

Murray Ridge Center

Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities (LCBDD)

2024 Strategic Plan Progress Report



Review of Progress on the 2024 Strategic Plan

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

Goals	Expected Outcomes
Encourage advocacy for Individuals served by formal and informal support people, community members, and friends	1. Increased amount and quality of advocacy for individuals served by LCBDD
Enhance identification of beneficial self-advocacy supports for LCBDD-eligible individuals	2. Increase in self-advocacy skills of individuals with developmental disabilities in Lorain County
Increase provider awareness/competencies relevant to the provision of self-advocacy support	3. Identification of those individuals who are interested in (increased) participation in advocacy activities
Sustain and expand opportunities for eligible individuals in Lorain County to receive training in and exercise self-advocacy	4. Increased participation of LCBDD-eligible individuals in advocacy activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively encourage Individuals served to consider carefully who to include in their person-centered planning processes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ As part of the annual planning process, Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) ask eligible individuals to identify who they would like to have participate in their person-centered planning process; the participants might include paid and unpaid support people, friends, family, people from work, etc. SSAs encourage the Individual to invite people who support and know them the best. Additionally, throughout the year, SSAs encourage and support Individuals to include these people in their ongoing planning process and review of progress toward realizing desired outcomes.• Ensure that service plans developed within the SSA Department include individualized supports to assist with improvement of self-advocacy skills.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Through the required utilization of the assessment section of the Ohio Individual Service Plan (OISP), SSAs continued to help identify individualized supports to assist LCBDD-eligible individuals with developing and/or improving self-advocacy skills. The questions within the OISP provided teams with a clear picture of what each Individual was capable of, and what supports to include in the Individual Plan. Based on the answers to the pertinent assessment questions, SSAs wrote into service plans specific supports to assist with self-advocacy, including, when appropriate, the use of technology.	

- **Assist interested individuals to develop and include in their service plans desired outcomes related to self-advocacy.**
 - As indicated through the OISP annual assessment process and on-going monitoring throughout the year, SSAs assisted interested individuals in developing and including in their service plans desired outcomes related to self-advocacy. For each desired outcome, the Individual Plan included specific strategies and people to assist with its achievement.
- **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, SSAs continued to identify Individuals interested in participating in self-advocacy activities, and included the associated supports in their OISPs.
 - The SSA Manager responsible for advocacy events and Provider Compliance and Resource Specialists (PCRSs) also maintained a list of all eligible individuals who attended advocacy events arranged by LCBDD throughout the year.
- **Identify and participate in training opportunities for developing/encouraging self-advocacy by people with developmental disabilities (DD), and identify/arrange for related supports.**
 - Throughout 2024, SSA Department staff attended numerous trainings on self-advocacy that were put on by such organizations as Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), We Thrive, the Ohio Association of County Boards Serving People with Developmental Disabilities (OACB), the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), the Family Resource Network of Ohio, and the Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA); training topics included developing friendships, community connections, being safe at home, technology, internet safety, and transition to adulthood. Staff who attended presented information from the training sessions to the SSA Department, and this information was used to assist eligible individuals in identifying and accessing pertinent supports.
- **Provide self-advocacy support information to providers of Residential and Adult Day/Employment Services in Lorain County.**
 - Throughout 2024, the SSA Department continued to provide information about self-advocacy to providers of Residential and Adult Day/Employment Services. The SSA Department met with four of the Adult Day/Employment Providers and three Residential Services providers to discuss self-advocacy and assist in developing programming. The SSA Department provided ongoing information related to self-advocacy programming and support to all Residential and Adult Day/Employment Services providers that supported eligible individuals in group settings. The SSA Department also distributed a monthly calendar of activities, including advocacy-related activities in the community and through We Thrive, to all Residential and Adult Day/Employment Services providers that supported eligible individuals in group settings.
- **Offer periodic group training/information sessions/events on self-advocacy (with external consultants, as available) for LCBDD-eligible adults and their advocates/family members.**

- In 2024, the SSA Department offered advocacy events using funds from the Myrtle's Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County. In April, 20 eligible individuals attended a cooking class at Lorain County Community College (LCCC) hosted by the Culinary Institute. The class focused on basic cooking essentials, and provided a way for citizens with disabilities to become more independent. Individuals learned how to chop vegetables, handle raw meat properly, and use grilling techniques. After preparing the meal, eligible individuals and guests sat down to enjoy the feast. The numerous benefits of cooking, from learning new skills to boosting self-confidence and bringing people together, were evident at the event. Eleven additional cooking classes were held throughout 2024, with approximately 20 eligible individuals attending each class.
- Throughout the year, LCBDD-eligible individuals from various Adult Day Programs attended six self-defense classes through Tracy's Karate Studio; the cost was covered through the above-referenced endowment fund. Mike Dancull from Tracy's Karate Studio worked with small groups of Individuals to learn valuable self-defense moves, as well as verbal techniques to thwart attacks from others.
- Using the above-referenced endowment fund, a luncheon was held with North Ridgeville Mayor Kevin Corcoran to discuss advocacy and politics. Mayor Corcoran addressed ways to become involved in the local community through politics and community meetings. This event was held in July of 2024, at the Valley of the Eagles in Elyria. While enjoying their meal, eligible individuals discussed community issues important to them with the mayor, and asked numerous questions about his job. Approximately 75 people attended the event.
- Using the above-referenced endowment fund, LCBDD and Empower Sports collaborated to host a Wellness Day. This fun-filled, action-packed event was held on August 28, 2024, at T3 Sports in Avon. Approximately 30 Individuals were in attendance. Wellness Day consisted of several sessions throughout the afternoon focusing on healthy living and developing positive habits. The sessions consisted of individual and team challenges. Each session and challenge encouraged individuals to focus on teamwork, learning new skills, and working towards healthy living and positive fitness habits.
- Using the above-referenced endowment fund, a luncheon was held for eligible individuals with Lorain County Board of Elections members who addressed the voting process and the importance of voting in Ohio. This event was held in September of 2024, at the Valley of the Eagles in Elyria. While enjoying their meal, eligible individuals learned how to register to vote, vote in person and by mail, request assistance with voting at the Board of Elections, and get information about the issues and candidates. Approximately 40 LCBDD-eligible people attended the event.
- Using the above-referenced endowment fund, a luncheon was held with members from local police and fire departments. This luncheon was at the Valley of the Eagles in Elyria in October of 2024. At the event, local fire and police personnel shared ways to keep safe in the community, how best to work with law enforcement, and when to contact law enforcement. While enjoying their meal, LCBDD-eligible individuals asked the police and fire fighters numerous questions about their jobs. Approximately 75 LCBDD-eligible people attended.
- Using the above-referenced endowment fund, LCBDD funded the attendance of 38 people at the Synergy Conference on October 2nd - 4th, 2024. Twenty-five eligible individuals and 13 'sponsors' attended this energizing advocacy event. Synergy is a three-day event

