



DD News and Updates

# Newsletter

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Website: [www.bhddh.ri.gov](http://www.bhddh.ri.gov)

Email: [BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov)

Phone: 401.462.3421

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014

# Division Updates

## A Note from the Director, Kevin Savage

Dear I/DD Community,

I hope people are enjoying the summer season as best they are able. There are quite a lot of changes in the DD system that I believe will benefit the community over time. Yet, we know that change can be a difficult process to go through. I ask for your patience as we continue to:

- Move over to the WellSky case management system.
- Put CFCM in place.
- Bring new services to scale in this fiscal year.

I have greatly enjoyed opportunities to meet with community members this year. Last month I had the special privilege of going to the Advocates in Action graduation. What a wonderful event! It always encourages me to see leaders develop within the community. I am also encouraged by peers and supporters working together to increase self-advocacy. The State remains committed to ensuring no decisions impacting people with I/DD are made without your input.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the community. Thank you to everyone who shared their time, energy, and expertise to work with us. By joining workgroups and committees, you helped us create and implement systems change. It is our privilege to work with you. Your input leads to improved decision-making.

Please enjoy the rest of the summer. I look forward to our next opportunity to meet.

Kevin

# Division Updates

## Happy Disability Pride Month!

July is Disability Pride Month. As [the Arc](#) explains, Disability Pride Month is a time to honor the lives of those with disabilities. This includes learning more about the disability community and what it has accomplished over time. The goal in doing this is to show everyone that people with disabilities are worthy, matter, and live meaningful lives.

For this Disability Pride Month, let's learn more about the Disability Pride Flag. According to the [Columbia University Irving Medical Center](#), the flag was made in 2019. The person who made the flag is Ann Magill. Ann is someone with a disability who was inspired to create the flag to bring people together. The flag has a black background with 5 colorful strips in the middle of it. The colors and their meanings are:

- Red: physical disabilities
- Gold: neurodiversity
- White: invisible disabilities and disabilities that haven't yet been diagnosed
- Blue: emotional and psychiatric disabilities, like anxiety, and depression
- Green: sensory disabilities, like hearing, visual, or other sensory disabilities
- Faded black background: mourning and rage for victims of ableist violence and abuse



# Community News

## What the “Big Beautiful Bill” Could Mean for People with Disabilities in Rhode Island

### What Is the “Big Beautiful Bill”?

It’s a new federal budget law passed by Congress that changes how the government spends money. Some leaders say it helps by cutting taxes, but others are worried because it also cuts funding for important programs like Medicaid and SNAP (food assistance).

### How It Affects People with I/DD in Rhode Island

Many people with I/DD rely on **Medicaid** to pay for services that help them live safely and independently. These services are called **Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)** and include:

- Help with daily tasks like bathing, eating, and getting dressed
- Support for jobs, day programs, and transportation
- Help for families caring for loved ones at home

The bill includes:

- **Big cuts to Medicaid**—almost 20% of the federal program
- **New rules that could make it harder to qualify for help**
- **Less money for states, which means Rhode Island may have to reduce services or make people wait longer for help**

### What Rhode Island Leaders and Advocates Are Saying

- Disability advocates say this bill could **hurt families** and **take away support** that people with disabilities need to live in their communities.
- Rhode Island’s governor and lawmakers are worried it will **put health care and food assistance at risk** for thousands of residents.
- The Arc of Rhode Island called it a “dark day” for people with disabilities.

# Community News

## The “Big Beautiful Bill” and Its Impact on Medicaid & HCBS: What Families Need to Know

Medicaid is a program that helps people pay for health care. Some of the services it pays for are called **Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)**. These help people with disabilities, older adults, or others who need long-term care stay in their homes instead of going to a hospital or nursing home.

These services include:

- Help with bathing, eating, and getting dressed
- Rides to appointments
- Support for getting a job or going to day programs
- Making homes safer to live in

Right now, the government is talking about **cutting Medicaid money**. If that happens:

- Fewer people might get help at home
- People may have to wait longer to get services
- Helpers might get paid less, and some places might close
- More people might need to live in nursing homes instead of with their families

Many people are worried about these changes because HCBS helps people live safely and happily at home.

