



Save the Date!
DD Virtual Community Forum



The next DD Community Forum will be on

Monday, March 22
3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

The forum will be hosted by
Advocates in Action
on Zoom,
so don't be afraid if it snows!

[Register here](#)

Survey for Vaccines for Those Unable to Leave Home

The RI Department of Health (RIDOH) has created a **survey to gather information for those unable to leave their home to receive a vaccine**. While all individuals are encouraged to seek vaccination opportunities through vaccination clinics and retail pharmacies, there are individuals who are unable to leave home to attend such opportunities. If you are unable to leave home to receive COVID-19 vaccination, or are the healthcare provider or family caregiver of someone who is homebound, please inform RIDOH through the following form: [http://bit.ly/homeboundvax \[bit.ly\]](http://bit.ly/homeboundvax).

What is EVV and who has to use it?

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) is a way for you let Medicaid know when you get services. It is required for Medicaid billing. You can use EVV through a phone or your provider can give you an easy to use device that works like a time clock. The State has contracted with Sandata Technologies to provide the EVV system.

If you are someone who self-directs your services and you need total support with all your personal care needs at home, you'll need to use EVV to record those services. This isn't for everyone who self-directs or for all in-home supports.

Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs) have already contacted those who need to use EVV. If you haven't heard from your FI, you don't have to use EVV. If you have any questions, you can ask your FI.

Sighs of Relief at The Country Club

by Randal Edgar, BHDDH Public Information Officer

LINCOLN — The Kirkbrae Country Club hosts an array of weddings, receptions and corporate meetings, but of late it's also become a place where people with reason to worry about COVID-19 can find some peace of mind.

These guests, more than 4,000 of them, have come over the past few weeks — not to dine or celebrate, but to get COVID vaccines that Rhode Island has made available to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“I was so excited,” said Veronica Lynn Schenck, 46, who was vaccinated Feb. 10. “I was searching the internet, wondering ‘when am I going to get the vaccine?’”

Kirkbrae, with its elegant dining rooms and banquet halls, was a busy place that day.

In the parking lot, a dozen volunteers guided traffic and offered instructions to those heading over to the clubhouse and others, smaller in number, who would be vaccinated right in their cars. Traffic also lined up on Old River Road, where a police officer halted vehicles to let those who came for shots and those escorting them get to and from the clubhouse.

Inside the clubhouse, more than 20 volunteers from the Rhode Island Disaster Medical Assistance Team's Medical Reserve Corps set up at a wall of tables to administer the vaccines. At times, the line of people waiting ran outside, toward the road. But just in case the wait seemed long, there was live entertainment — provided by a vocal-guitar duo of Eric Fontana, community navigator at West Bay RI, and Raymond Memery, executive director at Avatar Residential.

As at other COVID vaccination sites, those receiving the vaccine were asked to sit and wait for 15 minutes to make sure there were no allergic reactions.

“They're doing a good job. Everything is orderly, everything was easy, with so many people,” said John Crandall, a retired firefighter from Charlestown who brought his nephew to get the vaccine. “They've got it organized very well.”

The timing of COVID vaccines for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been contentious in some states, with advocates arguing that this vulnerable population should be higher on the priority lists, but Rhode Island moved quickly to make the vaccines available.

Tina Spears, executive director of the Community Provider Network of Rhode Island (CPNRI), said the state Department of Health encouraged gave her organization and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) the go ahead to move forward. CPNRI led the way, partnering with Medical Reserve Corps members who have donated their time. She also credited Kirkbrae for “being a gracious partner and host.”

“We're well on the way to getting everybody vaccinated,” she said.

The vaccines are bringing sighs of relief.

Jackie Gendron, of North Kingstown, drove to Lincoln with her 24-year-old daughter, Renee.

“She needed to be vaccinated,” Jackie Gendron said. “Her life right now is in the house. We go out, we go for walks, things like that, but not the normal things that she does. She’s not back in services. She’s also going through a medically difficult time right now, so she needed this. She needs people, and right now, she doesn’t have people.”

