

Review of 2021 Progress on 2019-2021 Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective: Increase the number of individuals of working age engaged in community employment.

Goals	Expected Outcomes
<p>A minimum of 22 LCBDD-eligible individuals will be placed in a job that meets the definition of community employment every year, between 2019 and 2021</p> <p>90% of LCBDD-eligible individuals who are placed in a job that meets the definition of community employment will retain the job for at least 90 days</p> <p>75% of LCBDD-eligible individuals who are placed in a job that meets the definition of community employment will maintain the job for one year or more</p>	<p>42* individuals were placed in jobs that meet the definition of community employment in 2021.</p> <p>35 of the 42 (or 83% of the) individuals placed in jobs that meet the definition of community employment in 2021 retained the employment for at least 90 days. (Examples of why employment was not retained include: 2 individuals resigned due to health issues, 2 were terminated due to excessive absences, and 1 was unable to successfully transition to new assignments.)</p> <p>Of the 42* individuals who between July 01, 2020 and June 30, 2021 were placed in jobs that meet the definition of community employment, 28 (67%) retained employment for one year or more. (One person in the group left his position for a job opportunity with significantly better pay and benefits, and one person was placed in a seasonal position that was expected to end; discounting these two individuals, the rate rises to 70%.)</p> <p>Note: The above data pertains strictly to individuals who obtained community employment through the Murray Ridge Supported Employment Program, and is not inclusive of any community employment facilitated by other providers.</p> <p>* The number of LCBDD-eligible individuals who were placed in positions that meet the definition of community employment was coincidentally 42 in the case of the period 01/01/2021 – 12/31/2021, and the period 07/01/2020 – 06/30/2021.</p>

- **Continue to coordinate and take a leadership role on the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team, which has established the following goals:**

Establish a baseline measurement of employment outcomes of youth in Lorain County, including information about the services, education, support, etc. received while in school and immediately after.

Building upon the identified strengths and resources of Lorain County and the Ohio Employment First Process, create a plan that outlines a process of awareness, training, and communication to support higher expectations for community employment for youth with DD in Lorain County, with a focus on all stakeholders (families, students, schools, DD system employees, OOD representatives, service providers, etc.).

Identify a continuum of options for youth with DD to prepare and support these youth to engage in community employment.

Currently, the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team is coordinated by the State Support Team. The following 2021 activities demonstrate a continued leadership role of LCBDD on the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team:

- LCBDD presented at a virtual Transition Fair held in April by the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team; the presentation addressed how to obtain services from LCBDD.
- LCBDD participated in a transition networking meeting with representation from DODD to discuss Employment First and DODD resources and services. LCBDD representatives were there to discuss services and intake.

- **Through on-going participation on the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team, take steps to ensure that LCBDD and local school districts use similar methods to support students with DD to obtain community employment and to resolve any duplication of effort.**

- Through active engagement with resources made available by the State Support Team through the Employment First Transition Team, LCBDD was exposed to employment strategies and philosophies that local school districts were also exposed to; this is expected to promote the use by LCBDD and local school districts of similar methods to support students with DD to obtain community employment. An example of a resource made available to both LCBDD and local school districts is a weekly newsletter initiated in October of 2021 by the Special Education Consultant of the State Support Team; the purpose of the newsletter is to keep team members abreast of updates, requirements, and resources related to transition services.
- The SSA Department continued to meet with local school districts to support students with DD through the process of obtaining community employment. The school districts, families, SSA Department, and staff from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) worked as a team to support students age 16 and older through transition and with efforts to obtain community employment. This collaboration has reduced duplications of effort.

- **Update and execute a strategic, targeted plan to create community-based, integrated employment opportunities for adult consumers utilizing a team of Supported Employment staff. Include strategies for evaluating the human resource needs of local employers, approaching specific employers, and making employers aware of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.**
 - The Supported Employment (SE) team continued to meet weekly to review placements, analyze terminations for lessons learned, identify backfilling opportunities, review situational and community-based assessments, and evaluate strengths and weakness of consumer job interviews from the previous week in order to identify strategies for future success.
 - No local job fairs were held in 2021 due to the pandemic.
 - The Supported Employment Director and applicable staff attended multiple webinars on employment and career planning for people with developmental disabilities and imparted the information to applicable staff members. Topics included the role of the provider in employment outcomes, assistive technology, transition services, workplace inclusion, workplace accommodations, and accessibility.
 - OOD provided online trainings for employers on inclusive employment practices. These were sent to employers in LCBDD's employer database.
 - Approval to hire two new job coaches was obtained to meet the increasing job training needs of those served by the Supported Employment Department.
- **Include in the LCBDD budget a line item for community employment marketing, and identify specific strategic expenditures designed to highlight the competencies of people with DD in the workforce and the benefits of hiring people with DD (e.g., 'bus bench campaign,' radio spots, radio interviews with employers/consumers, etc.).**
 - The 2021 budget for community employment marketing was \$18,530.00. Through this budget,
 - Radio spots highlighting the competencies of people with DD in the workforce and the benefits of hiring people with DD were aired on WOBL/WDLW ten months out of the year. Radio interviews were provided as a part of the broadcast package. In the interviews both employers and program participants highlighted benefits of hiring people with DD. Consumers pursuing community employment participated in mock interviews live on the air to practice their interviewing skills and make potential local employers aware of their skill sets.
 - Print media and radio were utilized to promote Developmental Disabilities Employment Awareness Month in October of 2021.
 - A line item for community employment marketing was included in the Agency's 2022 budget, which included bus bench advertising.
- **Facilitate the meetings/activities of a Community Employment Advisory Committee consisting of local business leaders from diverse industries (food service, manufacturing, retail, local government, not-for-profits) that will meet quarterly to**

develop best practices with regard to providing community employment services and placing consumers in competitive jobs.