If you live in Rhode Island and have questions about Medicaid or Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), here are some helpful resources:

### Rhode Island Medicaid & HCBS Support

- **Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)** Oversees Medicaid and HCBS programs in Rhode Island. Visit: EOHHS HCBS Enhancement Page Phone: 401-462-5274
- **Department of Human Services (DHS)** Handles Medicaid eligibility and enrollment. Visit: DHS Medicaid Programs Phone: 1-855-697-4347 Website: StayCovered.ri.gov
- **Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH)** Provides guidance on HCBS rules and services. Visit: HCBS Final Rule Guide Phone: 401-462-3421 Español: 401-462-3014

# Community News

## Opportunities to Get Involved in Local DD Work

Here are some ways you can get involved in local developmental disability (DD) work:

- 1. RI Sibs survey.** Sherlock Center is interested in learning from siblings of individuals with disabilities. They want to know what ideas, experiences, and interests siblings have. This information will be used to build their RI Sibs program. You can [learn more about RI Sibs and complete the survey online](#). The last day to complete the survey is Monday, July 21<sup>st</sup>.
- 2. Self-direction staffing survey.** Sherlock Center wants to learn from people who self-direct their services and manage their own staff. They want to know what works and doesn't work with staffing. They also want to learn how staffing can improve. The Survey ends Monday, July 21<sup>st</sup>. The survey is available in Spanish. Learn more on the [staffing survey webpage](#).



## Accessibility Tip

Sometimes, small changes to our environment can make huge differences. For example, including ramps on sidewalks have made it possible for more people to move around their communities. Similar changes can be made to our homes to make the place we live work for our needs. A new [Community Forum post on the AT3 Center website shares ideas on home changes you can make](#).

Here are a few examples from the post:

- Remove trip hazards like rugs and wires from pathways.
- Get kitchen appliances, like a coffee pot, that shut off automatically.
- Have motion-activated lights that turn on by themselves at night.
- Change the handles or knobs on your cabinet drawers to ones that are easier to use.
- Add smart locks to doors that ask for a password instead of a key to open the door.

# Community Resources

## Making Friends

Making friends at any age can be hard. We might feel nervous or unsure if people will like us and want to talk to us. This is normal, even for people who may seem very confident and outgoing. Here are a few ways you can lean into this challenge to make new friends:



Join a new social club in person or online. It may be easier to meet new people if the social club is about a topic you enjoy. That way, you and the other people who join will already have something in common.

If you can't find a group, make your own and invite others to join.



Stay curious and ask the other person questions to get to know them. This can also be a nice way to take the pressure off yourself from feeling like you must do most of the talking.

Try asking about things they enjoy doing, their favorite foods or T.V. shows, and more.



If you find someone you like, ask them to meet again. Visit a local park, get a coffee, or do something else you both will enjoy.

If you met this person online, schedule a video call or chat session. Be careful about sharing too much of your personal information, like your address, bank information, and more.

These are just 3 quick tips to get started making new friends. Learn more by visiting:

1. [The Friendship Project by Developmental Disability WA](#). They share videos and easy read guides about friendship. People with disabilities helped make the materials.
2. [NeuroNav 7 tips to friendship article](#).
3. [Neurodiverging post called "Making friends as an autistic adult."](#)

# Community News

## Know Your Rights Tip



Learning any new skill takes time and practice. This is true even for the skill of protecting your rights. At first, you will spend a lot of time learning about what your rights are and what it means to protect them. Then, you will spend a lot of time practicing protecting them. You may practice by calling your representatives, joining peaceful protests, or more.

When you start putting your skills into practice, you may experience unexpected events. One unexpected event that may happen when you protect your rights is you get arrested. Here are some tips that may help you in an event like this:

1. Remain silent. You don't have to answer questions or explain anything.
2. Ask for a lawyer. You have the right to a lawyer even if you can not afford one.
3. Never sign anything your lawyer hasn't talked to you about first.
4. Call someone you trust. Remember their number.

Remember, knowledge is power. Learn more by exploring these resources:

1. [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People \(NAACP\)](#)
2. [Innocence Project](#)
3. [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) Rhode Island](#)
4. [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#)

You can also check-out the [Division's Your Life, Your Rights Program resource page](#).