where eligible individuals, family, support staff, and professional staff join together to grow and learn. The mission of the Synergy Conference is to create collaborative experiences that drive change.

- **Disseminate information on the Ohio Self-Determination Association regional meetings and local self-advocacy groups to LCBDD-eligible adults and DODD-certified providers that serve individuals in Lorain County.**
 - The above-referenced notices, when available, were disseminated to LCBDD-eligible adults and DODD-certified providers.
- **Continue to support Murray Ridge Speaks Up; facilitate monthly self-advocacy training and meetings for interested Murray Ridge Adult Services (MRAS) Program participants; conduct quarterly Consumer/Employee Committee meetings at each MRAS Opportunity and Vocational Center (OVC); invite, encourage, and assist OVC attendees to make suggestions about the program; and carefully review all MRAS Program participant suggestions, and act upon them to the extent practicable.**
 - The Murray Ridge Speaks Up! self-advocacy group continued to meet on a monthly basis in 2024. Topics covered at the meetings included self-advocacy, voting, the Synergy Conference, carrying identification at all times, speaking up for oneself, and the Elyria Opportunity and Vocational Center (EOVC) transition. This program received much positive feedback from MRAS Program participants, and was well attended throughout the year.
 - In 2024, Consumer/Employee Committee meetings continued to be conducted on a quarterly basis, with four meetings each occurring at the Oberlin Opportunity and Vocational Center (OOVC) and the Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC); and one meeting at EOVC, which ceased operations after February of 2024. At the meetings, program participants were encouraged/supported to make suggestions, and these suggestions were acted on to the extent feasible. Some of the suggestions made at the meetings at LOVC included the Summer Picnic and Christmas Party, as well as a new lounge area; the lounge area idea was implemented; and the lounge has a new floor, pool table and ping pong table, and a nice sitting area for program participants to mingle in when they have time. Some of the suggestions at OOVC related to outdoor activities and holiday parties.

Strategic Objective: Ensure that Individuals receive services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their needs:

Goals/Benchmarks

Address the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements related to community-based, integrated service delivery

Support/enhance community activities and membership of people with developmental disabilities in the county

Expected Outcomes

1. Provision of services to Medicaid waiver recipients and others in integrated community settings, as desired/feasible
2. Continued engagement of LCBDD-eligible individuals in community-based volunteering/valued activities, and other activities of interest

- **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 2024, SSAs continued to utilize the DODD-prescribed OISP process to complete person-centered assessments and develop Individual Service Plans (ISPs). The OISP process addresses participation in community life and activities. Through the OISP assessment questions, SSAs and eligible individuals' teams identified desired outcomes, support strategies to achieve those outcomes, and specific community places where pertinent supports could occur.
- **Encourage and assist Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver enrollees and other LCBDD-eligible individuals to identify the providers that are best equipped to support them in accessing desired experiences within the community.**
 - In 2024, a DODD-certified agency that provides supports for community integration initiated services in Lorain County. In 2024, many newly certified Independent providers (approximately 70) were also available to provide community-based services in Lorain County. Through the annual person-centered planning process and throughout the year, LCBDD SSAs disseminated information about certified providers that could address identified needs/desires for supports within the community. SSAs regularly educated LCBDD-eligible individuals and their advocates about the availability of these providers, and assisted them in determining which providers were best able to support them in accessing desired experiences within the community.
- **Facilitate utilization of the new waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community places and opportunities.**
 - In 2024, 22 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the new Medicaid waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access places in their community. Nine of these individuals primarily used the service to get to and from work, while two others used it to get to and from volunteering opportunities. One individual used the service to travel to and from college classes.

- **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. Develop a database of community-based activities, locations, and contacts for SSA referral and linkage.**
 - Through the annual person-centered planning process and throughout ISP spans, SSAs continued to work with teams to provide eligible individuals with information about community-based activities related to their likes, interests, and desires. This included identification of both in-person and virtual groups and activities.
 - Additionally, PCRSs distributed a monthly calendar of community activities, which was made available throughout Lorain County to providers and SSAs for sharing with LCBDD-eligible individuals. The PCRSs also maintained a database of community-based activities, which was available electronically to SSA staff to share with eligible individuals.
- **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 2024, many SSA Department staff attended trainings related to the promotion of community membership and use of natural supports; such trainings were provided by Milestones, OCALI, OACB, DODD, Family Resource Network, and We Thrive. The SSAs who participated in the training sessions presented the highlights to the entire SSA team.
- **Continue to have a management employee meet, on at least a monthly basis, with each MRAS 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.**
 - Assigned Habilitation Managers met one-on-one with each consumer that had a desired outcome involving day support away from the OVC; during the meetings, they discussed the Individual's specific interests relative to the pertinent desired outcome(s).
- **For MRAS, assign a 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.**
 - During 2024, MRAS continued to assign a Habilitation Manager from each OVC to work directly with program participants and staff in each OVC area to plan services to occur outside the OVC. LCBDD is committed to providing all Adult Program participants with opportunities for community-based services, regardless of whether or not they have an ISP provision/desired outcome that specifically requires this.
- **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 MRAS Program participant to receive services at/en route to the proposed 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 MRAS 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, document occurrences/outcomes relative to what was addressed on the associated Proposal for Community-Based Services Forms.**

