates

The dates for the DDD Community Forums are in! All forums will take place online using Zoom. The forums are free, but you must register in advance. For the latest updates about the Community Forums visit our [DDD Events Webpage](#). For details about the 2024 Community Forums, read below.

- Tuesday, March 19, 2024, from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, June 18, 2024, from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, September 17, 2024, from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, December 10, 2024, from 3:00pm to 4:30pm



BHDDH Staff Update



Kaitlin Sarkees joined the DDD team on 2/12/24 as a new Social Caseworker II. She was formerly with DCYF

Casework Supervisor II, **Janice Bijesse** has retired and **Souphalak Muriel** has been promoted from Social Caseworker to Casework Supervisor II as of 2/25/24

Andrew McQuaide is consulting for DDD to support implementation of the Consent Decree Addendum entered this past October with the US District Court. He is the brother of Emily and Daniel, two Rhode Islanders with I/DD. His career in the field includes positions as a Direct Support Professional, Coordinator of Community Engagement at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College and as a Senior Director at Perspectives Corporation and Skills for Rhode Island's Future. Andrew now consults locally and nationally for organizations serving people with I/DD.

Technology Survey

[The Sherlock Center](#) sent out emails inviting people who received technology, through the Technology Fund (Rounds 1-4), to participate in a survey. If you received an email with a survey link, please complete the survey. The information we gather from this survey will help us to guide learning opportunities, trainings, and identify community needs related to technology use. Deadline for the survey is **Thursday, February 29th, 2024**.



Upon completion of the survey, you will be asked if you would like to enter a raffle for a \$25 gift card.

DDD Updates

BHDDH Your Life, Your Rights Program

February is the first month for the BHDDH Your Life, Your Rights Program. This program is a yearlong program to help you better understand all your rights.

The first lesson of this program is on your DD Service Bill of Rights. The **DD Service Bill of Rights** are the rights you have when it comes to your DD services. The DD Service Bill of Rights make sure you are treated well and get the help you want so you can live the life you choose.

DDD created two resources to help you learn about your DD Service Bill of Rights:

1. DD Service Bill of Rights Flyer



Your Life, Your Rights
DD Services Bill of Rights

Know Your Rights

All people with disabilities have the same rights as anyone else. These include:

- Freedom to be yourself and make decisions
- Not be treated unfairly because of who you are
- Live a safe, meaningful, and free life
- Be treated with dignity and respect

Your Rights and DD Services

Your life is your choice. This is also true for DD services you get.

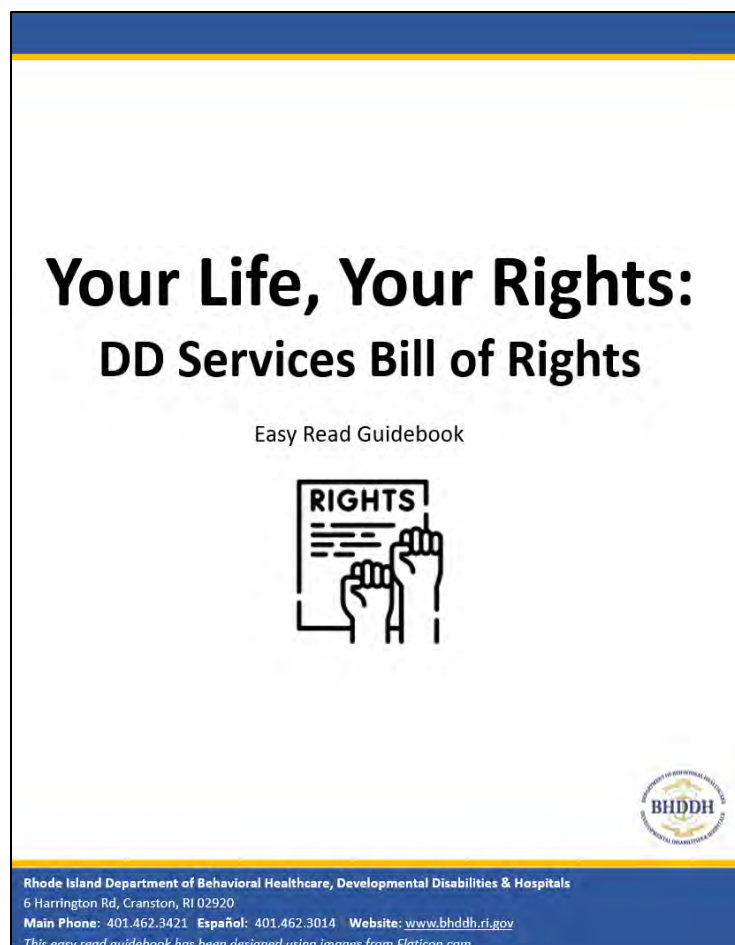
You have rights when it comes to your DD services that are called the **DD Bill of Rights**. The DD Bill of Rights make sure you are treated well and get the help you want so you can live the life you choose. The DD Bill of Rights are:

- You plan your life and pick your services and providers
- You understand your services and can ask questions at anytime
- You can let your provider or DDD know if you are unhappy with your services
- You are protected from abuse and mistreatment
- Your privacy is protected
- You can get your record at anytime
- You live in a safe and comfortable home
- You can take risks and make mistakes
- You wear clothing, own items, and eat food you want
- You can have relationships and people can visit you
- You will have safety plans that have the least restrictions
- You are involved in your community and choose the activities you do

If you feel your rights have been violated, please contact the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights by visiting their website.

Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals
6 Harrington Rd, Cranston, RI 02920 Main Phone: 401.462.3421 Español: 401.462.3014 www.bhddh.ri.gov
All images but BHDDH logo are from iStock.com

2. DD Service Bill of Rights Easy Read Guidebook



Your Life, Your Rights:
DD Services Bill of Rights

Easy Read Guidebook

RHDDH

Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals
6 Harrington Rd, Cranston, RI 02920
Main Phone: 401.462.3421 Español: 401.462.3014 Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov
This easy read guidebook has been designed using images from Flaticon.com

The [DD Service Bill of Rights Flyer](#) is included at the end of this newsletter. The [DD Service Bill of Rights Easy Read Guidebook](#) is located on the [BHDDH website](#).

Community News

RIPIN's 2024 Annual Breakfast



Event: 2024 Annual Breakfast

Date and Time: Thursday, May 23, 2024, from 8:00-10:00 AM

Location: Crowne Plaza, Warwick

To Register: [RIPIN website](#).

The annual breakfast is an opportunity for families, professionals, advocates, and community leaders to get together to celebrate the community at large. At this event, you can expect awards for individuals making contributions to the community. This is a wonderful opportunity to network and connect with families and professionals. To learn more about the event and to register, visit the [RIPIN website](#).

Tell Congress It's Time to End Marriage Penalties!



Marriage penalties for people with disabilities can reduce or cut off benefits. It can also limit savings for married people with disabilities who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other Social Security benefits.

The Arc Center is petitioning Congress to change the laws and penalties so that no one is forced to choose between marrying and getting support. To support this, you can sign the petition by visiting the [The Arc website](#).

Volunteer Income Tax Preparation Services (VITA)

**United Way
of Rhode Island**



VITA offers free tax preparation services across RI for those who make less than \$63,398. They offer a list of all the convenient locations offering their free services.

Volunteer preparers are trained and certified by the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). For a complete list and to learn more, please visit [the United Way RI website](#).

Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov

Email: BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

Phone: 401.462.3421

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014

Community News

Rhode Island's 2024 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference



**WE BELONG
→ HERE! ←**

**RI's 2024 Statewide
Self-Advocacy Conference**
Thursday, May 9th - Friday, May 10th



Rhode Island's 2024 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference is a yearly event hosted by Advocates in Action. The conference is scheduled from **Thursday May 9th to Friday May 10th**. The conference theme this year is "We Belong Here."

The first conference day (May 9th) is free and will take place online using Zoom. The second conference day (May 10th) includes a Dinner Dance Party at the Providence Marriott Downtown. You must buy a ticket for the dance party.

Visit the [Advocates in Action website](#) for the latest updates about the Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference. You can also learn about last year's event and catch up on all the other great work Advocates in Action is doing by visiting their website.

Accessibility Tip

Rhode Island has four agencies that can help you with Assistive Technology (AT). Each agency offers services to help you get AT and learn how to use AT. The four agencies are:

1. [Ocean State Center for Independent Living \(OSCIL\)](#)
2. [East Bay Educational Collaborative \(EBEC\)](#)
3. [TechACCESS of Rhode Island](#)
4. [Rhode Island Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan \(ATEL\) Program](#)

Community News

Save The Date! February 28: Stories of Entrepreneurship and CIE

Community of Practice Webinar Series

The webinar is on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, from 3:00-4:30p.m EST.

Webinar objectives are:

- Understand the Rhode Island Self-Employment Business Incubator Initiative.
- Explore the Ongoing Supports for Small Business Success.
- Hear inspiring stories of entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Learn practical advice for prospective entrepreneurs.

[*Register for the Webinar Here***](#)**

The webinar speakers include:



Sue Babin
Special Projects Coordinator
RIDDC



Rebecca Beaton
Business Owner,
"Rebecca's G Cards"



Ben del Rosario
Business Owner,
"Ben del Rosario
Photography"



Michael Coyne
Business Owner,
"Red, White & Brew"

emp¹ment

Community News

The Census Bureau Stops Plans to Change How it Collects Information About Disabilities

The Census Bureau uses the American Community Survey to collect information from American and their lives. The information they collect includes commuting times, internet access, family life, income, education levels, disabilities and more.



The Census Bureau had wanted to change some of the questions they had to identify the population of people with disabilities.

An article written by ABC News highlights the growing backlash the Census Bureau experienced from advocates for people with disabilities. Expressing concern that the new questions would cut their numbers by 40%. This would affect and or change funding that programs and services people with disabilities use and need.

They have since decide to stop the changes to the questions meet with advocates in the disability community to discuss and review the questions to make better capture the range of disabilities.

To learn more about this article and topic, please visit:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/census-bureau-pauses-changing-asks-disabilities-backlash-106996438>

Incorrect Picture- Tramell's Story on RI WINS Recent Newsletter



In last week's DD News & Update Volume 3, we included the Rhode Island Wins Workforce Investment & New Solution newsletter as an attachment.