# Community News

## Searching for Truth

We all have a set of ideas and beliefs that we feel strongly about. These ideas and beliefs can be about many different things. For example, they can be what we think success means or who we believe should be included or not.

Our ideas and beliefs often play a big role in our lives. They impact how we think, who we talk to, what we do, and more. But sometimes our ideas and beliefs may be wrong or cause harm to others. This doesn't mean we are bad people. Instead, it means our experience is limited and we have room to grow. The best part is, we even have power to change what we think and believe.

One way we can challenge ourselves in our search for truth is to talk to more people. Join a new online social group or go to a new café in your neighborhood. Get to know someone who may not look, sound, or move like you do. Learn from people who live different lives from you. When we do this, we learn more about the world and ourselves.

## Summer of Cultural Joy

There are many upcoming events in Rhode Island celebrating different cultures, such as:

1. [Wickford Art Festival on Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>.](#)
2. [Puerto Rican Bay Fest on Sunday, July 20<sup>th</sup>.](#)
3. [Cultural Survival Bazaar - A Festival of Indigenous Arts and Cultures starting Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, and ending Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup>.](#)
4. [African Summer Bash on Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>.](#)
5. [Dominican Festival & Parade of Rhode Island on Sunday, August 10<sup>th</sup>.](#)
6. [Hanabi Japanese Summer Event on Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup>.](#)
7. [Pawtucket Arts Festival starting Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup> and ending Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>.](#)



There may be other events not listed here. One resource that may help is the [RIPIN Link with Your Community Guide \(PDF\).](#)

# Community Resources

## Self-Care

July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. The goal is to raise awareness about the different mental health strengths and needs in different racial and ethnic groups.

Though everyone can experience mental health challenges, some people may be more at risk. This is a great opportunity for us to come together to learn from, and support, each other.

Here are two quick resources you can use and share with those you care about:

### 1. [BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit by Mental Health America](#)

On this website, you will learn more about National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. You will also get to explore the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) mental health toolkit. This toolkit includes worksheets and handouts to help you learn your strengths, coping skills, and more. One tool to check out is the [resource list](#), which includes over 20 organizations!

### 2. [Mental Health Support for Consumers with I/DD by RIPIN](#)

In this video, learn about mental health support for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). You will get to know about behavioral health clinics in Rhode Island. You will also learn what mental health services and support options there are.

If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org). If you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, you can also visit the [Trevor Project](#).



**Your mind matters.**

Find free resources for healing,  
connection, and support.

[mhanational.org/bipoc](https://mhanational.org/bipoc)



# Community Events

## Calendar of Events

Explore upcoming events in your community. Unless noted, these events are free and open to the public. You may have to sign-up a few days before the event to go.

Event	Date & Time	Location	Sign-up
Online Watch Party on "Best Judgment: Ladd School Lessons" by Advocates in Action	Thursday, July 17 <sup>th</sup> , at 7:30pm.	Zoom	You can <a href="#">sign up for the watch party online</a> .
"Shared Learning Groups on Systems Change and the Importance of Partnerships" by the Link Center	Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 1pm or 3pm OR Wednesday, 23, 2025, at 1pm or 3pm.	Online	<a href="#">To sign-up, visit the Link Center website</a> .
"Accessibility is Beautiful 2025 & FRINGEPVD! Together for one amazing day!"	Saturday, July 26, 2025, 11am-3pm	The Steel Yard, 27 Sims Avenue Providence, RI 02909	<a href="#">Accessibility is Beautiful event page</a> .
"Working With Benefits - Yes, You Can!" by Sherlock	Wednesday, July 30, 2025, 12-1pm	Zoom	<a href="#">Working With Benefits sign-up webpage</a> .
"Introduction to Person-Centered Thinking" by Sherlock	Tuesday to Thursday, Aug. 5 to 7 11am-1pm	Zoom	<a href="#">Person-Centered Thinking training sign-up</a> .
"Supporting Meaningful Employment: Job Retention and Coaching" by Sherlock	Thursdays, August 7 to September 4, 2025, at different times	In-person	<a href="#">Join the Job Retention and Coaching training program online</a> .
"Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Overview" by Sherlock	Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 12-1pm	Zoom	<a href="#">SSDI Overview sign-up webpage</a> .

