



HERITAGE
CHRISTIAN SERVICES

Celebrating **40** Years

FLAFI March 2026 Newsletter

Welcome to our team newsletter!



Falon representing HCS at the Festival of Inclusion!

If you are interested in attending events like these, please let Charissa know!

FI Team Updates and Reminders

- Thank you ALL so much for your work on cleaning up the Self-Hire Staff Roster!
- Thank you for getting your 2025 signed documents into eVero!
- Reminder: Reissues of Ingo payments cannot be requested until 3 weeks after the initial payment date (see Charissa's 3/24 email).
- Reminder: Please ask brokers to add in a swimming supervision level to any respite safeguard grid or community hab plan. For anyone who has a seizure disorder, this supervision level should generally be 1:1 with staff within arms reach.
- Reminder: HES may need to be pursued before we can consider IDGS or OTPS funding for items related to health, safety or independence in the home (see Charissa's 3/27 email).
- Reminder: The AD team reviewed AU's spring course offerings and emailed out the list of coverable and uncoverable courses (see Madeleine's 3/24 email). We will get the IDGS chart in Share Point updated ASAP.
- Reminder: We need guardianship paperwork for anyone who has a legal guardian. In 2026, at Life Plan reviews, please begin requesting copies of the guardianship paperwork and uploading to eVero. If you notice that a self-hired staff is also listed as legal guardian, please reach out to your supervisor immediately.
- Reminder: In order to cover a camp in IDGS Camps, the camp must have a DOH certificate to operate.
- If a camp allows for delayed payment, closer to the dates of the camp, we encourage families to choose this option. Camp payments can include registration/enrollment fees as well.
- Children approved for ESY (summer school) services cannot use any waiver services during ESY hours (staffing, IDGS, etc). Please keep your

- eyes peeled for the process on verifying this information for families.
- Don't miss Bianca's monthly calendar to help you keep up with recurring tasks.

Committee Updates

No updates from committees this month. If you are interested in a joining a committee, please let Charissa Moll know!

House it going?

We have already submitted over 10% of our 2026 Housing Subsidy Recertifications! Please keep the momentum going and continue to work toward aligning and completing subsidy recertifications throughout the year, with lease renewals.

Don't forget that new leases and QA checklists should be uploaded to the SDS-Documents tree in eVero. They are both used for separate tracking purposes and can cause delays if they are not in eVero. There are folders in the SDS-documents tree for all of the other housing documents if you want to use them!

Here is a brief outline on the difference between a Housing Subsidy Recertification and Housing Subsidy Amendment:

	Recertification	Amendment
When to submit	Annually with lease renewal	Any change in housing, housing costs, income, or other change that could impact the subsidy
What to submit	- ALL required supporting documents - budget amendment - current life plan	- ONLY supporting documents that reflect the change being made - budget amendment - current life plan
Where to submit	Region1HousingSubsidy@opwdd.ny.gov	Region1HousingSubsidy@opwdd.ny.gov

Check out 'A Housing Journey Podcast' from New York Housing Resource Center

Self-Hired Staff Training and Compliance Corner

Driving Requirements for Self-Hire Employees

General Driving Requirements for Self-Hire Employees:

- All driving Self-Hire staff must maintain a valid **New York State** driver's license and active insurance coverage.
- Self-Hire staff with out-of-state licenses need to transfer their license to a NYS license in order to be able to be hired as a driving staff. A valid out-of-state license typically transfer to a New York State license within one to two days of transferring the license at the DMV.

- A probationary license is not accepted, including during the first six months after a first-time license is issued.
- Licensed driver's are allowed a maximum of 7 driving points.
 - Driver's should be aware that points from other states will transfer to their NYS license and may impact their ability to drive with Heritage Christian Services.

Auto Insurance Information for Self-Hire Employees:

- The minimum auto liability insurance coverage for NYS is \$25,000 per person / \$50,000 per accident for bodily injury and \$50,000 for property damage.
- Though not required, HCS recommends that employees carry the following higher liability limits of \$100,000 per person/ \$300,000 per accident for bodily injury.

Self-Hired Data:

51 new self-hired staff were cleared to work in February 2026!

Intake Updates

Intake is now open in both regions with no waitlists! Our Finger Lakes (FL) team will continue to support the Western New York (WNY) intake process for the foreseeable future.

