



COVID-19 Update **June 12, 2020**

ReOpening RI: DDD Updates

An input session was held on Friday, June 5 to discuss concerns and ideas for re-opening the system. Gina Macris wrote an overview of the input session at the Developmental Disabilities News blog at <http://olmstead-ddnews.org/>. As stated in the article, people are both eager and fearful about reopening services. You can find the full article [here](#). A prominent theme of the session was the impact of racism and the increased stresses participants and staff of color have been experiencing. Other issues raised include:

- depression as a result of the continuing isolation and increased need for mental health supports built into services
- safe and supportive alternatives to group homes
- improved access to technology
- what day services might look like as the state re-opens

Ongoing discussions will be needed to craft the way forward. Additional sessions will be held later in June. In the meantime, if you have any feedback or concerns, please share them with your social caseworker or email them to BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov.

The RI Department of Health has issued an update for group settings called **“Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for BHDDH and DCYF Congregate Care Settings, Phase II”**. It can be found at https://www.reopeningri.com/resource_pdfs/Phase-II/PhaseII-BHDDH-DCYF-congregate-care-guidance-06.08.2020.pdf.

To support providers in safely resuming in-person services, BHDDH has developed a [Home-Based Services guidance](#) in collaboration with the RI Department of Health. The guidance includes recommended steps to ensure the safety of both providers and clients, including screening criteria, use of PPE, cleaning protocols, social distancing, and more. The full link is: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidance/Home-Visit-Service-Guidance.pdf>.

Service providers are being asked to use these guidelines to develop their plans for re-opening group homes to family visits and other activities, and for providing more home-based services to people living with family or independently.



It's Not Too Late

You can still complete the census today.

The 2020 Census will determine congressional representation, inform hundreds of billions in federal funding every year, and provide data that will impact our communities for the next decade.



It's Quick and Easy

The 2020 Census takes just a few moments to complete.

A Message from the Consent Decree Court Monitor

Greetings,

As some of you know, I am now the Federal Court Monitor for the Rhode Island Consent Decree. Judge McConnell has charged me with conducting a comprehensive review of the Consent Decree and making recommendations for what is needed to achieve the vision of the Consent Decree by 2024.

The vision of the Consent Decree is really quite simple. The intent is that every adolescent and every adult who has an intellectual or developmental disability lead a fully integrated life in community settings. Each life should be a blend of employment and other community-based activities (the Consent Decree calls that “integrated day”) of the person’s choosing. Each person should receive the supports they need to achieve that fully integrated, community based life.

The COVID crisis has documented the need to create new ways to provide services and supports that focus on the individual. Families are frequently the primary support and know their family member best. Thus, we are very interested in hearing your ideas. Given the large number of people from whom we’re trying to gather ideas, a survey is the best way to reach many people. The survey asks for your ideas about four major areas –

- (1) your thoughts about how some of the provisions of the Consent Decree apply to your family member;
- (2) how to make person-centered planning more efficient and more effective;
- (3) how to increase employment opportunities; and
- (4) how to identify community opportunities that match individual interests, personalities and strengths and how to support people in the community in ways that allow for individual lives.

For each of these areas we ask that you tell us your ideas about strategies or practices that would help achieve the vision of the Consent Decree, to identify any obstacles or barriers and to suggest solutions to those barriers. There is also room at the end to tell us anything else you feel is important.

There are three ways to respond to this survey.

First, **click this link** to complete the survey online.

English <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5620079/a7363a1f6b93>

Spanish <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5620079/84e6e777ec43>

Second, if you need to **enter an address into your browser**, use this link.

English <https://bit.ly/3eqWTMc>

Spanish <https://bit.ly/2yOGJNC>

Third, if you prefer a **hard copy**, please download the survey (English and Spanish versions are attached) and mail it to:

Court Monitor
PO Box 1027
Charlestown, RI 02813-9998

Please respond by June 22, 2020.

I know how important families are, particularly during this COVID crisis. Please share your ideas.

Thank you for your time

Tony Antosh

Questions about Economic Impact Payments and Social Security

My family member lives in a group home. Can the agency running the group home demand that my family member's stimulus check be turned over to them?

No. The stimulus check is for the individual to spend as they wish. The individual does not need the agency's permission to spend the money and does not need to report how they use the stimulus funds to the agency. This also applies to people living in SLAs. The agency or the SLA provider cannot ask for the stimulus check or tell individuals how to spend it.

