



DD News and Updates

Newsletter

Volume 14
August 30,
2024



Shared Resources

Get Ready for Fall!

Flu Shots: Make sure everyone gets their flu shot to stay healthy during the colder months.

Warm Clothing: As temperatures drop, make sure to have appropriate clothing like jackets, hats, and gloves.

Emergency Preparedness: Prepare for potential fall and winter storms by having an emergency kit ready, including necessary medications, water, and non-perishables.

Inside This Issue

- Community News
- Reporting Abuse
- BHDDH Staff Contact List
- Shared Resources

Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov

Email: BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

Phone: 401.462.3421

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014

Community News

End of August Tips!

Plan for Seasonal Activities

- **Outdoor Events:** Join community events like picnics, outdoor games, or nature walks. These activities help people with I/DD enjoy the Summer and make friends.
- **Gardening:** Encourage gardening. It's relaxing and gives a sense of achievement.

Prepare for Fall

- **Routine Changes:** Help people adjust their daily routines for Fall. This includes changing schedules, clothes, and meal plans.
- **School Support:** Make sure those going back to school have the supplies and help they need for a good start.

Promote Community Inclusion

- **Social Activities:** Help people join local clubs, hobby groups, or volunteer activities that interest them.
- **Awareness:** Raise awareness about I/DD in the community to create a more inclusive environment.

Health and Wellness

- **Check-ups:** Schedule medical or dental appointments before Fall gets busy.
- **Mental Health:** Encourage activities that support mental health, like mindfulness, art, or music.

Skill Development

- **Life Skills:** Teach skills like cooking, budgeting, and personal care to boost independence and confidence.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Help people develop skills to express their needs and make decisions.

Family and Caregiver Support

- **Respite Care:** Make sure caregivers have access to respite care to avoid burnout.
- **Support Groups:** Connect families and caregivers with local support groups for shared experiences and advice.

By focusing on these areas, we can help people with I/DD enjoy the end of Summer and get ready for Fall smoothly.

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

Email: BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

Phone: 401.462.3421

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014



Division of Developmental Disabilities Staff Contacts

Main Phone: (401) 462-3421	Website: https://bhddh.ri.gov/
Fax Phone: (401) 462-2775	Behavioral Health Link (BH Link): (401) 414-5465
Spanish Phone: (401) 462-3014	Report Abuse: (401) 462-2629
TDD: (401) 462-3226	

Administrative Team

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Kevin Savage	Director	462-0581	Kevin.Savage@bhddh.ri.gov
Heather Mincey	Assistant Director	462-1218	Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov
Brenda DuHamel	Associate Director, Admin Services	462-3010	Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov
Anne LeClerc	Associate Director, Prog Performance	462-0192	Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov
Tracy Levesque	Associate Director, Clinical	462-0209	Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov
Christine Botts	Deputy Administrator	462-2766	Christine.Botts@bhddh.ri.gov
Cindy Fusco	Interdepartmental Project Manager	462-6689	Cynthia.Fusco@bhddh.ri.gov
Natalie Munoz	Chief Implementation Aide	462-3016	Natalie.Munoz@bhddh.ri.gov

Eligibility Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Brenda DuHamel	Associate Director, Admin Services	462-3010	Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov
Karen Lowell	Casework Supervisor II	462-2209	Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov
Lori Lombardi- Burns	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

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Tracy Levesque	Associate Director, Clinical	462-0209	Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov
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
Betty Staplins	Social Caseworker II	462-0449	betty.staplins@bhddh.ri.gov

Residential

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Tracy Levesque	Associate Director, Clinical	462-0209	Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov
Melissa Greenlief	Administrator, Community Services	462-2459	Melissa.Greenlief@bhddh.ri.gov

Case Management Units

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Brenda DuHamel	Associate Director, Admin Services	462-3010	Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov
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
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
Timothy Cronin	Social Caseworker I	462-1721	Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov
Jennifer Gouveia	Social Caseworker I	462-0098	Jennifer.Gouveia@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

Independent Facilitation Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Meaghan Jencks	Casework Supervisor II	462-2113	Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov
Yolande Ramos	Casework Supervisor II	462-1059	Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov

Transition Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Heather Mincey	Assistant Director	462-1218	Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov
Susan Hayward	Administrator, Youth in Transition	462-2519	Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov
Carolee Leach	Professional Services Coordinator	462-1723	Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov
Laurie Rossi	Implementation Aide	462-2563	Laurie.Rossi@bhddh.ri.gov

Community Services

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Heather Mincey	Assistant Director	462-1218	Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov
Jackie Camilloni	Coordinator, Self Direction	462-6608	Jackie.Camilloni@bhddh.ri.gov
Elvys Ruiz	Administrator III, Employment	462-3857	Elvys.Ruiz@bhddh.ri.gov
Gerard (Jay) MacKay	Associate Administrator, Employment	462-5279	Gerard.Mackay@bhddh.ri.gov
Steven Seay	Coordinator, Integrated Comm Services	462-6609	Steven.Seay@bhddh.ri.gov

Communications and Training

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
Anne LeClerc	Associate Director, Prog Performance	462-0192	Anne.LeClerc@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
Kelly Petersen	Chief of Training & Staff Development	462-6592	Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov
Robin Gannon	Clinical Training Specialist	462-6691	Robin.Gannon@bhddh.ri.gov
Peter Joly	Principal Training Specialist	462-6638	Peter.Joly@bhddh.ri.gov


BUTLER HOSPITAL

Black and Aging Health and Wellness Fair!

Hosted by Butler Hospital's Memory and Aging Program

 **Thursday, September 5th, 2024**

 **9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

 **West End Community Center**
109 Bucklin Street
Providence, RI 02907

No registration – open to the general public.

Rain Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2024

Come join us for the 2024 Black and Aging Health and Wellness Fair! There will be various community organizations and public agencies that provide wellness resources and health insurance programs to Black seniors and their caregivers.

- Health resources
- Nutrition services
- Giveaways
- Free Vaccines (Pneumonia, Tdap, and Hep B)
- Live music

Vaccines | 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Provided by Family Service of Rhode Island and Asthenis Pharmacy

Blood Pressure and Glucose Checks | 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Provided by Providence Community Health Centers

Colorectal Education, Blood Pressure and Glucose Checks | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Provided by Lifespan Community Health Institute



east bay community action program
THE BRIDGE TO SELF-RELIANCE



RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK





Centers for Independent Living Connecting People with Disabilities to Competitive, Integrated Employment

National Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar

On **Tuesday, September 10, 2024 from 3:00-4:30PM Eastern Time (ET)**, join the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center (DETAC) for the September 2024 National CoP webinar, Centers for Independent Living Connecting People with Disabilities to Competitive, Integrated Employment.

During the month of September, AoD marks the 51st anniversary of the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to commemorate the first civil rights legislation for people with disabilities, DETAC welcomes two disability-led national organizations to discuss employment - the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL). They will highlight how their work increases access to competitive, integrated employment nationally and how they collaborate with Centers for Independent Living (CIL) in all geographical locations across the country to do so. This webinar is intended for CILs but is applicable to other Administration on Disabilities stakeholders, as well as self-advocates and family members who want to learn about additional resources to boost employment outcomes.

Presenters:

Mary-Kate Wells
Program Director
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

Rebecca Roberts
Director of Training and Technical Assistance
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)

[Register online for this webinar.](#)



Paul V.
Sherlock Center
On Disabilities / Rhode Island College

Person-Centered Thinking Facilitator Training

This free course is designed for those supporting people with I/DD living in Rhode Island

Next course starts Sept. 16

This course teaches the knowledge and skills the facilitator needs to get ready for the person-centered planning process, including creating the plan and putting the plan into action with an individual.

Course dates:

Sept. 16 to Dec. 10, 2024

This course requires approximately 40 hours of online learning including readings, quizzes and assignments. Learners will participate in four instructor-led group sessions using Zoom.