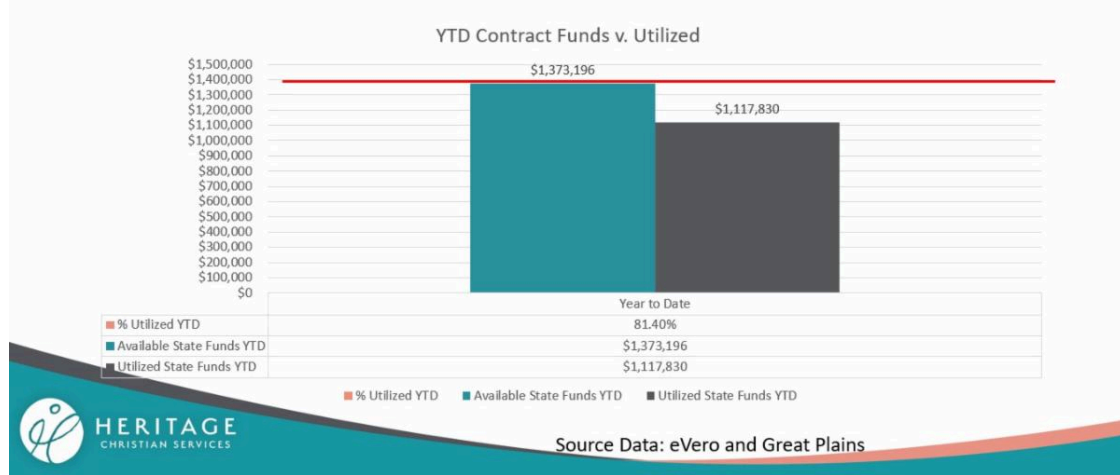
In February, we received 17 new referrals in Finger Lakes, bringing our total intake list to 53 individuals. Additionally, 14 start-up budgets were approved last month along with 1 transfer budget.

State Funded Contract Update

Each OPWDD Fiscal Intermediary holds a contract with OPWDD/NYS to administer state-funded, self-directed services, including Family Reimbursed Respite, Other Than Personal Services (OTPS), and Housing Subsidies/administrative fees. Agencies are responsible for ensuring expenditures remain within their approved contract allocations. If funds in the contract are exhausted before the year is over, all intake must stop and it is possible the agency would not continue to be reimbursed for additional state funded for that budget/contract year.

We were able to end the 2025 contract year at 99% contract utilization! Our new contract began on January 1, 2026 and provides an increase of about \$1.3M over the 2025 contract amount. In February 2026 we saw an 81% contract utilization of the YTD contract funds.

Below is YTD state funded contract usage for February 2026.



Meet the FI Team

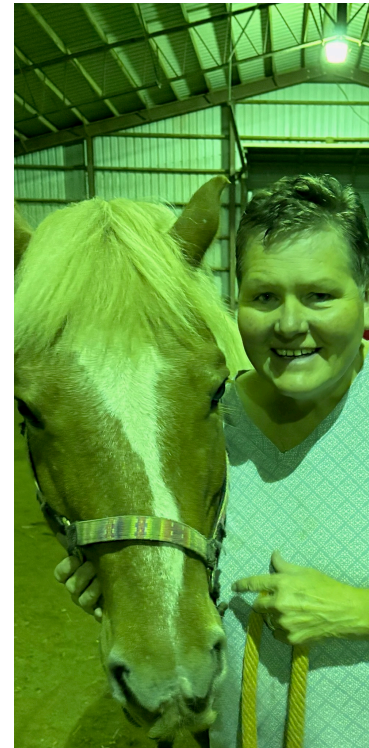
Each month, we will spotlight a team member whose dedication, personality, and unique talents help shape our community. This feature is all about celebrating the individuals behind the work—what inspires them, what they love, and the fun facts that make them. Join us as we highlight this month's featured coworker, Cathy Ernisse (FI Coordinator/Broker).

Cathy's path into Human Services was driven her love for working with and supporting people. While she jokes that she prefers people over machines and never expected technology to play such a large role in her job, her dedication to others has remained constant throughout her career.

Her journey within the Self-Direction team has evolved over time. Cathy began as a Support Broker, where she appreciated the opportunity to connect face-to-face with individuals and their families. She found fulfillment in leading person-centered meetings, completing start-ups, and truly getting to know the people she supported. Over time, she became interested in the FI role, drawn to the variety it offered and the chance to engage in different types of work throughout the day.

In her current role, Cathy continues to find purpose in building relationships—not only with individuals and families, but also with staff. She brings a unique perspective when it comes to technology, recognizing firsthand how challenging new systems can be. Because of this, she takes pride in offering patient, supportive guidance to others as they learn tools like eVero.

What motivates Cathy most is deeply personal. Her daughter, Kyra, has directly benefited from the Self-Directed program, and seeing the impact it has had on her life inspires Cathy every day. This experience drives her commitment to ensuring that others have access to the same opportunities.



Outside of work, Cathy finds peace and joy in spending time with her animals, especially taking walks with her dogs when the weather allows. She also draws strength from her faith, which remains a central and grounding force in her life. Cathy's compassion, authenticity, and lived experience continue to shape the way she supports others, making a lasting impact across the Self-Direction program.

Do you know someone looking for a job?

Consider referring people to Heritage!

<https://jobs.heritagechristianservices.org/>

Or, if you're interested in any of the listed roles—or would like to learn more about other departments within the agency—please reach out to a supervisor. We may be able to coordinate shadowing opportunities or set up discussions to help you explore different career paths.

Upcoming Events

- April 16 Spring Summit- PFLC
- April 21 Planning with a Purpose Seminar
- April 25 Sheep Shearing Festival
- April 29 All time off requests for 5/18-5/29 Due for submission

Do you have suggestions, ideas or constructive feedback to share?

[Submit Feedback Here](#)

Sincerely,

Finger Lakes FI Leadership Team



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Heritage Christian Services | 275 Kenneth Drive, Suite 100 | Rochester, NY 14623 US

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