

# INDEPENDENCE TIMES

*Newsletter of the Regional Center for Independent Living, Inc. / Winter 2022*

## An Update By RCIL's Deaf Systems Advocate

On February 4, 2022, Governor Hochul signed legislation creating the Office of the Chief Disability Officer who will be responsible for advocating for Deaf and Disabled New Yorkers. The Chief Disability Officer (CDO) will advocate within the administration on policy and legislation and will inform the Governor on issues related to the Disability community.

RCIL's Deaf Systems Advocate, Ayisha Mamudu, played a significant role assuring that this legislation was enacted. She collaborated with other advocates and disability-led groups across the state such as the Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL) and Access to Independence and Mobility (AIM).

The Office of the Chief Disability Officer was long in coming. Representation in State government has been a topic for the Deaf community. During the prior administration Deaf advocates were forced to sue the Cuomo Administration to secure sign language interpretation during his daily pressers on the COVID-19 pandemic. Deaf Advocates frequently spoke about being denied access to critical information related to the pandemic. Going forward a topic such as this will be addressed by the CDO and not ignored.

The Office of the Chief Disability Officer is a big win for the Deaf and Disability communities. For the first time we will be represented in State government and have an identified and acknowledged Advocate. RCIL thanks Governor Hochul for being good to her word and establishing the Office of the Chief Disability Officer and we look forward to working with the CDO.

Closer to home, in December Ayisha was honored by being asked to be a keynote speaker at the First National Deaf Muslim Camp in Ghana. She has been a strong advocate for Deaf women and children and encourages others to do similar work. One of the topics she spoke

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**Visit us on the web:**

**[www.rcil.org](http://www.rcil.org)**

**497 State Street**

**Rochester, NY 14608**

**(585) 442-6470**

## WHAT'S INSIDE

**INTEGRATION  
INDEPENDENCE  
CIVIL RIGHTS**

**2**

**Upcoming Events**  
Mark Your Calendar

**3**

**Catch Up With RCIL**  
Programs & Services

*Continued on Page 2*



*RCIL Deaf  
Systems Advocate  
in Ghana (Ayisha  
on the far left).*



## Dear Friends,

*Independence Times* provides our readers valuable information about RCIL programs and ongoing advocacy efforts - ensuring people with disabilities can be independent and integrated in the community.

Our featured story is about the recent work of our Deaf Systems Advocate. Be sure to read about our program highlight. Please contact us to learn how you can get involved at RCIL.

*Bruce E. Darling*

## Deaf Systems Advocate Continued

about was her work as the Deaf Systems Advocate at RCIL. She also highlighted other strong women advocates such as Michelle Obama and Susan B. Anthony. She was enthusiastic about speaking with the conference participants and will use this experience to further her work here in Rochester, New York.

Stay tuned for future updates about working with the new CDO and our advocacy work for the Deaf community.



## Are you interested in getting involved with us?

**You can help by:**

- **Donating**
- **Volunteering at Events**

**You can join our:**

- **Advocacy Efforts**
- **Committees**

**Don't forget to like, follow, and share us on social media!  
Ask us how you can get involved!**

**We are not-for profit organizations working to keep  
people with disabilities living independently in the community,  
with help from services and support they may need.**

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

Stay tuned for upcoming events.

They will be announced  
on [www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org)  
and on social media.

## RCIL's COVID-19 Booster Clinics

We are continuing our vaccination efforts; in January we partnered with our sister organization, Center for Disability Rights, and held two COVID-19 booster clinics. Last year we held several two dose vaccination clinics, and this year we are continuing with booster clinics to get as many people as fully protected as possible. If there are people who did not yet get the initial vaccines, we are addressing that need as well with our clinics.

IL team members conducted another phone campaign to reach everyone who received their initial vaccines here, to find out if they needed a booster and to schedule them if they had not. In addition, we advertise these clinics to the public. As before, we continue to provide accessible transportation as needed.

We are happy to say that we are still partnering with nurses from the Office of Mental Health (OMH), who have administered many booster shots and keep records of vaccinations given.

We plan to hold additional booster clinics. Dates will be announced on the CDR website and social media. Or you may either call (585-697-1660) or email ([vax@cdrnys.org](mailto:vax@cdrnys.org)), to ask about scheduling an appointment. The Moderna booster is compatible with any of the initial vaccines after a period of six months (Pfizer and Moderna) or two months (Johnson & Johnson).



Chair Debbie Bonomo (above).  
The OMH nurses (below).



### Newsletter Accessibility:

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter in an alternate format, including:

- Braille
- Large print

Contact Linda Taylor:  
[Ltaylor@cdrnys.org](mailto:Ltaylor@cdrnys.org)

### Upcoming Board Meeting

February 17, 2022  
1:00pm  
497 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14608

**All board meetings will be conducted on Zoom, until further notice.**

497 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14608  
(585) 442-6470



/RCILNYS



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RCIL Rochester



[rcil.org](http://rcil.org)

*This year, give a gift  
that lives on year-round.*

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RCIL works for the full integration, independence, and civil rights of people with disabilities.

### **Become a Member of RCIL today!**

**Membership year 11/1 - 10/31. Minimum contribution \$10 per year.**

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