In the Transformation Grant article, they highlighted Tramell's Journey: A Sneaker Enthusiast Finds Fulfillment in Retail Employment. Unfortunately, they included the wrong photo of Tramell. We are including it here to correctly represent Tramell and his incredible story.

Report Suspected Abuse

QA Hotline 401-462-2629

Mandated Reporting

Reporting suspected occurrences of abuse, neglect, and mistreatment of individuals with developmental disabilities

To **report abuse and serious incidents** call the BHDDH Quality Assurance (QA) Unit **hotline at (401) 462-2629**. The hotline is open 24-hour hotline, seven days per week, 365 days per year. Staff respond to reported incidents of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and financial exploitation.

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. Visit the BH Link website at www.bhlink.org.

If under 18 CALL: (855) KID (543)-LINK(5465)

VISIT the 24-HOUR/7-DAY Triage Center at:

975 Waterman Avenue, East Providence, RI

Call 911 if there is a risk of immediate danger.

If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text **988** or chat 988lifeline.org



For More Information on DD Initiatives

Newsletters: sign up and view old newsletters on our [News and Updates webpage](#)

Consent Decree: <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/consent-decree>

Conflict Free Case Management (CFCM): [EOHHS CFCM website](#) or [DD Initiatives-CFCM](#)

RI DSP State Workforce Initiative: <https://riswi.org/> or [DD Initiatives-SWI](#)

Hours of Operation

Monday – Friday

8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Contacting DDD Staff

See the full Division Contact List attached to this newsletter. Send general questions to

BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov.

Please do not email critical issues.

Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov

Phone: 401.462.3421

Email: BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014

Division of Developmental Disabilities - All Staff Contacts

Main Phone #: (401) 462-3421
Fax: (401) 462-2775

TDD: (401) 462-3226
Spanish Line: (401) 462-3014

Website: <https://bhddh.ri.gov/>
BH Link: (401) 414-5465

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

Name		Title	Phone	Email
Kevin	Savage	Director	462-0581	Kevin.Savage@bhddh.ri.gov
Heather	Mincey	Assistant Director	462-1218	Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov
Christine	Botts	Deputy Administrator	462-2766	Christine.Botts@bhddh.ri.gov
Jackie	Camilloni	Coordinator, Self Direction	462-6608	Jackie.Camilloni@bhddh.ri.gov
Brenda	DuHamel	Associate Director, Admin Services	462-3010	Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov
Cindy	Fusco	Interdepartmental Project Manager	462-6689	Cynthia.Fusco@bhddh.ri.gov
Melissa	Greenlief	Administrator, Community Services	462-2459	Melissa.Greenlief@bhddh.ri.gov
Susan	Hayward	Administrator, Youth in Transition	462-2519	Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov
Anne	LeClerc	Associate Director, Program Performance	462-0192	Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov
Tracy	Levesque	Associate Director, Clinical	462-0209	Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov
Gerard (Jay)	MacKay	Associate Administrator, Employment	462-5279	Gerard.Mackay@bhddh.ri.gov
Kelly	Petersen	Chief of Training & Staff Development	462-6592	Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov
Jacqueline	Reilly	Programming Services Officer	462-0126	Jacqueline.Reilly@bhddh.ri.gov
Steven	Seay	Coordinator, Integrated Community Svcs	462-6609	Steven.Seay@bhddh.ri.gov
Elvys	Ruiz	Administrator III, Employment	462-3857	Elvys.Ruiz@bhddh.ri.gov
Johanna	Mercado	Coordinator, Communications	462-6646	Johanna.Mercado@bhddh.ri.gov
Amethys	Nieves	Associate Admin, Communications	462-6629	Amethys.Nieves@bhddh.ri.gov
Peter	Joly	Principal Training Specialist	462-6638	Peter.Joly@bhddh.ri.gov
Robin	Gannon	Clinical Training Specialist	462-6691	Robin.Gannon@bhddh.ri.gov
Natalie	Munoz	Chief Implementation Aide	462-3016	Natalie.Munoz@bhddh.ri.gov

