

RIPIN

**The Self-Directed Support Program
Presents:**

**Employment Supports for Individuals
Who Self-Direct**

August 26, 2025



PERSONAL SUPPORT BUILT ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

About RIPIN

- Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
- *Peer Professionals*
- Help Rhode Islanders of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds access and navigate:
 - Health Care
 - Education
 - Healthy Aging
 - Other services/supports/complex systems



What is Self-Direction?

Self-Direction is a service model for people who:

→ Have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD)

→ Are found eligible for funding from the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH)

→ Want (along with family or trusted allies) to manage their own budgets, hire their staff, and set their own priorities



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The RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program



We guide and support families and individuals to navigate the systems and supports they need when choosing self-direction with:

- Training and Education
- Resource-Sharing
- Referrals
- Collaboration with other agencies and organizations

RIPIN

**Gerard (Jay) MacKay,
Associate Administrator II,
Behavioral Healthcare,
Developmental
Disabilities, and Hospitals
(BHDDH)**

**Melanie Sbardella,
Assistant Administrator of
Supported Employment,
Office of Rehabilitative
Services (ORS)**

**Rory Carmody,
Workforce Director,
Project Search,
AccessPoint RI**

**Sue Babin,
Project Director
Rhode Island
Developmental Disabilities
Council (RIDDC)**



Questions



ORS Employment Supports for Individuals that Self-Direct

Melanie Sbardella- ORS Assistant Administrator for Supported
Employment

August 26th, 2025

ORS' Mission

Our mission is to empower individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and integration into society

The Vocational Rehabilitation Process

- Referral
- Intake
- Assessments
- Eligibility Determination
- Individualized Plan For Employment (IPE)
- Services that support goal attainment
- Closure and post-employment services

How does an individual qualify to receive VR services through ORS?

- Individual who....
 - has a disability (physical, psychological or cognitive) that is a barrier to employment
 - receives SSI or SSDI benefits and has applied for VR services
 - will benefit from VR services in obtaining employment

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO....

- Counseling and Guidance to help plan vocational goals and services;
- Transition Services from School to Career;
- Rehabilitation Technology Services;
- Assistive Technology Services;
- Diagnostic Evaluations;
- College or Vocational Training;
- Job Training and Job Supports;
- Job Development and Placement Services;
- Vehicle Modifications;
- Housing Modifications;
- Benefits Counseling;
- Post-Employment Services.

Services are individualized, and are provided based on the individual's need to achieve the agreed vocational goal.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- IPE is a written document completed by the client and the VR counselor
- Written based on individual's unique strengths, skills, abilities, preferences, capabilities, interests, and values
- Previous work history, transferable skills, and labor market information - key components of IPE development
- Informed choice is applied through out the entire process

Closure And Post-Employment Services

- Employment - successful outcome for individual with a disability and VR program
- Once employed VR agency may assist with post-employment services to assist individual to retain or advance in employment

Supported Employment

- Supported Employment (SE) assists individuals with the most significant disabilities, who have been unsuccessful with traditional employment strategies and need ongoing supports, to choose, find and keep employment.
- Supported employment services could potentially be provided to individuals with intellectual disabilities, mental health issues, and traumatic brain injury, to assist with obtaining and maintaining employment.
- SE is competitive employment (at or above minimum wage, with pay commensurate to a non-disabled worker performing the same tasks). Paycheck must come directly from employer not service provider. ORS has a standard that employment must be at least ten hours per week.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

- Work must be in an integrated setting (person works and/or interacts with non-disabled population). Individuals must never be placed in any type of segregated employment.
- ORS provides intensive ongoing supports for a time-limited period. Long-term supports are provided through other funding sources such as funding through BHDDH. We also encourage the development of natural supports with co-workers and assistive technology.
- In order to develop these on the job supports it takes an integrated team to support the individual.

Example: ORS Counselor, BHDDH Social Worker, Provider Agency Job Coach, Provider Agency Job Developer, Family or Friend, Employer, other Professionals as needed.

Contact Information

State of Rhode Island

Department of Human Services

Office of Rehabilitation Services

Melanie Sbardella, Assistant Administrator – Supported Employment

Phone: (401) 332-9018

Email: Melanie.Sbardella@ors.ri.gov

Website: <https://ors.ri.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-program/supported-employment>

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

Referral and eligibility

- Rhode Islanders of all ages with an acuity of 20/60 or less in the better eye (with correction) or fields of twenty degrees or less in the better eye are eligible for services.
- An eye report is needed to determine eligibility which is reviewed by our consultant. This eye report must include; a diagnosis, Distance vision with correction, field test results if a restricted field is noted.

