



BHDDH Will Be Closed on Labor Day

BHDDH offices will be closed for Labor Day on Monday, September 6th

Labor Day was created in 1894 as a way to acknowledge and pay tribute to the workforce for all that they have done to make our country prosperous and strong.



Celebrate Labor Day and Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Excerpted from the Arc of Massachusetts

This Labor Day, as we celebrate the contributions that workers have made to this country since its founding, take a moment to think about employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD). People with I/DD should have the right to work in the community and receive supports to help them in their employment. People with disabilities need to be supported to make informed choices about their work and careers and have the resources to seek, obtain, and be successful in inclusive community employment.

People with disabilities want to contribute, to make a difference in the workplace, to earn a paycheck. But historically, their employment opportunities were limited at best, and often they were hidden away or relegated to back rooms, despite ample evidence that working alongside people who do not have disabilities enhances meaningfulness and wellbeing for all. Working in the community can often be a pivotal step toward greater inclusion. Working together allows people with and without disabilities to see that they have far more in common than they may have thought.

So, this Labor Day, as you are celebrating those who built this country, please take a moment to think about how people with intellectual or developmental disabilities can contribute to building the future.

New COVID-19 Materials for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

COVID-19 is challenging to explain, live through, and communicate about. The materials on this page were created to help make communicating about COVID-19 a little easier. Choose from videos, posters, social stories, and interactive activities to best meet your communication needs.

These materials ([also available in Spanish](#)) will cover 5 basic topics: getting the COVID-19 shot, washing your hands, getting a COVID-19 test, as well as wearing a mask and keeping a safe distance until you have gotten your shot.

Important Change for SSI Recipients & Applicants

The Social Security Administration (SSA) recently changed their rules about how pandemic-related financial assistance can affect an individual's eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or monthly SSI benefit amount. Previously, SSA had been counting many types of assistance as income and resources for SSI purposes, resulting in individuals having their SSI benefits reduced or suspended, or having their applications for SSI benefits denied. However, due to the severity of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, SSA has decided they will not count most types of pandemic-related financial assistance against SSI eligibility or benefit amount.

[For more information, see this document](#) from the [National Center on Law & Elder Rights](#).

What is Self-Direction? Video



Self-direction is a model of long-term care that allows people to receive support in their homes and communities, the way they want it.

Watch [this video](#) from [Applied Self Direction](#) to learn more.

Person-Centered Practices Webinar: Empowering Staff and Improving Lives

Thursday, September 30, 2021

2:00 PM

[Register Here](#)

Person-Centered Organizations consistently report higher levels of satisfaction for the people they support as well as those that provide support. That's not surprising. When staff understand, capture, and share valuable information in an easy-to-understand format, communication improves, anxiety decreases, and lives just get better for everyone. In this free webinar, learn about proven strategies, skills, and tools to help agencies integrate Person-Centered Practices into the fabric of their organization to empower staff and improve lives.

This webinar is presented by [ANCOR](#) and [IntellectAbility](#).



**Save the Date! Special Guest Judy Heumann at
the next Emerging Advocates Meeting
Thursday, September 23
[Register Here](#)**

Don't miss this meeting of the Think College Emerging Advocates on **Thursday, September 23, featuring special guest, Judy Heumann.**

Judy Heumann is an internationally recognized leader in the disability community and a lifelong civil rights advocate for people with disabilities. Her memoir [Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist](#), was published in 2020. She also is a part of a film called [Crip Camp](#) which shares the story of disabled teens at camp in the 1970's and how they helped sparked the disability civil rights movement. She has been featured in numerous documentaries on the history of the disability rights movement and she delivered [a TED talk](#) in the spring of 2018. Judy was a founding member of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living which helped launch the independent living movement. She also co-founded the World Institute on Disability. Judy has helped to pass many important laws for people with disabilities including the Americans with Disabilities Act. She continues to work on disability issues in government at the Department of Education, the State Department, and at other organizations including the Ford Foundation. Judy is active in the disability community with young leaders and currently hosts a podcast called [The Heumann Perspective](#) where she interviews disabled changemakers and their allies.

Everyone is welcome to attend this free event. [Registration](#) is required. For more information about Think College or this event, go to <https://thinkcollege.net/>.

Keep Building: Better Care Better Jobs Act

By Nicole LeBlanc from [AUCD POLICY TALK](#).

Writing by both established and emerging leaders in the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) network and disability community about the complexities of disability policy

Our service system must be reformed into a pro-active system that enables people with disabilities and their families to get access to HCBS without being put on waitlists for decades, or needing to be in crisis, to get services. Community living has been shown to be safer than segregated settings, such as day programs, group homes, institutions, and so forth. In addition, when people like me live in the community we often live longer and have better health, life outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic proves this when we look at COVID-19 risk in segregated settings compared to those who self-direct their services who may have lower risk of the virus.

As America moves towards pandemic recovery, it is essential now more than ever that we make massive investments in expanding access to home and community based services (HCBS) for kids and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. No one—regardless of disability severity—should fall through the cracks.