The required group sessions take place from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on these Tuesdays:

- Sept. 24
- Oct.15
- Nov.12
- Dec. 10

[Learn more and register for this course on the Sherlock Center website.](#)

Paul V. Sherlock Center

On Disabilities / Rhode Island College

FAMILY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS TRAINING (FEAT)

ONLINE SERIES USING ZOOM

Sept. 23, 26, 30 and Oct. 3, 2024

The Sherlock Center invites families and their young adults with developmental disabilities (**14 to 22 years of age**) and the professionals who support them to attend this **FREE** series about school-to-employment and everything in between.

Attendees are encouraged to attend all sessions of this four-part series, but it is not required. Each session will be a live, interactive training using Zoom. Participants are strongly encouraged to actively engage during the training series.

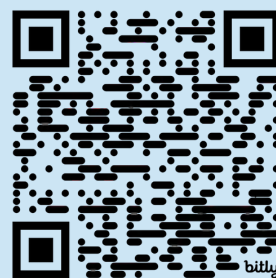
SESSION 1: SEPT. 23 5 to 6:30 p.m.	BUILDING THE DREAM OF EMPLOYMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to employment in Rhode Island• Panel of youth successfully employed in Rhode Island
SESSION 2: SEPT 26 5 to 6:30 p.m.	PLANNING THE TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of the family in planning for employment• School role in planning for employment (Transition IEP)
SESSION 3: SEPT. 30 5 to 6:30 p.m.	POSSIBILITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported and customized employment• Outside-the-box employment possibilities
SESSION 4: OCT. 3 5 to 6:30 p.m.	ACCESSING ADULT SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office of Rehabilitation Services• Division of Developmental Disabilities• Self-employment

ALL PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:

- Training materials and resources.
- Opportunity to network with families, employees, and entrepreneurs.
- Knowledge of state, federal and community resources that support employment.

Save your spot
for these
free sessions!

Register today at
<https://bit.ly/featr1>



This training is conducted in English; however, ASL or language interpreter services may be requested. Make your request known in the registration form or by contacting Vanessa Hollands at vhollands@ric.edu or Crystal Cerullo at ccerullo@ric.edu as soon as possible.

Phone: 401-456-8072
Fax: 401-456-8150
TTY via RI Relay: 711 or 800-745-5555
Spanish via RI Relay: 711 or 866-355-9214



Natural Supports-Who's in Your Circle?

Event: Natural Supports-Who's in Your Circle?

Time: September 24th at 6:00 PM

Location: Zoom

Are you or someone you support self-directing their services or home and community-based services? Join us on **September 24, 2024, at 6:00 PM** for an insightful webinar, **Natural Supports - Who's in Your Circle**, hosted by the RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program.

Natural supports are the individuals in your family, network, and community who play an essential role in your life. In this webinar, we'll explore how to recognize and engage these crucial members of your circle—whether they're family members, friends, or community connections. Understanding and leveraging natural supports can make a significant difference in your life.

This event is open to individuals self-directing, their families, direct support professionals, and other professionals in the field. We encourage you to join us for this important conversation and to invite others who might benefit from learning more about building and strengthening a supportive circle.

To secure your spot and receive the Zoom link, [please RSVP by September 20th](#).

We look forward to seeing you there!

RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program

selfdirectedsupport@ripin.org



[RIAPSE](#) Statewide Conference 2024 *Cultivating Employer Connections*

REGISTER by September 25, 2024

Attending the RIAPSE (RI Association Supporting Employment 1st) Statewide conference will be a terrific opportunity to network, expand your knowledge, and contribute toward building a more inclusive workforce in Rhode Island.

Who should attend: people with disabilities, family members, businesses, employment professionals (e.g. job developers, job coaches), educators, administrators, and anyone interested in advancing competitive employment for persons with disabilities.

Event Details

Date: Wednesday, October 2, 2024
Time: 12:30 - 4:30 pm
RIAPSE After Hours: 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
(Cash bar)
Venue: Radisson Airport Hotel,
Warwick, RI
Professional Development:
CESP Credits Requested

Fees: APSE Member: \$45.00
Non-Member: \$60.00
Scholarships: Limited #

For questions contact riapse@apse.org

To
Register
Click
Here



Conference Program

Opening Plenary: **Employment First in RI a State Vision**

- Kevin Savage, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities-BHDDH,
- Thomas Martin, Director, Division of Behavioral Health-BHDDH
- Joseph Murphy, Associate Director, ORS
- Jane Slade, IDEA Coordinator, RIDE