SBVI Services

- Services include evaluation and training are available to those deemed eligible from age three through adulthood. Programs include Social Services for children, Independent Living for adults including older(elderly) blind.
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Vocational Evaluation, Career Assessment and Educational Planning Training, Job Development, Job Placement and Job Retention (VR); Member of IEP team
- Low-Vision aids
- Information, referral to community resources and support to individuals and their families

SBVI Services (cont.)

- Orientation & Mobility training/ white canes
- Rehabilitation Teaching/ Assistive technology
- TECH training/iOS and Android, Braille and Computers training
- Certification of LB to obtain -Property Tax Exemptions (city/town) and Income Tax Deductions (LB)
- Assistance with Disability Parking Placards (LB) and RIDE/RIPTA reduced fare applications
- Talking Books and Newslines

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

462-7908 INTAKE
222-1328- FAX

MARIE MORIN- SUPERVISOR OF INDEPENDENT LIVING UNIT
MARIE.MORIN@ORS.RI.GOV

JANE CANNATA- SUPERVISOR VOCATIONAL REHAB UNIT
JANE.CANNATA@ORS.RI.GOV

Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)

ATAP is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

- ATAP's main initiatives include:
 - Device Loan
 - Device Re-Use
 - Device Exchange
 - Device Demonstration
 - Training and ICT Accessibility
 - Information & Referral
 - Public Awareness and Collaboration

ATAP Partners include Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL), West Bay Educational Collaborative, Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of RI.

Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL)

- The ATEL Program provides landline and wireless equipment to qualified individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, have a speech disability, or have neuromuscular damage or disease that hinders them from using a standard telephone. You must be a RI Resident, have one of the above-mentioned disabilities, and meet an income qualifier.

CONTACT INFORMATION

State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903

Denise Corson
ORS ATAP/ATEL Program Manager
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Jennifer Fiske
ATAP Director and Oversee ATEL Program
Phone: (401) 871-1145
Email: jennifer.fiske@ors.ri.gov

Website: www.atap.ri.gov
FB: facebook.com/rhodeislandatap

TRANSITION AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (Pre-ETS)

- ORS has a long history of providing youth with disabilities employment-related services to prepare them for life after high school. In 2014, WIOA afforded ORS the opportunity to expand these services to students with disabilities who have IEP's or 504 plans. These services are designated as Pre-Employment Transition Services and are available regardless of application status. Pre-ETS are quite prescriptive and limited to 5 focus areas. They include:
 - **Job Exploration**
 - **Work Readiness**
 - **Post-Secondary Education/Training Counseling**
 - **Work-Based Learning**
 - **Self-Advocacy Skills**

CONTACT INFORMATION

State of Rhode Island

Department of Human Services

Office of Rehabilitation Services

40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903

Barbara Mulligan, Assistant Administrator - Transition/Pre-ETS

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Email: Barbara.mulligan@ors.ri.gov

Website: <https://ors.ri.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-program/transition>

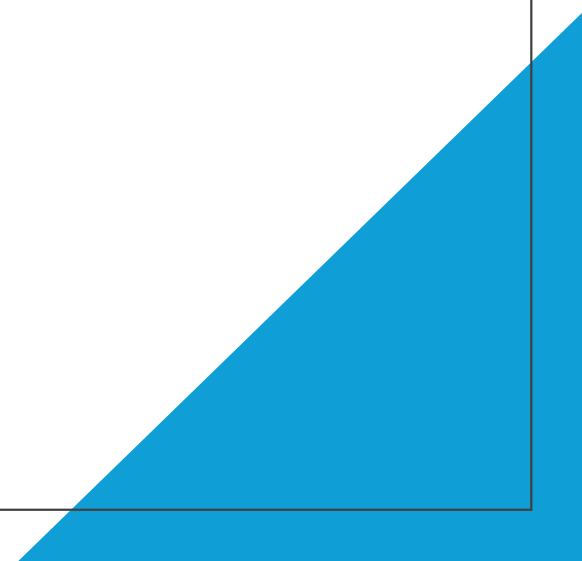
Questions





AccessPoint RI
Empowering People. Changing Lives.