CASE MANAGEMENT UNITS

Marguerite	Belisle	Casework Supervisor II	462-0714	Marguerite.Belisle@bhddh.ri.gov
Amie	Adams	Social Caseworker II	462-2480	Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov
GinaMarie	Debartolo	Social Caseworker II	462-3402	GinaMarie.Debartolo@bhddh.ri.gov
Amber	Matson	Social Caseworker II	462-1555	Amber.Matson@bhddh.ri.gov
Suzanne	Porter	Social Caseworker II	462-1972	Suzanne.Porter@bhddh.ri.gov
Kaitlin	Sarkees	Social Caseworker II	462-4075	Kaitlin.Sarkees@bhddh.ri.gov
Heather	Soares	Social Caseworker II	462-6097	Heather.Soares@bhddh.ri.gov
Souphalek	Muriel	Casework Supervisor II	462-2512	Souphalak.Muriel@bhddh.ri.gov
Mary	Cameron	Social Caseworker II	462-1307	Mary.Cameron@bhddh.ri.gov
Lauree	Champagne	Social Caseworker II	462-2728	Lauree.Champagne@bhddh.ri.gov
Megan	Gilbert	Social Caseworker II	462-2524	Megan.Gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov
Dayna	Hansen	Social Caseworker II	462-2505	Dayna.Hansen@bhddh.ri.gov
Vacant				
Judy	Smith	Social Caseworker II	462-1327	Judith.Smith@bhddh.ri.gov
Mary Beth	Stevens	Casework Supervisor II	462-2438	Marybeth.Stevens@bhddh.ri.gov
Marisa	Abbruzzi	Social Caseworker II (RICLAS)	462-6099	Marisa.Abbuzzi@bhddh.ri.gov
Timothy	Cronin	Social Caseworker II	462-1721	Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov
Jennifer	Gouveia	Social Caseworker II	462-0098	Jennifer.Gouveia@bhddh.ri.gov
Celestina	Okai	Social Caseworker II (RICLAS)	462-3896	Celestina.Okai@bhddh.ri.gov
Erin	Simonelli	Social Caseworker II	462-2502	Erin.Simonelli@bhddh.ri.gov
Lena	Sousa	Social Caseworker II	462-1834	Lena.Sousa@bhddh.ri.gov
Joseph	Tevyaw	Social Caseworker II	462-2474	Joseph.Tevyaw@bhddh.ri.gov
Stacey	Perry	Casework Supervisor II	462-3402	Stacey.Perry@bhddh.ri.gov
JoAnn	DiMuccio	Social Caseworker II	462-2523	JoAnn.DiMuccio@bhddh.ri.gov
Katrina	Ferry	Social Caseworker II	462-2529	Katrina.Ferry@bhddh.ri.gov
Heidy	Henriquez	Social Caseworker II	462-3022	Heidy.Henriquez@bhddh.ri.gov
Crystal	Morel	Social Caseworker II	462-1329	Crystal.Morel@bhddh.ri.gov
Vacant				
Yolande	Ramos	Social Caseworker II	462-1059	Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov

ELIGIBILITY UNIT

Karen	Lowell	Casework Supervisor II	462-2209	Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov
Lori	Lombardi, RN	PASRR	462-0089	Lori.Lombardiburns@bhddh.ri.gov
Jill	Murphy	Social Caseworker II	462-2409	Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov
Kim	Wright	Information Aide	462-2584	Kimberly.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov

SIS UNIT

Donna	Standish	Casework Supervisor II	462-2628	Donna.Standish@bhddh.ri.gov
Stephanie	Andreozzi	Implementation Aide	462-1859	Stephanie.Andreozzi@bhddh.ri.gov
Wendy	Cormier	Social Caseworker II	462-1302	Wendy.Cormier@bhddh.ri.gov
Jamie	Fitzgibbons	Social Caseworker II	462-2510	Jamie.Fitzgibbons@bhddh.ri.gov
Meaghan	Jencks	Social Caseworker II	462-2113	Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov
Vacant				

TRANSITION UNIT

Susan	Hayward	Administrator, YIT	462-2519	Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov
Carolee	Leach	Professional Services Coordinator	462-1723	Carolee.Leach@bhddh.ri.gov
Laurie	Rossi	Implementation Aide	462-2563	Laurie.Rossi@bhddh.ri.gov

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT - PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS WEBINAR

Employer Engagement is a key strategy for workforce development as it aligns programs and services with employer needs.

February 22, 2024 2:00 PM EST

The webinar will offer tools and resources to:

1. Assess the current status of your employer relationships
2. Engage and develop employer relationships
3. Evaluate the employer impact and benefits of your employment services.

[Click here to join in on Zoom](#)

PRESENTER:



Dale Verstegen has 35 years of experience in consulting, researching, and training related to transition and employment services in various parts of the country. Mr. Verstegen provides consultation and training in the areas of program development, performance management, marketing, and job development. Dale has developed curriculum and provided training on supported and customized employment for a widerange of universities and state agencies. Given his business background and having been an employer, Dale has focused his research, writing, and training on the provision if employment services to the employer community. Dale has provided field-based technical assistance to hundreds of Employment and Transition Specialists throughout the country in the area of job development and employer partnerships. Dale offers excellent resources and tools that are based on proven results presented in an engaging style that fosters comradery amongst those who are learning together. Mr. Verstegen has a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin - Madison and is currently the Past President on the Board of Directors of the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE).

Join us for
Strategies for building
employer relationships
and identifying
different employment
levels.

This event is sponsored by the RI Cross Disability Coalition and the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) and funded as one of the DD Transformation Grants. It is an activity of one of the goals of the Transformation Learning Collective open to all DD Transformation grantees to share information and learn from one another about various projects. For more information contact Tanja Blicher-Ucran at Tanja@riddc.org or Sue Babin at suebabin@riddc.org.



RIPIN

SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



FEBRUARY 27TH



6:00 - 7:00 PM



VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

**Join the RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program
for a collaborative and engaging experience.**

Help us build **Community Connections** during our online Community of Practice. This session is designed to foster a supportive network among individuals who self-direct, their family members, and professionals in the field.

