



**Questions & Answers About the Impact of COVID-19 on DD Services**

**1. How can I reach my caseworker if I have questions?**

Call (401) 462-3421 during normal business hours. For emerging or imminent care related questions, someone will be on call on nights and weekends at (401) 265-7461. DDD is using a centralized phone number for all calls to ensure all calls are captured and responded to if a caseworker is unavailable.

**2. I've heard my social caseworker or someone else from DDD will be calling everyone, but no one has called me. Why?**

Outreach calls have been happening for about 3 weeks and will be continuing. Outreach efforts were prioritized for participants living alone or with a single older caregiver to ensure they have the supplies they need, a backup plan if one or both become ill, and that the plan and other contacts are documented if the social caseworker needs to provide assistance during a crisis. For people who are served by provider agencies, the agencies are also doing this. If you need anything, please reach out to DDD at (401) 462-3421 during normal business hours, or if you have a non-medical emergency call (401) 265-7461 after hours.

**3. Will DDD be providing additional funding/services for individuals?**

No additional funding is being provided. However, self-directed individuals who had allocated some of their funding for day services from a provider can move the funding to community-based supports or to respite. If families are going to hire someone else, then they can submit an S-109 form and state on it they are requesting community-based supports in lieu of day supports. They can only get up to the day funding/hour of support they typically receive.

**4. During this crisis, can family members be paid for providing services that would typically be provided by staff?**

BHDDH has requested authority to do this but the answer is still pending.

**5. What is telehealth and what does it mean for me?**

Telehealth is a visit that is done using a video phone call. It can be done with a computer, tablet, or a smart phone. FaceTime and Skype are approved apps for telehealth during the COVID crisis. It can be a way for a doctor or nurse to check in with you on your health, just like talking to them in an office visit. Or it can be a way for your staff who are providing DD services to check in with you while we all need to stay at home. Telehealth can also include regular phone calls.

**6. What are essential services?**

BHDDH has not defined essential consumer services as they vary depending upon the needs of the individual. Services should continue to be provided based on need. A general definition is that essential services are those that, if they do not occur, could result in the individual requiring a higher level of care.

**7. If there is a statewide lockdown, will my staff be issued some sort of ID to show they are essential?**

This will have to be worked out with State Police and other agencies if it happens. There will probably not be IDs. A letter from the employer can be provided to the worker stating that they are essential.

**8. Can services be provided in my house?**

Yes, home-based services are allowed if they are deemed essential by the individual and family.

**9. How does the guidance to stop "non-essential home visits" apply to self-directed individuals?**

If the visits are deemed essential by the individual and their family, they should continue and follow all CDC guidelines. See the CDC website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

**10. What can be done if someone is experiencing a behavioral health emergency?**

BH Link is an available resource and can now provide telehealth services as well. BH Link's goal is to connect people seamlessly to ongoing treatment. 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. For more information visit the BH Link website at [www.bhlink.org](http://www.bhlink.org) 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

**11. How can families refer consumers who require additional services for health or behavioral health or other reasons that are the result of decreased staff time/social distancing/quarantine?**

There are no changes in the BHDDH referral process. For medical health, contact the consumer's doctor. For behavioral health, resources such as BH Link will remain available. Some services can now be provided via telephonic/ telehealth processes. If you need help finding additional resources, contact your social worker by calling BHDDH at 462-3421 Monday - Friday from 8:30am-4pm.

**12. With a limited workforce and families forced to stay home, what are the options for transportation?**

Families can transport or uber/taxi can be used. RIPTA and Ride are continuing to operate, and MTM is still available for medical trips. Alternative transportation options can be paid through a Fiscal Intermediary (FI). To allocate funds for an FI for transportation, you would need to submit a new purchase order.

**13. Self-Directed Programs need to have in place a way to call for emergency direct care providers when our regular staff are unable to come to work. There are many people out of work who could be recruited to be care givers. We need a coordinated system in place.**

BHDDH recommends utilizing Care.com at [www.care.com/rineed](https://www.care.com/rineed), which is providing free access to their website. Individuals can use this website to find direct care or to volunteer to provide direct care. Enter N/A where it asks "Where do you work?". BHDDH is reviewing additional options.

**14. Are you aware of any state resources that are available or in development related to self-directed support workers? I am looking for guidance on what employer responsibilities are, particularly related to compensation and unemployment if hours are reduced or restricted, and movement within the community.**

Employees can collect unemployment. If there are specific questions about this, individuals should reach out to their Fiscal Intermediary (FI) who can provide them with information.

**15. If I self-direct, can I provide paid sick leave, paid family leave, and paid medical leave?**

No, funding cannot be used for paid leave. If a staff person is unable to work due to illness or is laid off, the staff can collect RI Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) or unemployment. Staff should go to the DLT website to file for TDI at: [www.dlt.ri.gov/tDI/](https://www.dlt.ri.gov/tDI/) or unemployment at [www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/](https://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/)

**16. If my family member loses their job because of COVID-19 closures, should they apply for unemployment? What if they have more than one job, but only lose one.**

Unemployment is generally available for lost wages even if the worker has a second job, or from wages lost if hours are cut instead of layoffs. It's recommended to contact DLT about your specific circumstances. See the DLT website for more information: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/>

**17. Should an individual continue working if their employer gives them the opportunity?**

That is the individual's choice. Each individual should understand their risk factors and how to stay safe, then make an informed decision about whether to keep working or not.

