



DD News and Updates

# Newsletter

Volume 34

August 8, 2025

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### Happy Global Sleep Under the Stars Night 8/8

Love learning about the stars, planets, and space? Celebrate Global Sleep Under the Stars Night by visiting the [Frosty Dew Observatory](#). They are open every Friday night for free!

You can sign-up to get your own copy of this newsletter for free online.

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# Division News

## Using Your DD Funding for Transportation

There are many ways you can get transportation services. You can:

- Pay a licensed agency for transportation.
- Use funds to pay for trips through RIPTA (The Ride Program).
- Use self-direction for transportation using a taxi, Uber, Lyft, or other paid driver.
- Pay someone you know to drive you.

The funding for transportation comes from your flexible funding.

How you ask for transportation may change depending on the option you choose. For example, if you use self-direction, you need to submit a goods and service request. This transportation service would not count towards the goods and services limit.

## What You Can Use Transportation For

Transportation needs to support your plan goals. It can't be a stand-alone service. For example, if you have a goal to keep your job, then transportation to and from work is okay. If you have a goal to keep relationships with friends by meeting once a month, then transportation is okay.

It is not okay to get transportation unless it relates to a goal in your plan. For example, if you want to meet with friends but it is not part of a plan goal, then you can't use BHDDH transportation services.

If you need transportation for medical appointments, you can get this from Medicaid insurance. Some medical services are paid through the DD funding, such as some physical therapy. If the waiver is paying for a service, it can pay for the transportation to and from the service. If health insurance is paying for a medical appointment, the DD funding should not be used to get to and from the appointment.

# Division News

## Using RIPTA for Transportation

If you want to use RIPTA, you must call the Ride Program and book trips. You should tell RIPTA you are booking a BHDDH trip. You will not have to pay for the trip when you get on the bus. A trip is always a one-way trip. "Round-trips" to and from an agency, job, or other location equals 2 one-way trips.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), RIPTA has rules it must follow. RIPTA must offer paratransit service for people with disabilities who can't use regular bus routes. Under the ADA, transit agencies can only charge up to twice the regular bus fare. Since RIPTA's regular fare is \$2, the most ADA riders can be charged for the Ride Program is \$4. Passengers only pay this fare. RIPTA covers the rest of the cost for the trip, which is about \$40 for each one-way trip.

BHDDH contracts with RIPTA to provide transportation. BHDDH does not charge anything for transportation. BHDDH pays RIPTA \$21.20 per one-way trip. This is the same amount BHDDH pays licensed agencies for transportation. RIPTA receives a set rate for all trips, so a 50-mile trip costs the same as a 1-mile trip.

RIPTA provides a high level of service to people traveling under BHDDH. Under BHDDH service, Ride drivers provide door-to-door service. Ride drivers also do not leave BHDDH participants alone. That means a driver will sit with a participant until the building opens or a family member gets home.

There are many things that make up the transportation cost, including:

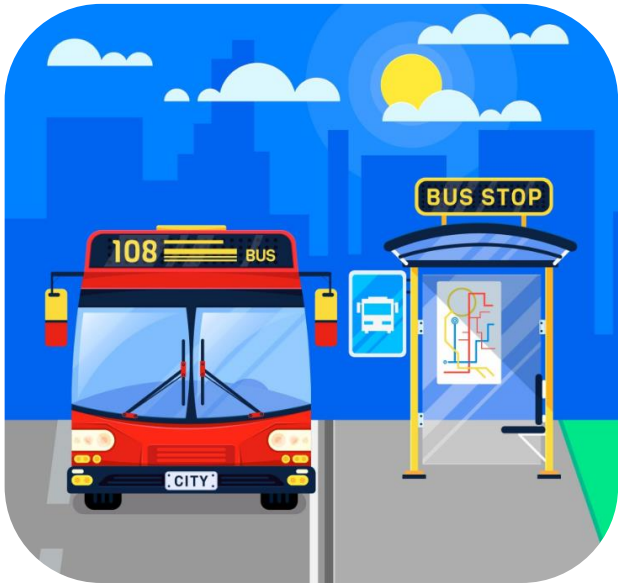
- Driver salary and benefits.
- The cost of the vehicle, including maintenance, fuel, and insurance.
- Call center operations.
- Staff training.