- The Proposal for Community-Based Services Form continued to be used by staff for planning services to occur outside of the OVCs. The form requires the identification of the community destination that program participants will go to, as well as the interests, desired outcomes, and support strategies that will be addressed for each Individual 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 Individual's identified interests, support strategies, and desired outcomes; (2) how Individuals will be involved in planning/organizing the activity; (3) who, other than paid staff and consumers, will/might be involved in the activity; (4) how the activity may foster relationship-building between Individuals served and community members; and (5) how the activity is expected to help LCBDD-eligible individuals engage within the broader community. After providing services away from the OVCs, staff documented on the Community-Based Services Form the related occurrences/outcomes.
- **Prior to taking MRAS Program participants 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.**
 - MRAS focused on assisting 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 prior to departing for community places.
- **Systematically, using the searchable database of individual interest areas of MRAS Program participants, assist Individuals served to plan community-based activities of interest with other MRAS Program participants who have common interests; in so doing, plan for adjustments to staffing within/arrangement of the OVCs such that they will meet the needs of those receiving center-based services while others receive community-based services.**
 - During 2024, staff responsible for planning community-based services continued to use the Interest Areas Database to assist individuals in planning community-based activities with other Adult Program participants who have common interests. Habilitation Managers at the OVCs planned for staffing to meet the needs of those receiving center-based services while others received community-based services; the Proposal for Community-Based Services Form addresses 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. Challenges related to providing services outside the OVCs to groups of individuals who normally are served in separate areas within the OVCs include (1) the need for training of staff to work in community settings with consumers with whom they are not normally assigned to work, and (2) managing the changes to staff-consumer ratios in the areas from which staff are pulled to deliver services outside the OVC; such challenges have been effectively addressed through on-going troubleshooting with direct care staff and emphasis on the importance of being flexible and creative to provide meaningful services in community places.

Continue to update and implement a system for identifying and communicating to MRAS Program Specialists when MRAS has reached its capacity for assisting those served to experience/work toward desired outcomes that require receipt of day services away from the OVCs.

When/if MRAS 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 MRAS is unable to facilitate the desired outcomes.

In such cases, assist with the identification of alternative providers/facilitators of the impacted desired outcomes.

- During 2024, the Director of Adult Programs, Recreation Specialist, and Program Specialists continued to receive notice of MRAS OVC attendees who had desired outcomes that required support outside of the OVCs. A list was maintained for each OVC, and Team Leaders were kept informed of capacity levels so that, during the person-centered planning process, Team Leaders could notify the team if MRAS was unable to facilitate identified desired outcomes. Fortunately, in 2024 such notifications were not necessary because MRAS was able to address all identified desired outcomes that involved the provision of day services outside the OVCs. Had this not been the case, the assigned SSA, the impacted Individual, and his/her team would have worked to identify natural supports, community supports, residential supports, or a new day provider able/willing to provide the desired assistance.
- **Continue to facilitate service clubs at each OVC, and sustain/expand the Acts of Giving Back Program through MRAS.**
 - Service Club meetings were held throughout 2024, and participation in ‘Acts of Giving Back’ was close to that in 2023, despite the mandated exodus in March of 2024 of Medicaid waiver recipients that had remained in MRAS. The following table shows the number of ‘Acts of Giving Back’ performed in 2021 - 2024. The lower number of ‘Acts of Giving Back’ in 2021 (and to a lesser degree in 2022) can be attributed primarily to the COVID epidemic.

	January 1 – December 31, 2021 (picked back up in Sept-Dec)	January 1 – December, 2022	January 1 – December, 2023	January 1 – December, 2024
Number of “Acts of Giving Back”	42	159	202	194
Number of program participants that participated in “Acts of Giving Back”	32	83	88	81

- Some on-going ‘Acts of Giving Back’ in 2024 included:
 - Program participants at all three OVCs volunteered on Wednesdays at the Friendship Animal Protective League (APL); there, they assisted with cleaning the facility, and they were also able to enjoy petting and socializing with the animals.

- Attendees of LOVC volunteered with the Amherst Office on Aging, and delivered ‘Meals on Wheels’ on a weekly basis to elderly residents.
 - OOVC attendees volunteered multiple times throughout the year at the Lorain County Safe Harbor-Genesis House.
- **Identify and offer through MRAS a variety of activities that promote community access and social skills development. These activities will be designed for and made available to MRAS Program participants with all types and levels of abilities and disabilities.**
 - Throughout 2024, activities that promoted community access and social skills development were made available to Adult Program participants with all types and levels of abilities and disabilities. Offering a variety of activities demonstrates a commitment to creating an inclusive environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate.
- **Identify and promote community-based activities that enable people with DD to interact meaningfully with people who don't have DD.**
 - MRAS staff, Habilitation Managers and Recreation Specialists continued, in 2024, to promote community-based activities that enabled people with DD to interact meaningfully with those who do not have DD. Some of the weekly community-based activities that enabled program participants to interact meaningfully with people without DD included volunteering at the Friendship APL, delivering meals for “Meals on Wheels,” and volunteering at the Elyria Arts Council and Valor Home.
- **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 2024, the engagement of eligible individuals in socially valued roles and activities was regularly spotlighted in the Agency newsletter, on social media, and in local radio spots.