As we reform our system, it is essential that we move from a systems-centered model to a truly person-centered system that supports self-determination, self-direction, individualized support in the community.

In order to make this happen, we must invest in affordable accessible housing, public transit, and a highly trained Direct Support Workforce. A sustainable Direct Support Workforce would be paid livable wages and decent benefits, such as paid sick days, leave, vacation days, tuition reimbursement, and access to paid training on a variety of topics, including autism, effective job coaching, self-determination, self-advocacy, health disparities, health promotion, and much more.

Being paid a livable wage is a human right. A nation is judged by how a society treats its most vulnerable. A long-term care expansion is essential given that COVID-19 is going to lead to more people becoming disabled due to Long COVID and other applicable social determinants of health. Disability is a natural part of the human experience, and we must plan for a society that can accommodate the challenges that come with being disabled.

Expanding access to HCBS and allowing us to buy into it and access HCBS via Medicaid state plan would make my life easier. When I lived in VT and got HCBS services, I self-directed my waiver and found self-direction to be very empowering. It is vital that we expand self-direction available to support people like me who self-direct their services in hiring and retaining high quality job coaches and support staff. These resources are critical in keeping my anxiety and stress to a minimum.

Expanding HCBS for all adults with autism would allow people like me to get job coaching that is critical to my success as a professional Disability Rights Advocate when it comes to various work tasks, such as drafting meeting agendas, dealing with computer malfunctions, editing written briefs on challenging topics (i.e. doctor house call interviews). In addition to things like facilitating meetings, organizing files, preparing presentations, editing, writing things in plain English, managing deadlines to name a few.

As a person with autism, anxiety, ADHD, and insomnia, having access to HCBS would bring significant ease in that it would allow me to get support with things like cleaning, budgeting, organizing, technology support, dealing with life transitions, stress management, medical management, managing public benefits, transportation to places not easily accessible via public transit, resolving tax issues, and other complex problem that come up on a day-to-day basis.

Self-Direction is one of the safest models in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Nicole LeBlanc has a keen ability and interest in public policy and excels at communicating the needs of people with developmental disabilities to public officials. She is currently the Self-Advocate Advisor at TASH. In 2018, Nicole graduated from the VT LEND program. She was the first self-advocate to complete it in Vermont. She has presented keynotes on the dignity of risk at statewide self-advocacy conferences in Alabama, Missouri and Rhode Island. In summer of 2019, Nicole won the David Joyce Advocate of the Year award for outstanding policy advocacy on Capitol Hill.



Giant Rubber Ducky Is A Mystery



A giant rubber ducky floats in Belfast Harbor, Tuesday, Aug, 17, 2021, in Belfast, Maine. Harbor Master Katherine Given says it's a mystery who put it there, but that the 25-foot-tall duck doesn't pose a navigational hazard so there's no rush to shoo it away. (New England Cable News/Kenn Tompkins via AP)

The sudden appearance of a giant rubber duck in a Maine harbor is a whimsical whodunit that's defied sleuths so far.

A 25-foot inflatable yellow duck named Joy appeared in Belfast Harbor over the weekend of August 14-15, and it's a mystery who put it there. About a week later, it disappeared as mysteriously as it arrived, likely because of concerns about Tropical Storm Henri, Belfast Harbor Master Katherine Given was quoted as saying in the Bangor Daily News.

Despite the weather concerns, Given said, people were upset to see the duck leave the harbor. The duck's arrival in the harbor was, and remains, a mystery. But Given said she received an anonymous letter from someone claiming to be responsible.

"JOY simply is fowl play," the letter said. "Nothing embodies childhood more than being in a warm bath with your rubber ducky – the joy of not having a care in the world other than having to remember to wash behind our ears."

Will the ducky return? That's not known — but the letter alluded to the duck landing somewhere else after Belfast.

Contacting DD Staff

See the full Division Contact List attached to this newsletter.

Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00
for questions or support

(401) 462-3421

Para español, llame

(401) 462-3014

Send general questions to the
AskDD email address.

BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

Please do not email critical issues.

Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates
and newsletters from BHDDH, you can
[sign up here](#) or on our website. Go to

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



SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER

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

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



Job Seekers Club

Who wants to work?



Calling All Job Seekers!

Please Join us for a Job Seekers Zoom meeting on Wednesday September 29th from 12-1:00pm for a discussion on redesigning our future meetings and club activities. If you are interested contact Jay MacKay at Gerard.mackay@bhddh.ri.gov or call: 401-462-5279.

Please share with a friend or two!





OSCIL CARES

Technology Assistance Program

Are you feeling isolated or disconnected since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic? Are you a Rhode Island resident and have a disability? Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) may be able to provide you with the technology and training you need to connect to activities such as telehealth, online purchase and delivery of groceries and health/medical supplies. Also to connect to friends and family via email, texting and social media and be able to access information online that will help you in your daily life.



Here are some examples of devices and training (based on the individual's interest & technology needs):

- Apple i-Pad
- Apple i-Phone
- Android Phone
- Laptop & Desktop computers
- Apps for smart phones and tablets
- Smart home technology such as Alexis
- WIFI Hot Spots and data plans

Who is eligible?

