



Parents Serving as Direct Support Staff

DD Services has recently received questions about parents still being able to continue as DSPs. Under COVID, we obtained permission for parents to serve as DSPs. This remains in effect until further notice.

A request has been submitted to CMS for this to continue to be allowed permanently post-COVID, but a final response has not yet been received.

Reopening RI Next Phase: End to Indoor Masking for Vaccinated Individuals in Accordance with CDC Guidelines

Rhode Island's masking and social distancing requirements were updated on Tuesday, May 18th to align with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Rhode Island moved up its reopening timeline from May 28th to May 21st.

The CDC announced that fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where they are still required to do so by state officials, local officials, workplaces, or businesses. People are fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or two weeks after receiving a single dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

"I am proud that we have made enough progress vaccinating Rhode Islanders that we can safely move forward with aligning with CDC mask wearing and social distancing updates," said Governor Dan McKee. "More than anything, I see this shift as a strong call to get vaccinated. It is only safe to unmask if you are fully vaccinated. We've made vaccinations available across the state. If you haven't gotten yours yet, sign up today at vaccinateri.org."

Vaccinated people who want to err on the side of caution can still wear masks when around other people. If you have a condition or take medications that weaken your immune system, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should continue wearing your mask.

Who still has to wear a mask and practice social distancing?

- People who are not fully vaccinated. This includes children from 2 to 12 years of age. Children younger than 12 cannot be vaccinated.
- Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people who are..
 - in healthcare settings, including doctors' offices, hospitals, and nursing homes
 - traveling on public transportation (for example, planes, buses, trains, etc.)
 - in facilities that serve people experiencing homelessness, both residents and employees
 - employees and customers of businesses that require masks
- Teachers, school administrators, and staff should continue to wear masks while in school, even if they are fully vaccinated.

Guard Your COVID-19 Vaccination Card

After you get your COVID-19 vaccine, **keep your vaccination card safe** — scammers are using the COVID-19 pandemic to try to steal your personal information.

Don't share a photo of your COVID-19 vaccination card online or on social media. Scammers can use content you post, like your date of birth, health care details, or other personal information to steal your identity.

You should get a COVID-19 vaccination card at your first vaccine appointment. If you didn't, contact the provider site where you got vaccinated or your state health department to find out how to get a card.

If someone contacts you to buy or sell a vaccination card, it's a scam.

The federal Office of the Inspector General has more information and tips on [How to Protect Yourself](#) from COVID scams.

If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, [report it online](#) or call **800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477)**. TTY users can call 1-800-377-4950.

Governor McKee to Hold Community Conversations

Governor Dan McKee has initiated a series of virtual community conversations to help develop a vision and strategy for a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable Rhode Island.

The first community conversation was held on May 6 in order to discuss Rhode Island's recovery and future, and what Rhode Island will look like in 2030. To watch the conversation virtually, please visit Governor McKee's Facebook page [here](#) or [stream the video](#). This was the first in a series of events, and each will touch upon topics affecting the state's future. The second was on Thursday, May 13 and focused on issues related to housing. This recording has not yet been posted.

Additional conversations will be announced at a later date. To stay informed on upcoming events, please fill out the sign-up form at <https://www.ri2030.com/>.

LISC Leadership Forum with Governor Daniel McKee

Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 9:00 AM

[Register Here](#)

Join LISC on June 10 for the second Leadership Forum of 2021 to hear about Governor McKee's vision for Rhode Island. Discussion will include his plans for small business recovery, affordable housing improvements and workforce development goals. The program will start at 9:00 AM. If you have questions you'd like to ask, please send them in advance to eklinkenberg@lisc.org.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) equips communities with the capital, strategy, and the know-how to become places where people can thrive. Together with residents, partners, and local leaders, LISC Rhode Island forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity. LISC works to create great places to live, work, visit, do business, and raise families. For more information, visit <https://rilisc.org/>.

2021 College Planning Forum Virtual Series

Thursday May 27, 2021, 6:30 PM-7:30 PM

[Register Here](#)

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. The Panel will be accompanied by the Assistant Dean of Students, Accessibility & Inclusion from RI College to answer detained questions regarding Disability Services . 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. Find out what college is REALLY like.

View past **[2021 Virtual College Planning Forum Recordings:](#)**

- Get Ready for College: How Diverse Learners and Their Families Can Prepare for the Transition to College
- Assistive Technology on the College Campus and Virtual

Strengthening the Direct Care Workforce: Scaling Up and Sustaining Strategies That Work

Thursday, June 3, 2021, 12:00 – 1:30 PM

[Register Here](#)

Join Mathematica’s Center for Studying Disability for a webinar in which a leading researcher, policymaker, advocate, and direct care worker will discuss evidence-based policies and practices for strengthening the direct care workforce in the wake of the pandemic. They will highlight state and local initiatives that scaled up evidence-based recruitment, retention, training, and career advancement strategies, and discuss adaptations made in response to COVID-19. Panelists will also discuss a range of national and state policies that are needed to expand and sustain these efforts going forward.

