



### **COVID Vaccination Updates**

The RI Department of Health (RIDOH) has not launched a public vaccination signup website. Until RIDOH announces a general public registration, please **do not enter personal information into a website claiming to be vaccination registration, and do not follow links for vaccination registration you find online.** Please go to a trusted source like the RIDOH website at <https://covid.ri.gov/vaccination> for all vaccination clinic information. The RIDOH website has links to towns that are sponsoring clinics as well as direct links to CVS and Walgreens, which are starting to do limited vaccinations for eligible individuals by appointment only at select pharmacies.

As part of the rollout of vaccine, RIDOH sends registration links to eligible people to register for their vaccination appointment. BHDDH and provider agencies are also assisting with registration. Please remember that a registration link is only for the person it was sent to, and links should not be shared. Anyone going to a vaccination clinic must show ID and will be turned away if they are not in an eligible vaccination group even if they registered with a shared link. Unauthorized sharing of registration links denies an eligible person the opportunity to be vaccinated that day and delays the rollout of vaccine to all Rhode Islanders.

### **Got Housing?!**

**Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6:00 PM on Zoom**

Plan RI has been hosting a monthly Zoom housing series with guests from around the United States and Canada discussing best practices in community-based housing for individuals with disabilities. Plan RI has partnered with BHDDH to hold “office hours” to hear from individuals and families about ideas for housing in the community, housing preferences, and housing dreams!

The office hours will be held on Wednesday, February 17 at 6 PM and hosted by Michelle Brophy from BHDDH and Betty Murray from Plan RI. We want to hear from you so we can work with our housing partners to develop housing that meets your needs!

There are two ways to join:

1. **If you are already registered for the Plan RI Alternative Housing Series:** join with the link for the regularly scheduled meetings that you received in the Housing Series registration confirmation.
2. **If you have not registered for 2021 Series:** [Click here to register.](#) After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



## **It's time to take control where we can**

*By A. Kathryn Power is the director of the R.I. Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals.*

We knew from the start that the COVID-19 pandemic was going to do more than make people sick. Just days after our country's first cases last year, experts were warning that this could have a dire impact on our mental health.

Twelve months later, COVID-19 and its upheaval have caused what some are calling a mental health pandemic. But I caution against an overly pessimistic view.

Yes, COVID-19 is causing stress and anxiety, not only about our physical health but jobs and livelihood, the well-being of loved ones, children who are not in school, and the many ways this scourge has interrupted and complicated our lives.

The medical community has responded with precautions and, more recently, vaccines to help us reduce the risk of infection. It is important to remember that we must also respond in ways that reduce the risk of adverse impact on our mental health.

We are seldom asked how we would define our mental health status, or how we would describe our emotions and the ways we are expressing ourselves. Yet we should be having these discussions. Our behavior, after all, is a reflection of our mental and emotional state.

Fear and anxiety should not eclipse healthy patterns and routines. For some, the COVID-19 pandemic, with its prolonged stress and interruptions, has felt overwhelming. But sometimes lost in the discussion about the dangers is the importance of thinking about how we respond and how we cope. I have found that even when we are inclined to think a particular challenge is too much, that we can't get through it, the truth is that in the long run, we are much more resilient and adaptive than we think. Even the most anxious human beings can adapt to an unusual situation and do so with tremendously successful emotional mastery. In the process, they become much more creative and discover new aspects of themselves.

To do this, we must take control of those things that we can control. Even if we are out of work, or working at home, we can establish and maintain a schedule – getting up in the morning and organizing our day, saying this is where I am going to proceed. This can be as simple as getting dressed, setting goals and making sure we have the essentials (food, medications, etc.) that we need.

Taking control can also mean other steps such as eating healthy foods, exercising, getting enough rest, staying in touch with others and making time to have fun. It can mean avoiding alcohol and drugs and avoiding too much news. Of course, we want to know what's happening, but we don't want to drown out the message about how we respond and cope, and how we sustain hope.

Fear and anxiety should not eclipse healthy patterns and routines. If they do, it is important to seek help. In Rhode Island, that is as simple as calling 401-414-LINK (5465), which takes callers to BH Link, the state's 24/7 behavioral health triage center.

We know the pandemic, and this latest surge, will eventually end. But we also know that we will feel its impact for a long time. That is why we must embrace practices that will help us get on our feet and stay there. Coping in healthy ways can help us get through the pandemic and help us as we face the next challenges that come our way.

At some point, having made the decision to cope and take charge during this difficult time, we will look back and see that we are stronger than we realized, and stronger for having taken that path.