REGISTRATION



BIT.LY/30IYCPS



SCAN ME



RIPIN

SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM

FISCAL INTERMEDIARY PANEL



MARCH 5TH



6:00 - 7:00 PM



VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

The RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program invites you to an insightful virtual panel focusing on Fiscal Intermediaries.

Delve into the crucial role of fiscal intermediaries in the context of self-directed support in Rhode Island. Learn about their functions, responsibilities, and the impact they have on managing finances and services. Gain insights into navigating services and establishing effective connections with fiscal intermediaries.

REGISTRATION



[CONTA.CC/4BEFDIQ](https://conta.cc/4BEFDIQ)

SCAN ME



Self-Directed Supports Network

A network of individuals and family members using self-directed supports in Rhode Island



Invite your
Direct Support
Professionals
to join!

Online meeting

7 – 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024

Panel Discussion with Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) and Stakeholders

Learn about utilizing Goods and Services, including updates and changes

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. This session will be recorded.

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.

Agenda

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 7 – 7:15 | Introductions and updates |
| 7:15 – 8:15 | Panel discussion on Goods and Services; ask questions, get updates and learn more about it |
| 8:15 – 8:30 | Questions and closing remarks |

RSVP link

<https://bit.ly/2YUamqz>

If you need a reasonable accommodation (e.g., ASL interpreter, large print) or information in a language other than English, please make your needs known when you RSVP.

For questions: Email Crystal Cerullo at ccerullo@ric.edu or call 401-456-8915; TTY via RI Relay: 711 or 800-745-5555; Spanish via RI Relay: 711 or 866-355-9214.

Work Incentives Sessions for SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries

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

When you register, please share your questions.

NOTE: These sessions will not address how to apply for SSI or SSDI benefits.

Free tax assistance for individuals with low to moderate incomes

Individuals who need assistance with filing tax returns may request help from a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site in Rhode Island. If you qualify, a trained volunteer can help you prepare and e-file your taxes and apply for certain tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

To find a site near you, you can call United Way at 211 or you can use the VITA (and TCE) locator found at <https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep>. Enter your ZIP code and the number of miles you are willing to travel. You should call the agency for an appointment and ask them to provide a list of documents that you will need to bring.



Schedule

All sessions are offered from noon to 1 p.m. on Zoom with subtitles in English and are presented by Certified Work Incentives Counselors.

Working with Benefits – Yes, You Can!

Feb. 28, 2024

SSDI Overview

March 13, 2024

Work Pays! An Introduction to YOUTH SSI Work Incentives

April 3, 2024

SSI Overview

April 24, 2024

Registration

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.

Register online now at: <https://bit.ly/2KkUCVQ>

Questions or accommodations

Accommodations: Contact Vanessa Hollands at vhollands@ric.edu, 401-456-8072.

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

SELF-EMPLOYMENT ONLINE Classes for People with Disabilities, Families and Community Agencies

NEXT CLASS STARTING April, 2024



Do you know a person with a disability or other individual who has a hobby or idea for a possible business or who needs more support for an existing small business? If so, our **FREE ONLINE ZOOM Business Classes** can help the person to learn all about self-employment and available resources for their business idea and financial future! Traditional employment in jobs may not be the best option for some people with disabilities. Small business ownership is another option and great choice to do work that has *real meaning* for the person. It is something people can control themselves and to sell a product or a service they really love. There are over 100 people with disabilities in RI and many others who have started their own businesses in the last few years.

Here's what Michael Coyne, business owner of "*Red, White and Brew Café*" in Warwick, RI has to say:

WHY CHOOSE SELF-EMPLOYMENT?

1. I love being my own "BOSS", meeting new people and spending my time working on something I really enjoy every day!
2. I decide my own flexible work schedule and hours.
3. The Business Classes helped me to learn skills for problem solving, communication, marketing, and self-advocacy. I met other great people with disabilities who also own their own businesses. I received a few grants from the Project and the Fogarty Foundation to buy the materials/supplies I needed for my business.
4. I have assistance through my personal support network, my Business Team and RIDDC who are there to help me with my business.
5. I am no longer "*volunteering*" my time at a job, but instead I have my own business making money and I now have a steady income!



The RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) offers a FREE Business Development Series of 8 Classes, ONLINE through ZOOM Meetings. The new Series will start in early April and scheduled every week for 9 weeks. The classes will assist people to learn the right business skills and access resources to become profitable RI small business owners! Mini-grants up to \$1000.00+ are available to people completing classes, homework and starting their businesses from DLT funding and the Fogarty Foundation.

The Classes provide business advice, resources and ongoing peer and staff support to participants, families and staff and contact with experienced Business Advisors. They know how to work with people to develop good business plans, marketing ideas, and set goals the person can achieve in the industry he/she launches. The Series includes: 1. Is Entrepreneurship Right for You? 2. Steps to Start a Small Business, 3. Identifying Your Target Market, 4. Creating an "*Elevator Pitch*" about Your Service/Product(s), 5. Writing a Good Business Plan, 6. Finances, Bookkeeping, & Community Resources, 7. Marketing, and 8. Using Social Media to Promote your Business.