- The Community Employment Advisory Committee met once (remotely) in 2021. The SE Department was extremely busy with placement activities, and the group felt that ongoing meetings would not be necessary at this time. Should the need arise, the group will convene again virtually. SE will continue to share applicable training opportunities with committee members as well.
- OOD's online trainings for employers on inclusive employment practices were sent to members of the committee.
- **Maintain ongoing contacts with a variety of businesses and industry representatives to promote community employment placements.**
 - The LCBDD Marketing/Job Placement Specialist maintained a database of industry representatives and contacts at a variety of businesses. The Marketing/Job Placement Specialist contacted people on this list, as well as people listed on job boards and in 'help wanted' advertisements. She also did cold calling. Any networking events she would have attended were canceled due to the pandemic. One local manufacturing business hired eight program participants. Several other businesses hired at least two program participants.
- **Solicit agency staff/supporters for job leads.**
 - This was not done in 2021 as the number of jobs available through other channels far exceeded the number of program participants looking for jobs.
- **Develop relationships with a variety of civic organizations/chambers of commerce/service clubs that could lead to employment opportunities for adult consumers.**
 - Murray Ridge Marketing staff continued to attend virtual meetings of the North Coast Chamber of Commerce, Lorain County Chamber of Commerce, Power of More (a conglomerate of many local chambers of commerce), the Lorain County Manufacturing Council, and the Lorain County Safety Committee, for the purpose of developing leads for community employment opportunities. Most meetings were moved to in-person by the end of the year.
- **Continue partnering with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) to assist identified individuals who want community employment by working with the OOD counselors to provide intensive placement services.**
 - The Supported Employment Department continued working with the OOD counselor by providing and tracking those services listed within each individual's employment plan for which it was the identified facilitator and meeting regularly (remotely) with the counselor to discuss plan efficacy. The SE team also met weekly to discuss newly referred individuals and their employment histories, if any, in order to assist with the development of effective employment plans. Vocational Placement Specialists would then communicate information to the applicable OOD counselor and review progress and issues for those already employed.

- **Utilize lessons learned from community employment dismissals and voluntary terminations to increase the likelihood of successful future community employment placements/job retention.**
 - Job losses were analyzed so that the reasons for individual job loss could be taken into consideration when facilitating future employment opportunities. Several people quit jobs due to various scheduling issues. An issue that arose in multiple cases was a consequence of employers being understaffed, and program participants being asked to work extra hours. The program participant would say “yes” every time he/she was asked to work overtime or on a day/days off, and then he/she would quit after feeling overworked. Now we advise employed program participants not to volunteer for extra shifts if they do not really want to work them. We let them know they will not get in trouble for saying “no”.
- **Actively participate in the development and promotion of MOVE, Lorain County’s Coordinated Transportation Plan, which, if funded, would develop and implement a mobility management program and create pilot projects to increase the availability of affordable public transportation services.**
 - The Director of Vocational and Transportation Services serves on a committee that developed a coordinated transportation plan for Lorain County. The goals of the plan are to increase awareness of and access to transportation options for Lorain County residents by: (a) increasing understanding and awareness of transportation needs; (b) coordinating transportation options to meet needs; and (c) building sustainable and healthy communities. The plan was updated in December of 2021.
 - The Transportation Advisory Committee met three times in 2021. Pilot projects were implemented, mostly focusing on providing transportation services to medical appointments/vaccine clinics, as well as enhancing transportation services for seniors.
 - In 2022 the committee wants more emphasis on workforce transportation and is looking at several pilot projects (which have yet to come to fruition) to address this.
- **Systematically track and document occasions in which lack of transportation precluded a community employment opportunity for an LCBDD-eligible individual, or resulted in job loss for an LCBDD-eligible individual.**
 - In 2019, the SSA Department developed and implemented a tracking mechanism to capture individual situations where the lack of transportation was a barrier to a community employment opportunity. In 2021, there were nine individuals who were unable to accept a community employment opportunity due to the lack of transportation.
- **Consider additional investment in the provision of work-related transportation when natural supports are unavailable.**
 - The Board will work to hire more intermittent drivers for Supported Employment.
 - Promotion of the use by Medicaid waiver recipients of transportation from Independent Providers and Participant-Directed Transportation (a waiver service that is being developed) will be promoted; LCBDD covers the non-Federal share of the cost of many Medicaid waiver services.

- **Refer individuals, as appropriate, to the DODD/OOD job placement partnership through which technical assistance is given.**
 - In 2021, the SSA Department completed 16 referrals to the DODD/OOD job placement partnership, through which funding and technical assistance was made available to providers of community employment services to assist referred individuals.
- **Continue to implement and enhance an assessment and service planning protocol for assisting eligible individuals to move forward on their paths to community employment.**
 - The SSA Department continues to utilize the Discovery & Individual Needs Assessment (DINA) to assess the individual's place on the path to employment and plan for services. The assessment was updated in 2019 based on guidance by DODD.
- **Seek guidance from DODD consultants on: (1) best practices for assessment and service planning to assist eligible individuals to move forward on their paths to community employment, (2) how to access and interpret statewide data on community employment of people with DD, (3) which providers have had the greatest success with assisting individuals with DD to achieve desired community employment outcomes.**
 - Guidance was sought from DODD during the period covered by the strategic plan.
- **Develop and begin collecting data on a metric that measures whether or not post-secondary school employment matches the job preferences identified by eligible individuals during the secondary school transition process.**
 - The metric was implemented in October of 2019. The occupational preference data is collected at age 16 (or when first assigned as a transition student to an SSA), at the time of graduation, and 4 years post-graduation. To date, post-secondary school employment preferences are being tracked for 21 individuals, 5 of which have graduated.

Strategic Objective: Within resource constraints, ensure/assist eligible individuals to receive services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their needs

Goals	Expected Outcomes
Address CMS requirements related to community-based, integrated service delivery	Increased provision of Murray Ridge Adult Services in integrated community settings
Increase the amount of time that all interested Adult Program participants spend receiving community-based day services	Continued engagement of LCBDD-eligible individuals in volunteering and other valued activities in their community
Identify more community places where individuals with DD may enjoy spending extended periods of time without incurring significant cost	Increased participation by LCBDD-eligible individuals in desired, community-based activities with the assistance of Medicaid waiver providers and other assistance, including natural supports
Arrange for eligible individuals to receive community-based services that help them enjoy themselves, progress toward desired outcomes, engage actively with people (other than paid staff) who do not have DD, and play valued roles within the community	Improved ability of Service & Support Administrators to assist with identification of specific community-based services desired by eligible individuals, and linkage of these individuals with providers that are well-equipped to provide these services

During 2021, the pandemic continued to significantly impact the provision of community-based services to those who received Murray Ridge Adult Services in LCBDD’s Opportunity and Vocational Centers (OVCs).

	Data collected from January 1 - December 31, 2020 (OVCs were closed from March 16, 2020 through August 2020)	Data collected from January 1 - December 31, 2021
Number of times individuals in Murray Ridge Adult Services participated in activities away from the OVCs other than work and volunteer activities coordinated by the SE Department	732	1,689
Number of groups of Adult Program participants that were involved in community-based activities (other than work or volunteering facilitated by the SE Department)	360	416
Number of times Murray Ridge Adult Program participants with severe medical, behavioral and/or physical challenges participated in community-based activities other than work.	1003	1020

The provision of Murray Ridge Adult Services in integrated community settings continues to be a priority, and is expected to increase to the pre-pandemic (per participant) level once the impact of COVID ends. (It is noteworthy that strategic efforts brought about a 100% increase in the frequency of community-based service provision to OVC participants in 2019 as compared to 2018.)