Breakout Sessions: Local and National Presenters

Session 1:

- Employer Engagement and Disclosure
- Keeping it Simple & Significant: Strategies for Individuals with Significant Disability
- Assistive Technology in the Workplace

Session 2:

- Effective Employment Supports-Consumers' Perspectives
- 10 Tools for Job Developers
- Job Coaching from an Employer Perspective

Closing Keynote

Supervising Employer Development

Rick McAllister, M.Ed, NEON Subject Matter Expert; Management Analytics Resource Collaborative

To learn about Vendor & Sponsor opportunities click [HERE](#)



Be a Sponsor or Vendor!



Cultivating Employer Connections

RIAPSE Statewide Conference 2024

RIAPSE Welcomes Vendors and Sponsors!

We anticipate 125 attendees representing professionals of employment services (state and community providers), people with disabilities, family members, educators and employers.

Conference Date: October 2, 2024

Location: The Radisson Airport Hotel, Warwick, RI

Time: Conference Registration: Noon – 12:30 pm Conference: 12:30 - 4:30 pm

Networking Reception: 4:30 - 5:30 pm

The half-day program includes an opening plenary and closing keynote, 2 breakout sessions, a variety of exhibits, and a networking reception (cash bar).

Secure your Vendor/Sponsor designation by September 25, 2024.

To Register as a Vendor or Sponsor: [CLICK HERE](#)

Contact RIAPSE with questions: RIAPSE@apse.org Subject: Vendor/Sponsor Inquiry

RIAPSE Vendor Sponsor opportunities to promote your organization and provide access to the conference:

Vendor fee \$150

Includes: one 6ft exhibit table with draping, recognition in promotional materials and social media, and one conference registration.

Sponsorship (Three levels):

1. Advocate fee \$250

Includes: one 6ft exhibit table with draping, recognition in promotional materials and social media, 2 conference registrations, and 1 scholarship.

2. Ally fee \$500

Includes: one 6ft exhibit table with draping, recognition in promotional materials and social media, 60-second sponsor ad to play during the conference, 4 conference registrations, and 2 scholarships.

3. Impact Champion fee \$1,000

Includes: one 6ft exhibit table with draping, recognition in promotional materials and social media, 60-second sponsor ad during the conference, 8 conference registrations, and 4 scholarships.

Payment Methods

Check or credit card through PayPal (i.e., bank account, debit card, Visa Debit card, or PayPal balance)



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.

Strengthening Rhode Island's Workforce: Insights from the RI WINS Coaching Call



Among the key components of the RI WINS Transformation Grant are regularly scheduled "coaching calls" that provide staff from community DD agencies an update of employer contacts, agency member follow-up from many previous training sessions, and reports of new job candidate interviews and job landings. These meetings include discussions regarding new initiatives, the introduction and feedback from the latest cohort completing the "Employer Engagement Training" led by Doug Crandell, and reinforcement of the importance of building relationships with employers instead of focusing on immediate candidate placements.

As anticipated, the evaluations from the training are always favorable, but also provide insight based on the agency representatives' previous experiences – a stark contrast and distinct benefit. Noticeably, there is a difference when the "informational meeting" with the prospective employer is not a "cold call," meaning staff and the RI WINS business consultants have already paved the way for the incoming Crandell trainees. According to Kelly Michaalek, from West Bay RI, "it was a great way to work with businesses...just hoping they will say 'yes' to the site visit is the first step."

During these sessions, the emphasis after the informational interview is on follow-up with the businesses, checking

in with those who were to be the team's "point person" to stay in touch with the business contact after the presentation and feedback session is complete. The goal is establishing a relationship, not necessarily making an immediate match between the business and job candidate. That happens later; sometimes, much later. With humor Danna Spencer - Associate Director of Client Services for Inclusion at Skills for Rhode Island's Future (SkillsRI) adds, "leave no relationship stone unturned." Both Brittany Dorrance - Client Services Associate at WorkABILITY at SkillsRI - and Danna cite several examples of their initial informational meetings with a business, follow-up discussions, quick calls, and eventually, a job opens. Together, they emphasize building the "community of practice" that continually strengthens the overall effort.