# Community Events

## Calendar of Events Part 2

Event	Date & Time	Location	Sign-up
“Top Concerns as People with IDD Age” by IDD Perspectives	Thursday, August 21, 2025, 1-1:30pm	Online	<a href="#">Top Concerns event online sign-up.</a>
“3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Resource Fair & Backpack Drive” by the Arc Rhode Island	Friday, August 22, 2025, 11am-3pm	The imPOSSIBLE Dream, Warwick	<a href="#">Backpack Drive event flyer.</a>
“Employment Services for Those Who Self-Direct for 2025” by RIPIN	Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM	Online	<a href="#">Employment Services event sign-up.</a>
“Work Pays! An Introduction to Youth SSI Work Incentives” by Sherlock	Wednesday, September 10, 2025, 12-1pm	Zoom	<a href="#">Work Pays sign-up webpage.</a>



# 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](http://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](http://988lifeline.org)



### For More about the Division

Want to find out more about the Division? Visit the [Division's webpage](#). You will find information on services, resources, and more.

To contact Division staff, review the Contact List attached to this newsletter. You can also find a full list of staff on the [Division's Contact Us webpage](#).

You are always welcome to send general questions to [BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov). Please do not email critical issues.

The Division is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM.

# Division of Developmental Disabilities Staff Contacts

<b>Main Phone:</b> (401) 462-3421	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://bhddh.ri.gov/">https://bhddh.ri.gov/</a>
<b>Fax Phone:</b> (401) 462-2775	<b>Behavioral Health Link (BH Link):</b> 988
<b>Spanish Phone:</b> (401) 462-3014	<b>Report Abuse:</b> (401) 462-2629
<b>TDD:</b> (401) 462-3226	

## Administrative Team

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Kevin Savage</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>462-0581</b>	<a href="mailto:Kevin.Savage@bhddh.ri.gov">Kevin.Savage@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Anne LeClerc	Associate Director, Prog Performance	462-0192	<a href="mailto:Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov">Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Brenda DuHamel	Associate Director, Admin Services	462-3010	<a href="mailto:Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov">Brenda.DuHamel@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Christine Botts	Deputy Administrator	462-2766	<a href="mailto:Christine.Botts@bhddh.ri.gov">Christine.Botts@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Cindy Fusco	Interdepartmental Project Manager	462-6689	<a href="mailto:Cynthia.Fusco@bhddh.ri.gov">Cynthia.Fusco@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Heather Mincey	Assistant Director	462-1218	<a href="mailto:Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov">Heather.Mincey@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Natalie Munoz	Chief Implementation Aide	462-3016	<a href="mailto:Natalie.Munoz@bhddh.ri.gov">Natalie.Munoz@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Susan Hayward	Administrator, Transition	462-2519	<a href="mailto:Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov">Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Tracy Levesque	Associate Director, Clinical and RICLAS	462-0209	<a href="mailto:Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov">Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Social Caseworker Units

### Unit 1

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Marguerite Belisle</b>	<b>Casework Supervisor II</b>	462-0714	<a href="mailto:Marguerite.Belisle@bhddh.ri.gov">Marguerite.Belisle@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Amie Adams	Social Caseworker II	462-2480	<a href="mailto:Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov">Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
GinaMarie Debartolo	Social Caseworker II	462-3402	<a href="mailto:GinaMarie.Debartolo@bhddh.ri.gov">GinaMarie.Debartolo@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Megan Gilbert	Social Caseworker II	462-2524	<a href="mailto:megan.gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov">megan.gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Kaitlin Sarkees	Social Caseworker II	462-4075	<a href="mailto:Kaitlin.Sarkees@bhddh.ri.gov">Kaitlin.Sarkees@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Heather Soares	Social Caseworker II	462-6097	<a href="mailto:Heather.Soares@bhddh.ri.gov">Heather.Soares@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

