



Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Recognition Week

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) during this, DSP Recognition Week. This is a week to show how grateful we are for the dedicated workforce that assists individuals with disabilities in navigating their world.

Our department oversees 34 agencies who employ thousands of dedicated workers who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It is so vital to honor the dedication of DSPs during these trying times.

DSPs value the full participation of people with I/DD in all aspects of community life through the provision of person-centered supports. You assist individuals in leading the life they choose. Sometimes, a DSP is the first to introduce an individual to their community through pathways and opportunities. You also calm fears, reassure families, and celebrate accomplishments. A DSP must know when to lead, when to follow, and when to fade into the background. That’s a skill you can’t teach but instead learn on the job.

We are fortunate in Rhode Island to have committed and devoted DSPs. I want to personally thank every one of you. Your contributions are life-changing by promoting the abilities and the potential of the individuals with whom you work.

Please know that you have the commitment of BHDDH in your work as you provide the best possible services and assistance to those you support.

With much appreciation for all you do.

Rick

Richard Charest
 BHDDH Director



DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL
 RECOGNITION WEEK
 SEPTEMBER 12-18, 2021



Rate Increase for DSPs Working for Self-Directed Individuals

The General Assembly recently approved an increase in funding for adults receiving services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). The intent of the funding is to increase wages and / or benefits for direct support professionals (DSPs) providing services to participants. DDD established a goal for all DSPs to be paid an hourly wage of at least \$15.75.

The expectation is that your DSPs will be paid at least \$15.75 per hour after the new rates are applied. DDD is asking fiscal intermediaries (FI) to look at cases where DSPs are being paid less than \$15.75. DDD will work with the self-directing individual who employs these DSPs to see if an exception is appropriate for their DSP wages.

You will not need to do a new purchase order for this wage change. The wage change can be accomplished through completing the change form provided by your FI. The fiscal intermediary provider will require time to implement the change.

DDD recognizes that the hourly standard of at least \$15.75 has generally been met by the self-directing community. We are pleased that the wage increase was approved, and hope that it will help you to recruit and keep staff.

If you have questions or need any help with the wage increase, please reach out to your Social Caseworker.

Nominate Someone You Know (or Yourself) for the US Department of Labor's Hall of Honor!

Throughout this pandemic, workers on the front lines have helped keep us safe, fed and moving forward – and we're deeply grateful. To honor the tireless efforts of these workers, the US Department of Labor is inducting Essential Workers of the COVID-19 Pandemic into the Hall of Honor, and needs your help with nominees. Please take a look at [the 2 minute video](#) from Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh about this effort.

In honor of **DSP Recognition Week**, this is a great way to honor all DSPs. And in preparation for **National Disability Employment Awareness month in October**, this would also be a great way to honor all people with disabilities who worked through COVID 19.

Please take the time to [complete the form](#) to nominate an essential worker to be recognized in the US Department of Labor's Hall of Honor.

Tracey Cunningham and Jay MacKay will be happy to help with this. Let's flood the story board with all the great Rhode Island stories out there!

In Honor of the Support Staff
THANK YOU!
Direct Support Professionals Recognition week

At the Division



Teresa Pereira, a DD social caseworker since 2019, accepted a position in Licensing at DCYF. Her last day at BHDDH was August 27th.

Joanne Prior, a DD social casework supervisor, has accepted a new position within the BHDDH Quality Management Division, effective September 5, 2021. Joanne will be an Associate Administrator within the Quality Assurance unit, which is responsible for investigations into allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and mistreatment.



Brenda Centracchio, a social caseworker with DD, retired in May 2021 after 29 years of state service.