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

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



JOIN OUR

FREE

MONTHLY LEARNING SERIES:

FAMILIES AT THE CENTER

of a
Connected
Community



DISCOVER, CONNECT, AND EMPOWER!

Our engaging **Free** monthly learning series invites you to dive deep into the stories, lessons, and practical wisdom shared by families of children with disabilities. Mark your calendars and join us for an enriching experience where families take center stage in building stronger, more connected communities. Don't miss out—register now to secure your spot!

SERIES INCLUDES: ALL SESSIONS 6PM-7PM

Register for the virtual session here:

<https://bit.ly/3UnUryc>

Feb 19



Community Asset Mapping

Mar 18



Interviewing/Listening/Affirming Giftedness

Apr 15



Avoiding Devaluation and Stereotypes

May 20



4 Commitments of Community Building

Jun 17



Planning Healing Experiences

Jul 15



Planning for Inclusion

Aug 19



Using Money for Connection

Sept 16



Planning for Sustainability



Need to connect?



nithya@starfirecouncil.org



RHODE ISLAND

Developmental Disabilities Council

Charting a New Course

starfire



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 8, 2024

CONTACT: Cristy Raposo Perry
401-784-9500, ext. 1242
raposo@ripta.com

UPDATED PUBLIC HEARING LOCATION

RIPTA to Hold Statewide Public Hearings on Proposed Service Changes

Ridership & Workforce Shortage Drive Service Changes Proposal

Hearings Scheduled February 12 – 15, February 19 and February 21

Providence, Rhode Island – The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) will hold public hearings on proposed service changes in all five Rhode Island counties on February 12 – 15, February 19 and February 21, 2024. The Authority announced that the reductions in service statewide are a direct response to its driver shortage, which is a longstanding issue that RIPTA has been trying to address over the past few years. This shortage is not related to the proposed FY2025 budget. Despite extensive recruitment efforts, drivers continue to retire more quickly than RIPTA can recruit new ones. RIPTA is actively working with Amalgamated Transit Union leadership to find a solution to this issue. The labor shortage, which is affecting transit agencies nationwide, has a direct impact on the level of service that RIPTA can provide. RIPTA must recalibrate its schedules with the level of service it can consistently run, so that service is accurate and reliable for passengers.

The proposed service changes are based on data which identified the lowest performing routes and trip times; changes include redistributing resources from low-performing routes to high-performing routes. The proposed service changes would affect thirty-three (33) regular bus routes and include the elimination of routes or route segments, the decrease of service frequency, as well as the increase of service frequency on some high performing routes.

Additionally, because ADA service is offered within a ¼ mile corridor of fixed-route service, the paratransit ADA service that RIPTA provides through the Ride Program would also be reduced wherever there is the elimination of a route or a segment of a route.

“Our goal is to ensure we can meet 100% of our scheduled service 100% of the time. In order to do that, as painful as it is, we must make prudent changes, particularly given our workforce challenges,” said **Scott Avedisian, RIPTA CEO**. “In the meantime, we are actively working with our union to create a new starting wage for drivers that should address our recruiting challenges and help RIPTA better execute its mission.”

Avedisian added that “aligning our current staffing levels with the service we can provide will eliminate missed trips and improve the passenger experience.” RIPTA plans to reinstate service based on ridership

– and in line with statewide Transit Master Plan goals - once the Agency can significantly increase its workforce to offset retirements.

Public hearings will address service changes to Routes 4, 6, 9x, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 29, 30, 51, 54, 58, 64, 65x, 69, 71, 72, 75, 87, 92 and 95x and the elimination of Routes QX, 10x, 12x, 23, 59x, 61x, 68, 73, 76, 80 and 88. Additionally, emergency temporary service changes made in Fall 2022 to Routes 22, 27, 28, 31, 50, 55, 56, 57, 60, 63, and 67 will also be addressed.

The proposed service changes are as follows:

Increase in Trip Frequency or Number of Trips

Route 51 (Charles St./Twin River/CCRI)
Route 54 (Lincoln/Woonsocket)
Route 72 (Weeden/Central Falls)
Route 92 (East Side/Federal Hill/RI College)

Trip Time Changes for Better Service Reliability

Route 14 (West Bay)
Route 16 (Bald Hill /New England Tech)
Route 21 (Reservoir/Malls/ CCRI)
Route 58 (Mineral Spring/North Providence)
Route 72 (Weeden/Central Falls)
Route 92 (East Side/Federal Hill/RI College)

Regular Route Eliminations

Route QX (Quonset Express)
Route 10x (North Scituate Park-n-Ride)
Route 12x (Arctic/117 Express Park-n-Ride)
Route 23 (Arctic/Crompton/Centre of NE)
Route 59x (North Smithfield/Lincoln Mall)
Route 61x (Tiverton/East Bay Park-n-Ride)
Route 68 (CCRI Newport/Memorial Blvd./First Beach)
Route 73 (Mineral Spring/Twin River/CCRI)
Route 76 (Central Ave.)
Route 80 (Armistice Blvd.)
Route 88 (Simmons Village Service)

Route Segment Eliminations

Route 6 (Prairie Ave./CCRI/RW Zoo)
Route 14 (West Bay)
Route 16 (Bald Hill /New England Tech)
Route 58 (Mineral Spring/North Providence)