- **Continue to have a management or professional level employee work, on at least a monthly basis, with each Murray Ridge Adult Program participant who has a desired outcome involving day support away from the OVCs to identify and arrange for the delivery of indicated/desired services in community places.**
 - During 2021, Murray Ridge Adult Services continued to assign a Program Manager from each OVC to work directly with program participants to plan services outside the OVCs. During this timeframe, the assigned Program Managers met one-on-one with each consumer who had a desired outcome that required day support away from the OVCs. When meeting with each consumer, they discussed what interests the consumer had and where he/she would like to go in the coming month. The information shared at the meetings was included on Desired Outcome Documentation forms and used as the basis for arranging individual services in community places.
- **Assign a professional level or management employee to work with the staff and program participants in each OVC area to plan services away from the OVC for Individuals assigned to the area.**
 - In 2021, the assigned Program Managers continued to work with OVC staff and program participants to plan services away from the OVCs. When possible, services that could, but did not necessarily have to be, delivered away from the OVCs were provided in community settings.
- **For planning of services to occur outside the OVCs, continue to use Proposals for Community Based Services Forms to identify proposed destination(s); interests, individualized support strategies, and desired outcomes to be addressed for each person to receive services at/on route to the destination(s); how those to receive the community-based services were/will be involved in planning the proposed community-based activities; how these activities may enable Adult Program participants to interact meaningfully with people (other than paid staff) who do not have DD; and how the proposed activities may foster relationship building and engagement within the broader community. Subsequent to delivery of community-based day services, support staff will document occurrences/outcomes relative to what was addressed on the Proposal Forms.**
 - The Proposal for Community-Based Services Form continued to be used to assist staff in planning for services to occur outside of the OVCs. The form requires the identification of the community destination the consumers will go to, as well as the interests, desired outcomes, and support strategies that will be addressed for each consumer when he/she receives services at (or on the way to) the destination. The following factors are systematically considered through the use of the form: (1) whether or not the destination lends itself to addressing each consumer's identified interests, support strategies, and desired outcomes; (2) whether or not existing staff coverage will be adequate for all consumers at the OVC (after associated staff are redeployed) if the identified group of consumers leaves the OVC and spends the planned amount of time at/traveling to the

destination; (3) being equitable in providing all consumers with opportunities for community-based services; (4) how the consumers will be involved in planning/organizing the activity; (5) who, other than paid staff and consumers, will/might be involved with the activity; (6) how the activity may foster relationship-building between consumers and community members; and (7) how the activity is expected to help consumers to engage within the broader community. After each community-based activity, staff documented the occurrences/outcomes relative to what occurred during the delivery of day support away from the OVC.

- **Systematically, using the searchable database of individual interest areas of Murray Ridge Adult Program participants, assist individuals served to plan community-based activities of interest with other Adult Program participants who have common interests; in so doing, plan for adjustments to staffing within/arrangement of the OVCs such that the needs of those receiving center-based services will be met while others receive community-based services.**
 - During 2021, staff responsible for planning community-based services continued to use an Interest Areas Database reflecting the interests of individual program participants to assist individuals to plan community-based activities with other Adult Program participants who have common interests. They also met with the Recreation staff to set up groups based upon common interests. Adult Program managers planned for staffing to meet the needs of those receiving center-based services while others received community-based services.
- **Establish a committee and through it work to address barriers to successful planning and delivery of community-based services within the Adult Program, including factors related to the cost of some community-based activities, communication/coordination with residential caregivers, and uncertainty about availability/approval for use of collective resources needed for community-based service delivery.**
 - The assigned Program Managers, Quality Assurance Manager PT, Recreation Specialists, Recreation Manager, and Director of Adult Programs were members of a committee that was established to address barriers to successful planning and delivery of community-based services. This committee had a kick-off meeting with the superintendent in early 2019. Some identified barriers included the cost of some community-based activities, the challenge of coordinating community-based services with employment services, the challenge of ensuring that residential caregivers send items necessary for community-based activities on days when they are to occur, and consumers changing their minds about leaving the OVCs at the last minute. It was noted that when consumers who had planned to participate in community-based activities were unprepared or unwilling to participate on the day of the activity, other consumers could (if willing and prepared) participate instead. Identification of more no-cost activities was identified as having the potential to increase the number of program participants able to participate in community-based activities without advance notice, and also to resolve issues related to program participants/caregivers forgetting to bring needed materials/supplies for planned activities away from the OVCs.
 - Because of the pandemic, keeping OVC attendees safe while in the community became a main focus during 2020 and 2021. The Program Managers strived to identify safe places to be in the community, a task that was much easier during the warmer months than the

Winter months when people tended to gather indoors. Providing safe transportation by maintaining social distancing in the vehicles was also important.

- **Continue to research and disseminate information about community places where LCBDD-eligible individuals may enjoy spending time without incurring (significant) expense.**
 - Staff and the Quality Assurance Manager PT continued to research and share information about community locations where program participants might enjoy spending time without incurring significant expense. In 2021, Murray Ridge Adult Services staff continued to focus on identifying safe community locations where community-based activities could occur at no cost.

	Data collected from January 1 - December 31, 2020	Data collected from January 1 - December 2021
Number of no-cost community-based group activities provided	291	343
Number of low-cost community-based group activities provided	80	71

- **Establish and implement a formal protocol for the use of resources at the disposal of Murray Ridge Adult Services (vehicles, Area staff, 'supplemental staff' including those assigned to the Seniors Program, nurses, etc.) for community-based service delivery; the protocol will be designed to maximize community-based day services using existing resources and provide equitable opportunities for those who are interested in community-based day support, while diligently assisting those with desired outcomes that must be addressed away from the OVCs to experience/work towards those outcomes.**
 - The committee to address barriers to providing community-based services met to establish and implement protocols for the use of resources, such as vehicles, staff, and nurses, in order to maximize community-based services and to provide equitable opportunities for those interested in community-based services. The Program Managers maintained a tracking system to ensure that all consumers were offered community-based services.
- **Expand capacity for community-based support through Murray Ridge Adult Services by strategically identifying ways to use more 'Area staff' and be less reliant on the use of supplemental staff for community-based service delivery.**
 - During 2021, the involvement of 'Area OVC staff' in delivery of community-based services became the common practice. With the downsizing of LCBDD OVCs, area staff became almost solely responsible to provide community-based services. The staffing in the Recreation Department was reduced, and the Recreation staff spent most of their time providing day-time physical fitness classes. The Recreation staff, as time allowed, did assist with the provision of community-based services to OVC attendees.