Jennifer Gouveia, started as a new social caseworker on August 1, 2021. She would like to introduce herself:

Hello! My name is Jennifer Gouveia, I began working at BHDDH as a Social Caseworker in August. My first job after graduating college was at a provider agency. I started there as a direct support staff providing community based supports to adults with various disabilities. After 2 years, I moved from direct support staff to become a clinical assistant under the Director of Clinical Services within that agency. Prior to coming to work at BHDDH I worked at DCYF for nearly 7 years in the Family Service Unit in the Bristol Region. While I truly enjoyed working with the children and families at DCYF I am excited for this change and very happy to be here!



LTSS: Personal Need Allowance Increase

Another success from the last legislative session is the increase to the Personal Need Allowance (PNA) for older Rhode Island adults and/or those with disabilities currently accessing Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).

Effective September 1, 2021, the PNA will increase from \$1,093 to \$2,382, or 300 percent of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. This means that current LTSS HCBS customers may see their current Cost of Care (COC) reduce significantly or be \$0.

These customers can now use this savings toward basic living expenses such as nutritious food, rent and other essential necessities to support their ability to continue to live safely in the community and in the comfort of their homes.

Current LTSS HCBS customers and their providers will soon receive a Benefit Decision notice with their updated, new cost of care.

For more information, visit <https://myoptions.ri.gov/> or call (401) 462-4205.

New Podcast Launched by Graduate of the RI DD Council's Self-Employment Business Class Series

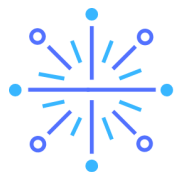
Nathan Markley, recent participant in the RI Developmental Disabilities Council's (RIDDC) Self Employment Business Class Series, has launched [a podcast](#) featuring participants from the Self-Employment Class. RIDDC is sharing his video podcasts, which spotlight and promote the various new business ventures of the new small business owners.

These interviews and podcast episodes are produced by Nathan Markley. They represent his perspectives, experiences, and new business venture. Check out the featured guests and see what Nathan has in store for future episodes.

[Listen Here on Spotify](#)

[Listen Here on Apple Podcasts](#)

[Watch Here on YouTube](#)



Self Employment Online Business Development Classes

FREE!

**Learn everything you need to start
and grow your small business.**

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) offers free self-employment business classes. The program consists of eight classes, designed for launching, managing and growing a business. Additionally, technical assistance is provided to support the small business vendors.

To register or for more information, call:
Claudia Lowe at 738-3960 or
Sue Babin at 523-2300



National Grid Discount Program

National Grid has always had beneficial discount programs for its gas and electric customers, including all enrolled in SNAP, SSI, LIHEAP, RI Works, GPA or Medicaid.

In September 2019, National Grid raised the discount rates to 25 percent off your bill for those receiving SNAP, SSI or LIHEAP and 30 percent off your bill for those receiving RI Works, GPA or Medicaid. To enroll, customers had to apply to National Grid and provide documentation that they were participants in most of our benefit programs.

After a year of working together with National Grid, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has successfully auto-enrolled DHS customers through a data match between the two. Now, 12,446 DHS customers will see this discount on their next bill because of the hard work of many at DHS. Including LIHEAP participants, more than 40,000 DHS customer households are enrolled in the discount programs and individuals and families will save significantly on their energy bills.

This project will continue with regular data matches going forward. A future addition will be to include Medicaid-only DHS customers in the data match.

See the [National Grid Discount Rates Webpage](#) for more information.

Assistive Technology (AT) Expo 2021

Friday, September 17th, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

[Register Here](#)

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, MassMATCH and Easterseals have collaborated to offer you this FREE Assistive Technology Training and Expo.

Target Audience: People with disabilities of all ages, their family members, professionals working with such individuals with disability and anyone interested in learning about assistive technology.

Training Sessions: Workshop format will consist of hour long training sessions exploring Assistive Technology devices and services for people with a wide range of disabilities. The focus will be on AT for employment, education and community living. See complete session schedule in the agenda section.

AT expo: The Expo component of the event will highlight approximately 20 vendors/providers of assistive technology products and services in the areas of hearing, learning, motor and visual impairments.

