



**THE  
RCAL**

**INDEPENDENT**



JANUARY 2024

YOUR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR MISSION

## A Letter From The Director

It's a new year with new hopes, new options, new possibilities and new opportunities to assist our fellow residence of Ulster County. RCAL is seeking passionate individuals to help individuals with developmental disabilities gain valuable skills and experience in the community. This is a paid volunteering experience that allows you to make a meaningful impact on people's lives. Depending on the individual, you may accompany them to go shopping, go to the movies, go hiking, or many other activities. Please call RCAL and ask for Leah for more information. It is the perfect way to spend 7 to 10 hours a week. We pay for training too, so you do not have to worry if you have the necessary skills.

There are other opportunities to volunteer with RCAL as well. We are seeking 3 new board members (less than 15 hours a month commitment) and several new and talented members to join our Fundraising Committee. Bring your ideas, skills and talents to help bring RCAL into the future. Feel free to reach out to me and ask questions. Call the front desk 845-331-0541 and let them know you would like to speak to me about being a board or committee member. Hope to talk to you soon.

-Anthony Mignone

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## 2024 State of the State & IL Policy

On Thursday January 9th, Governor Kathy Hochul delivered her annual State of the State address, outlining her key budgetary and policy priorities for the next fiscal year, required by law to be completed, signed, and in effect by April 1.

Hochul's address was followed up a week later with a complete set of executive budget legislation ([available here](#)). The following outlines key areas relevant to Independent Living to help inform advocates and the public as we prepare legislative meetings and testimony for hearings that are scheduled to receive feedback on the Governors proposed budget.

**Independent Living Funding:** Once again Independent Living is level funded at \$16 million in this year's Executive Budget. As in past years, we are seeking \$18 million as a stepping stone for addressing the systemic underfunding of our network. There is a proposed 1.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human service agencies (Health/Part FF). ILCs are not included because of our



Center - Governor Kathy Hochul,  
Above, left to right - Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie,  
Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado, Senate Majority  
Leader Adrea Stewart-Cousins

placement in the State Education Budget.

**Access to Home:** The Executive budget funds the home modifications program at only \$1 million, reverting last year's funding increase of \$2 million. We seek to restore the \$2 million increase included in last year's budget and add additional funding to this severely under-funded, yet critical program. The cut undermines housing accessibility which should be part of the Master Plan on Aging and Disability. We continue to advocate for a statewide



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## State of the State Continued

program available to all eligible residents in the state that is funded at \$10 million.

**Fair Pay for Home Care:** No increase to home care worker's wages was included in the executive budget. We continue to work on funding and getting the Fair Pay bill passed to address all of the related concerns, including ensuring the pass through of funds from plans to providers. As of January 1, the minimum wage for a home care worker is \$17.55 upstate and \$18.55 downstate (Westchester, NYC and Long Island). See the full breakdown online [here](#).

**Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program:** The executive budget proposal eliminates wage parity for downstate CDPAP workers. Workers would lose wages and benefits of \$200 million for CDPA workers, known as wage parity. The benefit would stay in place for agency-based personal care and other home care. This proposal was included in last year's Executive Budget and defeated by the legislature thanks to strong advocacy.

**Medicaid Global Spending Cap:** The executive budget proposes renewing the cap for another two years. The Global Cap spending limit is set by the five-year rolling average of Medicaid spending projections within the National Health Expenditure Accounts produced by Office of the Actuary in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, as set forth in the FY 2023 budget. We continue to oppose a cap.

**Office of People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD):** The executive budget supports access to more Independent Living settings with a proposal to allow Direct Service Providers to perform nursing tasks in a non-facility community-based setting.

**Medical Debt/ Consumer Protections:** The budget includes a prohibition on hospitals to commence legal action on medical debt for low-income consumers, earning less than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level. The budget also expands financial assistance programs, limits interest rates, and lowers monthly payment amounts.