Also, under Medicaid rules, a stimulus payment is not counted as income for 12 months. Therefore, receiving a stimulus payment does not change a group home resident's monthly payment (cost share). The resident pays the same monthly amount to the agency and keeps the stimulus payment for their own use.

I claim my adult child as a dependent on my taxes. Will I receive a stimulus payment?

No. Dependent adults claimed on someone else's taxes are not eligible for the payments. Only those with qualifying children under age 17 will receive the \$500 payment for dependents. Adults who are claimed as a dependent on another's 2019 tax return are not eligible for the \$1,200 payment.

For more information, see the following Q&A from the Social Security Administration's website:

How will the IRS send my economic impact payment (EIP) if I have a representative payee?

If you filed a 2019 or 2018 tax return: Your \$1,200 EIP was or will be sent to the bank account provided on your tax return for an electronic tax refund, or mailed to the address provided on your tax return if a tax refund was mailed or if there was no refund.

If you did not file a 2019 or 2018 tax return:

- An *Individual Representative Payee* should begin receiving EIPs on May 28 (revised from May 22) to the same direct deposit account or Direct Express card as the recipient's monthly Social Security or SSI payment. The mailing of paper check EIPs to payees will begin May 27.
- For an *Organizational Representative Payee*, the schedule above is the same, except that the payee may receive the EIP electronically or by paper check in the mail.

Typically, check payments to representative payees are clearly designated. For example, "Susan Smith for" on the first line of the check and the second line of the check displays the beneficiary's name. For EIP checks, there may be instances where the representative payee's name on the first line of the check is truncated, or missing the "for" designation, or the "for" designation could appear twice. These anomalies should not, in and of themselves, prevent financial institutions and check cashers from processing the check.

How should representative payees account for the economic impact payment (EIP) when completing the annual Representative Payee Report (i.e., annual accounting form)?

Because an EIP is not a Social Security or SSI benefit, representative payees are not required to account for the EIP when they complete their annual accounting form.

How should a representative payee use a beneficiary's economic impact payment (EIP)?

The EIP belongs to the Social Security or SSI beneficiary. It is not a Social Security or SSI benefit. A representative payee should discuss the EIP with the beneficiary. If the beneficiary wants to use the EIP independently, the representative payee should provide the EIP to the beneficiary. If the beneficiary asks the representative payee for assistance in using the EIP in a specific manner or saving it, the representative payee can provide that assistance outside the role of a representative payee.

What responsibilities does the representative payee have in managing the beneficiary's economic impact payment (EIP)?

Under the Social Security Act, a representative payee is only responsible for managing Social Security or SSI benefits. An EIP is not such a benefit. A representative payee should discuss the EIP with the beneficiary. If the beneficiary wants to use the EIP independently, the representative payee should provide the EIP to the beneficiary. If the beneficiary asks the representative payee for assistance in using the EIP in a specific manner or saving it, the representative payee can provide that assistance outside the role of a representative payee.

What if a beneficiary alleges a representative payee misused the economic impact payment (EIP)?

Because an EIP is not a Social Security or SSI benefit, SSA does not have authority to investigate or determine whether the EIP has been misused. However, if SSA receives an allegation that the EIP was not used on behalf of the beneficiary, SSA may decide to investigate for possible misuse of the beneficiary's Social Security or SSI benefit payments. SSA may also determine the representative payee is no longer suitable and appoint a new representative payee.

What is the Economic Impact Payment (EIP) Card being sent to some people?

The Department of the Treasury announced on May 18 that it is starting to send nearly 4 million EIPs by prepaid debit card, instead of by paper check. EIP Card recipients can make purchases, get cash from in-network ATMs, and transfer funds to their personal bank account without incurring any fees. Additional information is available in [Treasury's press release](#). EIP Card recipients can read more about their debit card at www.eipcard.com. Please note that the EIP Card is not the same as the Direct Express Debit Card on which many Social Security and SSI beneficiaries receive their monthly benefit payment. If you need to request a replacement EIP debit card, please call the EIP Card call center at 1-800-240-8100.

Where can I get answers to my Economic Impact Payments (EIP) questions?

You can find answers to most of your EIP-related questions at the IRS's [Economic Payment Information Center webpage](#) or on the Social Security Administration's COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/>. If you do not see the answer to your question, you can call the Internal Revenue Service's EIP hotline at 1-800-919-9835. The Social Security Administration cannot answer EIP questions about your specific situation.