- **Continue to implement and refine a system for identifying and communicating to Program Specialists when Murray Ridge Adult Services has reached its capacity for assisting those served to experience/work toward desired outcomes that require receipt of day services away from the OVCs.**
 - In 2021 Murray Ridge Adult Services continued to follow the established system to identify and communicate to Team Leaders when Adult Services had reached its capacity for assisting those served to experience/work toward desired outcomes that require receiving day services away from the OVCs. The system takes into account that services that can be provided in the OVCs should be delivered in community settings as well, and that all OVC attendees should have opportunities for community-based services, regardless of what their desired outcomes are.
- **When Murray Ridge Adult Services has reached its capacity for assisting eligible individuals to experience/work toward desired outcomes that require receipt of day services away from the OVCs, during the person-centered planning process, notify the teams of individuals who have such desired outcomes that Murray Ridge Adult Services is unable to facilitate the desired outcomes. In such cases, assist with the identification of alternative providers/facilitators of the impacted desired outcomes.**
 - During 2021, the Quality Assurance Manager PT continued to receive notice of OVC program participants who had desired outcomes that required support outside of the OVCs. He managed and maintained a list for each OVC, and he kept Team Leaders informed of capacity levels so that, during the person-centered planning process, Team Leaders could notify the team if Murray Ridge Adult Services was unable to facilitate desired outcomes. In 2021, at no time did Murray Ridge Adult Services reach its capacity for assisting OVC attendees/prospective OVC attendees to experience/work toward desired outcomes that required receipt of day services away from the OVCs.
- **Continue to facilitate service clubs at each OVC, and sustain/expand the Acts of Giving Back Program through Murray Ridge Adult Services.**

During 2021, Service Club meetings were postponed due to the pandemic. The table below shows that the number of "Acts of Giving Back" increased from 2018 to 2019. During 2020 and 2021 the number of Acts of Giving Back were reduced due to the pandemic.

	January 1 - December 31, 2018	January 1 - December 31, 2019	January 1 - December 31, 2020 (Jan through March)	January 1 – December, 2021 (picked back up in Sept-Dec)
Number of "Acts of Giving Back"	202	245 (a <u>21% increase</u> relative to 2018)	47	42
Number of program participants that participated in "Acts of Giving Back"	164	193 (an <u>18% increase</u> relative to 2018)	66	32

Some on-going Acts of Giving back in 2021 included:

- when permitted, program participants from all three OVCs volunteered on Wednesdays at the Friendship Animal Protective League (APL); there, they assisted with cleaning the facility, and also enjoyed petting and socializing with the animals.

- attendees of the Elyria Opportunity & Vocational Center (EOVC) helped to clean areas of the city of Elyria with the group "Bash That Trash".

- EOVC attendees volunteered at the Elyria Public Library's Annual Book Sale.

- attendees of the Lorain Opportunity & Vocational Center (LOVC) delivered 'Meals on Wheels' on a weekly basis to elderly residents.

- LOVC attendees volunteered at the Good Neighbor Thrift Store in Avon Lake.

- **Prior to taking consumers to community places, continue to meet with them to discuss hazards/challenges that they might encounter at their destinations and how the challenges can/will be addressed.**

- In 2021, Murray Ridge Adult Services assisted program participants to discuss what hazards/challenges might be encountered at their community destinations and how the challenges might be addressed. These meetings were documented on Proposal for Community-Based Services Forms.

- **Through Murray Ridge Adult Services, identify and offer a variety of activities that promote community access and social skills development. These activities will be designed for and made available to Adult Program participants with all types and levels of abilities and disabilities.**

- Beginning in June of 2020 and through December of 2021, Murray Ridge Adult Services provided Virtual Adult Day Support (VADS) due to the pandemic, social distancing requirements restricting group sizes at and transportation to the OVCs, other COVID-related safety measures, and the choice of some eligible individuals not to return to the OVCs due to COVID concerns. The VADS training covered the topics of social skills, community awareness, leisure/recreation, communication, and physical fitness. This program was very well received. Throughout 2021 those who attended the OVCs were also engaged in activities that promoted social and community access skills development.

- **Identify and promote community-based activities that enable people with DD to interact meaningfully with people who don't have DD.**

- In 2021, Murray Ridge Adult Services staff and Program Managers, and the Quality Assurance Manager PT continued to promote community-based activities that enabled people with developmental disabilities to interact meaningfully with people who do not have DD. In 2021, weekly community-based activities that enabled program participants to interact meaningfully with people who do not have DD included volunteering at the Friendship APL, delivering meals for "Meals on Wheels", crocheting with seniors at the Columbia Station Library, and volunteering at the Good Neighbor Thrift Store.

- At times when the COVID-19 cases surged, opportunities for meaningful in-person interaction with people who do not have DD were decreased, and some sites called to cancel scheduled volunteering activities.

Number of times an OVC attendee, while receiving community-based services through Murray Ridge Adult Services, had a documented meaningful interaction with a person who did not have DD			
January 1 - December 31, 2018	January 1- December 31, 2019	January 1- December 31, 2020	January 1- December 31, 2021
1,989	2,734 (This is an <u>increase of 38%</u> relative to 2018)	496	324

- **As person-centered plans are developed, facilitate the identification of community activities and places that will help individuals achieve/work toward desired outcomes and participate actively in community life.**
 - In 2021, SSAs continued to develop person-centered Individual Service Plans (ISPs), which involves planning for community-based activities that will assist individuals to achieve/work toward desired outcomes. The SSA staff and eligible individuals’ teams identified desired outcomes, support strategies to achieve desired outcomes, and community-specific places where the support strategies may occur. Due to COVID-19, some individuals did not feel comfortable going places indoors or where larger crowds may be present. SSAs worked creatively to identify person-centered community-based activities, while keeping in mind individuals’ fears/concerns about COVID-19.
- **Encourage and assist waiver enrollees to identify the providers that are best equipped to support them in accessing desired experiences within the community.**
 - Due to COVID restrictions, many desired experiences within the community were not readily available in 2021. Community-based activities were most available throughout the summer months and later in the year. Through the annual person-centered planning process and throughout the year, SSAs provided information about certified providers that were able to meet individual needs and address desired community activities either in-person or through virtual programming. SSAs educated eligible individuals and their advocates about provider limitations relevant to the provision of community-based support due to staffing shortages, COVID, etc., in order to help them determine which providers could best address individual desires.
- **Provide Information and referral that assists LCBDD-eligible individuals to participate in desired, community-based activities; explore and encourage the use of natural supports and community resources for this purpose.**
 - Through the annual person-centered planning process, SSAs worked with the team to provide the eligible individual with information about community-based activities related to the person’s likes, interests, and desires. Opportunities for community-based activities increased as COVID vaccines became more readily available. However, many individuals

or their natural supports did not feel safe participating in community-based activities with medium-to-large gatherings of people. Additionally, many eligible individuals were not able to follow COVID-19 guidelines regarding facial coverings and social distancing in the community, and many community locations still required masks and social distancing. SSAs researched virtual and community-based activities and relayed relevant information to the eligible individual and team members.