Asked if getting the vaccine hurt, an otherwise happy Renee Gendron answered with a matter-of-fact “yes.” But others had different views.

Justin Panciera, 30, of Westerly, was among those who said it didn’t hurt. In fact, he was looking forward to getting the second shot, because then, he hopes to take a vacation with his mother.

“Every year my mom and I go on a cruise for our Christmas vacation, but this year we couldn’t,” he said.

Studies have indicated that COVID presents greater risks for individuals with developmental disabilities, because they are more likely to have underlying medical conditions. The Centers for Disease Control has added Down syndrome to the list of high-risk medical conditions for those who have COVID, and it has recommended that states prioritize the vaccines for individuals in long-term care facilities. But it has not specifically said that individuals with developmental disabilities should be included in the first rounds of vaccinations, and instead has left that decision to the states.

Here in Rhode Island, Spears said, the right voices were heard.

“Many of the individuals you see here today have differing disabilities, and depending on those disabilities, they also have some medical conditions that put them at a very high risk,” she said. “But we had strong advocacy, and we had strong partners with the Department of Health, who recognized this population as being a priority. We advocated and they listened, and we had a great partner in BHDDH. It’s really just hard work and advocacy that got this over the goal line, and commitment from our state partners.”

Schenck, who was among those who said the shot didn’t hurt, said she too is looking forward to getting the second.

“I come back in 28 days,” she said.



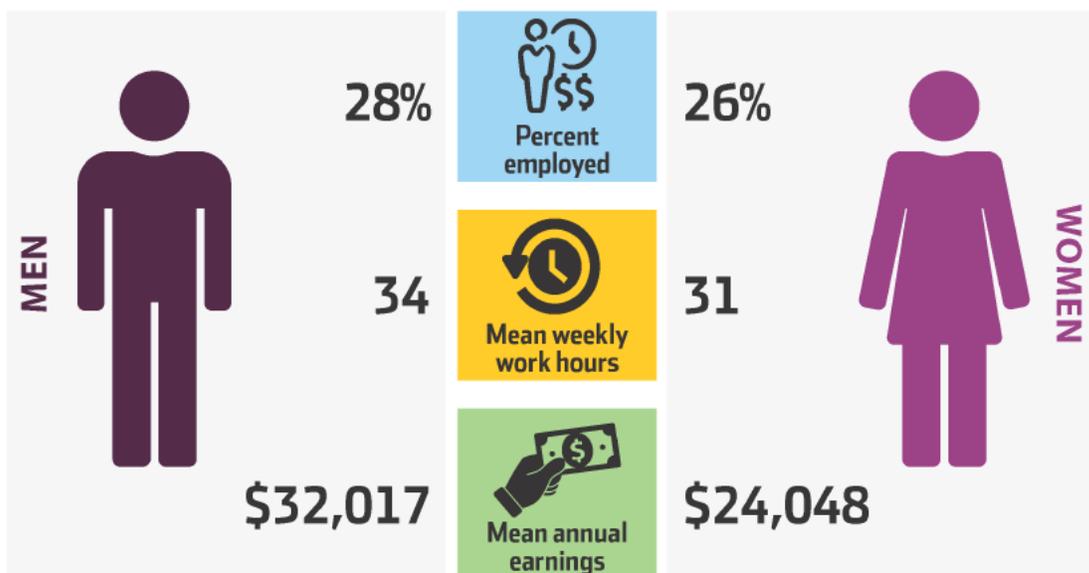
New Program Aims To Train Doctors On Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

A new effort is underway to better prepare future doctors and other health care professionals to treat people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living has allocated \$1.75 million over the next five years toward the initiative, which will bring together five universities to study existing trainings and develop materials and standardized practice experiences that can be incorporated into the curriculum for students in medical education.

