



DD News and Updates

Newsletter

Volume 18
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2024

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Community News

Division Update

As we have shared in past newsletters, the Division has a new assessment process. This process includes the Additional Needs and Support Questionnaire (ANSQ). This process helps the Division learn more about the people getting services. The goal is to find out what people need sooner so they do not need to submit a supplemental funding request (S109).

The Division is changing how long some S109s are approved for some people. For anyone who has had an approved S109 for the last 2 years or more, the approval will be for longer. The approval will be for the rest of their current plan year and the following plan year. A new S109 request will not be needed.

The Division will send out letters to anyone who has had a S109 for the last 2 years or more. This letter is the supplemental request outcome letter (S110). The approval can come from either the ANSQ Committee or S109 Committee.

If you are a participant and your support needs change before your next assessment, please let the Division know.

Participant Highlight: SLA



[Living Innovations](#) has shared a new story about Shared Living Arrangements (SLA). These stories are being shared to give people an idea about SLA and how it can work for them.

The story is about Sheryl. Sheryl lives in SLA where she has learned new skills and gotten closer to her goals. You can find the full story at the end of this newsletter.

Participant Highlight: Employment

The Division's Employment Team has been hard at work. Part of their mission is to work with providers in the community. The goal is to help adults with disabilities find their best job.

Sometimes, finding the right job can take time. Yet, once a person finds it, the wait is worth it. Take Chris Torgovec's story as an example. Chris had questions about the type of job he wanted. He also had challenges finding a job due to the COVID Pandemic. Yet, as time has passed, Chris now works a job he enjoys. You can find Chris's full story at the end of this newsletter.

October NDEAM

Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) kicked off this October. This is a great chance to learn more about supporting workers with disabilities. While a great topic to celebrate each October, there is always great work being done on this.

In this newsletter, learn about local and national activities about employment.

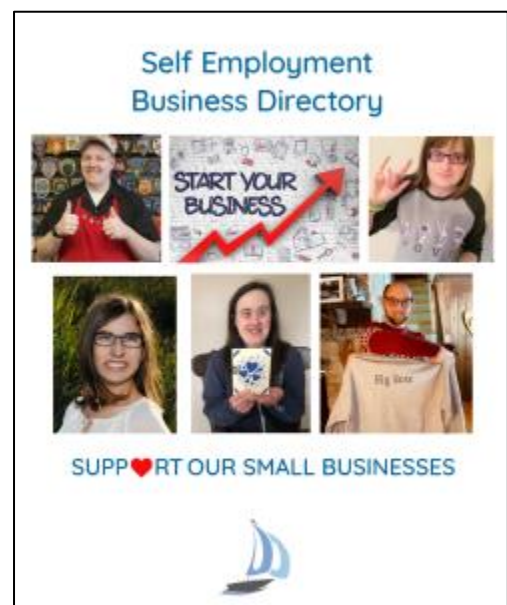


Self-Employment Business Directory

Adults with disabilities are doing big things when it comes to work. According to the [U.S. Department of Labor](#), 8% of workers with a disability were self-employed in 2023. People worked in all types of industries, like finance, leisure, and trade.

Many adults with disabilities in Rhode Island are also their own boss. The [Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council](#) shares details about these small businesses. The small businesses include:

- Clothing and jewelry
- Hand made gifts
- Art and Photography
- Fresh food and snacks
- Skincare and scents
- Cards and books
- Animal care



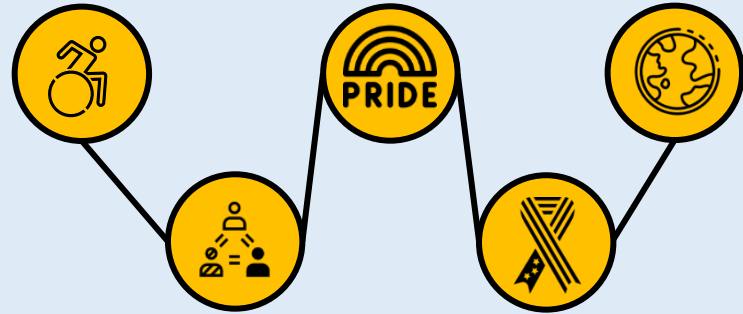


Your Life, Your Rights Employment Rights

Know Your Rights

Everyone has the right to choose their job, feel safe at work, and be treated well. This is true for all workers, including workers who:

- Have a disability
- Are of any race, ethnicity, or gender
- Are part of the LGBTQ+ Community
- Are veterans
- Are migrant workers



Your Employment Rights



Fair treatment no matter who you are



Earn the same money as others doing the same work



Make changes to the job to help you succeed



Have access to info about your rights



Keep some info about yourself private



Take time out of work when needed



Work in a safe place where you will not get hurt or sick



Join with coworkers to make the workplace better



Report broken rights and not get in trouble

If you think your boss is violating your rights, call the U.S. Department of Labor by phone at 1-866-487-2365. There is help in over 200 languages.