Strategic Objective: Reducing the number of Individuals in the county waiting for services:

Goals	Expected Outcomes
Reduction of waiting list for HCBS waivers	1. More individual/family needs will be met through community-based alternative services v. HCBS waivers
Enrollment on an HCBS waiver of everyone on the HCBS waiting list who has three or more needs, as defined in OAC 5123-9-04	2. A minimum of 35 people will be enrolled on HCBS waivers
Reduction of waiting list for supports in semi-independent living arrangements	3. Removal from the Supported Living Waiting List of individuals desiring supports in semi-independent living arrangements
Expansion of the provision of support and information to assist families to meet caregiver challenges	4. Family caregivers will be effectively assisted to handle care giving challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 DD and by families caring for members, including children, with DD.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The LCBDD Alternative Services List was reviewed and updated quarterly to include new resources and updated contact information. In 2024, new resource categories were added to the list.• Enroll a minimum of 25 additional individuals on locally-funded Level I Waivers, and 10 additional individuals on locally-funded Individual Options Waivers.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This objective was met by the end of 2024.• Continue implementation of the DODD standardized waiting list assessment for each Individual on the county's waiver waiting list and each Individual requesting waiver services, and update the list based on the results of the assessment.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Throughout 2024, the SSA Department completed initial (standardized) waiver waiting list assessments as requested by the Individual, guardian, or representative, as well as annual reviews and updates for Individuals already placed on the Lorain County Waiver Waiting List. All assessment results were submitted to DODD, which maintains and updates each county's waiver waiting list.• 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.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Using Supported Living funds, SSA increased 'Apartment Supports' (supports for individuals living by themselves) within the parameters of the established budget. During 2024, three additional people were served in the 'Apartment Supports Program'.	

- **Within the resource capacity of three 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 service 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.**
 - In 2024, the SSA 'Behavior Team' was expanded to include a dedicated SSA Manager responsible for overseeing the team. The SSA 'Behavior Team' consisted of two FTEs for four months of the year and two and a half FTEs the rest of the year. The SSA Manager provided case coverage throughout the entire year. The SSA 'behavior staff' worked directly with approximately 159 individuals and teams to identify support strategies for implementation in family homes. In doing so, the 'behavior staff' provided consultation, observation, and assessment. Additionally, the 'Behavior Team' members worked with families and support staff to implement positive proactive strategies, and they personally demonstrated the strategies when necessary. The 'behavior support' staff provided techniques, tools, and tips to families to assist with challenges related to behaviors.
 - In 2024, the 'behavior support' staff also worked with numerous youths assigned to OhioRise, the Ohio Medicaid program for multi-system youth. LCBDD 'behavior staff', as OhioRise team members, participated in weekly or bi-weekly meetings, assisted in OhioRise plan development, developed and modeled in-home supports, attended trainings, and continued to learn the benefits associated with OhioRise.
 - The 'behavior staff' connected three families to the DODD Keeping Families Together (KFT) grant to repair damages to the home caused by multi-system youth.
 - The 'behavior support' staff referred numerous individuals to technical assistance programs for addressing damaging behaviors of youth and adults with DD; those providing the technical assistance included DODD, the Multi-System Youth Comprehensive Assessment Team (MCAT), and Extension for Community HealthCare Outcomes (ECHO). Each of the technical assistance programs included a meeting of professionals to review the Individual's situation and history, in order to provide a list of recommendations to the team.
 - Additionally, the 'behavior support' staff assisted families of eligible individuals in getting connected to therapies (Applied Behavior Analysis, In-Home Behavior Therapy, Occupational Therapy for sensory issues, and Speech Therapy), technology, support groups, and other resource; and ensured that the team was working as a unit to address challenging behaviors.
 - Immediately prior to 2024, a new "hot spot" 30-day crisis bed was created through the Lorain County Integrated Services Partnership with Bellefaire. The LCBDD 'behavior support' staff worked collaboratively with Bellefaire on the support of those placed in the "hot spot" bed. Three children with DD used the crisis bed. The 'behavior support' staff worked with Bellefaire staff to create a model of supports consistent with strategies implemented at the Bellefaire facility, that could be used once the children returned to the family home. Unfortunately, the "hot spot" bed was discontinued by Bellefaire by May of 2024.

- **Marcus Crisis Prevention Program (MCP) training will be provided to SSA/Behavior Analysts and SSA/Assistant Behavior Analysts; the training focuses on how to safely prevent, manage and de-escalate crisis situations. The cost of the training will be covered through a Keeping Families Together (KFT) Grant that was applied for and secured by LCBDD through the SSA Department.**
 - Due to scheduling conflicts between the program administrator and SSA Department staff, this objective was not met in 2024. The training program is a three-day in-person training.
- **Behavior Intervention Team Services (BITS)* training will be provided to families of multi-system youth with challenging/destructive behaviors, and the cost of the training will be covered through a Keeping Families Together (KFT) Grant that was applied for and secured by LCBDD through the SSA Department.**

BITS training will also be offered by LCBDD to families of eligible children that are not multi-system youth, but who have very challenging/ destructive behaviors, and to the families of adults who live in the family home and who have very challenging/destructive behaviors.