- **Identify and participate in training on the facilitation of support in integrated settings and community membership, and the promotion of relationships and natural supports that reduce the reliance of people with DD on formal/paid services.**
 - Throughout 2021, many SSA Department staff attended trainings related to the promotion of community membership and natural supports; the trainings were provided by Milestones, Ohio Association of County Boards of DD, DODD, OOD, OSDA, and We Thrive. The SSAs who attended the trainings presented the highlights to the entire SSA Department.
- **Communicate in a variety of ways to the local public about the value of people with DD as co-workers, volunteers, citizens, neighbors and friends.**
 - Throughout 2021, SSA continued to provide information for a segment of the Agency newsletter to spotlight eligible individuals and their relatable activities, achievements, likes, etc. Additionally, engagement of eligible individuals in socially valued roles and activities were regularly spotlighted on social media, and through radio spots.

Strategic Objective: Promote self-advocacy by individuals served by LCBDD through the person-centered planning process, activities, and community connections

Goal	Expected Outcomes
<p>Enhance the assessment/identification of beneficial self-advocacy supports for LCBDD-eligible individuals</p> <p>Increase provider awareness/competencies relevant to the provision of self-advocacy support</p> <p>Sustain and expand opportunities for eligible individuals in Lorain County to receive training in and exercise self-advocacy</p>	<p>Increase in self-advocacy skills of individuals with developmental disabilities in Lorain County</p> <p>Identification of those individuals who are interested in (increased) participation in advocacy activities</p> <p>Increased participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in Lorain County in advocacy activities</p>

- **Revise the annual assessment tool/process used by LCBDD Service & Support Administrators to include more probing questions about self-advocacy skills and supports desired; in so doing, include questions related to speaking up about choices when with friends and providers.**

 - This was completed in 2019.
- **Ensure that service plans developed within the SSA Department include individualized supports to assist with improvement of self-advocacy skills.**

 - Based on the probing questions added to the Discovery & Individual Needs Assessment (DINA) in 2019, in 2021 SSAs identified individualized supports to assist eligible individuals in improving self-advocacy skills. The distinct questions within the DINA provided teams with a clear picture of what the individuals were capable of, and what types of support were needed for self-advocacy skill development.
- **Assist interested individuals to develop and include in their service plans desired outcomes related to self-advocacy.**

 - SSAs assisted interested individuals to develop and include in their service plans desired outcomes related to self-advocacy.
- **Identify consumers interested in participating in advocacy activities; ensure that supports necessary to achieve this are included in the person-centered plan of each of these individuals.**

 - Through the person-centered planning process, the SSA Department identified individuals interested in participating in advocacy activities, and wrote related support services into their Individual Service Plans.
- **(SSAs will) Identify and participate in training opportunities on self-advocacy for people with DD, and identify/arrange for related supports.**

- Several SSA staff participated in trainings on self-advocacy related to community engagement, technology, transition, and communication. The staff presented information from the seminars to the SSA Department, and this information was used to assist eligible individuals in identifying and accessing needed supports.
- **Provide self-advocacy support information to providers of Residential and Adult Day/Employment services in Lorain County. Develop and begin collecting data on a measure or measures of provider competency relative to supporting self-advocacy, including an assessment of competencies related to LCBDD's provision of related information.**
 - Throughout 2021 the SSA Department continued to provide information about self-advocacy to providers of Residential and Adult Day/Employment services. The SSA Department provided information related to self-advocacy programming and supporting eligible individuals, and presented a video series on self-advocacy to providers of Adult Day services.
 - The SSA Department developed/distributed a survey in order to identify the understanding of self-advocacy amongst direct care staff and agency administrators. This information was used to develop further training possibilities for providers related to self-advocacy.
- **Offer periodic group training/information sessions on self-advocacy (with external consultants, as available) for LCBDD-eligible adults and their advocates/family members.**
 - The Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist (PCRS) offered for all interested LCBDD-eligible individuals monthly small group training sessions on a variety of topics related to self-advocacy.
 - Using funds from the Community Foundation of Lorain County's Myrtle's Endowment Fund, the SSA Department arranged and hosted a two-day self-advocacy workshop/conference for all LCBDD-eligible adults (along with their advocates/family members) to learn and practice advocacy skills. This event, Becoming Your Own Champion, was held in August. Each day consisted of interactive sessions; topics covered included community safety, internet safety, fire safety, healthy versus unhealthy relationships, and asking for change in your community. The sessions incorporated community members, as well as two acting groups. During the conference, participants heard from Elyria Mayor Frank Whitfield, the Elyria Police Department, the Lorain Fire Department, the Improvaneers ("the world's first all Down syndrome comedy troupe"), and the Applied Drama of Autism improv group. Participants received individualized passports to the event, and were asked to keep notes on lessons learned. They also enjoyed documenting the event through complimentary photos taken at an on-site photo booth, and helping memorialize what was learned throughout the day in a video. Participants were asked to generate ideas for future self-advocacy sessions. There were multiple Becoming Your Own Champion follow-up events.
 - LCBDD-eligible individuals were able to attend a Becoming Your Own Champion follow-up workshop with the Improvaneers, where they practiced advocacy through expression and communication.