Community Resources

Disability Belongs

[Disability Belongs](#) is a community agency. They focus on improving policies and other issues in society. The purpose of the changes are to improve the options people with disabilities have.

Disability Belongs recently came out with two new resources. One resource is about voting, and the other about employment.



The voting resource talks about the upcoming election on November 5. There is info about how to vote, work at the polls, and get more involved in politics. To learn more, [visit the webpage *Our Vote. Our Voice. Our Choice.*](#)



The employment resource shares a list of events. The events include upcoming online meetings. The events also include past event recordings. All events are about employment to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

The next event is on Tuesday, October 29 at 3pm. The event is “Career Strategy Conversations: Entertainment Industry.”

To learn more, [visit the webpage *Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2024.*](#)

The Arc Rhode Island

One local agency that shares helpful info is the [Arc Rhode Island](#). The Arc Rhode Island focuses on policy work and education. Their goal is to support the rights of people with disabilities.

The Arc Rhode Island has a monthly newsletter. These newsletters share key events and holidays, disability news, and more. If you want to learn more about employment, check out their [October newsletter](#). In it, they share tips on making the workplace better for people with disabilities. Some tips are about assistive technology and hiring more people with disabilities. There are also tips on making work more welcoming.

Community Events

Calendar of Free Events

Date	Time	Location	Event
Mon, 10/28	12pm	Online using Teams	Health Workforce Planning - Stakeholder Update Meeting Join the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) for an update on health workforce changes.
Wed, 10/30	4-6pm	Rhode Island College	Context Blindness: What It Is and How You Can Help Join Sherlock Center to learn what color blindness is and 5 ways to help.
Wed, 11/6	12-1pm	Online using Zoom	Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Overview Join Sherlock Center to learn how you can work even if you get SSDI.
Fri, 11/8	9 am - 3 pm	Crowne Plaza in Warwick, RI	RIPIN Self-Directed Support Conference Join RIPIN for the first ever Self-Directed Support Conference. Learn what self-direction is and how you can get involved..
Wed, 11/20	12-1pm	Online using Zoom	Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Overview Join Sherlock Center to learn how you can work even if you get SSI.
Fri, 11/22	6:30 – 8:30pm	Rhode Island College	“Best Judgment: Ladd School Lessons” Film Screening Join Advocates in Action and Sherlock Center for movie screening about the Ladd School.
Tues, 12/3	6-7pm	Online	Peer Mentor Panel Join RIPIN to learn more about Advocates in Action’s peer mentor training program.

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 webpage](#)

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

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A Shared Living Story

Sheryl K.



Sheryl was one of 11 children born into a low-income household in Providence, RI. She and three of her sisters were admitted to The Ladd School in Exeter, RI when they were in their early teenage years. When the state started to deinstitutionalize in the 1980's the four sisters transitioned to Rhode Island Community Living and Supports (RICLAS), a state-run program for group homes. Sheryl had limited language but could repeat basic phrases that were said to her. The one exception was that she knew to say the word "coffee" and would do whatever she could to get a cup, including stealing cups. When Shared Living Arrangements (SLA) became easily available in Rhode Island, a staff member who was retiring from working in a state-run group home, arranged to become Sheryl's Shared Provider.

It has been over 16 years since Sheryl first joined Shared Living. She has thrived since moving into a home setting. Stealing coffee is no longer the focus of her life, though it still does remain a challenge.

Sheryl is now 69 years old, and she can communicate with others with the use of technology. This has been a life-changing skill for her. Thanks to funding from the State's technology fund, Sheryl was able to obtain a tablet that will speak for her. With help from her wonderful Shared Living provider, Sheryl can now go into her local coffee shop and order for herself. She has become a regular at the coffee shop and is greeted by the staff as she enters. She no longer must have someone close by her side to prevent stealing coffee. Thanks to a supportive SLA provider she has learned to finally let people know what she wants by using the words on her tablet. She can communicate for herself with those in her home and in her community. Thanks to technology and her amazing, shared living provider, she can tell the world what she thinks!

This story was shared by Living Innovations. For more information about shared living, and more stories of success please visit [the Living Innovations website](#).

A Story on Employment (part 1)

Worth the Wait

For Chris Torgovec, finding the right job took a little time. But he and his employer like the results.