### Unit 2

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Mary Beth Stevens</b>	<b>Casework Supervisor II</b>	462-2438	<a href="mailto:Marybeth.Stevens@bhddh.ri.gov">Marybeth.Stevens@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Timothy Cronin	Social Caseworker II	462-1721	<a href="mailto:Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov">Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jennifer Gouveia	Social Caseworker II	462-0098	<a href="mailto:Jennifer.Gouveia@bhddh.ri.gov">Jennifer.Gouveia@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Erin Simonelli	Social Caseworker II	462-2502	<a href="mailto:Erin.Simonelli@bhddh.ri.gov">Erin.Simonelli@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Lena Sousa	Social Caseworker II	462-1834	<a href="mailto:Lena.Sousa@bhddh.ri.gov">Lena.Sousa@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Joseph Tevyaw	Social Caseworker II	462-2474	<a href="mailto:Joseph.Tevyaw@bhddh.ri.gov">Joseph.Tevyaw@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

### Unit 3

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Stacey Perry</b>	<b>Casework Supervisor II</b>	462-2418	<a href="mailto:Stacey.Perry@bhddh.ri.gov">Stacey.Perry@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Mary Cameron	Social Caseworker II	462-1307	<a href="mailto:Mary.Cameron@bhddh.ri.gov">Mary.Cameron@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Judy Coit	Social Caseworker II	462-1327	<a href="mailto:judith.coit@bhddh.ri.gov">judith.coit@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
JoAnn DiMuccio	Social Caseworker II	462-2523	<a href="mailto:JoAnn.DiMuccio@bhddh.ri.gov">JoAnn.DiMuccio@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Katrina Ferry	Social Caseworker II	462-2529	<a href="mailto:katrina.ferry@bhddh.ri.gov">katrina.ferry@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Megan Gilbert	Social Caseworker II	462-2524	<a href="mailto:Megan.Gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov">Megan.Gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Dayna Hansen	Social Caseworker II	462-2505	<a href="mailto:Dayna.Hansen@bhddh.ri.gov">Dayna.Hansen@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Heidy Henriquez	Social Caseworker II	462-3022	<a href="mailto:heidy.henriquez@bhddh.ri.gov">heidy.henriquez@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Crystal Morel	Social Caseworker II	462-1329	<a href="mailto:Crystal.Morel@bhddh.ri.gov">Crystal.Morel@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Eligibility Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Karen Lowell</b>	<b>Caseworker Supervisor II/Elig Sup</b>	462-2209	<a href="mailto:Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov">Karen.Lowell@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Louise White	Public Health Nurse Consultant	462-0089	<a href="mailto:Louise.White@bhddh.ri.gov">Louise.White@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jill Murphy	Social Caseworker II	462-2409	<a href="mailto:Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov">Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Kim Wright	Information Aide	462-2584	<a href="mailto:Kimberly.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov">Kimberly.Wright@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## SIS Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Donna Standish</b>	<b>Caseworker Supervisor II/SIS Sup</b>	462-2628	<a href="mailto:Donna.Standish@bhddh.ri.gov">Donna.Standish@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>Meaghan Jencks</b>	<b>Caseworker Supervisor II/SIS Sup</b>	462-2113	<a href="mailto:Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov">Meaghan.Jencks@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Stephanie Andreozzi	Implementation Aide	462-1859	<a href="mailto:Stephanie.Andreozzi@bhddh.ri.gov">Stephanie.Andreozzi@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Wendy Cormier	Social Caseworker II	462-1302	<a href="mailto:Wendy.Cormier@bhddh.ri.gov">Wendy.Cormier@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jamie Fitzgibbons	Social Caseworker II	462-2510	<a href="mailto:Jamie.Fitzgibbons@bhddh.ri.gov">Jamie.Fitzgibbons@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Timothy Phok	Social Caseworker II	462-4290	<a href="mailto:timothy.phok@bhddh.ri.gov">timothy.phok@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jessica Rodriguez	Social Caseworker II	462-3233	<a href="mailto:Jessica.Rodriguez@bhddh.ri.gov">Jessica.Rodriguez@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Transition Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Susan Hayward</b>	<b>Administrator, YIT</b>	462-2519	<a href="mailto:Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov">Susan.Hayward@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Carolee Leach	Prof. Services Coordinator	462-1723	<a href="mailto:Carolee.Leach@bhddh.ri.gov">Carolee.Leach@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Laurie Rossi	Implementation Aide	462-2563	<a href="mailto:Laurie.Rossi@bhddh.ri.gov">Laurie.Rossi@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Case Management Units