Rory Carmody,
Workforce Director,
Access Point RI
Project Search





AccessPoint RI

★ Favorites · June 14 at 8:18 AM · 🌐

Cheers to our 2025 Project Search graduates, Cesar, Janel, Joel, and Ryan! Here's to your promising futures and endless possibilities! 🎓 #Inclusion #Success



4 🗨️ 📌
Liked by krystlejoanne and others
accesspoint.ri Congrats to our 2025 Project Search grads, Cesar, Janel, Joel, and Ryan! 🎓 Your hard work will shine in RI! #ProjectSearch-RI #Graduates #WorkforceReady #CongratsGrads #CommunityImpact #BallysBally's RI

3:46

← AccessPoint RI

Home About Posts Jobs People

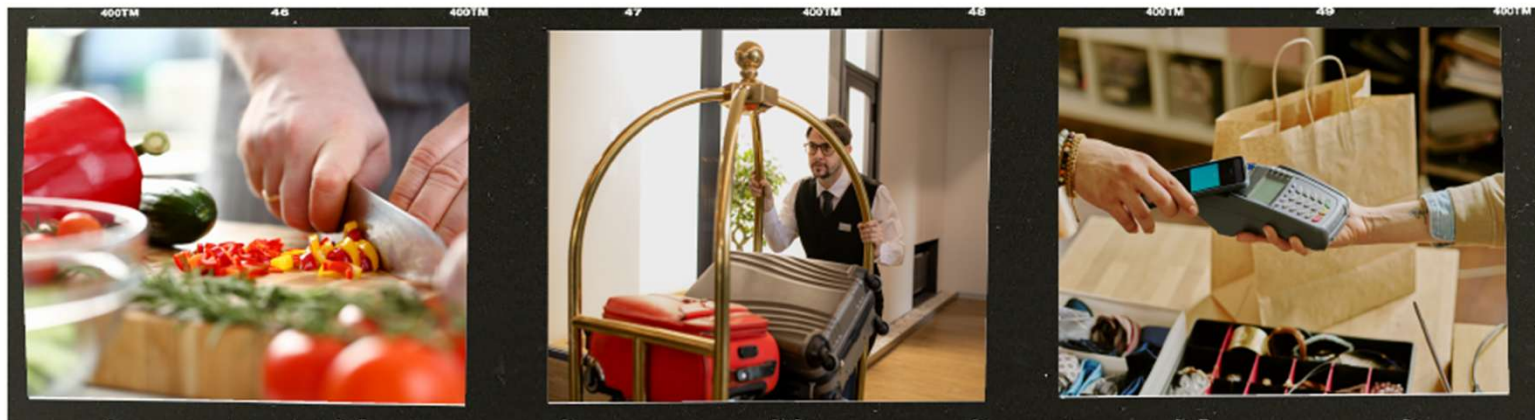
On Thursday, June 12th, we celebrated the achievements of our 2025 Project Search Graduates: Janel, Joel, Cesar, and Ryan. Surrounded by ...more



You and 5 others

Home Video My Network Notifications Jobs

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AND WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM: **RHODE ISLAND WELCOMeworks**



*Made possible with funding by
the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training*



For more information:
Contact: Rory Carmody
401-270-3491
rcarmody@accesspointri.org

Visit our website:
<http://www.accesspointri.org>



Questions





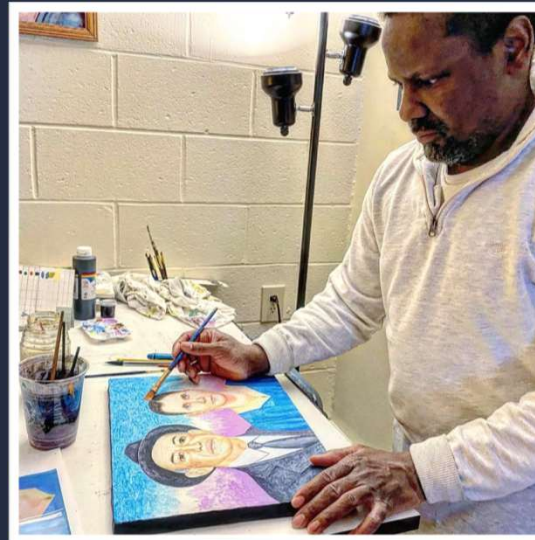
Rhode Island's Self-Employment Project

**"The Spirit of Individual Enterprise
for People with Disabilities"**

**Sue Babin, Project Director
August 26, 2025**

Agenda

- RI Self-Employment Overview
- WHY Self-Employment?
- Benefits of Self-Employment
- Program Components
- Family Comments



WHY Self-Employment (SE)?