In addition to the recap of the last training session, updates on employer contacts and potentially new opportunities for job candidates, Sue Babin announced a new initiative. "We would like to start a process over the next few months to obtain feedback from employers who have hired people with disabilities to hear their thoughts on how their workplace has changed and improved by the inclusion of employees with disabilities."

"The purpose of this is to get some really good data and comments back from employers on how we are doing as a system, which will also be important information to publicize statewide and nationally the benefits to employers of expanding and diversifying their workforce." All the individuals in this meeting understand the benefits and are committed to reinforcing the values during their various company outreach efforts. Participating agencies in this initiative will also receive a summarized report of the responses and comments of employers working with their individual agency.

The full agenda ends with a substantial list of next steps for the staff from agencies and the leadership team. For the agency staff, the task is to steadily build on existing contacts and relationships while identifying new opportunities. The team continues to support those job developers, maintaining channels of communication for them, and to move forward on new initiatives intended to bolster the internal organization – "the community of practice" – and enhance the RI workforce through diversity.



Employer Engagement Training

Expanding the network of agencies creating relationships with RI businesses, the seventh cohort of “Employer Engagement” Training led by Doug Crandell, of Griffin Hammis - a national leader in customized employment services for people with disabilities - concluded on April 25, 2024 at Red, White & Brew, a coffeeshop in Warwick. Four four-person teams represented eight different community agencies connected with local businesses, conducting informational interviews following their first training session on Customized Job Development and Ideal Conditions of Employment.

The nine community agencies that participated in this three-day session were: Community Living of RI, Fogarty Center, Maher Center, Providence Center, Perspectives, Trudeau Center, West Bay, ProABILITY, and Skills for RI’s Future.

The companies that were invited to participate included O2J, a packaging center; Coastal One Credit Union; The Empowerment Factory, a local non-profit focused on supporting youth through creativity, civic pride, and self-esteem building; and The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Widely varied, these businesses welcomed team members, explained their business mission, programs, products, community involvements, and workforce needs. The teams’ focus was to learn information about the business, identify their key workforce needs, analyze their findings, and identify potential solutions, while establishing relationships and paving the way to economic development. Powerpoint presentations were the backdrop for each team with a twenty-to-thirty-minute discussion, designed to share their experiences with other teams, agency members and guests. A tallied

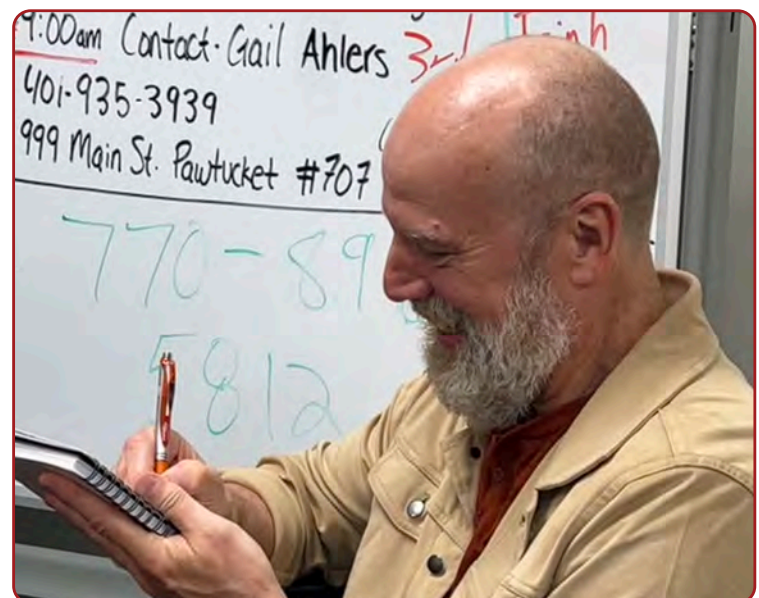
vote for the best presentation earned the O2J team a \$100 gift card for each team member and earned every team several rounds of applause.

To set a foundation for a relationship that continues far beyond the training session itself, the participants first gained an understanding of each business and their products and services rather than just place a person in a potential job opportunity.