Sin-Cere Multiservice is a family-owned business that provides consulting services and financial literacy classes, as well as medical transportation services. It's also a business that believes in providing opportunity and inclusion – in the surrounding community, and within its own doors.

Among the five full- and part-time employees at Sin-Cere is a young man who has worked there since May. He comes in one day a week.

That might seem like a breeze, but for Chris Torgovec, the number of hours worked does not convey the significance the job has for him. Or the effort that went into making sure he was a good fit for Sin-Cere, and the company a good fit for him.

Chris landed the job through a collaborative effort involving the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), and Spurwink RI, a provider agency that assists children and adults with disabilities. Through their combined efforts, Chris receives employment supports that help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities identify and work in jobs that match their skills and interests.

Finding the right job can be challenging, of course, and in Chris's case, there were added hurdles. While it was clear that he liked the idea of making money, there were questions about the type of job he might want. There were also questions about his ability to settle in and feel comfortable enough to show what he can do.

Knowing these challenges, three people joined forces to help: Mary Anne Maciel, Director of Employment and Community Services at Spurwink RI; Elvys Ruiz, Administrator of Business and Community Engagement at BHDDH's Division of Developmental Disabilities; and Emilee O'Connor, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at ORS.

Mary Anne had previously helped Chris connect with a job at a local manufacturing company, but that was before the COVID pandemic. More recently, she had arranged some tryouts, but when there was no job offer, Elvys suggested they contact Sharlyn (pronounced "Charlene") Martinez, the CEO at Providence-based Sin-Cere and an entrepreneur who is active in the local Latino community.

That led to a tryout last winter, and finally, in May, to a job offer.

A Story on Employment (Part 2)



At Sin-Cere, Chris helps with shredding, making copies, and monitoring the transportation portal, where he accepts requests for the company's non-emergency medical transportation business. Sharlyn and her team "customized" the position for Chris, making sure it appeals to his interests while also meeting the needs of the business. By all accounts, the job is going well.

"The first couple of months, he was definitely quiet, definitely to himself, but he has opened up," said Ellianna Caraballo, Sin-Cere's Office Manager. "We have so many different conversations, I love having him here. With the three responsibilities that he has, he does help us out a lot."

Sharlyn said hiring Chris has been good for Sin-Cere because he handles tasks that are sometimes overlooked when other matters are pressing. She believes hiring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities would also be good for other businesses, because they will receive the benefit of extra help while providing opportunities to people who want to work.

And yes, she believes the job has been good for Chris.

"I see his growth," she said. "Every time Ellianna asks him to do a task, he catches on and does it."

While he's working, Chris's job coach, Guy Benoit, is nearby. But Guy agreed that Chris works well without a lot of input.

"You've just got to let it happen, and everything gets done that should get done," he said.

For Chris, who is 31, the job helps him stay active and gain a greater sense of independence.

And, of course, there's also the money he earns for his services.





VOTING ACCESS & ASSISTANCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Join us for an informative event on voting rights and accommodations available to all voters in Rhode Island. Learn about federal and state protections, how to check your voter registration, find your polling place and research candidates for upcoming elections.

Local experts will explain various voting options, including mail ballot voting (absentee), early voting and polling place accessibility. The event will also cover the accommodations Rhode Island offers to ensure that every voter can participate fully and comfortably throughout the voting process.

Tuesday, Oct. 29

- 12:30 to 2 p.m. at Newport Public Library, 300 Spring St.
- 4:30 to 6 p.m. at Exeter Public Library, 773 Ten Rod Road

Wednesday, Oct. 30

- 10:30 a.m. to noon at Rhode Island College

For more information and to register, visit https://bit.ly/Voting_Access





ACCESO & ASISTENCIA PARA VOTAR:

LO QUE DEBES SABER

Únete a nosotros para un evento informativo sobre los derechos de voto y las adaptaciones disponibles para todos los votantes en Rhode Island. Aprende sobre las protecciones federales y estatales, cómo verificar tu registro de votante, encontrar tu lugar de votación y investigar a los candidatos para las próximas elecciones.

Los expertos locales explicarán diversas opciones de votación, incluyendo la votación por correo (voto en ausencia), la votación anticipada y la accesibilidad en los lugares de votación. El evento también abordará las adaptaciones que Rhode Island ofrece para asegurar que cada votante pueda participar plenamente y con comodidad a lo largo del proceso de votación.

Martes, 29 de octubre

- 12:30 a 2 p.m. en Newport Public Library, 300 Spring St.
- 4:30 a 6 p.m. en Exeter Public Library, 773 Ten Rod Road

Miércoles, 30 de octubre

- 10:30 a.m. a 12 p.m. en el Rhode Island College

Para más información y para registrarte, visita https://bit.ly/Voting_Access

