



**EOHHS Secretary Womazetta Jones to Serve
as Interim Director of BHDDH**



Womazetta Jones

Womazetta Jones, MA serves as the Secretary of Rhode Island’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), bringing almost 30 years of human services experience to the role. She is also serving as the Interim Director of BHDDH while Governor McKee’s administration conducts a search for a permanent replacement for Director A. Kathryn Power, who resigned as of April 5th.

Among her immediate objectives are to lead Rhode Island’s ongoing transition to a health and human service network that examines an individual’s health needs on a holistic basis.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in law enforcement administration and political science from Western Illinois University, Womazetta later went on to receive her Master of Arts degree in psychology, counseling and guidance from Chicago State University.

In her previous role, Womazetta served as the director of social services for Ramsey County, MN, which provides protection and support services for children and adults, including services around disabilities, mental health, substance abuse disorders, child protection, foster care and child care licensing, and adoptions. Here, she strived to help eliminate the stigma of mental health challenges facing communities of color and the area’s Native American populations.

Womazetta began her career as a child welfare specialist at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in 1991, eventually being promoted to Deputy Bureau Chief. Here, Womazetta was responsible for child protection practices throughout Illinois.

Womazetta credits her upbringing with providing her with such a giving spirit. Growing up on Chicago’s South Side, she spent time with her grandmother, who would prepare meals and deliver them, along with donated clothing, to area families in need—all on her own. It’s because of this dedication to the community, Womazetta says, that her desire to help society’s most vulnerable, and often invisible, populations burns so bright.

The Governor has charged Secretary Jones with conducting a thorough review of the Department and making recommendations to him on issues including, but not limited to, departmental policy, operations, staffing and quality standards for patient care. According to the Governor's office, Secretary Jones will work with staff and other stakeholders to "rebuild the lines of communication and trust necessary to improve patient outcomes. Secretary Jones will continue to maintain her duties as EOHHS Secretary and we thank her for taking on these additional responsibilities."

Please note the DD News will now be twice a month instead of weekly.

RI Department of Health **COVID Training Videos**

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) has produced videos to help the RI community better understand current COVID-19 public health guidance.

These COVID updates are available on [this YouTube playlist](#) and include English and Spanish language videos presented by physicians on:

- Masks
- Vaccines
- Treatment for COVID-19 (MABs)
- Updates on how to keep your community safe

Continue to help Crush COVID-19 in Rhode Island!

Get Out the Vaccine

<https://www.getoutthevaccine.org/>

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) and the 56 member Councils work across the United States and its territories to support programs that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion for all people in the United States with developmental disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Individual and public health, education and employment opportunities, and community living have drastically changed. For many people with disabilities, including I/DD, they and their families or caregivers may be feeling anxious or unsure about the vaccine and its safety.

Vaccine decisions should be based on facts and trusted sources. NACDD created the Get Out the Vaccine website to provide trusted sources to help you make the right decision for you, your family, and your community. Use these resources, including those from trusted sources like the CDC, and talk to your healthcare provider about any questions you have about the vaccine.

NACDD recently hosted a webinar with experts and community members on why they chose to be vaccinated. [Watch the Webinar here.](#)



Community Provider Network RI (CPNRI) **Recorded Town Hall for Adults with I/DD and Family Members**

On Monday April 12th, CPNRI hosted a virtual Town Hall for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

CPNRI provided updates on how support providers have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, shared information about recent vaccine clinics, and what's happening with the U.S. Consent Decree. They answered questions from attendees, and shared about their 2021 state policy priorities and what you can do to get involved. [Click here for a video recording of the town hall.](#)



Communication Toolkit Video

The Washington Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Preadmission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) is working to improve employees' ability to "hear" those who don't communicate with words. These kits, designed with consultation from a speech language pathologist and an assistive technology specialist, include high tech items (iPads with communication software) and low tech items (Velcro boards with symbol sets for choice-making). They have developed [this video](#) showcasing their toolkit.

Employment Resources

Looking to get back to work? Need some help? Talk to a job coach! Job coaches can provide you with one-on-one support, including resume writing assistance, interview prep, career planning, and more. Meetings with job coaches are held through video chat on [BackToWorkRI.com](#). To schedule an appointment, go to [BackToWorkRI.com](#), click on "Schedule a Meeting", and create a free user profile. Then you can schedule a meeting at your convenience! For more information, see these short videos from the RI Department of Labor & Training about [Job Coaches](#) and attending [Virtual Job Fairs](#).

Also see the [RI Resource Hub Orientation Video](#). The RI Resource Hub is a portal of curated online and in-person resources for adults in Rhode Island who wish to improve their academic skills, increase their digital literacy skills or find resources for employment readiness. This 8-minute video gives a tour of the site and explains how to do a search.