To summarize:

- RIPTA is required to provide ADA service and can only charge passengers a fare of \$4.
- BHDDH contracts with RIPTA for a higher level of service than the ADA provides. BHDDH pays RIPTA directly. BHDDH does not charge a fare or co-pay.

# Community News

## RIPTA Public Hearings



The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides bus services across the state. Recently, RIPTA hosted public meetings in the community. The meetings were about possible changes to bus routes. Due to lack of funding or income, RIPTA will decrease bus services. RIPTA hosted the public meetings to learn what the community thought about the possible changes.

The last public meeting was on Wednesday, August 6, 2025. The RIPTA team will take everything they learned from the meetings to vote on which bus route changes to make. The bus route changes will go into effect on Saturday, September 13, 2025.

To learn more visit [RIPTA's Public Hearing Resource Page](#). On this webpage, you will find the meeting recordings and notes, as well as a list of bus routes that may be cut.

## Rights Tip

One of the most common ways we can advocate for laws is by calling our elected officials. Elected officials are people that get voted into their jobs by members of the public, like you. An elected officials' main job is to learn what members of the public want for their community. They then use this information to help pass or block laws.

It can be scary and confusing to make a call to an elected official's office. You may be unsure about what to say, or which phone number to call. Luckily, there are resources to help you.

One helpful resource to check-out is [5 Calls](#). 5 Calls is a website and app that can help you plan what to say and who to call. They share a list of top laws elected officials across the country are working to pass or block. You can enter your zip code to customize the website. Once you find a topic you want to talk to your elected official about, you will be given two things. You will be given the right phone number(s) to call and a script on what to say when you call.

# Community News

## Starfire Family Network

The agency Starfire is hosting a family network. This network is open to people with disabilities and their families. The network includes family projects that help people explore their gifts in their communities. These projects also give people the chance to meet new people and get to know themselves better.

People who join the network will get:

- A project budget
- Mentorship
- Invitations to events and trainings
- So much more!

Learn more by:

- Visiting the [Starfire website](#)
- Sending an email to Nithya Narayan, the Starfire Rhode Island Network Coordinator at [Nithya@starfirecouncil.org](mailto:Nithya@starfirecouncil.org).



# Community News

## A Shared Living Story by Living Innovations

### Living an Active and Healthy Life in Shared Living



It was a little over 10 years ago that Chris found himself in a terrible situation. His mother, with whom he lived, became suddenly ill and was taken to the hospital. They had lived a rather isolated life with few, if any, family or friends. When his mother was hospitalized, Chris was left alone in their home for days without anyone to provide him with care.

When Living Innovations received the request to help Chris, they went into immediate action. They met Chris at his home and asked if he would like some help. Shared Living was explained to him, and he readily packed a few things and was on his way to a new life!

Now, at 50 years old, Chris has a full and healthy life. He watches his diet, has lost weight and goes to the gym frequently to exercise. Chris gets help with budgeting and has been able to purchase some very stylish clothes. He is very proud of his appearance. He has traveled to New York and New Hampshire with his SLA family.

Chris has been embraced by his shared living family as well as their church community. He regularly attends services where he is warmly greeted by fellow parishioners. He enjoys celebrations with his SLA family and the church friends. He is not only a beloved member of the family, but also a valued member of their community.

# Community News

## A Shared Living Story by Living Innovations

### Robyn Makes the Right Choice - Shared Living

From a life with family, to group homes and apartment programs, Robyn has finally found her right home! Having a lifetime of struggles living in the wrong places, Robyn has found the perfect fit for herself. She has chosen to live in a Living Innovations shared living arrangement (SLA) with a family who have young children. At first it was not known if Robyn would like to live with children, but after many visits, she decided to give it a try and she could not have been happier with her decision. She quickly fit right into the family routines and loves that ability to help with the young children. She also decided to self-direct her day supports as going to centers every day was just not for her. She can access community resources in a way that makes sense for her needs. She is happy. This is noted by her home provider as well as Robyn's family, who have noted a big change in Robyn!