***The focus of BITS is on teaching caregivers about the behavior spectrum, the signs of caregiver stress, appropriate physical responses to challenging behaviors, keys for successful behavior support, and tips for staying calm. This specialized training has been vital to helping families address complex, challenging behaviors in the home.**

- Through funding from the DODD Keeping Families Together (KFT) grant, the SSA Department offered Behavior Intervention Team Services (BITS) training for families of ‘multi-system youth,’ to assist these families to determine/know how to proactively and reactively address verbal and physical aggression. This training was provided for 14 families throughout 2024.
- In 2024, no families of LCBDD-eligible children that were not ‘multi-system youth’ or families of LCBDD-eligible adults who lived in the family home were found to be in need of/referred for the BITS training.
- **Within the limitations of the KFT grant, LCBDD will continue to cover the cost of implementing safety measures in family homes of ‘multi-system youth’ with challenging/destructive behaviors and the surrounding environments, with the goal of providing barriers/supports to prevent damage to the home environment and physical harm to household members.**
 - Through the DODD KFT grant, the SSA Department covered the cost of implementing safety measures to prevent damage to the family homes of ‘multi-system youth’ with challenging/destructive behaviors. In 2024, three families received this assistance for items including special windows to prevent a child from shattering the glass, and protective wall covering to prevent the child from destroying the walls and pulling out electrical wires.
- **Within the limitations of the KFT grant, LCBDD will continue to cover the cost of equipment/ safety devices for family caregivers to use to address challenging behaviors of multi-system youth with challenging/destructive behaviors, so that they can remain in the home without significantly harming other household members.**
 - Through the KFT grant, the SSA Department covered the cost of six safety devices for use by family caregivers of ‘multi-system youth’ with challenging/destructive behaviors. Two

families received this assistance in 2024, and items purchased included bite jackets, blocking pads, and protective arm gear.

- **LCBDD will cover the cost of risk assessments and preparation of trauma-informed biologic timelines by the Nisonger Center for youth and adults with complex/challenging behaviors.**
 - Due to inability to resolve an issue involving contract content, this strategy was not implemented in 2024.
- **LCBDD staff, to include Behavior Analysts, SSAs, Developmental Specialists (who serve the 0-3 population) and other professionals, as applicable, will continue to offer and expand periodic trainings/information sessions for families and other caregivers on topics of expressed interest.**
 - The SSA Department continued to provide information through a variety of means to connect families and other caregivers to virtual and in-person trainings. The trainings were provided by external entities and were generally free to all who attended. The trainings in 2024 covered a wide variety of topics, including connecting with Managed Care, using visual supports and schedules in the home, de-escalation techniques, caregiver respite and mental health, communication challenges, planning for transitions, technology supports for individuals and caregivers, and social skills.
 - The SSA Department provided information about Medicaid managed care and the benefits of its use for medical care coordination, and help with accessing medical transportation and Applied Behavior Analysis.
 - In August of 2024, the LCBDD Early Intervention Department provided training to all Lorain County Community Action Agency staff on topics including autism spectrum disorders and other developmental delays; related early childhood sensory issues and impact on speech, language and fine motor skill development; and classroom management strategies.
- **LCBDD will continue to operate its Family Support Program, without modification. Note: the co-pays for families of those whose LCBDD-eligible member is not enrolled on a Medicaid waiver were restructured and reduced, effective 01/01/2023.**
 - LCBDD operated its Family Support Program throughout 2024, serving 679 families of LCBDD-eligible children and adults.

Strategic Objective: Plan and set priorities based on available resources to meet the needs of children and adults residing in the county who are individuals with developmental disabilities:

Goals

Expected Outcomes

To effectively assess the resources necessary to provide existing programs and services of LCBDD that are utilized/valued by LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families, and to make these resources available

The needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities residing in the county will be met

Desires of LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families/informal caregivers will be addressed

To recognize unmet needs/desires of LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families, and to address unmet needs and, as resources allow, unmet desires by identifying third-party resources that can be used to (help) address the needs/desires, and/or providing/ participating in the provision of resources to address the needs/desires

- **Early Intervention (EI) is considered high priority because it occurs at a critically important stage of a child’s development, and is cost-effective by design because it provides family caregivers with tools/strategies to effectively stimulate the development of infants and toddlers on a daily basis. The EI Program also receives consistently high ratings from families on the annual satisfaction survey. Enrollment in the LCBDD EI Program has grown significantly and steadily; between 10/1/22 and 9/30/23 the number of children served in EI was 1,024 (a record number), as compared to the already very high number of 950 during the same timeframe the year before. Consequently, up to two additional full-time (FT) Developmental Specialists (DSs) will be added in 2024. The EI Program will be operated in 2024 with one FT Speech & Language Pathologist, one part-time DS, and up to 13 FT DSs.**
 - One additional Developmental Specialist joined the EI team on May 13, 2024; a second additional Developmental Specialist joined the EI team on August 12, 2024.
- **SSAs provide essential services that enable eligible individuals to access services that address their needs and life quality; SSA duties are also mandatory functions of county boards. Due to case load sizes and SSA responsibilities, two FT SSA positions will be added in 2024.**
 - One additional SSA was hired on April 23, 2024; a second additional SSA was hired on May 13, 2024.
- **As the number served by LCBDD and the number of providers utilized by LCBDD-eligible individuals grows, and standards that impact providers become more rigorous, the need for provider support and oversight has increased substantially, as has the need for eligible individuals to receive well-researched third-party resource information; therefore, one FT Provider Compliance and Resource Specialist will be added in 2024.**
 - An additional Provider Compliance and Resource Specialist was hired on June 09, 2024.