## Black History Month and Disability Justice

February is Black History Month, a time to remember the incredible achievements and contributions of Black people. The Disability Justice movement, which empowers people with disabilities, must include the perspectives and voices of Black people. People with disabilities who have intersectional identities have unique experiences and add value to make the lives of all people with disabilities better. In light of this, [Disability Rights California](#) has produced a video titled “[Disability Justice is About Us](#)” celebrating Black History Month and featuring members of its staff and the disability community. [Click here for a Descriptive Audio Version of the video.](#)



### **Highlighting contributions of past and present Black disability rights advocates**

**Lois Curtis** was diagnosed at an early age with mental and intellectual disabilities and placed in a Georgia psychiatric facility at 11 years old where she remained until she was 29. A state official created a policy that kept Lois and others with disabilities in hospitals, but that policy was challenged as unlawful segregation and a violation of the ADA in the well-known lawsuit, *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.* Lois stepped up to fight for her rights and the rights of others as a plaintiff in the case. The Supreme Court finally ruled in 1999 that people with disabilities must be allowed to live in the most appropriate integrated community setting.



**Imani Barbarin** is a disability rights advocate, public speaker, and writer who communicates about the intersection of race, disability, and feminism. “The disability space needs to be more inclusive of [the Black community], and I’m seeing great change,” said Imani. “But there’s so much more that we can do.” Watch [this video](#) to learn more about what she has to say.

[RespectAbility](#) highlights African Americans with Disabilities in Honor of Black History Month

[Disability Rights Texas](#) is celebrating Disability Rights and Black History Month by looking at the intersection of Black history and disability rights. Each week they will feature some of the remarkable contributions of past and present Black disability rights advocates.

### [Honoring Black History Month: Unsung Heroes of the Disability Rights Movement](#)

The [National Black Disability Coalition](#) (NBDC) is the nation’s organization for all Black disabled people, founded in 1990 in response to the need for Black disabled people to organize around mutual concerns. Membership and partners includes Black disabled organizations, disabled people, parents, family members, faith based, non-profits, and academic and policy leaders.

Ola Ojewumi, Executive Director and Founder of ProjectAscend, has launched the 2021 Disabled Black History campaign on twitter. Follow the hashtag [#blackdisabledhistory](#) for more info.

## **Visibility: A Selection of Black Deaf and Disabled Performance Artists**

<https://ikouii.com/visibility/>

In recognition of Black History Month, Visibility, The Ikouii Creative's VISIBILITY exhibition brings together a global selection of trailblazing artists. The virtual exhibition celebrates the aesthetic sensibility of the black disabled community, using the performance arts as a vehicle for producing exciting new narratives of acceptance and adaptation. Captioned for the Deaf/HOH. Transcribed for the Visually Impaired.

*The Ikouii Creative is a disability-led organization committed to providing opportunities and support for artists with disabilities.*

## **Black Lives with IDD and Their Faith Communities**

### **The AAIDD Religion and Spirituality Interest Network Recorded Webinar Series**

*A discussion of the role of church communities in the lives of black and brown people with IDD and their families*

#### **Watch Session 1: To Be Black and Christian with a Disability**

- Speaker: **Dr. Luchara Wallace**, Director of the Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations and Associate Professor in Special Education, Western Michigan State University. [View and Download Dr. Wallace's PowerPoint Slides](#)

#### **Watch Session 2: Roles of Church Communities in the Lives of Black People with IDD**

- Speaker: **Dr. LaTonya Penny**, Senior Pastor of New Mount Zion Baptist Church in Roxboro, NC and the Executive Director for Family Abuse Services, a domestic violence service provider. [View and Download Dr. Penny's PowerPoint slides.](#)

#### **Watch Session 3: A Black Pastor with Autism and his Relationship to his Church**

- Speaker: **Dr. Lamar Hardwick**, lead pastor at Tri-Cities Church in East Point, Georgia. In 2014 at the age of 36, Lamar was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. [View and download Dr. Hardwick's PowerPoint slides](#)

#### **Watch Session 4: Black Lives with IDD and Their Faith Communities**

- Panel discussion with **Dr. Hardwick, Dr. Penny, and Dr. Wallace**



*AAIDD promotes progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.*

Co-sponsored by the [University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration](#)

## Employing People With Intellectual And Developmental Disabilities

Excerpted from: <https://www.i4cp.com/trendwatchers/2014/10/15/what-your-d-i-policy-is-missing-employing-people-with-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities>

What if the chance to be considered for a job--any job--was completely out of the question? Regardless of education, experience, skill, talent, work ethic--you (or someone you care about) were relegated to dependency and perhaps poverty? Imagine being excluded from ever experiencing even a measure of the independence, sense of accomplishment, and camaraderie so many of us take for granted by virtue of simply being employed, and this was due solely to biases about hiring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

Many families in our communities live this reality every day--in fact, nearly five million people in the U.S. have some form of intellectual disability, which means that the likelihood is quite high that this affects someone you know personally or professionally, or both. Here are a few more numbers that should give pause:

- A staggering 85% of adults in the U.S. with developmental disabilities do not have a paid job in the community.
- Only a quarter of corporate Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) recruiting efforts differentiate for types of disabilities--and only half of those target people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
- While the jobless rate for those with disabilities is nearly twice that of the general population, those with IDD hover closer to 70% unemployment. But we can do better.