- At another Becoming Your Own Champion follow-up event (which was offered both virtually and in-person), LCBDD-eligible adults learned about internet safety related to social media, internet searches, on-line shopping, texting, and on-line dating; LCBDD received related training materials for future use.
- Approximately 20 LCBDD-eligible adults attended a self-defense workshop, which was also a Becoming Your Own Campion follow-up event.
- **Disseminate information on the Ohio Self-Determination Association (OSDA) regional meetings and local self-advocacy groups to LCBDD-eligible adults and DODD-certified providers that serve individuals in Lorain County.**
 - As available, information about regional and state OSDA meetings was disseminated to eligible individuals in Lorain County. Additionally, OSDA community gathering information was posted on the Murray Ridge Facebook page. All OSDA meetings in 2021 were virtual.
 - Throughout 2021, SSA staff shared self-advocacy opportunities (including both in-person and remote activities) with eligible individuals and their teams. SSA staff ensured that all individuals interested in learning self-advocacy skills were invited to LCBDD's two-day advocacy event in August of 2021.
- **Consider facilitation of a self-advocacy group for any and all LCBDD-eligible individuals; in so doing, learn about how this works in counties where the county board of DD facilitates such groups.**
 - In 2020 the PCRS researched county board-facilitated self-advocacy groups in other counties in northern Ohio, learning that these are generally facilitated by SSA Departments. Throughout 2021 the PCRS invited eligible individuals with an interest in self-advocacy to attend advocacy gatherings, with the intent of developing/facilitating a Lorain County self-advocacy group for all LCBDD-eligible individuals. However, a limited number of individuals attended these gatherings, and they showed no interest in a self-advocacy group. The SSA Department will revisit this in the future.
- **Continue to support Murray Ridge Speaks Up! (a self-advocacy group of Murry Ridge Adult Services program participants), and to facilitate monthly Self-Advocacy training/meetings**
 - Due to concerns about COVID-19, in 2021 the Murray Ridge Speaks Up! self-advocacy group continued to meet virtually. The group met on a monthly basis. Topics covered at the virtual meetings in 2021 included: updates on COVID-19 and vaccines, where to obtain vaccines, properly wearing masks, bullies and how to handle them, COVID-related home improvement ideas, exercising through Virtual Adult Day Support, the Cedar Point re-opening, supported employment opportunities after COVID, and always remembering to speak up. Other activities of the group included watching a video on Living Arrangements that was produced by the LCBDD SSA Department, and watching videos from the OOD website that addressed scams in Ohio and elsewhere in the United States.
 - On March 02, 2021 (Self-Advocacy Day), Chief Hartung of the Vermilion Police Department provided an informational session via Zoom to the Murray Ridge Speaks Up! group.
 - In August and September of 2021, new members began joining Murray Ridge Speaks Up!

Strategic Objective: Reduce the number of eligible individuals in the county waiting for services

Goal	Expected Outcomes
Reduction of waiting list for HCBS Medicaid waivers	More individual/family needs will be met through community-based alternative services v. HCBS waivers.
Reduction of waiting list for supports in semi-independent living arrangements	A minimum of 110 people will be enrolled on HCBS waivers (during 2019-2021).
Expanded provision of desired support to eligible individuals	Family caregivers will be assisted to handle caregiving challenges.
Expansion of the provision of support and information to assist families to meet caregiver challenges	Growth in services will be fiscally sustainable, and will not jeopardize the continuation of the Early Intervention Program or Murray Ridge School.

- **Hire a Part Time Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist who will have, as one of two primary roles, responsibility for identification of and user-friendly communication about community-based alternative services as well as targeted provider recruitment.**
 - A part-time PCRS was hired in 2019; upon her departure, the position was changed from part-time to full-time, and a full-time PCRS was hired in March of 2020. In December of 2021, the Board approved (in the 2022 budget) the addition a second full-time PCRS.
- **Post information about self-advocacy events and resources on LCBDD website.**
 - As event information became available, it was posted on the Agency website under one of two links on the home page – events sponsored by Murray Ridge (listed on the home page calendar) or a separate link to “Upcoming Events Not Sponsored by Murray Ridge Center.” Any such information was also posted on the Murray Ridge Facebook page.
- **Based upon research and a comprehensive review of related resources, update the LCBDD Alternative Services List that includes resources needed/desired by county residents with developmental disabilities (DD) and by families caring for members, including children, with DD.**
 - The LCBDD Alternative Services list was reviewed and updated quarterly throughout 2021.
- **Enroll a minimum of 55 additional individuals on locally-funded Level I (L1) Waivers.**
 - This objective was completed by the end of 2020.
- **Enroll (in 2021) a minimum of 45 additional individuals on locally-funded LI Waivers and 10 individuals on locally-funded Individual Options Waivers.**
 - Enrollments on (13) locally-funded Individual Options Waivers were completed in 2020.
 - The forty-five additional locally-funded Level One Waiver enrollments were completed in 2021.

- **Initiate Supported Living services for individuals on the waiting list for supported living services in semi-independent living arrangements as budgeted dollars for Supported Living become available.**
 - Using Supported Living funds, SSA increased 'Apartment Supports' (supports for individuals living by themselves) within the parameters of the established budget. During 2021, two additional people were served in the 'Apartment Supports Program'.
- **Within the resource capacity of two dedicated FTEs, implement in-home behavior analysis and support through SSA positions dedicated (in whole or in part) to in-depth analysis of maladaptive behavior causation and correlation. This is designed for application within the homes of families caring for eligible individuals, and related consultation may also be made with day care centers/school personnel.**

Note: similar assistance may be provided within the context of the Early Intervention Program.

- In 2021, the SSA 'behavior staff' worked directly with approximately 102 individuals and teams to identify and implement support strategies for implementation in family homes; this involved consultation, observation, and assessment. The behavior team members worked with families and support staff to implement positive proactive strategies, and personally demonstrated the strategies when necessary. The behavior support staff provided techniques, tools, and tips to families to work through this difficult time. Additionally, the behavior support staff assisted families of eligible individuals with connecting to Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and In-Home Behavioral Therapy services, and ensuring that the team was working as a unit to address behaviors.
- **Consider increased funding for the reduction of the waiting list for supported living services in semi-independent living arrangements.**
 - During the budget process, the annual budget limitation was analyzed and determined appropriate for the 2022 calendar year.
- **Assess need/desire for and affordability of expanded capacity for in-home behavior analysis and support.**
 - During the budget process, the need for expansion of the SSA 'behavior team' was evaluated. In December of 2021, the Board approved (in the 2022 budget) an additional full-time SSA/Behavior Analyst.
- **LCBDD staff, to include Behavior Analysts, SSAs, Developmental Specialists (who serve the 0-3 population) and other professionals will continue, as applicable, to offer and expand periodic trainings/information sessions for families and other caregivers on topics of expressed interest (e.g., toilet training, puberty, self-advocacy).**
 - The SSA Department provided information through a variety of means to connect families and other caregivers to virtual and in-person trainings. The trainings were provided through external entities and were generally free to all who attended. The trainings in 2021 covered a wide variety of topics including communication challenges, working with law enforcement, planning for transitions, developing and maintaining schedules in the home, technology, mental health, puberty, sexual relationships, and grant funding.

