



**Kevin Savage Named Director of
Developmental Disabilities Services**



We are pleased to announce that Kevin Savage has been named Director of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS). He formally starts in this new role on Monday, March 1st. Kevin headed up the DD Regulations Reform effort; his knowledge of policies and regulations for DDS is far-reaching and quite impressive. It was also gratifying to receive positive feedback from families and our provider community while he served as Acting Director. Please congratulate Kevin and wish him well!

**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.

[Register here](#)



BHDDH Website Facelift



A new BHDDH website has been in the works for more than a year but was delayed when the pandemic hit. This week, we finally transitioned to the new website.

[Check out the new site here.](#)

Please update any saved links you may have to the BHDDH website.

DD Community Vaccination Clinics

About 5,700 individuals and staff from the DD community were vaccinated at the clinics held in February. This was a true partnership between the State agencies, RI Medical Reserve Corp (DMAT), the Community Provider Network of RI (CPNRI), Kirkbrae Country Club, and the many volunteers that donated their time and energy to this effort. It has been inspiring and uplifting knowing we have accomplished this together. It certainly had its challenges, but all in all, we did it as a community!

The second dose clinics have started and are running smoothly. Second dose clinics are being offered exactly 28 days after the first dose and will also be held at Kirkbrae Country Club.

The second dose clinics are only for those who received their first dose at the clinic 28 days before. **Please make sure you register in advance and go to your second dose clinic.** You cannot be guaranteed the availability of a second dose, or rescheduling an appointment, if you miss your second dose clinic.

COVID Vaccine Update

All Rhode Islanders 65 years old or older are now eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine. If you are in that age group, you can schedule your appointment at one of the three types of vaccination clinics.

1. **State-run vaccination sites:** Book your appointment online at VaccinateRI.org [r20.rs6.net] or by calling 844-930-1779.
2. **Municipal sites:** Contact your municipal government using their website or phone number, which you can find [here](#) [r20.rs6.net].
3. **Pharmacies:** To schedule an appointment through a pharmacy visit CVS.com [r20.rs6.net] or Walgreens.com/ScheduleVaccine [r20.rs6.net].

Individuals who are Medicaid members or over the age of 60 may request transportation to a vaccination opportunity through MTM, online at <https://www.mtm-inc.net/mtm-link/> or by phone at 1-855-330-9131 (TTY: 711), at least 48 hours before the vaccination appointment.

To find a vaccination clinic and sign up for a vaccination, go to www.VaccinateRI.org

Message from Governor Raimondo

I'm grateful to our National Guard and to the Rhode Island Department of Health for their incredible work in launching Phase 2 of our vaccination campaign. Because of their work over the last few months, we're now in a position to rapidly distribute vaccines at centralized locations to Rhode Islanders across the state.

Phase 1 of the campaign focused on vaccinating our highest-risk populations: health care workers, Rhode Islanders in nursing homes and other congregate care settings, older Rhode Islanders, and Rhode Islanders in high-density communities. As a result, we've seen our hospitalizations drop more quickly than our neighboring states and the national average. **Because of that improvement, we will be closing both of our field hospitals.** Out of an abundance of caution, we're going to keep the equipment in place to treat a potential surge. But as it stands today, our existing hospital infrastructure is more than capable of handling the current pace of COVID-19 patients.

This is a sign of the enormous effort and sacrifices that all Rhode Islanders have made over the last few months. Thank you, and let's keep going. If we continue to wear a mask, get tested often, and get vaccinated when eligible, we're going to get through this.

-Gina Raimondo, Governor

Survey to Gather Information for Those Unable to Leave Their Home for Vaccine

While everyone is encouraged to get the COVID vaccine through clinics and retail pharmacies, there are individuals who are unable to leave home to get to the clinics.

If you are unable to leave home to get the COVID-19 vaccination, or are the healthcare provider or family caregiver of someone who is homebound, please let the RI Department of Health know by completing the form **Request for In-Home COVID-19 Vaccination** found at:

<http://bit.ly/homeboundvax>.

Español: <http://bit.ly/homeboundvax-es>

Português: <http://bit.ly/homeboundvax-pt>

For assistance completing the survey by phone, please call The Point at 401-462-4444.