**18. If an individual develops symptoms of the virus, what should be done?**

If you suspect that you or someone you're caring for has COVID-19, call your primary care physician. Do not go into your doctor's office, urgent care center, or the Emergency Room without calling first. Medical offices and hospitals have COVID-19 protocols to protect other patients and staff. If the individual is having a health emergency, call 911 and let the operator know that you suspect COVID-19 so the EMTs can be prepared when they get to your home.

Please report the suspected virus for an individual receiving services or any other household member to BHDDH through a phone call to the QA hotline at (401) 462-2629 or your provider should report it to QA. BHDDH is reporting to the Dept of Health and will follow up with you.

**19. What quarantine practices should we use?**

All households should follow the CDC and RI Department of Health guidance on quarantine and caring for people who are sick. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>

**20. Are there alternative locations for quarantine?**

RIEMA and the Dept of Health are leading efforts to address quarantine / isolation. We do not have specific information about this yet.

**21. What precautions should individuals take if they choose to work?**

Follow the CDC and RI Department of Health guidelines. Wash your hands often and for at least 20 seconds. Do not touch your face. Keep 6 feet away from other people. And don't go to work if you feel sick.

**22. Will the State provide DSP training specific to COVID-19 emergency?**

It is each employer's responsibility to ensure their staff have the needed information and training. RI Dept of Health has put out guidelines for home care at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/guidance-home-care.pdf> and the CDC page has a lot of information as well at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

**23. If my family member has an emergency, where should I go? Who should I call?**

For medical emergencies, call 911 and tell the operator if it is a COVID-19 related emergency. For behavioral health emergencies, call BH Link at (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

**24. If my family member needs to be hospitalized, will hospital staff receive instruction re: how to treat people with I/DD?**

BHDDH will provide this concern and recommendation to RIEMA.

**25. If the need should arise for a son/daughter/loved one with a significant developmental disability and numerous serious health issues to be hospitalized for COVID19, would a parent or other caregiver with healthcare power of attorney be able to accompany that person and remain with them in the hospital during the duration of their stay?**

Call the hospital directly for guidance or call the RI Dept of Health (RIDOH) COVID-19 Hotline at (401) 222-8022 or 211 after hours; or email [RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov) or visit their website at <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>. If restrictions are in place, we encourage families to put together concise information about their loved one for the hospital staff in advance.

**26. What can I do to prepare my family member for any hospitalization? What can or should I bring to the hospital?**

Bring a concise information sheet that includes: Basic information such as name and date of birth, immediate contacts, medical/behavioral health needs, diagnoses, how the individual communicates, what medications they are taking, dietary restrictions and eating guidelines. For an example, the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities has developed a Health Passport for hospital visits, which can be found in English, Spanish, and Chinese at [fifcic.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/materials/health.html](http://fifcic.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/materials/health.html)

**27. What do we do if an ISP is due and how will services be authorized if a new ISP cannot be developed?**

DDD has developed a simple form for use by individuals who assert that their current plan continues to meet their needs. You can find the new Interim ISP COVID-19 form on the BHDDH website under Forms and Policies, or this link:

<https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/pdf/Interim%20ISP%20COVID-19%20v2%20fillable%20form.pdf>

**28. What do we do if we have supplemental funding with an S110 that is about to expire?**

Individuals who have an S-110 that is ending can send in an S-109 form filled out so we can extend the funding that is currently in place, if an individual is still in need of it. The extension will be for a quarter, but can be extended if needed. Forms can be found on the BHDDH website at

[https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/forms\\_provider.php](https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/forms_provider.php)

**29. How will the state pay for assistive technology or other costs for responding to this crisis and implementing an individual's person-centered service plan?**

The public health emergency has not changed the funding mechanisms for assistive technology. If someone requires assistive technology or other goods and services, they will be able to access it through general Medicaid or through waiver-funded services as usual.

**30. How will SSI/SSDI/Medicaid be affected if someone collects unemployment, including the additional \$600 per week, and/or by the stimulus package?**

BHDDH does not administer social security benefits. Please consult with the Social Security Administration.

**31. Do providers still need to collect cost of care?**

Yes, all collections should continue until otherwise directed. The State is seeking permission from Medicaid to waive this, but has not yet received permission.

## 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](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov)  
Website <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

### Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information

Website [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)  
ASL Videos <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvvp9iOILTQatwnqm61jqFrsfUB4RKh6J>

## Contacting the Division

The department is working on a reduced workforce and therefore calls should not be placed to your social caseworker. DDD has put 24-hour phone coverage in place with a central business hour phone number and an on-call number for nights and weekends.

### Please Call

During business hours (Monday-Friday 8:30-4:00), for questions or support **(401) 462-3421**

At other hours, for emerging or imminent care related questions **(401) 265-7461**

For medical or healthcare related emergencies Your Primary Care Physician or 911

You may also send general questions to the AskDD email address. Please do not email critical issues. [BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov)

To report a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, call the QA Hotline **(401) 462-2629**

If you have a vital need, please call the numbers above.

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.

## Sign Up for Our Email List

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from the Division, you can sign up on our website. From the main BHDDH page at [bhddh.ri.gov](http://bhddh.ri.gov), select **What's New**, then go to bottom and click on **DD Community Newsletter**. The link to sign up for the BHDDH Newsletter is directly below the title, as shown in the picture at right.



DD Community Newsletter  
[SIGN UP FOR THE BHDDH NEWSLETTER](#)

## Look for Future Updates

Look for updated information in future newsletter or on the BHDDH website. BHDDH will soon have a page dedicated to COVID-19 information on our website.