

THE FLIC

NEWS FLASH

News from the Finger Lakes Independence Center

FEBRUARY 2026

SHORT NOTES

- FLIC will be closed Monday, February 16, in observance of President's Day.
- Reminder: **When Ithaca City School District closes schools for inclement weather, FLIC is closed.** We follow their schedule for weather.
- **Do you need help with transportation?** Don't forget about **Gadabout**, a non-profit, door-to-door transportation service based in Ithaca, serving Tompkins County seniors (55+) and people with disabilities, providing critical, specialized transit for medical appointments, shopping and other errands, and personal needs. <https://gadaboutbus.org/>
- Our **free Covid tests** are expiring at the end of this month, but we still have plenty. Stop in and get what you need!
- If you see instances of snow and ice in public areas that hamper accessibility, please report the instances. If you live in the City of Ithaca, you can report by clicking this link: [Report inaccessibility due to snow.](#)
- You can **contact FLIC** by calling 607-272-2433 or by emailing the general mailbox at info@fliconline.org.

Chili!



The heat is on! Remember to get your tickets to the Downtown Ithaca Chili Cook-Off on March 7, 2026. For more information, visit:

<https://www.downtownithaca.com/chili-cook-off-2026/>



Invisible Disability Support Group

FLIC is hoping to restart the **Invisible Disability Support Group**.

An invisible disability is a physical, mental or neurological condition that isn't visible from the outside, but can limit or challenge a person's movements, senses, or activities. Examples are learning differences, autism, mental health disabilities, diabetes, ADHD, fibromyalgia, arthritis, sleep disorders and epilepsy, but there are, of course, so many others.

Would you like more information? Contact Jan at jan@fliconline.org.

**"I'm not going to be one of those
amputees
who dances and everyone finds inspiring.
I'm not inspiring. I'm just me."**

-- Katherine Locke, award-winning and critically-acclaimed author

March is Developmental Disability Awareness Month

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan declared March to be Developmental Disability Awareness Month. The goal was to promote understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities throughout the year.



FLIC, of course, wants to bring awareness to the importance of the month and encourage that we all be more understanding, accepting,

and inclusive of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

10 Ways To Be More Inclusive:

1. Educate Yourself and Others

Learn about developmental and intellectual disabilities and the many valuable abilities brought to the table by those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Share this knowledge! Doing so will help dispel harmful stereotypes.

2. Don't Assume What Is or Isn't Possible

People with developmental and intellectual disabilities are diverse, representing a variety of cultures, skill sets, backgrounds, and, of course, disabilities. They have skills and talents they can offer their community. They can live independently. Don't assume you understand someone else's capabilities.

3. Use Person-First Language

Use person-first language, meaning use "a person with a disability" instead of "a disabled person." This emphasizes the individual's humanity over their disability and promotes respect and dignity.

4. Promote Accessible Public Spaces

Accessibility is key to creating an inclusive society. Play a role in ensuring public spaces, businesses, and transportation systems are designed with people of all abilities in mind, including features like ramps, braille signage, and restrooms.

5. Advocate for Inclusive Education

Encourage schools and educational institutions to provide the necessary resources, training, and support for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities to thrive, including inclusive education that allows children with disabilities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities.

6. Employers, Create Employment Opportunities

People with developmental and intellectual disabilities bring valuable skills to the workplace. Employers should create work environments where people with disabilities feel respected and supported. They should offer necessary training programs and provide reasonable accommodations.

7. Encourage Social Interaction and Participation

Social isolation is a common challenge for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Play a role in creating opportunities for social interaction, through community events, sports teams, art programs and other programs.

8. Employers, Seek Input from People with Disabilities

The best way to create an inclusive environment for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities is to get their input. Ask them how they would like their situation to be addressed — if at all — and what accommodations they need. Ask employees with disabilities how they feel the organization is promoting accessibility and inclusion.

9. Donate to Nonprofits That Empower People with Disabilities

Support nonprofits that empower people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live more independent and socially-integrated lives. These organizations provide crucial services, such as vocational training, housing assistance, social programs and resources for families and caregivers.

10. Volunteer in Your Community

Get involved! Want to know where to start? Contact us.