- **Investigative Agents (IAs) play a key role in ensuring the health and welfare of LCBDD-eligible individuals; IA duties are also mandatory functions of county boards. The number of Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) that LCBDD's IAs were required to investigate in 2023 was very high, and an additional (unbudgeted) IA was added in 2023. In 2024, intermittent consulting to assist IAs in specialized areas such as court/police matters and forensic accounting will be added.**
 - In January of 2024, an Intermittent Law Enforcement/Judicial System Navigator was hired to assist the IAs with court/police matters involving Individuals served. This position was invaluable with regard to assistance provided to IAs in understanding legal documents such as subpoenas and court records. Additionally, the Intermittent Law Enforcement/Judicial System Navigator saved IAs valuable time by following up on legal hearings related to Individuals served, and making important contacts with local leaders in the court and law enforcement systems. The position was also helpful in assisting the IAs in expediting securement of crucial information such as police reports and videos, and various other court documents.
 - Intermittent consulting in forensic accounting was not obtained in 2024.
- **During 2024 LCBDD department heads and personnel will continuously monitor resource needs, and explore the use of third-party resources to (help) address needs, as applicable.**
 - This strategy was implemented in 2024, and emphasis was placed on identification of and referral to third-party resources. The commitment to connecting LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families with beneficial resources was reflected in the inclusion of the following strategy in the 2025 Strategic Plan: Survey SSAs and Developmental Specialists regarding those resources/resource categories that have been found to be of particular interest to eligible individuals/families and professionals; create a broad web-based resource hub to provide resources/resource categories that are of known interest to eligible individuals/families, and professionals within the DD system, as well as to those to whom LCBDD provides general information and referral.
- **During 2024, LCBDD department heads and personnel will prepare for Board consideration Significant Financial Considerations addressing budgeted, unbudgeted, emergent, and on-going use of Agency resources.**
 - Throughout 2024, LCBDD department heads and personnel prepared and presented Significant Financial Considerations addressing both routine and emergent needs for budgeted, and some unbudgeted expenditures.
- **LCBDD department heads will be actively involved with the annual budget process/development of the 2025 Budget proposal.**
 - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the development of the 2025 Budget proposal, which was approved in December of 2024.
- **A detailed fiscal forecast will be prepared and presented to the Board in conjunction with the annual budget process.**
 - A detailed fiscal forecast was prepared and presented to the Board/Budget & Human Resources Committee in conjunction with the annual budget process.

Strategic Objective: Increase the number of Individuals of working age engaged in competitive integrated employment:

Goals/Benchmarks

A minimum of 24 LCBDD-eligible individuals will be placed in a job that meets the definition of competitive integrated employment, as defined in OAC 5123-2-05*

90% of LCBDD-eligible individuals who are placed in a job that meets the definition of competitive integrated employment will retain the job for at least 90 days

*OAC 5123-2-05 defines competitive integrated employment, in part, as work (including self-employment, as applicable) for which the individual is compensated at a rate that is not less than minimum wage, and not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who do not have disabilities and who are in similar occupations and have similar training, experience and skills; for which the individual is eligible for the level of benefits provided by the employer to other employees; performed at a location where the individual interacts with persons without disabilities to the same extent as employees of the employer who are not receiving HCBS services; and which presents opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for persons without disabilities who have similar positions.

Outcomes

Twenty-nine eligible individuals were placed in jobs that meet the definition of competitive integrated employment in 2024. Of those, 16 were placed through the Murray Ridge Supported Employment (SE) Program, and 13 were placed by other providers.

Nineteen of the 29 (or 66% of the) individuals placed in jobs that meet the definition of competitive integrated employment retained employment for at least 90 days.

Eleven of the 16 (or 69% of the) individuals placed through the Murray Ridge SE Program retained employment for at least 90 days. Eight of the 13 (or 62% of the) individuals placed by other providers retained employment for at least 90 days.

- **Actively participate in meetings of the Regional Transition Network, which has established the following objectives:**
 - **Identify key components of successful transition planning for students with disabilities**
 - **Collaborate to determine strategies and methods for transition that can be brought back to participating organizations for use**
 - **Provide updates from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE)**

- The Murray Ridge SSA Managers, SSAs assigned to work with ‘Transition students,’ and Director of Supported Employment (SE) attended the quarterly meetings of the Lorain County Employment First Transition Team (otherwise known as the Regional Transition Network), which is coordinated by the State Support Team. LCBDD staff actively networked at these meetings, and engaged with resources made available by the State Support Team through the Regional Employment First Transition Team.
- **Through on-going participation in the Regional Transition Network, take steps to ensure that LCBDD and local school districts use similar methods to support students with DD to obtain competitive integrated employment, and attempt to resolve any duplication of efforts.**
 - Through on-going participation in the Regional Transition Network, LCBDD personnel and local school districts were exposed to, and consequently utilized/embraced some of, the same resources and philosophies, which led to use of similar methods to support students with DD to obtain competitive, integrated employment. Some of the resources for transition planning that were presented at the Transition Network meetings in 2024 include the enhanced website of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), which made it easier to refer students in Transition to OOD; various transition planning resource links; occupation-specific links to Ohio Means Jobs; and ‘Find Your Pathway’ links that can be used by/with students in Transition to explore various career paths of interest to them. Additionally, the director of the Regional Transition Network sent to team members emails which provided updates from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), shared resources on best practices for Transition services, and made members aware of new resources and upcoming trainings related to Transition. SSAs and local school district personnel participated in a variety of trainings about ways to support youth in Transition who wish to be employed within their communities.
 - Through opportunities for networking and collaboration between personnel of LCBDD and local school districts that were enhanced by on-going participation in the Regional Transition Network, some duplications of effort were resolved/potentially prevented. The SSA Department continued, throughout 2024, to meet with local school district personnel to support ‘Transition students’ with DD through the processes of exploring/securing employment; the school districts, SSAs, and OOD staff worked as a team to support students aged 16 and older with Transition. Additionally, members of the Murray Ridge Supported Employment Department attended a separate meeting with Lorain County transition coordinators to discuss the employment services provided by Murray Ridge to those who are not enrolled on Medicaid waivers, and how those ‘Transition students’ who are not enrolled on waivers may access these services if they choose.
- **Implement and enhance service planning protocol for assisting eligible individuals to move forward on their paths to competitive integrated employment.**
 - In 2024, the SSA Department, as required, continued to utilize the OISP and its built-in assessments to assist eligible individuals to make decisions about and move forward on their chosen paths to community/competitive integrated employment.
- **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 by the Murray Ridge Supported Employment Department so that the reasons for individual job loss could be taken into consideration when facilitating future employment opportunities. For example, one person who was placed in a clerical position lost his job because he was unwilling to accept reasonable accommodations offered by his employer,

