FI Connect Newsletter

August 2026

NY Able

ABLE accounts were created through federal legislation known as the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, or ABLE Act. The law allows eligible individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without having to choose between building financial security and maintaining eligibility for certain public benefits.

Unlike traditional accounts, tax-advantaged ABLE savings accounts are designed to work alongside certain public benefits programs. Over time, they have become an established and trusted tool for both day-to-day needs and long-term planning.

Why ABLY Accounts Matter

Many public benefit programs, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid, include asset limits that can make saving difficult. ABLE accounts allow eligible individuals to build savings without jeopardizing certain means-tested benefits.

This flexibility supports planning for both routine and unexpected costs, from housing and transportation to education, assistive technology, and health-related needs.

Money in your ABLEnow account can be used for both routine needs and unexpected costs. Qualified Disability Expenses are broadly defined under federal law and are intended to support daily living, independence, and long-term well-being.

Examples of Qualified Disability Expenses include, but are not limited to:

Living expenses, Education, Housing, Transportation, Employment training and support, Assistive technology, and Personal support services.

Please reach out to your Care Coordinator for more information!

Protecting PHI: Preventing Unauthorized Disclosures

An Unauthorized Disclosure occurs when Protected Health Information (PHI) is accessed, used, or shared in a way that is not permitted by law. Protecting PHI is everyone's responsibility and helps ensure the privacy and trust of the individuals we serve.Examples include:

- Sending PHI to the wrong person.
- Using a personal email account instead of your agency email.
- Sending texts about a person supported from your personal cell phone.
- Taking photos of a person supported on a personal device.
- Sharing information with friends, family members, or community members who are not authorized to receive it.
- Sharing more information than is necessary.

Before sharing PHI, make sure you are using agency-approved communication methods and only sharing the minimum information needed. If you're unsure, ask before you share.

Self-Hire Trainings

All Self-Hires are required to complete the following trainings by **08/31/2026:**

Safety Issues and Fire Safety Update 2026

It is crucial that all Self-Hires remain informed and compliant with all New York State and OPWDD requirements. **Failure to complete this training by the due date can result in disabled eVero access, corrective action, and termination**. If your Self Hire need assistance with the Relias System—such as logging in, resetting a password, or navigating tests please contact your FI Coordinator or email the training department at the following address: **Training@thearcas.org**

The Arc Allegany-Steuben's mission is to support and respect people's choices on their journey to independence.

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Rate increases for Self-Direction

Effective August 1st, 2026, The Arc Allegany-Steuben will be increasing the following:

Com Hab Self-Hire Pay Rate Limit will be $32.00 per hour

- Pay Rate cannot be implemented until an Approved Budget Amendment has been received. Change in Pay Rates cannot take place in prior pay periods.

Respite Self-Hire Pay Rate Limit will be $21.00 per hour

- Pay Rate cannot be implemented until an Approved Budget Amendment has been received. Change in Pay Rates cannot take place in prior pay periods.

Family Reimbursed Respite (FRR) reimbursement limit will be $21.00 per hour

- Justification needed for higher needs to be able to approve a reimbursement rate higher than $21 per hour.

IDGS and OTPS Transportation mileage reimbursement will be $.76 per mile

- This will take effect automatically in eVero.
- This aligns with the increased IRS Mileage Rate.

The State has increased the maximum Broker Rate to $47.52 per hour

- With approval from the person supported, a new Broker Agreement and Budget Amendment will need to be completed in order to pay the increased rate

Pay rate increases are determined by the Person Supported, their Family Advocate/Broker, and the planning team in accordance with the individual's approved Self-Direction budget. Self-hired staff should not independently negotiate wage increases.

Any proposed rate increase must be reviewed to ensure sufficient funding is available within the individual's budget and may only be approved if the budget can support the increased cost without negatively impacting other authorized services and supports.

For any questions, please reach out to your FI Coordinator.

Q & A

Q: I accidentally sent an email containing PHI to the wrong recipient. Is that considered an unauthorized disclosure?

A: Yes. Sending PHI to an unintended recipient is considered an unauthorized disclosure because the information was shared with someone who was not authorized to receive it. If this occurs, notify your supervisor and/or the Privacy Officer immediately.

Q: Can I discuss a person's services with a family member if they seem involved in the individual's care?

A: Not unless the family member is authorized to receive that information. Always verify authorization before discussing PHI. When in doubt, do not share information and seek guidance from your supervisor or Privacy Officer.

Q: What is the Privacy Officer's Contact information?

A: You can reach the Privacy Officer, Mary Kuhlmann by:

- *Email - Mary.Kuhlmann@thearcas.org*
- *Phone - (607)776-4146 ext. 2274*

You can also reach out to your FI Coordinator for assistance.

Stay Connected

For any questions regarding information found on this newsletter, please email: **FIConnect@thearcas.org**