Parity Resources Available in English And Spanish

The Rhode Island Mental Health Parity Initiative has a series of free videos which feature need-to-know information, quick tips and resources to help you access behavioral health coverage you are entitled to from your health insurer.

Topics such as, "What is Mental Health Parity?" and "Defending Your Rights" can be found on the RI Parity Initiative website. All videos are available in English and Spanish.



[Watch the Videos here](#)

[Click here](#) to get the Mental Health Association of RI (MHARI) Behavioral Health Resource Guide, available in English and Spanish

Got Housing?! Monthly Conversation **Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 6:00 PM on Zoom**

Plan RI has been hosting a monthly Zoom housing series with guests from around the United States and Canada discussing best practices in community-based housing for individuals with disabilities. Plan RI has partnered with BHDDH to hold "office hours" to hear from individuals and families about ideas for housing in the community, housing preferences, and housing dreams!

This month the office hours will be held on Wednesday, March 10 at 6 PM and hosted by Michelle Brophy from BHDDH and Betty Murray from Plan RI. We want to hear from you so we can work with our housing partners to develop housing that meets your needs!

There are two ways to join:

1. **If you are already registered for the Plan RI Alternative Housing Series:** join with the link for the regularly scheduled meetings that you received in the Housing Series registration confirmation.
2. **If you have not registered for 2021 Series:** [Click here to register](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Affordable Housing

According to the Out of Reach Report, Rhode Island is ranked #19 for affordability of housing in the country, so when you are looking for housing options you must know your options.



Customize Your Search

Do you want to live alone or with roommates?

Do you need to live close to work or community services?

Do you need to live on a bus line?

Do you prefer the city or the country – What are the top 5 communities where you would like to live?

How to Make Your Housing Affordable

- Housing Choice Vouchers
- Project Based Vouchers
- Public Housing units
- Privately owned subsidized housing
- Shared Living Arrangements
- Roommates
- For more information about applying for housing choice vouchers <https://www.waitlist-centralri.com> or a list of public and privately owned subsidized housing options, <https://www.rihousing.com/wp-content/uploads/Rental-Resource-Guide-10-1-19.pdf>



Community Opportunities

The Housing Network of Rhode Island is the state association of non-profit community development corporations. The member agencies have developed and built thousands of units of affordable housing and initiated numerous revitalization efforts in neighborhoods across Rhode Island. The Housing Network of Rhode Island offers affordable home ownership and rental units.

For more information about programs in your community, <http://www.housingnetworkri.org/>



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Bridging the Digital Divide Webinar Series

Part I: Thursday, March 4 from 3:00 - 4:30 pm

[Register for Part I: March 4, 2021 \[neweditions.adobeconnect.com\]](https://www.neweditions.adobeconnect.com)

Part II: Thursday, March 18, from 3:00 - 4:30 pm

[Register for Part II: March 18, 2021 \[neweditions.adobeconnect.com\]](https://www.neweditions.adobeconnect.com)

The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency has left many older adults and people with disabilities grieving the loss of close relationships and a sense of community. This is due to physical distancing orders, staffing shortages, and the closing of day programs and is taking a considerable toll on their physical and mental well-being.

The transition to telemedicine and virtual services in place of in-person services has helped expand care to millions. However, without the skills, resources and supports to get online and participate in digital forums, many older adults and people with disabilities are more isolated than ever. This “digital divide” affects their ability to obtain life-saving health information, medical services, procure basic goods and services, address social determinants of health, and stay connected.

It is uncertain when in-person services will resume to pre-pandemic levels. Yet, investing in technology solutions may provide opportunities that can be implemented now and preserved after the end of the Public Health Emergency to supplement and support in-person services, such as: socialization, the ability to address disability and language related barriers, tools to manage chronic diseases and promote behavioral change.

The webinar will be recorded. If you are interested in the webinar and cannot attend, please register. The recording link will be sent via email to all those who register.

Part I (March 4, 2021)

1. Awareness and Leadership: Leadership, funding, enact policies, public engagement, stakeholder mobilization
2. Beneficiary and provider: Assessing technology needs/opportunities, engagement, education, and supports
3. Barriers: Identifying cultural and systemic barriers

Part II (March 18, 2021)

4. Internet: Access and affordability
5. Hardware (internet enabled devices -smart phones, tablets) and software/applications: Affordability, accessibility, technical considerations, universal design, setup, ongoing technical supports



About the ACL/CMS Promising Practices Training Series

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) host a monthly webinar series that invites subject matter experts and practitioners from across the home-and-community-based services (HCBS) continuum to share insights and best practices to develop high quality HCBS programs and services.