**The Federal Response to COVID-19:
Addressing the Needs of the Autism and Disability Communities**

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

2:00 to 4:00 PM

[Click Here to Register](#)

The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Autism Research Coordination at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are co-hosting a webinar about the health, education, and employment of people with disabilities during the pandemic. The webinar will feature speakers from the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Labor as well as the autism advocacy community. The event is free and open to the public.

**The U.S Department of Labor Seeking Input on Ensuring
Equity in Employment for People With Disabilities**

The U.S. Department of Labor is seeking input on ideas for ensuring equity in employment policies and programs for people with disabilities from historically underserved communities.

Please consider sharing your ideas, review community input, and comment on others' ideas. Your feedback will be used to identify solutions for overcoming barriers to employment for people with disabilities from diverse backgrounds, communities, and identities. It will also inform future programs and funding opportunities that equitably deliver employment services and supports to all.

Submissions are open through April 26, 2021.

[Click here](#) to see the submitted suggestions or to submit your ideas.

This input is being collected through [ePolicyWorks Online Dialogues](#). See this [informational video](#) that explains how people like you can influence policy through these crowdsourcing events. Watch and join the conversation today!



Belonging in the Workplace:
A Conversation With An All-Autistic Panel of Professionals

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

3:00 PM

[Click Here to Register](#)

Join a panel of all-Autistic professionals from Ultranaughts for an insightful conversation about autism acceptance, the 'Universal Workplace,' and ways to be an ally to neurodivergent colleagues. The panelists will share stories based on their lived experience and strategies grounded in their work at Ultranaughts.

Host & Moderator: J. David Hall, Corporate Consultant and Founder of [Neuroguides](#)

About Ultranaughts: Named a Fast Company World Changing Idea and MIT SOLVE Challenge Winner, Ultranaughts Inc. is a fully-remote quality engineering firm with teammates in 29 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the autism spectrum. Together, we are reimagining how a company hires talent, manages teams and develops careers, and designing a Universal Workplace that embraces diversity and serves as a replicable blueprint for other employers.



Webinar: Strengths-Based Planning for Worst-Case Scenarios
Person-Centered Planning in Disaster Preparedness

Monday, April 26

3:00 - 4:30 PM

[Click Here to Register](#)

The events of 2020 and early months of 2021 have upended and disrupted everyone's lives, but the impact on the lives of people with disabilities and older adults is especially pronounced. It is now clear that planning ahead for emergencies is a must-do, particularly for those who rely on long-term services and supports for their daily wellbeing. What does person-centered planning for disasters look like? And how do we ensure that disaster responses are as person-centered as possible? In this panel, experts will describe what we have learned from recent events so we can be better equipped to respond to future disasters in a person-centered manner. Experts will also weigh in on the difference between personal planning and community planning, and why personal planning is never a substitute for comprehensive whole-community emergency preparedness, disaster response and recovery, and truly inclusive community resilience.



NCAPPS webinars are live-captioned in English and Spanish. If you require any additional accommodations to participate please contact Connor Bailey (cBailey@hsri.org).

RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council

Upcoming Virtual Full Council Meeting Wednesday, April 28, 2021 12:30 - 4:30 PM

ACL recently announced the eighth Full Council Meeting of the RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council on April 28, 2021. The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the RAISE webpage prior to the meeting.

The virtual meeting will be open to the public. Registration is not required to attend via webinar. The webinar link will be posted on the [RAISE webpage](#), and open for access (live) 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time.



"Our nation's system of long term services and support could not function without the dedicated daily efforts of family caregivers. When the council convened for the first time in Washington one year ago it was a significant step and a broad national effort to improve the lives of our nearly 50 million family caregivers. My hope is that the initial report to Congress will present the voices of family caregivers in clear and compelling ways helping to breathe life into the recommendations and strategies we propose."

- Secretary of Health Human and Services Alex Azar, August 12, 2020

About the RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council

The council is charged with providing recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on effective models of both family caregiving and support to family caregivers, as well as improving coordination across federal government programs.

The law specified that the council must include up to 15 voting members who reflect the diversity of family caregivers and people who receive support, with at least one from each of the following constituencies:

- Caregivers
- Older adults who need long-term services and supports
- Individuals with disabilities
- Health care and social service providers
- Providers of long-term services and supports
- Employers
- Paraprofessional workers
- State and local officials
- Accreditation bodies
- Veterans

In addition, the council includes non-voting representatives from federal departments and agencies who play role in these issues.

ACL RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council Progress Report: [RAISE Family Caregivers Act: Progress Toward a National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers](#)

Relax Your Mind

The Word Search below is from [Taking Care of You Newsletter](#). Check out their meditation, breathing, and music is healing videos, and the resources in the [East Providence School District Virtual Calming Room](#).