Mental Health America’s 2021 Annual Virtual Conference: From Resiliency to Recovery

Thursday, June 10 – Saturday, June 12, 2021

Free

[Register Here](#)

Due to the ongoing need for mental health education, resources, and support, virtual registration for the 2021 Annual Conference is now available at no cost. You can attend this year’s virtual conference from June 10-12 for free! Mental health information is important right now, and MHA does not want cost to be a barrier to accessing this year’s content. Spots for the virtual conference are limited, so don’t wait to register. If you have any questions, please contact Catherine Reynolds at creynolds@mhanational.org.

See the conference agenda and more information **[here](#)**.

News from TechAccess RI

[Watch this video](#) to catch a glimpse of the amazing supports TechAccess can provide to people with disabilities using smart home technology!

Smart Home Technology for Rhode Islanders with Spinal Cord Injuries

TechACCESS recently received a grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation to integrate smart home technology supports into the homes of individuals with spinal cord injuries and other mobility impairments. They are looking for individuals who would be interested in participating.

The goal of the project, “**ParticipATing from Home**”, is to help individuals in Rhode Island with spinal cord injuries and other mobility impairments increase their independence through the use of smart home technology. TechAccess will be providing participants with technology that can help increase independence around the home over a 3-month loan period. The purpose of the loan period is to determine what specific smart home technology best fits each individual participant’s needs and abilities. At the conclusion of the loan period, TechAccess will also help identify potential funding sources to assist in acquiring the equipment that has been identified. Since privacy can be a concern with smart home technology, TechAccess will focus on ensuring privacy and security when setting up these devices for program participants.

During the loan period, there will be an initial home visit scheduled to set up and configure smart home devices. Support services will be provided throughout the course of the loan period. When possible, this will be done remotely through video conferencing. Depending on the support required, additional home visits may be necessary.

If you would like to participate in this project or know someone who might, please complete or share the [Participation Survey](#)!

AAC Voice Output Devices and Smart Home Technology

By now we’re all familiar with smart speakers such as the Amazon Alexa/Echo and Google Home devices. They’ve added convenience, accessibility, organization, and entertainment features that we can activate simply by talking to them. Among many other things, we can ask for the weather, set reminders, hear the joke of the day, and make phone calls. With a little extra equipment, we can control devices in our home environments such as lights, the television, and even keep track of who is at the door.

Did you know that smart speakers will understand and follow commands produced by a voice output device? It’s true! You can use any voice output device ranging from a one button/one message device all the way up to complex dynamic display devices to control smart speakers. You can use your AbleNet Step-by-Step to turn the lights on and off, your Novachat to ask for tomorrow’s weather, or your PRC Accent to make a voice call/drop in with other smart speakers. Give it a try!



Using Smart Technology for Physical Access

Making homes and tools accessible for individuals with decreased motor skills and physical access difficulties is critical to foster independence. Making homes and devices more accessible has become easier due to smart technology. Examples include:

- Amazon Echo or Echo Dot can be used to manage your devices using your voice. You can set up alarms, reminders, timers, and shopping lists. In addition, you can play music, listen to books and search the internet.
- Smart Locks are an alternative to keypads especially if you need to allow someone to enter your home like a nurse or therapist without giving anyone a code or password.
- Smart Doorbells allow for motion-sensor cameras to let you know who is at the door before allowing them to enter.
- Smart Thermostats will allow you to set the temperature even when you are not home by using your smartphone to control it.
- Smart Lighting will allow you to turn your lights on and off or even be set for specific times of the day.
- Smart Blinds and Shades will allow you to operate your window coverings with the use of your smartphone.
- Smart Garage Door Opener can be controlled through compatible smart add-ons.

There are many smart technology tools available to help individuals with physical disabilities have more independence and help foster happy and healthy lifestyles.



2021 Healthy Brain Webinar Series for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Webinars are free and held on Webex platform. Webinars and materials will be recorded and archived on YouTube. CEUs are not offered for the webinars. For disability accommodations email Jasmina Sisirak (jsisirak@uic.edu).

Brain Health Across the Lifespan for People with I/DD May 25th, 2021, 2:00 - 3:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

This webinar will present best practice and policies that can support healthy habits for brain health among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan. This will cover what is known about the trajectory of healthy brain aging for persons with I/DD and how good brain health can help people realize their abilities and optimize their cognitive, emotional, psychological and behavioral functioning to cope with life situations. Considerations about aging with a disability and with dementia will be discussed. Lastly, strategies to mitigate Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias for people with I/DD and their caregivers will be discussed through the six pillars of health (physical exercise, food and nutrition, medical health, sleep and relaxation, mental fitness, social interaction).

Nutrition and Brain Health for People with I/DD June 29th, 2021, 2:00 - 3:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

This webinar will focus on the role of nutrition in brain health across the lifespan. It includes guidelines for reducing risks for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in people with I/DD and their caregivers. The webinar will also discuss the importance of physical activity, sleep and relaxation, and social interactions to an individual's overall health, and how to enhance these lifestyle factors. Practical dietary principles will be discussed. It should be noted that although certain nutrients help with brain function and disease treatment, what matters is not one food or one nutrient but the total dietary pattern individualized to each person's needs. The nutrients will be translated to culturally appropriate food choices.

