



DD News and Updates

Newsletter

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

Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov

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Division Updates

A Note from the Director, Kevin Savage

Dear I/DD Community Partners,

This is our last newsletter of 2025, and I want to wish you all a joyful holiday season. I hope you're able to spend time with loved ones.

Throughout the year, so many of you—DSPs, providers, families, advocates, government partners, and more—give your time and energy to support people with disabilities. You help make sure they can take part in community life, work, medical care, and other important activities. We at BHDDH are truly grateful for your dedication and for the way you share holidays and special moments with others.

To adults with disabilities, thank you for speaking up and helping raise awareness about the need for better access in all areas of life. Your voices make a difference. We look forward to working with you in 2026 to keep improving the system and better meet your needs.

Happy holidays,

Kevin

Kevin W. Savage

Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

BHDDH


• HAPPY.
HOLIDAYS



Community News

Technology Training Opportunity for Provider Agency Staff

BHDDH is partnering with Jennifer White from [Able Opportunities, Inc.](#) to offer new technology trainings for provider agency staff. These trainings are designed to build confidence and skills in using technology tools to better support people with disabilities.

Staff who complete the required training project will get to keep the technology used in the session — either an iPad or a Low-Tech Kit — for their agency to use. Each participant will also leave with a model project they created during the training.

A Person-Driven Low-Tech Overview Training is required before attending other sessions (unless you've already completed it). This overview training will be held in person on December 8, December 11, January 9, January 30, and February 9.

After completing the overview, staff can join one of two rounds of trainings offered both in person and online. Topics include:

- **Writing Technology Goals for Plan Writers** – how to write and track technology-related goals.
- **iPad Basics & Common Apps** – set up, native apps, and favorite tools.
- **Low-Tech Kits** – using cameras and printers for schedules, cooking steps, and communication.
- **iPad Film Projects** – Learn how to set up and use your iPad. We'll explore the built-in apps that come with it, like Safari for browsing the web and Mail for email. We'll also share some favorite apps you might want to download and try.
- **Employer Engagement** – strategies and tools to show the value of hiring people with disabilities.
- **Goal Implementation Planning** – writing plans and using tracking systems for tech goals.

All details, including registration links, have been sent to agency leadership. Please reach out to your agency leadership team for more information.

For general questions, and for additional help registering for the trainings please contact:

assistant@ableopps.com



Community News

Celebrating Disability Employment in Rhode Island

October marked the 80th anniversary of [National Disability Employment Awareness Month \(NDEAM\)](#), a time to recognize the contributions of workers with disabilities and the employers who support them.

On October 30, Melanie Spardella from the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) presented [Mahr Inc.](#) with a plaque to honor their efforts in hiring and supporting employees with disabilities.



One of their employees, Noah Marsland, works as a Calibration Technician in a customized role. Noah receives support from BHDDH through [Spurwink](#). He was recognized with a Certificate of Employee Excellence from [BHDDH Developmental Disabilities](#) Director Kevin Savage and a Certificate of Appreciation from BHDDH Director Rich Leclerc.

Just a few days earlier, on October 28, Jay MacKay from BHDDH and Melanie Spardella from ORS visited [Gingersnaps Bakery](#) in Lincoln, RI. ORS presented owner Kayla with a plaque for employment excellence. BHDDH also honored employee Muhamet Samate, who has worked at the bakery since 2023 as a dishwasher and assistant. Muhamet, who receives supports from BHDDH provider [ProAbility](#), was awarded a Certificate of Employee Excellence.

These celebrations highlight the importance of inclusive workplaces and the achievements of employees with disabilities across Rhode Island.



Community News

Dale: A Shared Living Hero



Dale enjoys a happy life in Shared Living. Since 2015, he has lived with Michelle and her family, and he has become a familiar face in South County. He loves visiting local shops, eating at nearby restaurants, and spending time outdoors.

One of Dale's favorite places is the South County Bike Path. He often walks there, and he's known for stopping to help people when they need it. Dale is a natural helper.

Last year, while walking on the path, Dale found a baby bunny all alone. He looked around for its mother but couldn't find her. So, Dale carefully brought the bunny home. He gave it water, a warm spot to rest, and then called the National Wildlife Refuge Center in Narragansett. Using his own savings, Dale paid for an Uber to take him and the bunny to the rescue center, where he made sure the little animal was safe.

Dale's kindness shines through in moments like this. With the support of his Shared Living provider, he has built a wonderful life at home and in the community.

For more information about Living Innovations Shared Living, visit: [Rhode Island Services – Living Innovations](#)



Community News

Rights Tip

Everyone has the right to fair treatment and good services. If something feels wrong, you don't have to stay quiet. In Rhode Island, people with I/DD can file a **grievance** or an **appeal**.

- **Grievance:** A formal complaint. Example: You feel unsafe in your program or didn't get the support you asked for.
- **Appeal:** A request to review and change a decision. Example: Medicaid says "no" to a service you need.