RELAX	INHALE	PLOD	BLANKET	BLINK
BREATHE	EXHALE	STROLL	TEA	NAP
SLOW	REST	POTTER	HYDRATE	NOW
QUIET	RECLINE	PILLOW	SLEEP	SAFE
PULSE	RETIRE	CUSHION	SNOOZE	CALM

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

[SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER](#)

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from BHDDH, you can sign up on by clicking the link at left or on our website.

Go to <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/events/newsandupdates/> to see past quarterly newsletters and issues of DD News.

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.

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**

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!



This program is only for renters and their landlords.

Rhode Island has received \$200 million in rent relief funds from the federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program. This program provides rental and utility relief payments to help eligible renters maintain housing stability.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program can pay for rent and utilities owed back to April 1, 2020. The program also covers up to three (3) months of upcoming rent. Utilities may include electricity, water, sewer, trash, and heat. Renters may apply for help with paying for utilities even if they do not need help paying for rent. Applicants are eligible for up to a total of 12 months of assistance. In some instances, an additional 3 months may be available.

There is no monthly cap on eligible rent relief. The monthly amount is determined by the rent payment agreed to in the lease.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Tenant applicants **must meet all** of the following criteria to be considered for rent relief:

- **Household income must meet certain income limits.** Limits vary by location and household size. Income Limits are available online at RentReliefRI.com.
- **You must have qualified for unemployment benefits or have experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, OR experienced other financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19.**
- **Applicants must show they are at risk for becoming homeless or loss of housing.** This may include submitting past-due rent and utility bills or eviction notices at application.

APPLICATION AND PAYMENT PROCESS:

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through September 2022 via an online portal. Both landlords and tenants may initiate an application for the program. Information from both the tenant and landlord will be required to successfully complete an application. Assistance completing applications is available through a network of partners throughout the state.

Applicants will need the following documents:

Tenants

- Proof of residency
(ex; bank statement, utility bill, driver's license)
- Proof of income
(ex; wage statements, unemployment letter, 2020 tax return)
- Signed copy of your lease agreement or documentation showing tenancy
(a pattern of rent payment)
- Documentation demonstrating your rental/utility arrearage
(ex; past due utility bill, eviction notice, 5 day demand letter, communication from landlord)

Property Managers/Landlords

- W9 Form
- EIN or SSN Verification
(ex; tax filing, social security card)
- Rent arrearage documentation
(ex; ledger, past due notice)
- Proof of property ownership
(ex; mortgage statement, real estate tax bill, water/sewer bill)
- Tenant contact information
(ex; cell phone, email address)

*If you have received a notice from the court for an eviction proceeding against you, please have that documentation available.



Visit [RentReliefRI.com](https://rentreliefri.com) for additional details and information.

About RentReliefRI

RentReliefRI is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number ERA0013 awarded to the State of Rhode Island by the U.S. Department of Treasury.



2021 College Planning Forum Virtual Series

Join us for a free series of virtual presentations designed for RI **Students** who will be accessing support services as they transition to college, **Families and Educators**. Whether you're still deciding which college best suits you, plan to attend college locally or out of state--now is the time to gather knowledge to prepare for college success.

You could win an Amazon Echo Dot for attending along with other great prizes, books & resources!

****Each Presentation has its own registration.**

Thursday April 29, 2021

6:30pm-8:00pm

Jennifer Sullivan, author and founder of Fast Forward College Coaching

Get Ready For College: How Diverse Learners and Their Families Can Prepare for the Transition to College

Jennifer Sullivan, author and founder of Fast Forward College Coaching, will lead the discussion to help attendees successfully navigate the transition from high school to college with a focus on disability support in higher education. Topics include differences between high school and college, the variety of supports in college, disability disclosure, getting accommodations in college and what students and families can do in high school to prepare for college.

To Register click here: [April 29th session](#)

Thursday May 13, 2021

6:30pm-8:00pm

Kelly Charlebois, ATP Executive Director TechACCESS of RI

Assistive Technology on the College Campus and Virtual!

This session will discuss how assistive technology (AT) use should be addressed as part of your transition plan and what funding options are available for AT that will be used in the college setting. We will also discuss tools and strategies that can be used to support executive functioning, reading, writing and note-taking.

To Register click here: [May 13th session](#)

Thursday May 27, 2021

6:30pm-7:30pm

The College Panel

The College Panel is made up of young men and women who have disabilities that have successfully completed or are currently navigating college. They will share with you their personal experiences of accessing Disability Support Services, the college campus, courses and extracurricular activities. Find out what college is REALLY like. This is an exciting time for everyone. Listening to the College Panel will help in planning and will give tips to have a positive college experience.

To Register click here: [May 27th session](#)

Sponsored by:

RI Regional Transition Centers

RI Department of Education Office of Student, Community and Academic Support

RI Office of Rehabilitation Services