The curriculum developed will first be implemented at the participating institutions — Rush University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, St. John Fisher College, Villanova University and the University of Minnesota — before ultimately being disseminated to 30 other schools with a goal of training more than 15,000 students across various health care fields.

Gender Disparities in Workforce Participation

Despite being employed at similar rates and working similar hours, women with a cognitive disability earn 28.4% less than men with a cognitive disability.



Data Source: American Community Survey, 2017

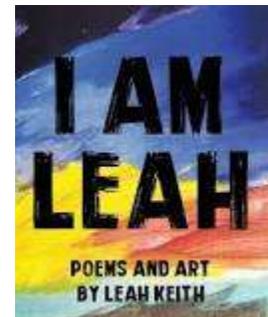
To learn more, see [Employment and Economic Outcomes by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender for Individuals With and Without Disabilities, 2017](#). This report describes the employment and economic outcomes for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities in 2017. Results are summarized for the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC). These data are divided according to race, ethnicity, and gender. Data are drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS), Rehabilitation Services Administration 911, and National Core Indicators (NCI)

Leah Keith - The Artist and the Teacher

Leah Keith has Down Syndrome and is about to turn 34 years old. When Leah was a child her dream was to become a published writer. Many of us have this dream, but not as many see their dream come true. In the past several years Leah has worked very hard to not only write and publish her own book of poetry and art, but she also opened an art studio and has recently started teaching art to special education students at her local public middle and high school.

Leah teaches art every Tuesday morning at 9am to students who attend Mt. Hope High School and at 10:30am to students at Kickemuit Middle School. Right now she is teaching virtually because of the pandemic, but she hopes to be able to teach in person sometime soon. What's really exciting is that Leah was recruited to do this work by the Special Education Department. Currently, the special education students are not able to attend school with the rest of the school population because of their special healthcare needs and their vulnerability and risk of contracting COVID19. One of the teachers, Rachel Koger, who knows Leah very well, thought that having Leah for a teacher and role model would be really inspiring and motivating for her students. She presented the idea to Leah and then to the school department and everyone was equally excited!

A little background on why Leah is such a great candidate for this position starts with some great programs that the state of Rhode Island has provided for adults with disabilities that Leah has participated in. Leah met Jay MacKay at Cutler Mills where they both had an art studio. In addition to being an accomplished artist Jay works for Developmental Disabilities Services at BHDDH as an administrator for the vocational program that serves adults with disabilities. Jay took an interest in Leah and told her about Sue Babin and her business classes and grants through the RI Developmental Disabilities Council. Leah took these classes for a year, was then provided a mentor from the business community and ultimately given a grant that allowed her to publish her book, "I Am Leah". Leah has become well known in the East Bay community of Bristol and Warren and has participated in many events like gallery night and the local Walk-Abouts. There have been several articles written about her in the local newspapers.



Last year Leah participated in a Leadership Series offered by Advocates In Action, which taught her how to advocate for herself, present with good speaking skills and learn about her civil rights. This year she is a paid Peer Mentor for this group. These skills have empowered her in her current position as art teacher. Leah has an amazing support network, which includes Stephen Alfano, who is an artist and teacher too. He has supported her through all of her great endeavors for the past 10 years. His services are provided through Options, one of the agencies that administer BHDDH self-directed services for adults with disabilities in Rhode Island.

When Leah graduated High School the programs being offered to adults like her were sheltered workshops and other isolating and segregating programs. We knew Leah would not thrive and meet her potential unless she could be part of her community. This is why we eventually chose self-directed supports. The Sherlock Center has been a great resource as well and has promoted inclusion in the community and the belief that given the opportunity many people like Leah can

achieve better independence and thus live a much more fulfilling life!! Leah was also very involved with VSA of RI for many years and participated in their poetry contests and art classes at RISD Museum. After winning the Allen Ginsberg Poetry competition several times she became their Poet Laureate and wrote and presented poems for them at many public events, such as the 25th Anniversary Celebration at the Pawtucket Town Hall.