- Traditional employment may not be the best option for some people with disabilities
- Some people apply for jobs but do not get the position, or even an interview sometimes, which is very discouraging
- Barriers such as transportation can prevent a person from obtaining the job they want
- SE can open doors and match a person's interest, skills & dreams with opportunities to launch/grow their own small business
- Person makes the choice to work at something really meaningful to them and spend time with doing work that is their passion
- Opportunity to demonstrate the value/contributions people can make to improve their financial futures and their local economy



Benefits of Self-Employment

People work in a job they really LOVE and can control themselves...

Opportunities to network, meet people, interact with customers and improve social skills and independence,

Increased self-esteem by people who are proud to be the “BOSS” and a business owner,

Set own business hours vs. time set by someone else,

You decide on your place of employment... work where you want



Benefits of Entrepreneurial Education

Each person can learn about important life skills:

- How to work with a team
- How to speak in public
- How to solve problems
- How to think creatively
- Higher self-esteem and confidence
- More control over your life and future



Program Components

THINK
LIKE AN
ENTREPRENEUR!



Business Classes

**1-1 Business
Technical Support
and Staff/Peer
Mentors**

**Weekly
Entrepreneurs
Forum**

Mini Grants

**Public and Media
Relations**

**Ongoing Support
for Selling
Platforms**



"Self-Employment has helped my daughter Rachel in so many positive ways. She has gained a pride and self-confidence that she never had before. Having her own business has also made her become much more social than she ever was. She loves talking to people about her paintings and selling her art at vendor shows. She also loves teaching others how to paint. Having her own business has given her a real pride and motivation to be successful. She loves bringing happiness and joy to people through her beautiful and colorful paintings."

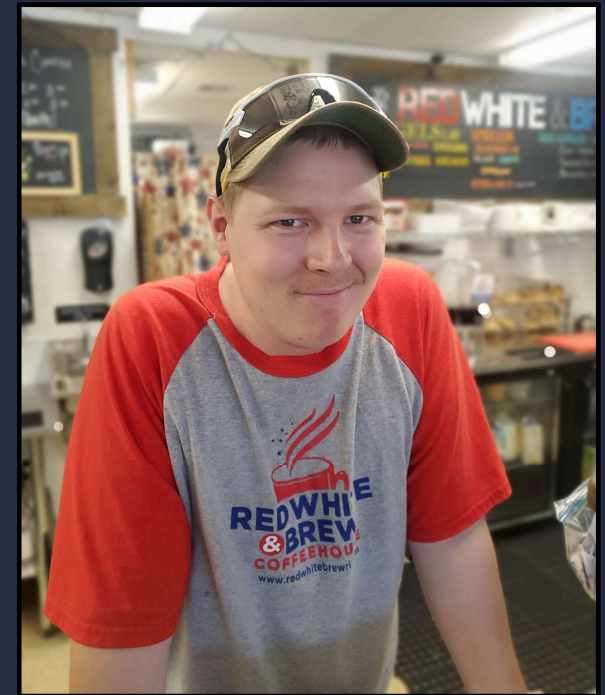
**- Karen Rasnick, Mom of Rachel Rasnick,
Business Owner of "Rachel Rasnick Art"**

Michael Coyne, Business Owner, “Red, White & Brew Coffeehouse” and “The Budding Violet Giftshop”



This is Michael at his day program before he opened his store.

This really says it all!



This is Michael after he became a small Business Owner!

Contact Information:

Sue Babin

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401-523-2300

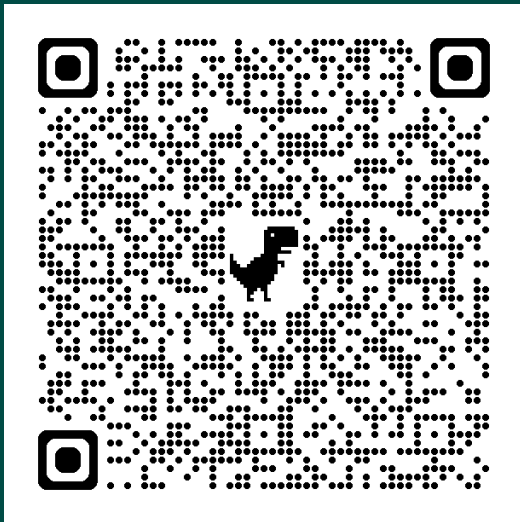
www.riddc.org



Questions



Your feedback is important to us!
Please participate in our survey.