After years of discontentment, Robyn is finally emotionally healthy and loves her SLA home and the SLA provider's children, who consider her family. Robyn is living her best life in an SLA!



# Community Resources

## Resources on the Budget Bill

In the [7/11/25 DD Newsletter \(page 4-5\)](#), we shared an update about a new budget bill the federal government passed. This budget bill will change how the government will spend money on things like health insurance and food access programs.

Many of these changes will start taking place in 2026 and 2027, so we don't yet know how the changes will impact people. But there are two resources that may help you learn more about the budget bill. These resources are from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

1. Resource one is the [CBPP budget bill timeline](#). This breaks down the changes from the bill and when to expect them.
2. Resource two is the [CBPP resource map](#). This shares details on the impact these changes are expected to have on people. The details are broken down by state.

## Accessibility Tip

Most, if not all, businesses and companies need to share information with customers. This information must be accessible so as many people as possible can find, use, and understand it.

The same is true for health and social service agencies, like the Division. No matter a person's disability, they should be able to access the agency building. They should also be able to access a copy of their service records.

Just having access doesn't automatically mean something is fully accessible. For example, let's say you ask for a copy of your Person-Centered Plan (PCP), but the words on the paper are too small. Even though you have a copy of your PCP, it is not helpful to you because you can't see or read what is in the plan. In other words, the records are inaccessible to you.

Remember, you have the right to accessible information. Here are some ways you can ask for a copy of your DD service records that may be more accessible for you:

- Large or extra-large print.
- Pictures or a short video.
- Emailed copy you can read on a computer.
- Braille or audio recording.

# Community Resources

## Self-Care

Making choices is a big part of our lives. We make big and small choices from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep. For example, we choose what to eat, wear, do, and more.

Having options to choose from is a good thing, but sometimes we may have trouble deciding. We may not know what choice to make or if we made the right choice in a given moment. This can make us anxious, or worried, which is normal.

Luckily, there are things to help us make choices, and take care of our mental health while we make the choices. Here are some ideas you can try:



If you feel nervous, remember this is normal and doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong.



Give yourself time to think before you make a choice. Even if you take a minute or two, this can help.



Be kind to yourself. Not every choice will be perfect. It is okay if a choice you make is a mistake.



Believe in yourself. Even if a choice you make ends up being a mistake, you can make other choices.



Ask for help when you need it. Ask a close family member, friend, mentor, or other person you trust.



Explore tools and services. Visit the [FAIR Health for Older Adults website](#) or [RI Center for Supported Decision-Making website](#).

Information from this page is from a [blog post on the Empathic Counseling Center website](#).

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

# 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  |
|---|--|--|--|
| “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> |
| “Black and Aging Health and Wellness Fair” by Butler Hospital                   | Friday, August 8, 2025, 9am-1pm                              | 109 Bucklin Street, Providence           | Open to the public; no sign-up needed  |
| “Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Overview” by Sherlock              | Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 12-1pm                           | Zoom                                     | <a href="#">SSDI Overview sign-up webpage.</a>                               |
| “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>                                   |
| Latin Expo 2025 that features a job fair by Latina 100.3 FM                     | Saturday, October 25, 2025, 11am - 4pm                       | Farm Fresh RI at 10 Sims Ave, Providence | Open to the public; no sign-up needed  |

# 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>       |
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| 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  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|--|
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| Amie Adams                | Social Caseworker II          | 462-2480 | <a href="mailto:Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov">Amie.Adams@bhddh.ri.gov</a>                   |
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| Megan Gilbert             | Social Caseworker II          | 462-2524 | <a href="mailto:megan.gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov">megan.gilbert@bhddh.ri.gov</a>             |
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| 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  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|--|
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| Timothy Cronin           | Social Caseworker II          | 462-1721 | <a href="mailto:Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov">Timothy.Cronin@bhddh.ri.gov</a>     |
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| 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

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## Eligibility Unit

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| Jill Murphy         | Social Caseworker II                     | 462-2409 | <a href="mailto:Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov">Jill.Murphy@bhddh.ri.gov</a>         |
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## SIS Unit

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## Transition Unit

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## Case Management Units

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### Unit 2

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## Community Services

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