Leah has very special gifts as do all people. She has needed supports and opportunities in order to use those gifts and achieve all the great accomplishments that she has. My hope is that the State will continue to support people like Leah so that they can reach their highest potential and become valuable members of their community.

Charles' Story

Charles Estrela was recently hired by Ocean State Job Lot in Rhode Island. Ocean State Job Lot is considered an essential business and carries a multitude of necessary items, including groceries, PPE equipment, clothing, health and beauty aids, hardware, etc.

Charles was initially interviewed for this position back in March of 2020, but when the pandemic hit, hiring was put on hold. However, as business noticeably picked up, this opportunity was pursued and led to the hire. He works as a stock associate, processing freight in the backroom in preparation for moving it out onto the sales floor.

As part of the onboarding process, dozens of new safety procedures have been implemented; this creates (literal and figurative) distance between shoppers and associates. When the entire approach to business has to be rethought from the ground up, it's certainly going to affect hiring practices and ongoing employment. In some instances, opportunities have emerged and many people with disabilities have stepped up to fulfill these essential roles. They serve as an inspiration to all!

Charlie is a very intelligent man with a talent for organization and compartmentalization. He doesn't perceive safety precautions as any type of inconvenience. Rather he streamlines the wearing of safety masks, the social distancing, and the handwashing and sanitization into his workflow. There isn't much that throws him off his game.

People with disabilities have demonstrated their ability and willingness to be adaptable in working alongside all other essential workers on the front lines. Situations that most people take for granted can and will affect the population on an immediate level (entrances to buildings, poorly displayed signage, confusing graphic design, and layout on menus.) In some instances, opportunities have emerged and many people with disabilities have stepped up to fulfill these essential roles. They serve as an inspiration to all!



We Salute Essential Workers!

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 BHDDH, 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 DD Staff

DDD has put extended 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 on the next page. 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.

401-462-3421

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

401-265-7461

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

401-265-7461

ON WEEKENDS FOR:

- VITAL, NON-MEDICAL SUPPORT NEEDS

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

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

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!

Your Path to Free Vaccination



State-run vaccination sites

Sockanosset Site*
Dunkin' Donuts Center*

 **Eligible now**

Sign up at vaccinateri.org.
New clinics will be added twice a week; possibly more.
If you need help, call the automated phone line at **844-930-1779**.

 **Not Eligible Yet**

Sign up at portal.ri.gov to be added to the vaccine interest notification list.
If you need help, call the automated phone line at **844-930-1779**.



Regional or community-run clinics

Clinics run by cities and towns, hospitals, community health centers, home health agencies, onsite at senior housing, etc.

 **Eligible now**

Details vary by city/town, see back for contact information.
Lifespan is operating a vaccination site. Visit: <http://bit.ly/LifespanVax>

 **Not Eligible Yet**

Your city or town may have a notification list. Contact them directly to learn more.



Retail pharmacies

CVS Health
Walgreens

 **Eligible now**

Go to CVS.com, use CVS Pharmacy phone app. or call **800-746-7287**
Go to Walgreens.com/ScheduleVaccine or call your local Walgreens.

 **Not Eligible Yet**

Sign up at portal.ri.gov to be added to the vaccine interest notification list.
If you need help, call the automated phone line at **844-930-1779**.

- For general COVID-19 questions call **401-222-8022**.
- Please schedule an appointment in one place only. If you have an appointment, you are guaranteed a dose of vaccine.
- Remember, someone else can schedule an appointment for you!



*Sockanosset Site 100 Sockanosset Cross Road, Cranston RI 02920

*Dunkin' Donuts Center 1 La Salle Square, Providence, RI 02903

COVID-19 Vaccination Information in Your Community

Cities and towns throughout Rhode Island are helping to vaccinate their residents. For more information or to sign up to be vaccinated, contact your city or town at the phone number or website listed below. **Appointments are required at all vaccination sites.** Please arrive at your scheduled time. You do not need to arrive early.