Best Buddies International's [I'm In To Hire](#) campaign--backed by i4cp's study, [Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)--confronts long-standing biases about inclusive hiring and takes an employer's-eye-view to the workplace potential of people with IDD. In partnership with non-profit disability advocates Best Buddies International, Project SEARCH, and several exemplary companies that live their inclusion values, i4cp's research puts hard numbers to what those who already employ workers with IDD have known for years--companies gain dependable, motivated workers who deliver observable business benefits, while also building inclusive cultures that attract broader talent pools.

### What the numbers show



Based on data collected from more than 200 organizations, our study found that three-quarters or more of employers rate their employees with IDD as good to very good on most performance factors--including work quality and productivity.

Nearly three-quarters of companies that hire workers with IDD report a positive experience, with fully one-third of high-performance organizations--based on measures of profitability, market share, revenue growth, and customer satisfaction over time--saying the experience *exceeded expectations*.

While some hire workers with IDD to support corporate social responsibility efforts, the addition of exceptional and productive hires is high on the list of reasons to include people with IDD in the talent mix. While also signaling an inclusive culture to the broader talent pool, what many find by hiring workers with IDD are good talent matches that also link to observable business benefits such as overall engagement and increased customer loyalty.

### What employers say

The enthusiasm of the employers we interviewed during our research, especially when asked about the talent and abilities people with IDD bring to their workplaces, was palpable. And those who actively work with organizations to find integrated employment opportunities for people with IDD in their communities tell us that positive anecdotal outcomes are easy to come by. Here are just a few:

- Walgreens (an i4cp member company) has seen its IDD inclusion efforts deliver multi-faceted benefits to the organization, the community, and the company's customer base.
- "From a productivity standpoint, our employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities are highly attentive, eager, and earnest about applying themselves," says Matt Capaci, staffing manager at Silicon Valley Bank's (SVB).
- "People with IDD are a tremendous resource," says John Hailer, CEO of Natixis Global Asset Management in the Americas and Asia. "We've found people who are phenomenally responsible and motivated."
- "We've had a tremendous experience with our Buddies," says Lisa Damon, executive committee member in Seyfarth Shaw LLC's Boston office. "They have become an integral part of our team and the firm's day-to-day business operations."
- "We've shown that IDD workers can do complex work," says Mitch Morgan, leadership development program manager at Fifth Third Bank. "They are prepared for the world of work, for orientation, for performance management."

If you want to learn more, go to the [I'm In To Hire](#) website and download the free i4cp study, [Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#). The report includes stories detailing how companies are leveraging the talents of workers with IDD. It covers the gap in real vs. perceived challenges that hold many back from tapping this talent pool, outlines Section 503 compliance benefits for government contractors and subcontractors, and the wealth of resources available to help you get started--such as professional onsite workplace assessments, job customization, coaching support, and more.

*This article is co-authored by Eric Davis, Creative Director & Senior Editor, i4cp; and Lorrie Lykins, Director of Research Services and Managing Editor, i4cp.*



## Silver Linings

### Channel Kindness



Channel Kindness is a digital platform created by Lady Gaga’s Born This Way Foundation. It is a safe space for young people to tell their stories of kindness, resilience, and community. By highlighting the people and organizations that are doing good in their communities, Channel Kindness’ audience is inspired to create a kinder and braver world, one story at a time.

Explore the [Channel Kindness website](#) or [Channel Kindness Radio](#) on YouTube.

### **ASL performer steals the show during Super Bowl national anthem**

Warren “Wawa” Snipe stole the show while performing the national anthem in American Sign Language (ASL) prior to Sunday’s Super Bowl game. While Grammy nominees Jazmine Sullivan and Eric Church performed the national anthem, "Wawa", who is Deaf, brought the tunes alive with his interpretation through ASL.

A [video of his National Anthem performance](#), which has gone viral since being posted, was shared by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). NAD also posted a video of Snipe [performing during H.E.R.'s rendition of \*America the Beautiful\*](#).



## 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](http://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](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov)

Website <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

### Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information

Website [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://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](http://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](mailto: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

If you aren't receiving email updates and newsletters from BHDDH, 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](#)

## 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](mailto: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!**

## COVID-19 Vaccination Update

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s plan for the next phase of the State's COVID-19 vaccination campaign is a data-driven approach to make vaccine available to Rhode Islanders as quickly as possible while protecting those most at risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Eligible people in Rhode Island will soon have three ways to receive the COVID-19 vaccine: **pharmacies, local and regional vaccination sites, and state-run vaccination sites**. Eligibility will continue to depend on three factors: age, high-risk conditions, and geography.