- Rhode Island Residents with a disability.
- Must attest to financial hardship due to COVID-19
- Undergo assessment by OSCIL Staff and be approved.

How to get started:

- Call us at 401-738-1013 or
 - Send email to info@oscil.org or
 - By Video Phone: 401-244-7792
- and mention that you are interested in learning more about OSCIL's Technology and Training program.



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This program is made possible by Federal funding from the CARES Act.

A guide for caregivers

COVID-19 is challenging to explain, live through, and communicate about. As a caregiver, you work hard to help the person you care for stay healthy and safe during this difficult time. These materials were created to help you share important information about COVID-19 — and make the tough moments a little easier.

We've created videos, posters, social stories, and cut-out activities so you can choose the materials that work best for your situation. The materials cover 5 basic topics:

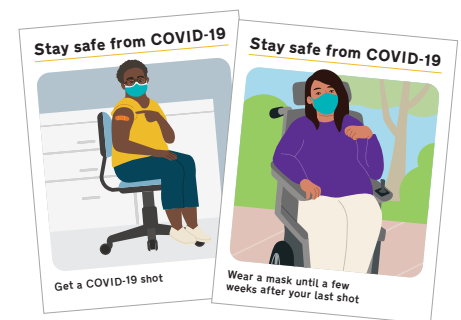
- Getting a COVID-19 shot
- Wearing a mask until a few weeks after your last COVID-19 shot
- Keeping a safe distance until a few weeks after your last COVID-19 shot
- Washing your hands
- Getting a COVID-19 test

Videos

You can watch the videos together to visualize specific ways to stay safe — like wearing a mask and social distancing until a few weeks after your last COVID-19 shot — and apply these ideas to your own daily routine.

Posters

The posters can help the person you care for remember to practice healthy habits. Post them in the kitchen, living room, or other places where you spend time together. You can also share them in schools, workplaces, and other group settings.



Social stories

You can read the social stories together to reinforce habits like wearing a mask and learn what to expect in new situations, like getting a COVID-19 test or vaccine. Some of the social stories are interactive, so you can fill in the blanks together and personalize the story. For example, you could use the “How I keep a safe distance” social story to remind the person you care for to practice social distancing at their workplace or school.

Cut-out activities

These activities are a great way to review the steps of handwashing or get ready for a COVID-19 test. Cut out the pictures together and help the person you care for place the steps in order.



Tips for talking about COVID-19

Talking about COVID-19 can be hard — but it's important to make sure the person you care for understands how to stay safe. Below are some tips that other caregivers have found helpful in having those important conversations.

Model and explain what you're doing to stay safe.

When you take steps like wearing a mask or washing your hands, try pointing out and talking about what you're doing. For example, as you're putting your mask on, say "I'm putting my mask on now before I go outside."



Show empathy by acknowledging the hard things.

Some ways to prevent COVID-19, like wearing a mask and getting a vaccine, can be hard — especially for people with sensory challenges.

Show that you understand what they're going through. Then, remind them that everyone needs to take steps to stay safe from COVID-19. When possible, see if there are small changes that could make it easier — for example, trying out a few different styles of masks.



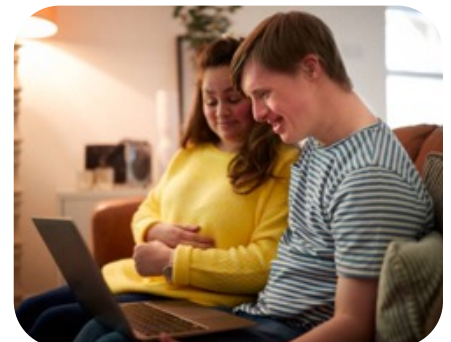
Give safe distance reminders.

When you're getting ready to leave home, remind the person you care for to keep a safe distance (until a few weeks after their last COVID-19 shot). Be sure to use the same words every time. For example, you could say, "When we go out, keep a safe distance between yourself and other people."



Identify and acknowledge changes in routine.

When COVID-19 interrupts your plans or routines, clearly acknowledge what's changing and explain why. For example: "We can't go out to dinner with Uncle Marcus right now. I know you miss hanging out with him, but it's not safe because of COVID-19." If possible, suggest a safer alternative like a video call.



Explain what to expect ahead of time.

When you're getting ready to go to a new place, explain what to expect and point out anything that might be different than usual because of COVID-19.

For example, as you're getting ready for a doctor's appointment, you could mention that everyone will keep a safe distance in the waiting room, and the doctor will also wear a mask. Social stories can be a great way to prepare for new situations like these.



Ease their worries.

It's normal to feel scared or anxious about COVID-19 — especially when there's so much that is out of our control. If the person you care for is feeling worried, remind them that there are things they can do to stay safe: get a COVID-19 shot, wear a mask and keep a safe distance until 2 weeks after their last shot, and wash their hands.



Helpful resources

- Get the latest information about COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/).
- Learn ways to cope with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html).
- If you're a professional caregiver, CDC has more tips to help you stay safe from COVID-19: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html).