### Unit 1

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Souphalak Muriel</b>	<b>Casework Supervisor II</b>	462-2512	<a href="mailto:Souphalak.Muriel@bhddh.ri.gov">Souphalak.Muriel@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Alex Blue	Social Caseworker II	864-5403	<a href="mailto:Alex.Blue@bhddh.ri.gov">Alex.Blue@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Cayla Cozzo	Social Caseworker II	864-1944	<a href="mailto:Cayla.Cozzo@bhddh.ri.gov">Cayla.Cozzo@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Liana Fontaine	Social Caseworker II	864-7622	<a href="mailto:Liana.Fontaine@bhddh.ri.gov">Liana.Fontaine@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Nathaniel Mazza	Social Caseworker II	864-6934	<a href="mailto:Nathaniel.Mazza@bhddh.ri.gov">Nathaniel.Mazza@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Mellissa Parham	Social Caseworker II	864-1103	<a href="mailto:Mellissa.Parham@bhddh.ri.gov">Mellissa.Parham@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Karen Schmid	Social Caseworker II	864-2590	<a href="mailto:Karen.Schmid@bhddh.ri.gov">Karen.Schmid@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Jennea Young	Social Caseworker II	864-1506	<a href="mailto:Jennea.Young@bhddh.ri.gov">Jennea.Young@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

### Unit 2

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Yolande Ramos</b>	<b>Casework Supervisor II</b>	462-1059	<a href="mailto:Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov">Yolande.Ramos@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Erin Hagopian	Social Caseworker II	864-2854	<a href="mailto:Erin.Hagopian@bhddh.ri.gov">Erin.Hagopian@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Cassandra Killingham	Social Caseworker II	864-3728	<a href="mailto:Cassandra.Killingham@bhddh.ri.gov">Cassandra.Killingham@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Erica MacDougall	Social Caseworker II	479-0584	<a href="mailto:Erica.Macdougall@bhddh.ri.gov">Erica.Macdougall@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Beth-Ann Myers	Social Caseworker II	864-0198	<a href="mailto:Bethann.Myers@bhddh.ri.gov">Bethann.Myers@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Glenn Vario	Social Caseworker II	529-0720	<a href="mailto:Glenn.Vario@bhddh.ri.gov">Glenn.Vario@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Christine Warren	Social Caseworker II	864-0666	<a href="mailto:Christine.Warren@bhddh.ri.gov">Christine.Warren@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Community Services

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

## Residential

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Tracy Levesque</b>	<b>Associate Director, Clinical and RICLAS</b>	<b>462-0209</b>	<a href="mailto:Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov">Tracy.Levesque@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Melissa Greenlief	Administrator, Community Services	462-2459	<a href="mailto:Melissa.Greenlief@bhddh.ri.gov">Melissa.Greenlief@bhddh.ri.gov</a>

## Communications and Training

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
<b>Anne LeClerc</b>	<b>Associate Director, Prog Performance</b>	<b>462-0192</b>	<a href="mailto:Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov">Anne.LeClerc@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>Johanna Mercado</b>	<b>Coordinator, Communications</b>	<b>462-6646</b>	<a href="mailto:Johanna.Mercado@bhddh.ri.gov">Johanna.Mercado@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Amethys Nieves	Associate Admin, Communications	462-6629	<a href="mailto:Amethys.Nieves@bhddh.ri.gov">Amethys.Nieves@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
<b>Kelly Petersen</b>	<b>Chief of Training, Staff Development and CQI</b>	<b>462-6592</b>	<a href="mailto:Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov">Kelly.Petersen@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Christine Allenson	Programming Services Officer	462-0126	<a href="mailto:christine.allenson@bhddh.ri.gov">christine.allenson@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Peter Joly	Principal Community Development and Training Specialist	462-6638	<a href="mailto:Peter.Joly@bhddh.ri.gov">Peter.Joly@bhddh.ri.gov</a>
Robin Gannon	Clinical Training Specialist	462-6691	<a href="mailto:Robin.Gannon@bhddh.ri.gov">Robin.Gannon@bhddh.ri.gov</a>