Registration: Anyone interested in participating must register to receive the confirmation email and other details. All are welcome.

Cost is FREE!! There will be a leadership board aspect of the event. Prizes will be provided to the top 2 participants.

For more information and the agenda, go to <https://atexpo2021.vfairs.com/>

RIPIN Invites You To An In-Person Community Listening Session

Wednesday, September 22nd, 4:00–6:00 PM

at The imPOSSIBLE DREAM, 575 Centreville Road, Warwick, RI

[Click Here to RSVP for the Listening Session](#)

RIPIN is developing a strategic plan to guide the organization for the next 3-5 years, and they have been hearing from consumers, families, and partners from all across Rhode Island.

RIPIN will be holding an in-person listening session on Wednesday, September 22 at 4:00 PM. This is a chance to share your perspective on how RIPIN can best serve our communities. Sign up today to help shape the future of RIPIN!

Please note: Masks will be required at this in-person event.

Supporting Adults with IDD to Safely Engage in Online Social Relationships

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Social media, dating app, and internet use can be beneficial for connecting with others. It can also be risky. In this webinar, you will learn strategies and resources to assist adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) in safely navigating these platforms to create and maintain meaningful relationships.

Please be aware this registration is a two-step process:

Step One: [click here to register for this event](#)

Step Two: once you have registered, you will get a Zoom link where you'll need to enter your contact information again.

If you need registration assistance, please contact Laura Thorn at lthorn@aaidd.org

Hosted by AAIDD.

Cost: \$10 for non-members.



Disability Rights Rhode Island Wants to Know What Issues Matter Most to You

Each year, Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI) seeks public input regarding our Focus Areas. Please take a moment to fill out the brief 3-question survey from the link below.

DRRI appreciates your assistance in our efforts to identify and focus on advocacy services that will enable people with disabilities to live independent, productive lives as fully included members of the community.

[Click Here to take the survey](#)

Disability Rights
RHODE ISLAND

Pandemic-Related Disaster Assistance for SSI Recipients

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

2:00-3:00 PM

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.

[This training \[default.salsalabs.org\]](https://default.salsalabs.org) will review the guidance issued by SSA on what types of financial assistance they now consider pandemic-related disaster assistance, what steps they will be taking to restore individuals' SSI benefits, and what advocates can do to assist clients with contacting SSA to access or restore SSI benefits.

Presenter: Kate Lang, Justice in Aging

Additional Resources—Updated Economic Impact Payment Guides:

- [Nursing Home Residents, Medicaid, and Stimulus Checks: What You Need to Know \[default.salsalabs.org\]](https://default.salsalabs.org)
- [Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services \(HCBS\) and Stimulus Checks: What You Need to Know \[default.salsalabs.org\]](https://default.salsalabs.org)
- [Stimulus Payments and Representative Payees: What You Need to Know \[default.salsalabs.org\]](https://default.salsalabs.org)
- [Important Change for SSI Recipients and Applicants \[default.salsalabs.org\]](https://default.salsalabs.org)

Closed captioning will be available on this webcast. A link with access to the captions will be shared through GoToWebinar's chat box shortly before the webcast start time.

This training will be presented in a **WEBCAST** format to accommodate more participants. Due to the high volume of participants, computer audio will be the only option to listen to the presentation. No telephone call-in number will be provided. Please plan accordingly.

This webcast will be recorded and available on our website shortly after the presentation. The recording and training materials will also be emailed to all registrants within a few days after the training.

Self-Directed Supports Network Zoom Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

7:00 - 8:30 PM

[Register Here](#)

A network of individual and family members using self-directed supports in RI

Are you an individual or family member currently using self-directed supports through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (i.e. Options, Works for Me, My Choice, or proPartnerships)?

Are you considering self-directed supports?

Would you like a chance to meet with other people or their families using self-directed supports?

Join us to share ideas about.....