Strategic Objective: Recruit sufficient providers of services to meet the needs of eligible individuals receiving services in Lorain County

Goal	Expected Outcomes
Ensure that there are willing and able service providers for each HCBS waiver recipient served by LCBDD, including individuals with intensive needs	Increased availability of service providers, including providers of Participant-Directed Services to meet the needs of waiver recipients served by LCBDD
Ongoing awareness of unmet needs/desires for providers/information on providers to support LCBDD-eligible individuals	Improved access to desired resource information by LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families; improved ability to compare resource/provider options
Provision of user-friendly, readily accessible information about providers/resources desired by LCBDD-eligible individuals and known to LCBDD	Increased access to desired providers/resources by LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families
Recruitment/identification of more providers to meet unmet needs/desires of LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families	Increased ability for waiver recipients to find providers of preferred person-centered plan provisions
Secure providers willing to commit to implementation of person-centered plans	Enhanced satisfaction by some LCBDD-eligible individuals with Adult Day Support and Supported Employment services
Targeted recruitment of Adult Day Support and Supported Employment providers capable of effectively addressing the desired outcomes of LCBDD-eligible adults	Increase in the number of residential and day service providers in Lorain County that are willing/able to serve individuals with intensive medical/health-related and behavior support needs
Ensure that an acceptable and appropriate foster home (shared living option) is readily available for each eligible individual requiring emergency placement, if adult foster care is appropriate for and desired by the individual	Increase in the total number of readily available foster homes

- **Hire a Part Time Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist who will have, as one of two primary roles, responsibility for identification of and user-friendly communication about community-based alternative services as well as targeted provider recruitment.**
 - See progress on the first strategy for previous objective. [In December of 2021, the Board approved (in the 2022 budget) the addition a second full-time PCRS.]
- **Engage in strategic targeted recruitment of: (1) Providers of SELF Waiver Participant-Directed Homemaker/Personal Care (PDHPC) Services, (2) Residential and Adult Day Support Providers Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Medical/Health-Related Needs, (3) Residential and Adult Day Support Providers Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Behavior Support Needs, (4) Providers of Supported Employment, (5) Providers of Remote Technology and Support, and (6) Providers of Foster Care.**

- Targeted recruitment efforts were a struggle in 2021 due to COVID-19 and the staffing crisis. Many residential and day services providers struggled to hire and maintain staff. This created issues with recruiting agency providers for all services.
- **SELF Waiver/Providers of Participant Directed (HPC) Services: Host a meeting for all HPC providers currently working in Lorain County (Agency and Independent) to discuss need for SELF Waiver providers and provide education on the SELF Waiver. Contact IO and Level One certified providers directly to discuss need for SELF Waiver providers and provide education on the SELF Waiver. Connect SELF Waiver enrollees/their families with interested providers through the assigned SSA. Host a provider fair specific to the SELF Waiver. Work with SELF Waiver enrollees/their families to identify friends and family members who may want to become certified Independent Providers under the SELF Waiver, and assist these potential providers with the certification process and the DODD financial management agent process through Morning Star.**
 - Education was provided to HPC-certified providers working in Lorain County about the SELF Waiver and the need for SELF Waiver providers for in home supports. An information session was held for potentially interested providers to learn about the SELF Waiver. In 2021, approximately 12 independent providers became SELF PDHPC-certified.
- **Residential and Adult Day Support Providers That Are Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Medical/Health-Related Needs: Contact surrounding county boards to inquire about providers serving individuals with intense medical/health-related needs, including G-/J-tube assistance and suctioning. Contact these providers to develop a listing of those willing to provide services in Lorain County and willing to serve Lorain County residents, but only in their contiguous/base county (Erie, Medina, or Cuyahoga). Connect Individuals with unmet intensive medical needs/their families with interested providers. Host a provider fair specific to providers that are willing/able to serve individuals with intensive medical/health-related needs. Work with Individuals with intensive medical needs/their families to identify friends and family members who may want to become DODD-certified providers, and assist these potential providers with the certification process.**
 - Targeted recruitment of Adult Day Support Providers willing to serve individuals with intensive medical/health-related needs occurred throughout 2021. Two providers were identified to provide this service; however, due to the staffing crisis, these providers were not able to initiate services for many individuals in 2021. Additionally, due to COVID, many of the individuals with intensive medical needs were choosing not to attend day services programs. Recruitment efforts will continue in this area.
- **Residential and Adult Day Support Providers That Are Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Behavior Support Needs: Contact surrounding county boards to inquire about providers serving individuals with intensive behavior support needs, specifically those with physical aggression and a history of elopement. Contact these providers to develop a listing of those willing to provide services in Lorain County and any willing to serve Lorain County residents, but only in their contiguous/base county (Erie, Medina, or Cuyahoga). Inquire also with these providers about their experience with/interest in working with individuals with autism. Connect individuals with unmet behavior support needs/their families with interested providers.**

Host a provider fair specific to providers that are willing/able to provide behavior-related supports and/or serve individuals with intensive behavior support needs.

Work with individuals with intensive behavior support needs/their families to identify friends and family members who may want to become DODD-certified providers, and assist these potential providers with the certification process.

- Targeted recruitment of Adult Day Support Providers willing to serve individuals with intensive behavior support needs occurred throughout 2021. A new provider was identified and, once staffing needs were met, initiated services for several individuals in 2021. Recruitment efforts will continue in this area.
- **Providers of Employment Support: Invite OOD providers currently providing services in Lorain, Cuyahoga and/or Erie Counties to meet and discuss the need in Lorain County for HCBS waiver providers of employment services, and the waiver provider certification and billing processes. Invite employment providers with current HCBS waiver certification and listed on the DODD website as interested in serving individuals in Lorain, Erie and/or Medina Counties or the West side of Cuyahoga County, to meet and discuss the need in Lorain County for providers of employment services. Host a provider fair specific to providers that are willing to provide employment services to individuals with DD in Lorain County through HCBS waiver programs.**
 - Recruitment of Providers of Employment Support occurred throughout the year. SSA staff developed relationships with five new Employment Providers during 2021. The majority of the services provided are job development, job placement, and employment support. SSA Department staff that work with transition-age youth and OOD on a regular basis continue to speak with providers about the need for DODD-certified employment providers and the DODD certification process. Recruitment efforts will continue in this area.
- **Providers of Remote Technology and Support: Provide education to the SSA staff on the various types of remote supports that are available. Invite remote support providers to SSA staff meetings to share information about their agencies and services. Ask SSA staff to identify individuals who may benefit from remote supports and invite those specific individuals/their families to a meeting with remote support providers. As requested, connect providers directly to individuals/families through the assigned SSA to evaluate needs and provide recommendations.**

Invite remote support providers to be present at provider fairs specific to providers who meet various needs that may be addressed through remote support.