SafeLink Wireless®

<https://www.safelinkwireless.com/>

SAFELINK WIRELESS® is a program provided by TracFone Wireless, Inc. serving eligible households. To participate in the SAFELINK WIRELESS® service, certain eligibility requirements must be met, which are set by each State where the service is provided. SAFELINK WIRELESS® service is limited to one person per household, however, LifeLine support is available to each eligible low-income consumer living in group living facilities.

SafeLink Wireless® offers a Smartphone or SIM Card along with free minutes, texts and data each month for qualified customers. Relationships with major manufacturers allow us to satisfy any customer preference – from entry-level smartphones to industry-leading flagship devices. Our Keep Your Own Smartphone plan enables customers to keep their current mobile device and phone number while moving their service to our networks. Both options offer a variety of plans and provide superior service to customers.

The Lifeline program is available to eligible consumers in selected states and territories. Actual requirements vary by state, but in general to qualify for Lifeline, subscribers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal Poverty Guidelines, or participate in one of the following assistance programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit

Silver Linings

Your Year 2020

Monday June 15 at 7:00 PM

Invitation From Governor Raimondo

This virus has been so hard on everyone. That's particularly true of our senior class who have missed out on so many in person milestones. I want to remind everyone that we have a special statewide graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020. **This Monday, June 15 at 7PM, 'Your Year 2020' will air on Rhode Island PBS.** We've lined up some exciting guests for you: Actress Viola Davis will deliver the keynote address, we have shout-outs from members of the Patriots and musical performances from Rhode Island's own Billy Gillman and more. It will also feature highlight personal messages from the Class of 2020.

And right after the graduation ceremony, we have a virtual concert for our grads that will also air on Rhode Island PBS. UNITED FOR GRADS will include musical performances from Grammy-nominated musician Jon Batiste, Walk the Moon and others. Shout-outs from celebrities will include Stephen Colbert, Shepard Fairey, who designed our Angel of Hope image, and more.

Student makes ‘ear savers’ for Landmark Medical workers

From the Valley Breeze 6/3/2020 By LAUREN CLEM, Valley Breeze Staff Writer



<https://www.valleybreeze.com/2020-06-03/woonsocket-north-smithfield/student-makes-ear-savers-landmark-medical-workers#.XuFsROVKg2z>

Ryan Golditch, front, a 4th-grader at Oak Lawn Elementary School in Cranston, visited Landmark Medical Center on Monday to present staff members with several bags of “ear savers” and other devices he made at home to help make mask-wearing more comfortable for medical workers. (Breeze photo by Lauren Clem)

WOONSOCKET – Health care workers at Landmark Medical Center received a special donation of personal protective equipment on Monday.

Ryan Golditch, a 4th-grader at Oak Lawn Elementary School in Cranston, visited the hospital to present several bags of mask-wearing aids he made at home on his 3D printer. Each bag contained a mask hook, an N95 hook and an “ear saver,” all designed to hold elastics away from the ears and make masks more comfortable for health workers who have to wear them for eight or more hours each day.

Golditch said he got the idea to make the devices after realizing how uncomfortable his own mask was.

“When I got my mask, the ear elastics were not comfortable on it and I had to wear it whenever I went out,” he said.

He reached out to Dr. James McDonald, medical director for the Rhode Island Department of Health, who, along with the Healthcare Coalition of Rhode Island, helped coordinate a donation to Hasbro Children’s Hospital. After that first donation, said Golditch, he wanted to make more and decided to make a second batch for workers at Landmark.

“They’re all working and helping us all stay safe while we all get to stay home,” he explained.

Golditch said he spent about 18 hours making the devices for Landmark workers. When he grows up, he said, he wants to continue his work with technology as an artificial intelligence engineer.

Landmark staff members met Golditch and his mom, Lynda, outside the hospital on Monday to accept the donation. Staff members thanked him and offered to give him a tour of Landmark once COVID-19 is no longer a concern.



Ask The Work Incentive Benefits Counselor Sessions



12:00-12:30 PM

Three sessions offered.

June 24, 2020

July 8, 2020

July 22, 2020

Advanced registration required.