The working partnership between Doug Crandell and Sue Babin, project leader for the RI Developmental Disabilities Council and lead on the collaboration between RIDDC, RI Cross Disability Coalition, and Skills For RI Future, structured the process for informational interviews with RI employers. Employers were identified by Paul Ouelette from the Transformation Project, Brittany Dorrance from Skills and Elvys Ruiz from DD. Staff of each agency were assigned into new teams, forging new relationships with people from other agencies as well as with their newly assigned business participants – the four company owners or CEOs.

Sue’s rapport with Doug, as well as the agency participants, provided a model to the groups that helped them to form strong working relationships which increased the effectiveness of the training and working session and develop ongoing collaborations that last outside of the training. Affable as always, Doug congratulated the group on their work and announced, “RI always does the best job with this training.”

Classroom training and discussion of the core topics related to economic development versus traditional



job placement prepared the participants for their onsite sessions with the businesses. Among the many elements of the training, which was supported by Doug Crandell's data-rich PowerPoint presentation, helped the participants gain an understanding of demand-driven and customized job development approaches, the local labor market, return on investment, social capital, purchasing power, community building, discovering unmet needs, and the basics of negotiation.

The last day of training brought participants and their agency supervisors/directors together in an atmosphere that was collegial, with members from each team prepared their research findings. The synergy was apparent. Building relationships with employers to identify their needs takes time, commitment and follow-up. At the end of the competition segment, Shannon Laihot, from the Maher Center, remarked: "This training was really excellent and should be required for anyone who does this job or work relating to employment."

Everyone applauded.

***Collaboration at Work- The State Agency,
The Provider Agency and The Employer;
From BHDDH to Spurwink|RI to Downtown
Makers Marketplace***



Elvys Ruiz is firmly rooted as a Business and Community Engagement champion formerly in the Rhode Island Department of Administration, and currently, The Department of Behavioral Healthcare Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). He has a strong background working with the Rhode Island business community for

over 20 years, including managing the Supplier Diversity Office at the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (DEDI) where he also oversaw the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) while acting as Interim Administrator of the Minority Business Enterprise Compliance office (MBECO). In an interview he noted that "he was the first community outreach person for the RI Parent Information Network working on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and has also worked for the Department of Human Services and served as a board member for the Ocean State Center for Independent Living."

Integral to his work is educating businesses about the benefits of hiring people with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), especially their contributions, gaining an understanding of the unique needs of each business, and then connecting with the community providers that may have the best potential job candidate to meet that need. To accomplish that task, Elvys relies on a Supported Employment Provider Questionnaire developed to determine the referral capacity of each agency provider, including the skills and areas of interest of each potential job candidate.

"It may take several months, notes Elvys, "I keep the conversation with employers going. It is about consistency. They may not be able to hire a person right



away, due to slow production times, but the time will come when they call you to offer a job and that only happens if we are engaged with the employer, they understand the benefits of hiring people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and are enthusiastic about it.



Elvys recently connected with Mary Anne Maciel, Director of VocLinks, the employment and community connections program of Spurwink|ri. The two first met with Luca Carnevale, Benny Barber and Eric Betz at Downtown Makers Marketplace run by Hope & Main to learn more about the current hiring needs of that employer. Mary Anne identified a potential candidate whose skills and interests aligned with the business needs, brought him for an introduction, tour, and an opportunity to learn more about the position. Both parties were able to customize a position that met the needs of the business and aligned with the skills of the candidate while allowing potential for growth.

Shakirudeen Alli Owe – aka Deen – started as a “modified” food prep position, portioning and packaging various sauces and condiments. During this initial “job trial” or internship phase funded by the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), a VocLinks employment specialist was on-site to assess his performance, while identifying and training on areas identified for additional growth. Following this assessment period, Deen was offered a part-time position and went on payroll. “Follow-up is our responsibility, so we stay in touch with the employer and make sure everything is going well,” says Elvys

Mary Anne provides context for when Deen was the candidate for a job at Hope & Main: “Deen was initially

very hesitant about re-entering the workforce due to a significant fear of failure. He had been in Nigeria for 10-12 years and then resumed services with Spurwink|RI when he returned. Spurwink had previously provided services when he graduated from high school many years ago.