### Pharmacies

- COVID-19 vaccines will become available at select pharmacies throughout the state.
- Eligible people age 75 and older can begin scheduling appointments during the week of February 6 at select CVS and Walgreens pharmacies.
- You will need to call or book appointments online directly with the pharmacies.

### Local and Regional Vaccination Sites

- COVID-19 vaccines will also be available from local and regional vaccination sites. This will include community clinics run in cities and towns. Each vaccine provider will conduct their own outreach and scheduling.
- Approximately 5,000 doses were made available across cities and towns to vaccinate people age 75 and older starting the weekend of January 30. Starting the week of February 14, cities and towns will receive a combined total of 7,000 doses each week for four weeks.
- Many cities and towns have their own contact lists. They will still use those lists to let people know about appointments.

### State-Run Vaccination Sites

- RIDOH is currently evaluating multiple large sites in central locations to run mass vaccination clinics. ***None of these sites are currently open to the public.***
- People will be able to sign up online and by phone when they become eligible. Starting around the middle of February, scheduling will open for people age 75 and older. Limited appointments will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis. More information will be shared soon.
- RIDOH anticipates appointments to begin later this month.

Supply of vaccine is limited. It may take some time for everyone who is eligible to get an appointment. Please be patient and know that you will probably not get an appointment right away. The more vaccine we receive each week, the more quickly appointments will become available. To learn more information, visit [C19vaccineRI.org](https://www.health.ri.gov/covid).

# Underlying Medical Conditions

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*People who have any of these medical conditions are more likely to be hospitalized if they get COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccine supply to Rhode Island is still limited, so this is only the first group of people who will be prioritized for vaccination. This list does not replace CDC's inclusive list of underlying medical conditions that increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19. As we get more vaccine, more medical conditions will be added to the list.*

## Diabetes

- Type 1
- Type 2

## Lung disease

- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Emphysema
- Cystic Fibrosis
- People with significant decreased lung function
- People with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease)

## Heart disease

- Congestive heart failure
- Coronary artery disease
- People with enlarged hearts (cardiomyopathies)
- People with other significant heart conditions
- People with Down Syndrome

## Kidney disease

- People on dialysis
- Significant chronic kidney disease

## Weakened immune system

- Cancer
- People who get chemotherapy or radiation
- People who have had a transplant or are waiting for a transplant
- HIV/AIDS
- Sickle cell disease
- People who have a disease that weakens the immune system
- People who take medicine that weakens the immune system
- Pregnancy



Developmental Disabilities Services | February 2021

## InfoBrief: New Employment Program

We are pleased to announce the Person-Centered Supported Employment Performance Program (PCSEPP 3) is well underway! While the program primarily focuses on individuals identified by the DOJ Consent Decree as part of the protected class (youth exit, sheltered workshop, day) and who have never worked, we are now considering others who have not had significant work history or successful employment experiences.

National experts have come to Rhode Island to help get the projects started and trained in the evidence best practice of Customized Employment. “Customized employment” is a very successful option for job seekers who have not been successful with traditional employment. Through an individualized discovery process job seekers strengths, talents and interests are identified and are matched to businesses unmet needs. By building and negotiating job duties and schedules along with the right supervision, job seekers can be successful in the workplace.

The four projects all presented at two virtual open houses on September 21 and October 6 hosted by Advocates in Action. If you were not able to attend the presentations live, they were recorded and are now available on the Advocates in Action website: <https://www.advocatesinaction.org/2020Webinars>.

For additional information go to BHDDH Developmental Disabilities Employment page: [https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/employmentfirst\\_index.php](https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmentaldisabilities/employmentfirst_index.php)

Below is the list of the project teams with contacts – please reach out to them for more information about these unique projects.



Looking Upwards, L.I.F.E. Inc., and West Bay  
CONTACT: Jodi Merryman  
[JMerryman@lookingupwards.org](mailto:JMerryman@lookingupwards.org)  
(401) 293-5790 x375



Perspectives, AccessPoint RI, and Trudeau  
CONTACT: Adrienne Tipple  
[ATipple@perspectivescorporation.com](mailto:ATipple@perspectivescorporation.com)  
(401) 374-7321



Seven Hills and Trudeau Center  
CONTACT: Melissa Charpentier  
[mcharpentier@sevenhills.org](mailto:mcharpentier@sevenhills.org)  
(401) 597-6700



Work Inc. and Kaleidoscope  
CONTACT: Kristen Piccolo  
[Kpiccolo@workinc.org](mailto:Kpiccolo@workinc.org)  
(617) 691-1707