Register Online [r20.rs6.net]

The Sherlock Center provides Work Incentive Information and Benefits Counseling services to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries and those that support them (family, guardian, rep payee). These online Lunch & Learn sessions provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the following topics:

- Covid-19 benefits impact on SSI, SSDI and other benefits
- Ticket to Work
- SSI and SSDI Work Incentives
- Resources about Work Incentive Information
- Access to Benefits Counseling
- Working and Impact on Health Insurance Medicaid/Medicare
- Other questions related to benefits and working

Upon registration please share your questions. These sessions will not address how to apply for SSI/SSDI benefits.

All sessions will be offered on Zoom and will be closed captioned.

REGISTRATION IS LIMITED! Attend one or more sessions. You must register separately for each session. Registrations will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the session. You can access the session by computer, mobile device or listen using a cell or landline phone.

Presenters:

- Jeanne Fay, Certified Work Incentive Counselor
- Vicki Ferrara, Coordinator, Access to Integrated Employment

Accommodation requests or registration questions:

Contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu

Session questions:

Contact Vicki Ferrara at vferrara@ric.edu

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, 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. Call 911 if there is risk of immediate danger. Visit the BH Link website at www.bhlink.org or for confidential support and to get connected to care:

CALL (401) 414-LINK (5465)

If under 18 CALL: (855) KID(543)-LINK(5465)

Visit the 24-HOUR/7-DAY TRIAGE CENTER at 975 Waterman Avenue, East Providence, RI

Stay Informed with Information on COVID-19

Rhode Island Department of Health COVID-19 Resources

Hotline (401) 222-8022 or 211 after hours;

Email RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov

Website <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information

Website cdc.gov/coronavirus

Videos <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/videos.html>

Includes a link to ASL videos

BHDDH Information on COVID-19's Impact on DD Services and the DD Community

Website bhddh.ri.gov/COVID

RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

Website <https://ripin.org/covid-19-resources/>

Call Center (401) 270-0101 or email callcenter@ripin.org

Advocates in Action – for videos and easy to read materials

Website <https://www.advocatesinaction.org/>

Website offers BrowseAloud, which will read the website to you

Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from the Division, you can sign up on our website. From the main BHDDH page at bhddh.ri.gov, select **What's New**, then go to bottom and click on **DD Community Newsletter**. The link to sign up for the BHDDH Newsletter is directly below the title, as shown in the picture at right.

DD Community Newsletter

[SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER](#)

Contacting the Division

The department is working on a reduced workforce and therefore calls should not be placed directly to your social caseworker. DDD has put 24-hour phone coverage in place with a central business hour phone number and an on-call number for nights and weekends.

If you have a vital need, please call the numbers below. If you have any general questions or concerns, please email them if you can, in order to try to leave the phone lines free for those who need to call. We will do our best to address your questions directly or through future newsletters.

AM **M T W Th F** PM
401-462-3421

8:30 AM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 4:00 PM

WEEKDAYS DURING BUSINESS HOURS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**
- **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DD SERVICES**

During business hours
 (Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00),
 for questions or support
(401) 462-3421
 Para español, llame
(401) 462-3014

PM **M T W Th F** PM
401-265-7461

4:00 PM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 10:00 PM

AFTER HOURS ON WEEKDAYS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

For emerging or imminent care
 related questions,
 Mon - Fri 4pm-10pm and
 weekends 8:30am-10pm
(401) 265-7461

AM **SAT SUN** PM
401-265-7461

8:30 AM → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← 10:00 PM

ON WEEKENDS FOR:

- **VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

E-MAIL THE DIVISION

BHDDH.AskDD@BHDDH.RI.GOV

HELP US KEEP THE PHONE LINES OPEN FOR THOSE WHO ARE CALLING WITH A VITAL NEED!

WHEN POSSIBLE, PLEASE SEND AN E-MAIL FOR:

- **NON-CRITICAL CONCERNS** about Your Services and Supports
- **GENERAL QUESTIONS** about Your Services or the RI DD System

Send general questions to the
 AskDD email address. Please
 do not email critical issues.
BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

911

**FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES
 CALL 911
 RIGHT AWAY. DON'T WAIT!**

For medical or
 healthcare related
 emergencies, call
 your Primary Care
 Physician or 911

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR

CALL FOR:

- ROUTINE Healthcare Questions
- NON-EMERGENCY Medical Care

**FOLLOW YOUR DOCTOR'S ADVICE
 DON'T go to their office
 unless they tell you to!**

Families with Adult Family Members Survey

1) Which of the following best describes you and your family member.