The Healthy Brain Initiative for People with I/DD May 4th, 2021 Session, [Recording Available Here](#)

This session introduces the Healthy Brain Initiative, which aims to enhance supports and quality of care and address misconceptions that Alzheimer's disease and various types of dementias are a natural course of aging for people with IDD.

Additional Healthy Brain Resources for People with IDD and their Supports <https://www.healthmattersprogram.org/hbi-for-people-with-idd-resources/>

Healthy Brain Webinar Series is presented by the HealthMatters Program (<https://www.healthmattersprogram.org>), Department of Disability and Human Development, College of Applied Health Sciences, University of Illinois at Chicago in partnership with National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices (NTG) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Sex Talk for Self-Advocates Webinar #9: Sexual Self-Advocacy

Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 2:00 - 3:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

Join the AUCD Sexual Health Special Interest Group for the final Sex Talk for Self-Advocates Webinar #9: Sexual Self-Advocacy on May 26, 2021, from 2:00 - 3:30 PM. The expert hosts of sexuality educators and self-advocates have invited a panel to discuss questions and topics related to advocating for one's right to have relationships and sexuality as well as how to advocate for oneself within relationships.

This webinar is part of an on-going series that addresses self-advocate questions about relationships and sexuality. This series is a great learning opportunity for self-advocates, professionals, and paraprofessionals working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to understand sexual health needs better.

This webinar will be held on the Zoom Platform. For disability accommodations, email aucdinfo@aucd.org.

View previous webinars in the series:

1. [Relationships](#)
2. [Sex and Intimacy](#)
3. [Safe Sex Practices](#)
4. [Relationship Experiences](#)
5. [Birth Control](#)
6. [LGBTQ+ Relationships](#)
7. [Marriage](#)
8. [Parenting](#)

Additional Resources

The links below provide resources on a wide range of topics including dating, healthy relationships, sexual orientation, sexual health, and articles of interest for individuals with disabilities, parents, guardians, family members, professionals, and educators.

- [Oregon Health & Science University UCEDD and Sexual Health Equity for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(SHEIDD\) Project Sexual Health Resource Hub](#)
- [Wyoming Institute for Disabilities- Sexual and Reproductive Health Resources](#)
- [Illinois Institute on Disability and Human Development - Sexuality and Disability Consortium](#)
- [In My Voice: Sexual Self-Advocacy \(video\)](#)
- [Sexual Self Advocacy \(video\)](#)
- [Disabled People and Sexuality \(video\)](#)
- [AUCD Statement in Response to NPR's "Abused & Betrayed" Series](#)

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a membership organization that supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. Network members consist of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Programs, and Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers (IDDRC)



Advocates in Action RI
Rhode Island's 2021 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference:
Hot Topics and Cool Ideas

Thursday, June 24 – Friday, June 25, 2021

[Register Here](#)

Advocates in Action RI is excited to host Rhode Island's 2021 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference, "Hot Topics and Cool Ideas"!

This year's 2-day event will be virtual through Zoom on Thursday, June 24th, and Friday, June 25th, and we're thrilled to inform you that there's **NO COST** to attend!

While the Conference is free, everyone who plans to join the fun needs to register at this link:



[https://tinyurl.com/2021ConferenceRegistration \[tinyurl.com\]](https://tinyurl.com/2021ConferenceRegistration)

Giving Back

HUGE congratulations to Eddy for completing his first day of volunteering at Matthewson Street Church! Eddy was the ultimate utility man in the kitchen on a recent Sunday morning, doing everything from wrapping the silverware, cooking scrambled eggs, and plating all of the to-go orders so that they could be delivered to those in need. Eddy, you're an absolute natural in the kitchen and your community thanks you for your dedication to giving back!



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.

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

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

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

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

**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!

Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Overview

Registration Now Open!
Work Incentive sessions for SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries

SSI Sessions:
June 2, 12-1 pm

SSDI Sessions:
May 26, 12-1 pm
June 23, 12-1 pm

*Sessions will be offered on Zoom
with subtitles in English.*



REGISTER ONLINE at <https://bit.ly/2KkUCVQ>

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, professionals). These sessions will be of value to anyone looking for a basic introduction to disability-related work incentives and/or has related questions. Along with providing an overview of basic SSI or SSDI and related information, these sessions provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the following topics:

- Ticket to Work
- SSI or 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.

NOTE: These sessions will not address how to apply for SSI or SSDI benefits.

TIP: Unsure if you receive SSI or SSDI? You can confirm which benefit you have at <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>

Presented by Certified Work Incentives Counselors.

REGISTRATION IS LIMITED! Advance registration is required. 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.

Accommodation requests or registration questions: Contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu.

Session questions: Contact Vicki Ferrara at vferrara@ric.edu.