Five animals that form strong,
long-term, or lifelong pair bonds
to raise offspring

BALD EAGLES
BEAVERS
GIBBONS

Wolves
Prairie voles

Executive

Budget Highlights

Compiled by Andrea Champlin,
Advocacy and Support Specialist



Happy State Budget Season! Governor Hochul has released her executive budget. You can check out more information about the state budget by visiting the [Governor's budget website](#). In the coming weeks, the New York State Assembly & Senate will both release their own budgets (referred to as one-house budgets). After that, all groups will deliberate to reach final budget decisions. Make sure you sign up to receive Statewide Systems Advocacy notifications from FLIC's Statewide Systems Advocate, Andrea Champlin. Andrea will be sharing actions you can take to help ensure that NYS prioritizes people with disabilities and independent living in the state budget. You can sign up for this mailing list by completing this [FLIC Advocacy Volunteer Google Form](#). You can also email Andrea directly at Andrea@FLIConline.org. Here is an overview of some key elements of the Governor's budget proposal:

Funding for Independent Living Centers (ILC)

In the 2024-2025 budgets, ILCs received a \$750,000 increase in funding. Unfortunately, the Governor did not include this increase in her budget proposal, and instead funded ILCs with \$16 million. Advocates will work to

restore the \$750,000 increase from last year. Advocates are also working to make sure that ILC staff are included in the 1.7% Target Inflationary Increase (COLA) by advocating for A.2590/S.1580. In addition to helping ILCs, this bill would ensure other valuable human services staff receive these raises, too.

Health

The Governor's budget included \$20 million to support 11 ILCs, including FLIC, acting as facilitators for the Statewide Fiscal Intermediary for the Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Program. The Medicaid Global Cap was also extended to 2027. The Expanded In Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP) did receive a \$2 million increase.

The Office of People with Developmental Disabilities' Family Support Services (FSS) received a \$33 million cut. This important program provides a wide variety of services that support people with developmental disabilities in their homes.

The Nursing Home Transition and Diversion program did not receive any cuts, though the Governor did include the enrollment cap instituted last year.

Finally, the Governor's budget included reimbursement increases for institutional settings; this did not extend to Medicaid-funded community-based services.

Housing

The Governor proposes cutting funding for Access to Home to \$1 million in the Capital Projects bill. The program was funded at \$4 million last year. We will advocate to restore this funding and increase it by emphasizing the importance of this program. If Access to Home is only funded at \$1 million, this will not be enough funding to ensure even 1 household in each county in NY can benefit from the program.

**Looking for a way
to get involved?** 

Consider joining Andrea Champlin, our Advocacy and Support Specialist, promote legislation that is advantageous to people with disabilities. Simply **receive periodic Action Alerts** asking you to take action through calls, emails or sharing information on your social media. To get your name added to this very important list, reach out to Andrea at andrea@fliconline.org.

Also consider joining the Tompkins County Core Advocacy Group (CAG), FLIC's **Emergency Planning Group**, a group that meets every

other month to discuss aspects of emergency preparedness. Help effect change when it comes to local emergency preparedness services and emergency planning for people with disabilities. Reach out to Jeff at jeff@fliconline.org.

SNAP BENEFITS ARE CHANGING

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Rules

Recent Federal SNAP Work Rule changes mean that some adults aged 18 through 64 without dependents must meet ABAWD work rules to keep SNAP

1 Do new work rules apply to me?

Use this [screening tool](#), or contact DSS directly to confirm individual requirements



If you have one or more of these exemptions, you may not have to meet the work rules

- You are currently working 30 or more hours a week OR earning at least \$217.50 per week
- You are pregnant
- You are receiving disability benefits, such as NYS Disability benefits or SSI, or are an applicant for SSI
- You are receiving Unemployment Benefits
- You are participating in a substance use treatment program
- You are responsible for the care of an ill or disabled person (even if they do not live in your home)
- You are a student enrolled in any recognized school, job skills training, or institution of higher learning at least half time and meeting the student eligibility criteria to receive SNAP

2 Don't meet an exemption?

You have options. If you don't meet any of the exemptions contact to DSS for more information at (607) 274-5680,



tompkins-opportunity.org

Keep your address current with DSS and the post office so you don't miss important mail!

What a Resource!

*What Makes Ben Bassett, our NY Connects Specialist, **Unique ... and Valuable***



I'm going on my second year at FLIC and wanted to mention some of my **unique abilities** that may benefit those in need. Perhaps there are some offerings which you hadn't considered!