- We self-direct.
 - We mostly self-direct, but use agencies for some functions.
 - We are supported by one provider organization.
 - We are supported by two or more provider organizations.
 - Other - Please describe: _____
-

2) Are you familiar with the term "Employment First"?

- Yes, I understand what it means.
- I have heard something about it, but want to know more.
- I have hear the term, but don't know what it means.
- No, I am not familiar with the term.

3) Have you received information about opportunities and resources that would assist your family member to be employed in an integrated work setting?

- Yes, I have all the information I need.
- I received some information, but need more.
- I have received very little information.
- I have received no information.

4) If you need more information, please briefly list all the topics about which you would like to receive more information.

5) Have you received information about opportunities and resources that would assist your family member to participate in other integrated community activities?

- Yes, I have all the information I need.
- I received some information, but need more.
- I have received very little information.
- I have received no information.

6) Have you received information about community opportunities? Please check all the topics about which you have received information.

- Community-based cultural activities in which your family member could participate.
- Community-based leisure or recreational activities in which your family member could participate.
- Community-based organizations or clubs in which your family member could become a member.
- Community-based educational opportunities for learning about new things.
- Community-based opportunities for volunteering.

7) If you need information about other community-based opportunities and resources, please briefly describe what else you need.

8) Have you received information about technology that could help your family member be employed or participate in more community-based activities?

- Yes, I have all the information I need.
- I received some information, but need more.
- I have received very little information.
- I have received no information.

9) Do you believe your family member should have a job?

- Yes.
- I've thought about it, but am not sure.
- I've thought about, but there are challenges in my family member's life that need to be resolved before we can talk about employment.
- No.

10) If you are hesitant about employment, what would help change your mind.

Check all that apply.

- Talking to another family member.
 - Getting more information about how it would work and what supports would be available.
 - Getting more information about opportunities for employment.
 - Something Else - please describe: _____
-

11) Do you believe your family member could participate in more community-based activities?

- Yes.
- I've thought about it, but am not sure.
- I've thought about, but there are challenges in my family member's life that need to be resolved before we can talk about community-based activities.
- No.

12) If you are hesitant about your family member participating in community-based activities, what would help change your mind.

Check all that apply.

- Talking to another family member.
 - Getting more information about how it would work and what supports would be available.
 - Getting more information about opportunities.
 - Something Else - please describe: _____
-

13) Do you believe that your family member can (or could when he/she is an adult) make his/her own decisions about some life activities? Please check all the activities about which you think your family member can make decisions.

Daily functions – what to wear, what to eat, hygiene.

Leisure and recreation.

Employment and type of job.

Who they select to be their support staff.

Daily fiscal decisions – small purchases.

Big fiscal decisions – big purchases.

Daily health functions.

Big health decisions.

Relationships.

14) Has your family member ever received any instruction about how to make choices or how to be more self-determined?

Yes.

I'm not sure.

I don't think so.

15) Thinking about comprehensive community-based person-centered planning, are there any other practices or structural components that need to be created to achieve the vision of the Consent Decree? Please describe.

16) Please describe any obstacles or barriers to achieving the vision of the Consent Decree for comprehensive community-based person-centered planning. Give your ideas for how to resolve or remove those obstacles or barriers. You may add up to 5 items.

Obstacle/Barrier	Solution

17) Thinking about employment services and supports, are there any other practices or structural components (*for example, different strategies for discovering interests, different strategies for outreaching to employers and finding jobs, better ways to support people on the job site, strategies for increasing job retention*) that need to be created to achieve the vision of the Consent Decree? Please describe.

18) Please describe any obstacles or barriers to achieving the vision of the Consent Decree for employment services and supports. Give your ideas for how to resolve or remove those obstacles or barriers.

Obstacle/Barrier	Solution

19) Thinking about services and supports for community-based activities of the person’s choice, are there any other practices or structural components (*for example, different strategies for discovering interests, different strategies for outreaching to employers and finding jobs, better ways to support people on the job site, strategies for increasing job retention*) that need to be created to achieve the vision of the Consent Decree? Please describe.

20) Please describe any obstacles or barriers to achieving the vision of the Consent Decree for services and supports for community-based activities of the person’s choice. Give your ideas for how to resolve or remove those obstacles or barriers.

Obstacle/Barrier	Solution

21) Please offer any other comments or thoughts you may have for achieving the vision of the Consent Decree.

Thank You!