In conjunction with ORS, and after spending some time in the discovery phase, Deen was introduced to Luca, Benny, and Eric at Hope & Main Marketplace for an overview and tour. She notes, “Although Spurwink already had a long-standing relationship with Hope & Main, Elvys was instrumental in introducing us to the Marketplace.” At Hope & Main Luca, Executive Director of Operations, speaks about Deen helping to fulfill the mission of the organization. “He’s part of the community. He helps us feel good and we’re happy to work with his accommodations.” Deen’s direct supervisor at The Maker’s Marketplace is kitchen manager Eric, who discussed the scope of the work and Deen’s growth.

“He weighs, packages, and labels a variety of snacks for our marketplace, and portions most of the sauces and salad dressings used in our cafe. Recently I’ve been teaching him how to follow recipes and prepare items such as honey mustard sauce and spicy aioli,” notes Eric.

Eric added, “Deen shows up for every shift with a smile and a positive attitude. I think all our staff members enjoy working with him. We had an intern a few months ago who shared Deen’s passion for basketball. It was cool to see their friendship grow. Deen even made cards for the interns when they finished their time with us.”

From job performance to enriching the work culture, Deen is clearly a valued and valuable employee.

He also observed that VocLinks’ job coaches were helpful getting Deen started, and then started stepping back, little by little, as Deen gained skills and independence.

According to Mary Anne, Deen began a short-term Community-Based Work Experience (CBWE), and received on-site job coaching throughout that phase, initially trialing just one 4-hour shift per week. “Upon completion of the job trial with CBWE, a hire was negotiated at two 4-5 hour shifts per week above RI minimum wage, while simultaneously developing natural supports. It has been a great job match and Deen is so proud of his accomplishments and the team at the Marketplace are thrilled as well. Overall, it has been a tremendous win-win.”

Speakers Bureau 5.28 - AVA Voice



At the Warwick Public Library, presenters from the RI Cross Disability Coalition’s Speakers Bureau Rachel Ferreira, Heidi Showstead, Bobby Macaux discussed “Healthy Relationships” with a full group from the Ava Voice Self Advocacy Group. In an informal Q&A guided by a PowerPoint, our 3-person team engaged the group in what constitutes a healthy relationship as well as reviewed important tips for staying safe in various interpersonal encounters, ranging from friends and family to those with professional services.

Speakers Bureau 6.4 - Sargent Center



Keeping it real, Tanja and Deanne teamed up to discuss what it takes to recognize and build a good healthy relationship in this Speakers’ Bureau presentation. The group of more than 20 students in transition at the Warwick-based Sargent Center started out by naming friends, and why they called that person their best friend. To start the open dialogue, Deanne & Tanja even shared their own anecdotes about beginning a relationship, and then continuing a deeper discussion by sharing examples of what works in a healthy friendship. With lively interaction among the students and their hands eagerly raised to

participate, the students demonstrated that they were also able to identify an unhealthy relationship. Together, the leaders and students explored the PowerPoint examples of tips for making healthy choices and staying safe in relationships.

Speakers Bureau 6.18 - AVA Voice



At Avatar, the Warwick-based Ava Voice self-advocacy group, Speakers Bureau leaders Deanne Gagne and Tanja Blicher-Ucran took a lighthearted approach to the important topic: “Let’s Talk About Money.” On the first very hot day of this summer, twenty-five participants, together with staff, discussed why money is important after listing the enjoyable ways of spending their money, ranging from vacations and manicures to sporting events and concert tickets. Deanne and Tanja addressed income sources and typical expenses, ways to make and save money, and reduce expenses, and the importance of a budget. The PowerPoint presentation enabled them to show a budget, line by line, as well as how a monthly budget is created. From groceries and cleaning supplies to clothing, pet care and medical costs, the group eagerly shared how their money is spent. With hands raised for every question, the participants openly discussed differences between their wants and needs, including the use of cell phones, credit and debit card and Internet. Time passed quickly as the participants focused, laughed, and responded well to a wide variety of questions.

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**