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## State of the State Continued

### Office of the Chief Disability

**Officer:** The FY 2025 Budget provides for an additional full time employee to better support the Interagency Council for the Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing within the Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO) and the deafblind community. This staff member will increase outreach and advocacy for deafblind individuals.

Additionally, under the Office of the Chief Disability Officer, the FY 2025 Executive Budget includes \$250,000 for New York's Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) to issue an Olmstead Plan. This will ensure that people with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

**Open Meetings Law:** The budget extends for two years authorization for public bodies to conduct meetings at which some members may join by videoconference from locations not accessible to the public. The current bill is scheduled to sunset on July 1st 2024. We support retaining the above expansion and continue to advocate for additional permanent expansion of the existing Open Meetings Law.

### Employment First: In 2015, by

Executive Order, New York's Employment First Commission released a report outlining a path for New York to be an Employment First State. Governor Hochul has made disability employment a top priority for the administration. In her Executive budget, the Governor is proposing a \$6.7 million investment to support a multi-agency effort led by OPWDD to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The 2015 plan is available online [here](#).

\*The above budget analysis comes from Alex Thompson, Director of Advocacy at the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL)

Additional Online Resources:

[2024 State of the State Budget Book](#)

[Full Video: 2024 NY State of the State Address](#)





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## Annual Independent Living Budget Advocacy Day-2/12

Please join us for NYAIL's Annual Budget Advocacy Day on **Monday, February 12, 2024**.

This in-person day of advocacy in Albany marks the beginning of our push for the Disability Budget and Legislative Agenda (coming soon). The event, as in past years, will be held in The Well of the Legislative Office Building (LOB) which is connected to the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

What to expect:

**10:00 AM** - Check-in Begins: Centers can sign in and pick up a packet of materials and copies of the 2024 Disability Priority Agenda to distribute to legislators at the check-in table in the Well.

**11:00 AM** - Opening Rally with legislators

**12:00 PM** - Lunch (not provided)

**1:00 - 5:00 PM** - Member Center Meetings: Meet with legislators and drop off packets. We encourage you to Make your appointments now and we ask centers to avoid scheduling meetings during the opening rally to ensure a large presence in the Well to hear our speakers and show our strength!

[Register Here](#)



NYAIL  
NEWS



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## 2024 Budget Advocacy Priorities

A new year means the start of negotiations for a new state budget for the coming fiscal year (April 1, 2024- March 31, 2025). As one of over a dozen Systems Advocates across New York State, I work with the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL), who coordinates the aforementioned Statewide Systems Advocacy Network. Through a structure of various public policy committees that meet year-round, our collective efforts and concerns form the basis of our annual budgetary, and later, legislative priority agendas. The following is a list of this year's budget priorities. -Keith Gurgui

- Increase base funding for Independent Living Centers in FY 2024-25 to \$18 million and incorporate a statutory cost-of-living adjustment to ensure funding keeps pace with the cost of doing business.
- Address the home care crisis by increasing wages for home care workers to 150% of the State's minimum wage, as outlined in the Fair Pay for Home Care Act.
- Repeal cuts to eligibility for home and community-based long-term supports and services in Medicaid proposed by the Medicaid Redesign Team II.
- Increase funding for Access to Home to \$10 million.
- Require counties to expand paratransit beyond the federal Americans with Disabilities Act minimum.

Read NYAIL's full budget letter to Governor Hochul [here](#).





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## Ulster County Transportation Council Seeks Input

The Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC) is updating its Human Services Transportation Plan! Scheduled for completion in the Spring of 2024, the Plan will identify needs and develop solutions to improve transit, mobility, and access for seniors, persons with disabilities, and people with lower incomes.

### YOU CAN PARTICIPATE!

Take a brief online survey at [www.ulstercountyhstp.com](http://www.ulstercountyhstp.com) or attend an upcoming public listening sessions on Thursday, February 8th, from 10AM - 12PM and 4PM - 6PM at the Restorative Justice & Community Empowerment Center located at 733 Broadway Kingston, NY 12401

Accommodation requests for people with disabilities can be made by contacting Brian Slack, Principal Transportation Planner, UCTC at [bsla@co.ulster.ny.us](mailto:bsla@co.ulster.ny.us) or by calling 845-334-5590.