as he did not want to be treated differently than fellow employees without disabilities; as a result, prior to placing Individuals in jobs, the SE team now discusses with Individuals the potential need for accommodations, and their willingness to accept them.

- **Utilizing a team of SE staff, update and execute a strategic, targeted plan to create competitive integrated employment opportunities for adult consumers. 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 developmental disabilities.**
 - In 2024, the Murray Ridge 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 weaknesses of Individual job interviews from the previous week, in order to identify strategies for future success.
 - In 2024, the number of local job fairs was greater than it had been since the beginning of the COVID epidemic. The Murray Ridge Marketing/Job Placement Specialist attended seven local job fairs; these provided opportunities to learn about the types of jobs that were available, and to engage in face-to-face meetings with local employers to discuss the benefits of hiring people with developmental disabilities, and the willingness/ability of the employers to accommodate workers through job carving, etc.
 - The SE Director and some other members of the Murray Ridge SE Department attended various trainings on employment and career planning for people with DD, and shared content from the trainings with other SE Department employees to whom the information was pertinent. One such training was the 6th Annual Employment Summit, which covered how to prepare job seekers and their family members for employment, how job developers can effectively approach employer meetings and interviews, and how job coaches should handle various situations that could arise while coaching. Another 2024 training, which was conducted by the Association of People Supporting Employment First, provided valuable insights on family engagement, transition partnerships, general principles of building relationships with employers, and how to support businesses after job coaching concludes.
 - The SE Director and some other SE staff visited several sites where providers were implementing a program to teach Individuals earning subminimum wages about the benefits of and skills needed to be successful in competitive integrated employment. A related strategy was included in LCBDD's 2025 Strategic Plan.
- **Refer individuals, as appropriate, to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and the Workforce Development Agency of Lorain County. Track the submission and outcome of OOD and Workforce Development Agency referrals initiated by SSA.**
 - SSAs systematically recorded, on a monthly basis: (1) information regarding all individuals on their caseloads who had been referred to OOD or the Workforce Development Agency of Lorain County (programs through which funding and technical support are made available to assist referred individuals with exploring and obtaining competitive employment), and (2) the outcomes of the referrals. The data recorded by SSAs was submitted to and maintained in a spreadsheet by SSA clerical staff.
 - Based on the data collected through the established tracking mechanism, in 2024, 35 individuals were referred to OOD by SSAs, and five of these individuals obtained employment and maintained in for at least 90 days.

- **Continue partnering with OOD in order to assist identified Individuals who want community employment by working with OOD counselors to provide intensive placement services.**
 - The Murray Ridge SE Department continued working with OOD counselors by providing and tracking those services listed within each Individual's employment plan for which OOD was the identified facilitator, and meeting regularly with the assigned 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 (VPSs) then communicated information to the applicable OOD counselor and reviewed progress and issues for those already employed. Thirteen individuals in the Murray Ridge SE Program were served through the OOD/DODD partnership in 2024.
- **Systematically track and document circumstances 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.**
 - SSAs systematically recorded on a monthly basis, with regard to all Individuals on their caseloads who were not in the Murray Ridge Adult Services Program, instances of: (1) occasions in which lack of transportation precluded a community employment opportunity, and (2) occasions in which lack of transportation resulted in job loss; the data recorded by SSAs was submitted to and maintained in a spreadsheet by SSA clerical staff. With regard to Individuals who are in the MRAS Program, VPSs reported at weekly meetings of the SE Department instances of: (1) occasions in which lack of transportation precluded a community employment opportunity, and (2) occasions in which lack of transportation resulted in job loss; the SE Director then entered the information in a tracking spreadsheet.
 - Based upon data collected through the established tracking mechanisms, in 2024 there were two occasions in which an LCBDD-eligible individual was unable to accept a job offer due to lack of transportation. Additionally, in five cases, an LCBDD-eligible individual did not pursue community employment opportunities in which he/she was interested due to lack of transportation.
 - In 2024, based upon data collected through the established tracking mechanisms, no LCBDD-eligible individual lost a job due to lack of transportation options.
- **Facilitate utilization of the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community work sites and opportunities.**
 - In 2024, nine LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access community work sites.
- **Include in the LCBDD budget a line item for 'community employment marketing,' and make 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.).**
 - Through the 2024 Budget for community employment marketing:

- 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. One spot utilized testimony from the Deputy Director of the Lorain County Veterans Service Commission, who shared positive experiences resulting from employment of individuals with DD. Other spots described the job placement process and job coaching, highlighted the fact that these services are provided at no cost to employers, and made employers aware of potential tax savings to be had by employing people with disabilities.
- Radio interviews were provided as a part of the WOBL/WDLW broadcast package. Interviews with LCBDD-eligible individuals looking for work, and LCBDD-eligible individuals who had recently found work were aired. Other interviews highlighted information about job carving, tax incentives for employers who hire someone with a developmental disability, and Developmental Disability Employment Awareness Month.
- Print media and radio were utilized to promote Developmental Disabilities Employment Awareness Month in October.
- Twenty-six Lorain County bus benches featured competitively employed individuals with DD and their employers, as well as contact information for the Murray Ridge SE Department.