- Designing a plan to support what you need
- Recruiting and keeping good staff
- Connecting to opportunities in your community & more....
- Coping with COVID

Use the link above to register. This meeting will take place online using Zoom. Soon after you register, you will receive an email confirmation with complete details and directions for using Zoom.

For more information, or to join the mailing list, contact:

Claire Rosenbaum, Sherlock Center

Phone: 401-456-4732

Email: crosenbaum@ric.edu

Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL)

Caregiver Support Group

Saturday, October 30 at 1:00 PM

OSCIL will start a monthly support group for caregivers/parents of adults with developmental disabilities in October on a Saturday, October 30, 1:00 pm. OSCIL is located at 1800 Post Road, (Airport Plaza, right off the highway,) Warwick.

Please contact info@oscil.org to sign up.

This in-person opportunity is currently for caregivers only. E-mail info@oscil.org if interested as space is limited.

September is Suicide Prevention Month

There are an average of 123 suicides each day in this country. It's the tenth leading cause of death in America — second leading for ages 25-34, and third leading for ages 15-24. In order to create awareness and strengthen the fight against suicide, the entire month of September is Suicide Prevention Month.

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month—a time to shed light on this highly taboo and stigmatized topic. Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. AAIDD has a recorded webinar on [Understanding and Preventing Suicide in People with IDD](#).

Different life experiences affect a person's risk for suicide. For example, suicide risk is higher among people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence. Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, and other emotional or financial stresses are known to raise the risk for suicide. People may be more likely to experience these feelings during a crisis like a pandemic.

However, there are ways to protect against suicidal thoughts and behaviors. For example, support from family and community, or feeling connected, and having access to in-person or virtual counseling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like the pandemic.



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

Working While Disabled—Work Incentives Sessions

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

Work & Benefits—An Introduction

September 29, 12-1 pm

SSI Overview:

October 13, 12-1 pm

SSDI Overview:

November 17, 12-1 pm

YOUTH Work Incentives:

November 4, 6:30-7:30 pm



All 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. The Work and Benefits Introduction is for those starting to think about working and have general questions. The SSI or SSDI sessions provide details about the specific work incentives and other related information. All 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.



PERSON-CENTERED THINKING FACILITATOR TRAINING

Online Course

September 28 – December 7, 2021

This free course is available to those supporting persons with I/DD living in R.I.

Register by September 21, 2021

Course Description:

Rhode Island is in the process of expanding and refining Person-Centered practices throughout the state. One of the most important components of Person-Centered Thinking is the facilitator who advises and assists the person to actively participate in developing a plan for all domains of their life.

This course focuses on the knowledge and skills a facilitator needs to help individuals to:

- Prepare for the plan
- Develop the plan
- Implement the Plan

To get the most from this course, it is recommended that learners identify an individual with whom they might engage in person-centered planning. The course will provide the opportunity to practice the skills and knowledge learned and to reflect on learner experiences.

Course Requirements:

Completion of the 11 online modules, assignments and participation in four (4) group sessions via Zoom is required to earn a certificate of completion.

Course Details:

The Sherlock Center is now offering **Person-Centered Thinking Facilitator Training** as an online course. The next course runs from **September 28–December 7, 2021**. Learners will use Moodle, an online platform, to independently access course materials and assignments. Learners will also participate in four (4) scheduled virtual group sessions with the instructor.

The required group sessions will take place from 10:00 –11:30 AM on the following dates:

- **October 5, October 19, November 9 , December 7**

Learners are required to complete an orientation to Moodle and initial readings prior to the first group session on **October 5**. Details will be provided following registration.

Technology Requirements:

To access Moodle and participate in the group sessions, learners will need a computer, laptop or tablet with internet access and a camera. We recommend using the latest version of **Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Microsoft Edge, or Safari** for the best Moodle experience.

Every effort has been made to create this course and course documents in an accessible format. All course materials will be provided electronically using Moodle and/or email. It is recommended that learners install a free version of Adobe Reader on the device that will be used for the course.