Agencies like BHDDH must have a process that explains who to talk to, how to file, and when you'll get an answer. If you don't agree, you can appeal to a higher level.

Bottom line: Grievances and appeals protect your rights. They make sure your opinions count, and your needs are taken seriously.

📌 Local RI Resources for Help with Grievances & Appeals:

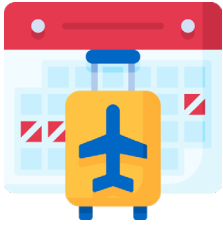
- Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI)
 - Rhode Island's official Protection & Advocacy agency.
 - Helps people with disabilities protect their rights, including filing grievances and appeals.
 - Contact: drri.org | Phone: (401) 831-3150
- Advocates in Action Rhode Island
 - A statewide self-advocacy organization run by and for people with I/DD.
 - Offers workshops, forums, and easy-to-read guides about rights and processes.
 - Website: advocatesinaction.org
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
 - The state agency overseeing I/DD services.
 - Publishes official [Appeals Process Guidance](#) and can answer questions about forms.
 - Appeals info: [BHDDH Appeals Guidance PDF](#)



Community Resource

Six Simple Ways to Enjoy the Holidays

The holidays are a special time for fun, family, and traditions. They can also feel busy or stressful, especially for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). With a little planning and support, the season can be easier and more enjoyable. Here are six simple tips to help make the holidays brighter.



Plan Early.

Mark holiday dates on a calendar and make a simple checklist. Planning ahead reduces stress.



Join Community Events.

Look for local celebrations through groups like Advocates in Action RI or Parent Support Networks.



Keep Traditions.

Decorating, cooking or listening to holiday or your favorite music can bring comfort and joy.



Ask for help.

If plans feel overwhelming, ask your provider, family, or an advocate for support.



Take Breaks.

Holidays can be busy. It's okay to step away, rest, or have quiet time.



Try Something new.

Explore a new activity, like a holiday craft or community volunteer event, to make the season special.

Want more holiday ideas? In Rhode Island, groups like **Advocates in Action RI** (advocatesinaction.org) and **The Arc Rhode Island** (ri.thearc.org) offer events and resources for people with I/DD and their families. These organizations can help make the season fun and welcoming for everyone.

Community Resource

Holiday Spotlight: Inclusive Local Businesses



[Bitty & Beau's Coffee](#) opened on North Main Street on October 25, 2025. The shop is part of a franchise that hires more than 450 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The new location brings both great coffee and a welcoming place that celebrates inclusion in our community.

[Red White & Brew](#) in North Smithfield is a disability-owned coffeehouse started by Michael Coyne, a graduate of the RIDDC Self-Employment Program. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and commitment to inclusion, showing how small businesses can make a big impact.



The [Budding Violet gift shop](#), also founded by Michael Coyne, offers handmade items and unique gifts. It highlights the creativity and entrepreneurship of the I/DD community while giving customers a chance to support local disability-owned businesses.

[Mr. C's Old Thyme Scents](#) is a small business created by Jack Carfagna, another RIDDC Self-Employment graduate. Jack makes handcrafted scented products, and his work has been recognized by Citizens Bank's "Champions in Action" program for promoting disability entrepreneurship.



Gingersnaps Bakery in Lincoln was honored during National Disability Employment Awareness Month for inclusive hiring. Employee Muhamet Samate, supported by BHDDH provider Proability, has been part of the team since 2023, showing how local businesses can open doors for meaningful work.

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
Small Business Saturday SHOP RI	Saturday, Nov 29, 2025, 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM	Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI	Event information
Healthy Relationships Webinar (RIPIN)	Tuesday, Dec 2, 2025, 6:00 – 7:00 PM	Zoom	RSVP Here
Introduction to Person-Centered Thinking hosted by the Sherlock Center	Wed, Dec 3 – Thu, Dec 11, 2025, 12:00 – 1:30 PM	Zoom	Event Info
Mental Health Training for Families & Caregivers (The Arc RI)	Wednesday, Dec 3, 2025, Time TBD (Sign up due by Nov 29)	Rhode Island (details via The Arc RI)	Register Here
Community Forum (BHDDH & Advocates in Action)	Tuesday, Dec 16, 2025, 3:00 – 4:30 PM	Zoom	Register Here
AAIDD Webinar: Strategies to Improve Access to Preventative Dental Care for Adults with IDD	Wednesday, Dec 10, 2025, 4:00 – 5:00 PM	Online	Register Here
AAIDD Webinar: Treating Substance Use Disorder in People with IDD	Tuesday, Jan 27, 2026, 1:00 – 2:00 PM	Online	Conference info
Self-Directed Support Conference (RIPIN)	Friday, Mar 20, 2026, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM	DoubleTree by Hilton, Warwick, RI	Take the Survey

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 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. 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

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

Administrative Team

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
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Case Management Units

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Unit 2

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Eligibility Unit

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SIS Unit

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Transition Unit

Name	Job Title	Phone	Email
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Residential

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Vacant	Associate Admin of Comm Serv		
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