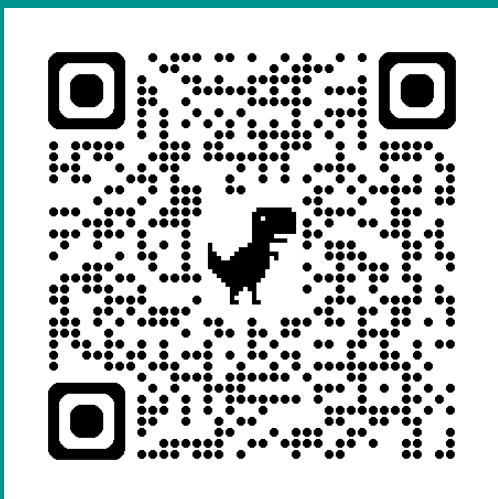


https://ripin.tfaforms.net/forms/view/4813003?tfa_9=701Qk00000RvOhP&tfa_23=2025-08-26%20Employment%20Supports%20for%20Individuals%20who%20Self-Direct%202025&tfa_144=English&tfa_208=

RIPIN



Our Fall Calendar



RIPIN



SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM



PROGRAMMING

2025

AUG
26

Employment Supports for Individuals Who Self-Direct 2025
Up-to-date information about the services and supports available for those who wish to work.

SEPT
23

Special Needs Trusts
PLAN of MA and RI will share information and options for planning for the future of your loved one's care.

OCT
21

Rhode Island's ABLÉ Accounts
What is an ABLÉ account? How can it help me? How can I use it?

NOV
4

What is the SIS?
An updated presentation about changes to the (SIS) process (Supports Intensity Scale).

DEC
2

Healthy Relationships
Friends from the Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition lead a discussion about healthy relationships.

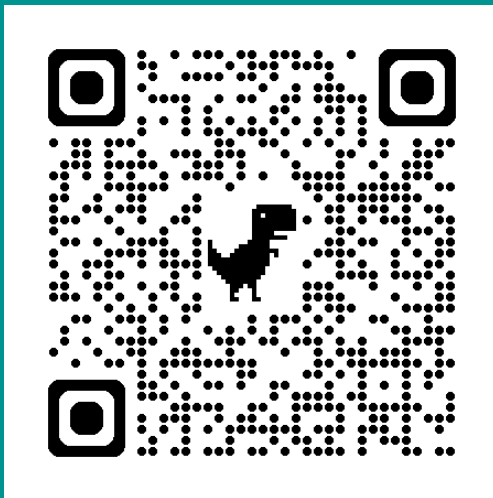


selfdirectedsupport@ripin.org



ripin.org/selfdirectedsupport

Join Us at Our Next Webinar in September



RIPIN

▶ **WEBINAR**



RIPIN SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM PRESENTS
SPECIAL NEEDS TRUST
Peace of Mind for Your Loved One's Future

- Learn how Special Needs Trusts work
- Protect benefits and assets for your loved one
- Understand trust management & long-term planning

SEPTEMBER 23RD | 6:00 - 7:00 PM | ZOOM

Check out our new resource!

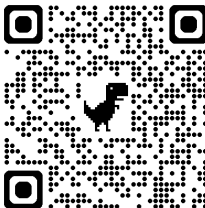
**SELF-DIRECTED
SUPPORT**

TOOLKIT



ripin.org/selfdirectedtoolkit

RIPIN



Sign up for our monthly newsletter!

THE NAVIGATOR

NEWS AND RESOURCES FROM RIPIN'S SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM



Visit our webpage ripin.org/selfdirectedsupport to sign up!

RIPIN

Missed something?

View our content on the web!

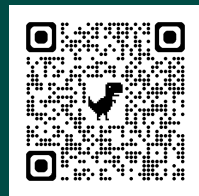
Our live webinars are recorded and posted within a few days to our website for you to view at any time.

They can be reviewed here:

Our Self-Directed Support Program's page:
ripin.org/selfdirectedsupport



RIPIN's webinar page:
ripin.org/webinars/sdsp/



RIPIN



Contact Us



401-270-0101

Monday through Friday
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM



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Facebook: @RIPIN.ORG

Twitter/Instagram: @RIPIN_RI