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## New York State Receives Approval by CMS for 1115 Medicaid Waiver Amendment

New York recently became the latest state to receive a Section 1115 Demonstration waiver from the federal government, with a goal of narrowing health disparities and reducing long-term spending. According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), this approval “allows New York to make large investments in wide-ranging Medicaid initiatives, including establishing sustainable base rates for safety net hospitals that serve the state’s most underserved communities; connecting people to critical housing and nutritional support services; enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive treatment for substance use disorders (SUDs); and making long-term, sustainable investments in the state’s health care workforce...

Medicaid section 1115 demonstrations allow CMS to approve innovative projects that promote the objectives of Medicaid, which provides health coverage to millions of low-income adults, children, pregnant people, and people with disabilities.

In New York’s demonstration, CMS is approving several initiatives to address health-related social needs as well as support greater integration between primary care providers, community-based organizations, and behavioral health specialists. This complements other...efforts to strengthen the primary care infrastructure in this country, including the recently announced CMS Innovation Center’s Making Care Primary (MCP) and States Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development (AHEAD) models.” (See full Jan 9, 2024 CMS Press Release)

According to the Hochul Administration, the waiver will make available approximately \$7.5 Billion in federal funds over the next three years (see more).



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Got questions about your upcoming CSE meeting?



# COMEASK THE ADVOCATE

Presented by: Mid-Hudson Special Education Task Force  
**Thursday 22nd February 2024**

**7:00 pm-8:30 pm**

The event is free of charge, but registration is required. This event will be recorded.



**Jennifer O'Neill**, Parent, Community Organizer, and Senior Special Education Advocate with [Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.](#)

**Susan H Wolman Mann, MA**, Parent, and Independent Special Education Advocate

**Renee Falanga Brenner**, Parent, Special Education Advocate at the [Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc.](#)

All SETF trainings will have **closed captioning**. ASL interpretation available upon request.

Need additional information or any accommodations? Contact Nancy Nowak at [Disability Rights New York: Nancy.Nowak@drny.org](mailto:Nancy.Nowak@drny.org) or 516.238.1261

**[To register, click HERE](#)**

Websites: [NY Special Ed Task Force](#) [Disability Rights New York](#) [Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.](#) [Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc.](#)

Special Education Task Force  
LUNCH & LEARN Series:

**RESTRAINTS AND TIME OUT ROOMS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: New Changes Parents and Professionals Need to Know**



February 14, 2024 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM ET



Tara L. Moffett, Esq.  
Girvin & Ferlazzo, PC



Julie M. Keegan, Esq.  
Disability Rights New York



Closed Captioning & ASL Interpretation provided.

# WE ARE HIRING

## Administrative Assistant to the CEO

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS: • Two to four years of experience as an administrative or office manager. • Additional qualification or certification as an Administrative Officer or Secretary

Necessary Skills • Manage staff meetings • Organize Board Meetings & Executive meetings • Provide notifications • Grant Assistance - write grants • prepare annual and Semi-Annual reports • Organize tabling events • Organize Staff Outings • Assist with Fundraising • Provide direct support to the CEO • Coordinate staff and Community Events

## Community Habilitaion (Comm Hab) Specialist

Community Habilitation is a service which provides experience and life skill development to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live at home. This helps promote independence and integration in the community. Previous experience is not necessarily required.

If you have any questions about a position or if you're not sure if your experience can be considered, please feel free to contact Leah Gherardi, Program Supervisor, at [lgherardi@rcal.org](mailto:lgherardi@rcal.org).

**MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE!**

**APPLY ON INDEED OR  
ON RCAL.ORG**





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Hudson Valley Chiropractic



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