Eliminated Segment

This route will no longer serve Colony House
North Kingstown to Narragansett (Saturday only)
New England Tech to Quonset
Mineral Spring to Rte. 146 (one trip affected)

Elimination of Saturday Service

Route 18 (Union Ave.)
Route 58 (Mineral Spring/North Providence)
Route 64 (Newport/URI/Kingston Station)

Elimination of Sunday Service

Route 4 (Warwick Ave./West Shore)
Route 16 (Bald Hill /New England Tech)
Route 71 (Broad St./Central Falls)
Route 69 (URI/Galilee)

Elimination of All Weekend Service

Route 6 (Prairie Ave./CCRI/RW Zoo)
Route 13 (Coventry/Arctic/CCRI)
Route 29 (CCRI Warwick/Conimicut)
Route 30 (Arlington/Oaklawn)
Route 75 (Dexter/Lincoln Mall)

Reduction in Trip Frequency or Number of Trips

Route 6 (Prairie Ave./CCRI/RW Zoo)
Route 9x (Pascoag Express)
Route 16 (Bald Hill /New England Tech)
Route 18 (Union Ave.)
Route 21 (Reservoir/Malls/CCRI)
Route 65x (Wakefield Express)
Route 87 (Fairmount/Walnut Hill)
Route 95x (Westerly Express)

Under state law, the Authority must post the hearing schedule prior to holding any public hearings. All input from the public at the hearings will go to RIPTA's Board of Directors in February and the Board will vote on the proposed service changes at its February 22, 2024, Board meeting. If approved, service changes would go into effect on Saturday, April 6, 2024. For more information on these changes, passengers can visit [RIPTA.com/PublicHearings](https://www.ripta.com/PublicHearings).

Updated Schedule for Public Hearings

The public hearing schedule is as follows:

Monday, February 12, 2024
Barrington Public Library
281 County Road, Barrington
Times: 12:30pm – 2pm & 5:30pm – 7pm

Monday, February 19, 2024
URI Memorial Union, Room 360
50 Lower College Road, Kingston
Times: 12:30pm – 2pm & 5:30pm – 7pm

Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Providence Foundation
30 Exchange Terrace, Providence
Times: 12:30pm – 2pm & 5:30pm – 7pm

Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Blackstone Valley Visitor Center
175 Main Street, Pawtucket
Time: 5:30pm – 7pm

Thursday, February 15, 2024
Newport CCRI Auditorium
One John H. Chafee Blvd., Newport
Times: 12:30pm – 2pm & 5:30pm – 7pm

Wednesday, February 21, 2024
West Warwick Public Library
1043 Main Street, West Warwick
Times: 12:30pm – 2pm & 5:30pm – 7pm

These hearings will be accessible to people with disabilities and people with limited English proficiency. RIPTA will provide translation and interpreter services for the deaf and hearing impaired, provided such a request is made at least 72 hours prior to the hearing date. A request for this service can be made by calling (401) 784-9500 ex. 1242 or 800-745-5555 (RI Relay TDD).

For information on RIPTA services, passengers may call (401) 781-9400 or visit [RIPTA.com](https://www.ripta.com).

Transformation Grant

RI WINS (Workforce Investment & New Solutions) is the name utilized by the RI Cross Disability Coalition for our DD Transformation Grant in collaboration with the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) and Skills for RI's Future. This newsletter provides information on the status of implementation of the goal areas within the project and efforts to educate and provide support to people with disabilities, staff from community agencies, and RI employers on creating sustainable change for meaningful and inclusive lives for individuals with disabilities.

Tramell's Journey: A Sneaker Enthusiast Finds Fulfillment in Retail Employment

In the heart of Rhode Island, a unique partnership between a youth transition service and the Salvation Army has paved the way for individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to pursue their passion for work. One such inspiring story is that of Tramell, a young man whose love for sneakers led him to a fulfilling job at the Salvation Army Retail store.



Tramell working at Salvation Army

The Path to Success

Tramell's journey began with the youth transition services at the Fogarty Center, a program focused on one-on-one employment opportunities within the community. Within just six months of starting the program, Tramell realized his dream of working in retail, specifically at the Salvation Army's Pitman Street location in Providence. Despite potential challenges, he embraced a partially customized job, dedicating nearly 20 hours per week to his newfound role.

What makes Tramell's story even more remarkable is the organic connection that played a crucial role in his hire. Christopher Correa, a job coach with prior experience at the Salvation Army, leveraged his personal and professional network and social capital to facilitate a solid hire. This connection highlights the importance of networking in career development and underscores the positive impact that mentorship and support can have on individuals like Tramell.

Weathering Challenges with Enthusiasm

Tramell's commitment to his work was evident when faced with challenges. His mother, concerned about the weather, contemplated whether he should go to work. However, Tramell's enthusiasm prevailed, showcasing his dedication to the job and his sense of belonging at the Salvation Army Retail store.