1. **I am bilingual.** I graduated from Ithaca College in 2001. During my time in school, I learned Spanish. Also, it's worth mentioning that my mom's parents were Mexican by way of South Texas. So if you ever need assistance with translation, or just want to talk, I love speaking Spanish.
2. **I have personal experience in the mental health system.** I was diagnosed with Bipolar Depression many years ago when I was in college. Despite this mental health condition, I have worked full time for 25 years. So if you're ever wondering if it's possible to work while coping with mental health symptoms, I'm here to tell you that it is. If you have the proper supports in place, you are capable of doing what you set your mind to. I'm not employed as a peer at FLIC, but I AM a peer. This impacts my life and work greatly.
3. **I love repairing stuff.** Here and there at FLIC I have done some basic repairs on wheelchairs and walkers. If your brakes ever need adjustment, or if you have some other repair issue that's been bothersome, please don't hesitate to call me and see if I can help.
4. **I can direct you to resources** in the community, or I can reach out to them for you. I have been in Ithaca for quite some time now, and I've familiarized myself with many community supports. If I don't know about a resource, I'll research and find what's out there. I recently connected a gentleman to Special Needs Trust Lawyers, I've contacted local politicians when their involvement is needed, I have mitigated situations with landlords and rent, and I have interacted with medical personnel in the area. I will not shy away from speaking with any of these people on your behalf, if you are not comfortable doing so.
5. **I've had a mutually beneficial partnership with Cornell University, in particular Cornell Assistive Technologies.** We successfully completed an adaptive rolling table for one of my clients, and they are always looking for new ideas. Due to my history with technical work, I am a great intermediary if you have an idea that will benefit you or someone you know with a disability.

That's it for now. There is much more I do here, but these are some areas that I know well. As always, thank you for your continued support of our little non-

in·clu·sive

1. INCLUDING OR COVERING ALL THE SERVICES, FACILITIES, OR ITEMS NORMALLY EXPECTED OR REQUIRED.
2. NOT EXCLUDING ANY OF THE PARTIES OR GROUPS INVOLVED IN SOMETHING.

FREE! *EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM*

NAMI Finger Lakes, in partnership with **NAMI Steuben County**, is offering the **NAMI Family-to-Family** class online via Zoom.

This is a free 8-week course, meeting Tuesdays, February 3 - March 24, 5:30pm to 8pm. **Registration is required.** For more information and to register, visit <https://www.namifingerlakes.org/nami-family-to-family>. If you have questions about the class or need further information, you can email support@namifingerlakes.org.

NAMI Family-to-Family is a free, 8-session educational program for family, significant others and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidenced-based program. This means that research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition.

NAMI Family-to-Family is taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there, and includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises.

NAMI Family-to-Family not only provides information and strategies for taking care of the person you love, but you'll also find out that you're not alone. Recovery is a journey, and there is hope.

The group setting of **NAMI Family-to-Family** provides mutual support and shared positive impact — experience compassion and reinforcement from people who understand your situation. Sharing your own experience may help others in your class. In the program, you'll learn about:

- How to solve problems and communicate effectively
- Taking care of yourself and managing your stress
- Supporting your loved one with compassion
- Finding and using local supports and services
- Up-to-date information on mental health conditions and how they affect the brain
- How to handle a crisis
- Current treatments and therapies

- The impact of mental health conditions on the entire family

Try this for free!

IV Pole

Available in our
Try It Room

FLiG



Items in our Try It Room can be borrowed for one month. There's no deposit or cost associated with using items from the Try It Room.

Awareness Spotlight

February is Low Vision Awareness Month

Low Vision Awareness Month is observed every February to highlight that "low vision" cannot be fully corrected by glasses, medicine, or surgery. It promotes awareness, eye exams, and rehabilitation to help millions maintain independence and improve quality of life.

What one step can you take to celebrate National Low Vision Awareness Month? Schedule your exams and encourage others to do the same! The goal is to detect conditions early. Share your encouragement on social meeting using hashtags like #LowVisionAwareness and #LifeAfterVisionLoss.

Increased Awareness is a Powerful Tool.



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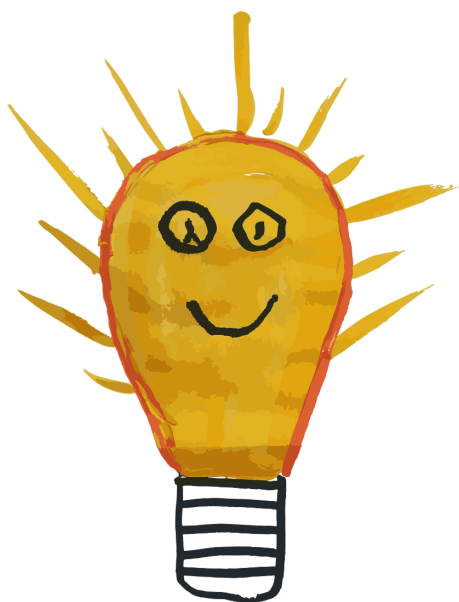
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We'd Love to Hear From You!

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Fax (607) 272-0902

info@fliconline.org

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

9:00am-5:00pm

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