You can call the COVID-19 info line at **401-222-8022** if you have general questions about the state's vaccination program.

City/Town	Phone	Organization	Website
Barrington	401-247-1926	Peck Center for Adult Enrichment	www.barrington.ri.gov/coronavirus
Bristol	401-253-1611	Bristol Parks & Recreation Senior Services	www.bristolri.gov/covid-19/vaccination
Burrillville	401-710-7800	Town of Burrillville	www.burrillville.org
Central Falls	1-855-843-7620	BEAT COVID-19 Hotline	www.centralfallsri.us/coronavirus
Charlestown	401-218-1968	Charlestown Emergency Management	www.charlestownri.org
Coventry	401-822-9175	Coventry Human Services	www.coventryri.org
Cranston	401-461-1000	Cranston City Hall	www.cranstonri.gov
Cumberland	401-335-5888	Town of Cumberland	www.cumberlandri.org
East Greenwich	401-886-8626	East Greenwich Recreation Office	www.eastgreenwichri.com
East Providence	401-435-7500	East Providence City Hall	www.eastprovidenceri.gov/Covid-19
Exeter	401-294-3891	Exeter City Hall	www.town.exeter.ri.us
Foster	401-392-9208	Foster City Hall	www.townoffoster.com
Glocester	401-710-4182	Glocester Hotline	www.glocesterri.org
Hopkinton	401-388-8476	Hopkinton COVID Hotline	www.hopkintonri.org/notification-list
Jamestown	401-423-1213 x 4328	Town of Jamestown	www.jamestownri.gov
Johnston	401-944-3343	Johnston Senior Center	www.townofjohnstonri.com
Lincoln	401-333-1100	Lincoln Town Hall	www.lincolnri.org
Little Compton	401-635-4400	Little Compton Town Clerk	www.littlecomptonri.org
Middletown	401-842-6565	Middletown Emergency Operations Center	www.middletownri.com/covid-19
Narragansett	401-782-0611	Town of Narragansett - Code RED Hotline	www.narragansettri.gov
New Shoreham	401-466-3200	New Shoreham City Hall	www.new-shoreham.com
Newport	401-846-7426 x 1	Newport COVID Hotline	www.cityofnewport.com/vaccine
North Kingstown	401-294-3331 x 405	North Kingstown COVID Hotline	www.northkingstown.org
North Providence	401-437-6418	North Providence COVID Hotline	www.northprovidenceri.gov/vaccine
North Smithfield	401-767-2200 x 510	North Smithfield EMA	www.nsmithfieldri.org
Pawtucket	1-855-843-7620	BEAT COVID-19 Hotline	www.pawtucketri.com/COVID19
Portsmouth	401-643-0323	Portsmouth Vaccine Number	www.portsmouthri.com
Providence	401-680-5000	Providence City Hall	www.providenceri.gov/vaccinate
Richmond	401-539-9000	Richmond Town Hall	Covid@richmondri.com (email)
Scituate	401-647-2662	Scituate Senior Center Staff	www.scituateriema.org
Smithfield	401-949-4590	Smithfield Senior Center	www.smithfieldri.com/vaccine
South Kingstown	401-789-0268	South Kingstown Senior Center	www.southkingstownri.com/998/COVID-19
Tiverton	401-625-6700	Tiverton Town Hall	www.tivertoncovid19.com
Warren	401-247-1930	Warren Senior Center	www.townofwarren-ri.gov
Warwick	401-468-4070	Warwick Pilgrim Senior Center	www.warwickri.gov/vaccine
West Greenwich	401-392-3800	West Greenwich Town Hall	www.wgtownri.org
West Warwick	401-822-4450	West Warwick Senior Center	www.westwarwickri.org
Westerly	401-348-2526	Westerly Police Department	www.westerlyri.gov
Woonsocket	401-765-2500	Woonsocket Emergency Management	www.woonsocketri.org