The partnership extended beyond regular employment, encompassing seasonal hiring opportunities like the Bell Ringing campaign. Collaborating with local businesses such as Stop and Shop, the program provides a chance for individuals with limited employment experience to gain valuable skills in customer service while contributing to the community. The money earned during these seasonal engagements directly supports local initiatives, creating a meaningful cycle of giving back. Major Steven Lopes agrees that "building relationships within the community is the most valuable way to raise awareness of the program and is built upon the strength of the people we serve and support".

David Reiss, CEO of The Fogarty Center fully supported the expansion of youth in transition services within the organization, "quoting the television show, the A Team, 'I love it when a plan comes together' is so similar to the relationship between the Salvation Army and the Fogarty Center. Mutually respectful of each other's missions

Tramell's Journey (cont.)

over the last 25 years, these two long standing non-profit agencies have formed an alliance that encourages and supports community participation and inclusion, aiding society as a whole. It is heartening to see people in need working hard for the benefit of all. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute their unique skills and gifts in this world! It is these types of business relationships that keep our community vibrant."

Exceeding Expectations

Tramell's success is a testament to the effectiveness of the youth transition services. The goal of the program is to have individuals employed within a year of starting the service, and Tramell not only met but exceeded this goal. His story reflects the positive impact of personalized employment support and the importance of community partnerships in creating opportunities for individuals with I/DD.

For more information contact Kie O'Donnell, kodonnell@fogartycenter.org



Michael E's Journey to Success in the Office Environment

In today's workforce, diversity and inclusion are essential components of a thriving workplace. Companies that embrace the unique strengths of individuals with different abilities contribute to a more vibrant and innovative work culture.

Michael E.'s journey began when he was referred to a job opportunity in office services. Michael, who is on the autism spectrum, had distinct needs and preferences, emphasizing his organizational skills and attention to detail. He was clear about his goals and wanted to work in a role different from typical positions for people with similar diagnoses, like bagging groceries.

The Power of Networking

Networking played a pivotal role in Michael's employment journey. A colleague referred him to an administrative position at CareLink, an opportunity that perfectly aligned with his skill set. Despite initial reservations about his fit within the team, Michael's unique abilities and commitment to the job quickly dispelled any concerns.

Overcoming Initial Hesitations

During the hiring process, Michael's potential employer expressed concerns about effectively communicating tasks to him, given his placement on the autism spectrum. However, the supportive approach the hiring team took, guided by a commitment to treat him like any other employee, proved to be the key to Michael's success.

Jennifer Fraser, Associate Director, Workforce Development, AccessPoint RI, was crucial in preparing Michael for his new role to ensure a smooth transition. They worked on various aspects, from refining communication skills to addressing potential challenges that might arise in a professional setting. Michael's preparation for the interview showcased his eagerness and aptitude for the job.

Since his hire in September, Jennifer checks in bi-weekly to ensure his success. "He has strong tech skills, using Excel, but also YouTube videos of his photography," notes Jennifer. He is responsible for taking inventory of office and kitchen supplies for multiple locations. He fills in the excel sheet and forwards it to his supervisor to order products. The HR department enlists his help to make folders for new hires, gathering binders for training, printing each curriculum as he's advised of upcoming projects.

Working together, Michael and Jennifer planned a daily



Michael Working at CareLink

Michael E's Journey (cont.)

visual checklist, the best system of tasks to keep him focused. Of course, he typed it out and laminated the document. At work, he has his own laptop, desk, and shares office space. He also coordinates his own transportation, including the sporadic changes that come along with his work schedule. He also adapted nicely to his very active physical routine as his work required.

His social growth has been noticeable. Greeting his co-workers in the hallways and cordially asking visitors who they're coming to see are among his soft skills now. Not surprisingly, there is also a boost in his self-confidence. "He bought new clothes, comes in with his shirt tucked, and looks great. He completely dresses the part." "He's fantastic," according to Jen. That says it all.

A Positive Workplace Environment

Michael's responsibilities at CareLink include answering phones, interacting with representatives, redirecting visitors, handling mail, and managing calendars. His role as an office assistant underscores the versatility of employment opportunities for individuals with diverse abilities.

The support and understanding provided by his colleagues, especially the Operations Coordinator, have been instrumental in his success. His manager, Brooke Huemann, said, "Michael brings such positivity to the office, it's been a wonderful experience. He greets everyone when he walks by and wishes them a great day."

Championing Diversity in the Workplace

Michael's story challenges preconceived notions about the types of roles individuals with disabilities can excel in. His success serves as a testament to the importance of workplace diversity and inclusion, demonstrating that with the right support and understanding, individuals with unique abilities can contribute significantly to any organization.

Michael's journey to success in an office setting highlights the significance of creating inclusive workplaces where individuals with diverse abilities can thrive. As we celebrate stories like his, we move closer to a future where everyone, regardless of their background or abilities, has the opportunity to pursue fulfilling and meaningful careers.

For more information contact Rory Carmody, rcarmody@accesspointri.org



For More Information on the Transformation Project and collaborative partners RI Cross Disability Coalition, RIDDC or Skills for RI's Future contact:

- **Tanja Blicher-Ucran, RI Cross Disability Coalition, tanja@riddc.org**
- **Sue Babin, RIDDC, suebabin@riddc.org**
- **Danna Spencer, Skills for Rhode Island's Future, dspencer@skillsforri.com**