'Hug station' at East Providence nursing home allows residents, loved ones to safely embrace

<https://www.wpri.com/news/its-good-news/hug-station-at-east-providence-nursing-home-allows-residents-loved-ones-to-safely-embrace/>

EAST PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) — An East Providence nursing home has made it possible for its residents to hug their loved ones once again.

The R.I. Department of Health eased visitation restrictions on nursing homes and assisted-living facilities statewide last week, but Tuesday was the first day the Linn Health Care Center began allowing visitors. The nursing home went a step further, however, by creating a “hug station” where residents can safely hug their loved ones.

The station is located in a doorway that is covered by plastic, with two arm sleeves on either side. Both the resident and visitor can simply place their arms through the plastic sleeves so they can hug one another.

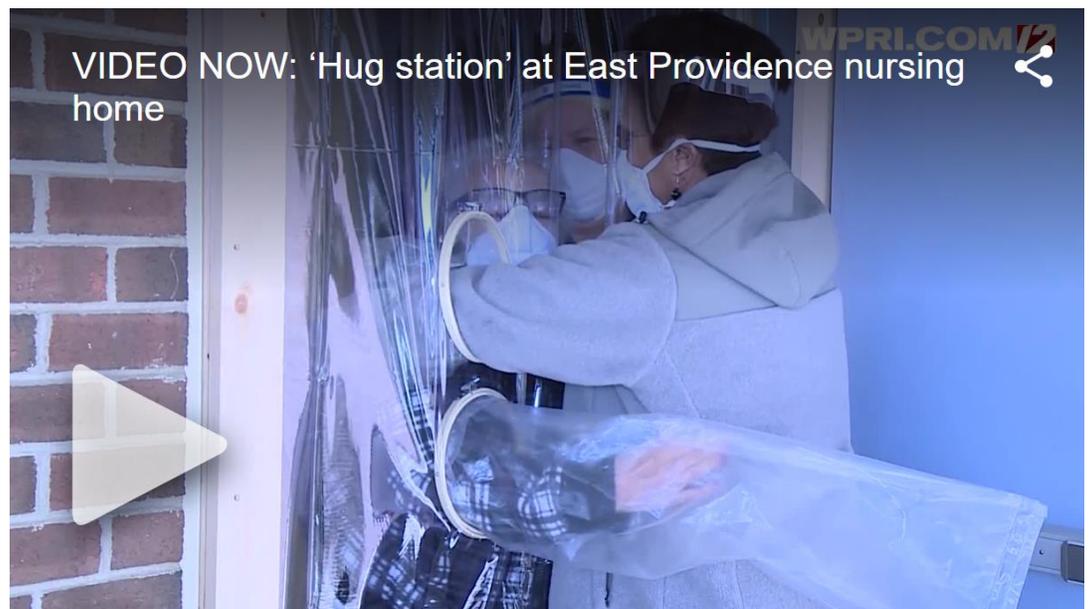
The heart-warming gesture allowed Toni Spencer and her 97-year-old mother Maria to hug for the first time since March. Toni and Maria were the first to utilize the “hug station” Tuesday. When asked what she thought of the embrace, Maria said it was “wonderful.” “It’s just heart-warming,” Toni said. “My sisters are all jealous, and my brother.”

Toni said this was one of her most favorite visits to her mother’s nursing home since the coronavirus pandemic began. “We were always giving each other hugs and holding hands, so it’s been hard,” Toni said. “It was hard when we could see her outside and couldn’t touch her, and then this not seeing her at all has been tough.”

Jamie Sanford, the administrator of the nursing home, said they’re grateful to provide the “hug station” for their residents and visitors. “We’ve been waiting for this since the first week of March, to have that warm embrace,” Sanford said. “Physical touch is so important; it adds comfort and wellbeing. It is therapeutic and everybody needs it.”

Toni said her mother is fully vaccinated and has never tested positive for COVID-19. She’s hopeful that their family can have more visits just like this one in the near future.

“She’s 97, so she still wants to be around to see everybody,” Toni said. “Things will get better.”



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.