- In July of 2021, the SSA Department held a technology fair which featured 10 technology vendors that provided a variety of services. Throughout 2021, the SSA Department worked diligently with these vendors to provide education to SSA staff and families about technology resources and supports. The SSA Department TECH team is familiar and has worked with the DODD-certified TECH vendors who provide remote technology and supports throughout the state of Ohio. The TECH team continues to connect providers with individuals/families/advocates as requested through the SSA Department tech referral process. The SSA TECH team continued to provide education to SSAs about technology supports. Information about vendors, technology, and supports is provided through on-going communication from DODD, the TECH team, and DODD sponsored trainings.

- **Providers of Foster Care:** At each training for Independent providers, discuss the need for certified Adult Foster Care providers and follow up with those who express interest.

Strategically place posters in public venues for the purpose of recruiting foster care providers, with emphasis on the need for foster homes without children or pets.

Utilize currently accessible methods that incur no additional cost to inform the community of the need for Adult Foster Care providers without children or pets. If deemed necessary, formally advertise for Adult Foster Care providers without children or pets.

Arrange for medication delegation classes in the evenings or on weekends, if it is determined that this will increase the number of foster providers in the county that are delegated to administer medication.

- As discussions were held with providers seeking DODD certification, SSA Management and the Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist discussed the need for Foster Care providers. One new provider was identified in 2021 and is actively providing services. Recruitment efforts will continue in this area.
- **For each Medicaid waiver recipient for whom there is no willing and able provider with a previously expressed interest in operating in Lorain that is acceptable to the waiver recipient, given required consent, promptly conduct a statewide search for a willing, able, and acceptable provider.**
 - Statewide provider searches were conducted for 27 Medicaid waiver recipients for whom providers could not be located; in 20 cases, this was a direct result of the staff shortage. As eligible individuals became ready to return to activities outside of the home, Day Array, Non-Medical Transportation, HPC, and respite providers were in high demand. The pre-pandemic staffing shortage became much more severe during the pandemic. Through the statewide search process, SSA staff were able to locate Agency or Independent providers for most Medicaid waiver recipients in need of a provider. The SSA Department will continue to search for providers of State Plan Nursing, Waiver Nursing, and HPC.
- **Incorporate into the provider database a web-based system through which LCBDD is able to post a profile for certified providers to view and indicate if they are interested in serving the individual. This mechanism will also allow SSA staff to notify providers when a new profile has been posted, and providers will be able to indicate on the website whether or not they are interested in serving the individual based on his/her profile.**
 - This goal was met in December of 2020.
- **Keep a running record of provisions that providers with a current expressed interest in operating in Lorain County are unwilling to implement. Evaluate this running record and identify: (1) the types of services that providers currently operating in the county have been unwilling to provide, and (2) the circumstances under which and number of instances in which no provider that is on record as being interested in operating in Lorain County is willing/able to provide HCBS waiver services. Use this information in the design and execution of provider recruitment strategies.**

- A service plan provision that no provider with expressed interest in operating in Lorain County was willing to implement was 'Waiver Nursing'. There were two individuals requiring this service for whom the provider search was on-going at the end of 2021. In these cases, SSA staff had conducted several statewide searches through e-mails, phone calls, and face-to face interviews. (SSA staff is working with nursing colleges, nursing agencies, and hospitals to seek out nurses willing to become certified to provide pediatric nursing services through DODD. SSA staff have contacted providers of in-home services for the elderly to discuss DODD certification.)
- Another service provision that no provider with expressed interest in operating in Lorain County was willing to implement is Homemaker Personal Care/Respite. The main reason for this issue was the staffing shortage. (SSA staff called all certified providers in neighboring counties and throughout Ohio to locate willing providers of this service, and this search process has yielded an HPC/Respite provider for a number of people.)
- **In discussion with/recruitment of providers of Day Array Services, provide information about expressed unmet needs/desires of eligible individuals in Lorain County relative to Adult Day Supports and Supported Employment, respectively.**
 - SSA Management and the Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist discussed unmet needs of eligible individuals in the county with all Day Array service providers. However, due to COVID and the staffing crisis, providers found it difficult to meet the needs of all individuals. In 2021 many providers continued to implement COVID protocols which included mask wearing, and some eligible individuals who desired Day Array services were unable to wear a mask. Additionally, providers of site-based Day Array services did not all provide transportation in 2021.
 - Supported Employment services were discussed with all certified providers with expressed interest in operating in Lorain County, and a significant number of eligible individuals received assistance finding employment. For the majority of the individuals, SSAs were able to locate providers (paid and unpaid) to provide transportation to and from work.
- **Actively discuss with providers the unmet desire for and cost-effectiveness of providing group social/recreational opportunities for children and adults with DD, and of providing community-based group activities for people with DD. Support providers interested in providing these group services by helping to communicate the (potential) availability of the services to eligible individuals/their families, and providing other assistance, as needed.**
 - The SSA Department provided education to Independent and Agency providers about providing group social/recreational opportunities. Due to the COVID pandemic, this was difficult for providers (and provision of large group services was discouraged/prohibited during much of the pandemic). There were numerous Independent providers that successfully provided social/recreational services to groups of two or three individuals through the Level One and IO Waivers; providers coordinated such (small group) services based on friendships and common interests/desired outcomes of service recipients.

Strategic Objective: Meet with each newly certified independent provider within sixty days of the provider being selected to provide services to an individual, for the purposes of confirming that the provider understands the individual service plan and the provider's responsibilities, and ensuring that the provider has contact information for the county board.

Goal	Expected Outcomes
<p>Follow SSA procedure provisions requiring that SSAs meet with each newly certified provider within sixty days of the provider being selected to provide services to an individual, for the purposes of confirming the provider understands the individual service plan and the provider's responsibilities, and ensuring that the provider has contact information for the county board</p>	<p>Each newly certified independent provider will be promptly aware of and understand his/her responsibilities as outlined in individual service plans.</p> <p>All certified independent providers will have needed contact information for the county board.</p>

- Follow SSA procedure provisions requiring that SSAs meet with each newly certified provider within sixty days of the provider being selected to provide services to an individual, for the purposes of confirming that the provider understands the individual service plan and the provider's responsibilities, and ensuring the provider has contact information for the county board.**

 - The SSA staff met with each newly certified independent provider within 60 days of the provider being selected to provide services to an individual, for the purposes of confirming that the provider understood the ISP and the provider's responsibilities, and ensuring the provider had contact information for the county board. These meetings were held virtually or in-person.