Registration: <http://bit.ly/2xeV6pT>

Register online by **Tuesday, September 21** using the link above. You will receive a confirmation by email once your registration is processed. Registration and course information is also available on the Sherlock Center website at www.sherlockcenter.org.

If you need a reasonable accommodation (e.g., ASL/CART) to participate in this course, please indicate your request on the registration form as soon as possible.

The Sherlock Center will use the email provided with your registration to create an account in Moodle and to provide course information and updates.

For registration questions, contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu or Leave a message at 401-456-2764.



Community of Practice in Autism in RI

October Meeting

Zoom Webinar

4 A's of Autism:

Awareness to Acceptance to Appreciation to Action as a Pathway to Fulfilling and Productive Lives

PRESENTER: Stephen Shore, PhD,
educator, consultant, author, speaker with autism.

Attend this webinar and change the way you think about autism! Dr. Stephen Shore will share his lived experiences as an autistic man to explain how making fulfilling and productive lives for autistic individuals can be the rule rather than the exception. He will charge participants to reframe their thinking away from deficit, disorder, and deficit towards seeking abilities based on individual strengths. The session ends with generalizing focus on strengths-based thinking to the rest of humanity – and finally, to the audience themselves.

REGISTRATION

OCTOBER 6, 2021
4:00-6:00 PM
ZOOM WEBINAR

Advance registration is required
using the link below:

<http://bit.ly/38DRVJN>



After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the webinar.

Professional Development:

Continuing Education Credits (2.0 credit hours) from NASW-RI and RIMHCA will be available pending approval.

To be eligible for CEUs you MUST:

- JOIN USING YOUR UNIQUE ZOOM LINK PROVIDED UPON REGISTERING,
- SIGN INTO WEBINAR USING BOTH FIRST & LAST NAMES, and
- PARTICIPATE THE DURATION OF THE WEBINAR.

Questions & Requests:

If you need a reasonable accommodation, please indicate your request on the registration form as soon as possible.

For registration questions, contact Elaine Sollecito at esollecito@ric.edu or 401-456-2764.

For questions about the Community of Practice or this meeting, contact Paul LaCava at placava@ric.edu or 401-456-4735.



Registration information is also available on the Sherlock Center website at www.sherlockcenter.org.

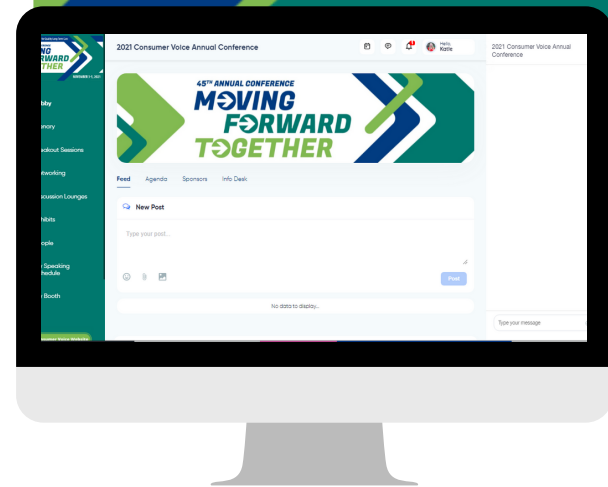
45TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

November 3 - 5, 2021



VIRTUAL EVENT



At the 2021 conference, you will:

- Listen to key experts and discuss policy updates;
- Hear the voice of long-term care consumers;
- Connect with advocates and learn best practices;
- Gain skills relevant to your work; and
- Leave revitalized and equipped with new tools to put your systems and individual advocacy into action!

Registration Open

Sponsorships & Exhibit opportunities are available.

<https://theconsumervoice.org/2021-conference>

Registration includes three full days of
LIVE programming and 30 days of
access to all materials after the event.



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!