Strategic Objective: Taking measures to recruit sufficient providers of services to meet the needs of individuals receiving services in the county:

Goals	Expected Outcomes
Ensure that there are willing and able service providers for each HCBS waiver recipient served by LCBDD, including individuals with intensive needs	1. Increased availability of providers, including providers of Participant-Directed Services, to meet needs of individuals receiving services in the county
On-going awareness of unmet needs/desires for providers, and information on providers to support LCBDD-eligible individuals	2. 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	3. 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	4. Increased ability for eligible individuals to find/utilize providers of preferred person-centered plan provisions
Secure providers willing to commit to implementation of most provisions of person-centered plans	5. Sustained satisfaction of HCBS waiver recipients 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	6. Increase in the number of residential and day service providers in Lorain County that are willing/able to serve LCBDD-eligible individuals with intensive medical/health-related and behavior support needs

- **Advertise the need for providers. Connect potential providers with the SSA management contact, to explain services and the DODD certification process.**
 - The PCRSs discussed the need for providers in Lorain County at each advocacy event and while attending conferences and informational events. Based on the PCRS staff sharing this information, one provider of Adult Day Services (Ability Works) was connected with the SSA Director in mid-2024. Another Adult Day Services provider (Empowered) met with the SSA Director about service needs before opening a second ADS location in Avon.
 - The SSA Manager responsible for provider support met with a multitude of individual providers and about a dozen agencies interested in serving eligible individuals of Lorain County.

- Engage in targeted provider recruitment using strategies including, but not limited to:

Residential and Adult Day Support Providers That Are Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Medical/Health-Related Needs

Make available to providers of Medicaid waiver-funded Adult Day Array Services and/or locally-funded Adult Day Services up to 30% reimbursement of their costs (salaries, benefits, contracts, etc.) for the provision of nursing services/nursing availability in day services sites.

Contact providers in surrounding counties to inquire about serving individuals with intense medical/health-related needs, specifically g/j-tube assistance, insulin and suctioning. Maintain 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, and Cuyahoga).

Connect Individuals with unmet Intensive medical needs/their families with interested providers.

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 understanding the waiver, the benefits of the job, and the certification process.

- LCBDD developed and circulated/offered to all providers of day services in Lorain County an agreement under which providers of Medicaid waiver-funded Adult Day Array Services and/or locally-funded Adult Day Services could receive up to 30% reimbursement of their costs (salaries, benefits, contracts, etc.) for the provision of nursing services/nursing availability in day services sites. One provider of Adult Day Services took advantage of this funding.
- Targeted recruitment of residential and ADS providers willing to serve Individuals with intensive medical/health-related needs occurred throughout 2024. One new residential provider agency (Blissful) was identified in 2024, and by year-end was actively serving Lorain County residents in individual settings. Additionally, in 2024, one family referred individuals to work with its (adult) children with intensive medical needs, and LCBDD PCRSs assisted these individuals to successfully complete the certification process and initiate services. One ADS provider (Empowered) was, by year-end, actively serving Lorain County residents with intensive medical/health-related needs in two locations (one of which was opened in 2024), one in Lorain and one in Avon. Empowered provided nursing services on-site and while traveling out in the community; this provider utilized the LCBDD nursing services subsidy.

Residential and Adult Day Support Providers That Are Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Behavior Support Needs

Contact providers in surrounding counties to inquire about serving individuals with intensive behavior support needs, and specifically with physical aggression and a history of elopement. Maintain 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, and 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.

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 understanding the waiver, the benefits of the job and the certification process.

- An LCBDD PCRS maintained and updated a listing of providers willing to serve Lorain County Individuals with intensive behavior support needs, including those with autism, physical aggression and histories of elopement.
- Targeted recruitment of residential and ADS providers willing to serve individuals with intensive behavior support needs occurred throughout 2024. Three new (to Lorain County) residential provider agencies (Blissful Living, Hope Ohio, and Life Out Loud) were identified, and by year-end were actively serving Lorain County residents with intensive behavior support needs in family settings. In 2024, there were no new ADS providers that were willing/able to serve Individuals with intensive behavior support needs.

Providers of Employment Support

Contact OOD providers currently providing services in Lorain, Cuyahoga, and Erie Counties to 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 2024. The SSA Department continued to contact employment providers through OOD and DODD, and providers working in surrounding counties to discuss the need for employment support providers in Lorain County. During 2024, LCBDD SSA staff developed relationships with one new (to Lorain County) employment services provider (Onebridge Support Services) that, by year-end, was actively providing employment support to individuals in Lorain County. Most of the services this agency provided were related to Individual Employment supports, such as career development, job placement, and job coaching.

Providers of Foster Care

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

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.

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.

- LCBDD PCRSs discussed the need for foster care providers at each provider group training session, as well as with each Independent provider during the DODD certification process. As individual providers expressed interest, the providers were connected with the SSA Manager responsible for foster care. No new providers of this service were identified in 2024.
- It was determined, based on discussions with Lorain County foster providers, that offering medication delegation classes in the evenings or on weekends would not increase the number of foster providers in the county that are delegated to administer medication.
- **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 18 Medicaid waiver recipients for whom there was no available provider that was (or had expressed an interest in) operating in Lorain County. In many of these cases, no such provider was available as a result of the families' need to have a flexible schedule and/or the intensive behavior-related or medical needs of the Individual. The services being sought by the 18 Individuals were mainly Homemaker Personal Care (HPC), Community Respite for minors, Residential Respite, and Non-Medical Transportation (NMT).
 - Ultimately, due to the statewide search process, willing, able, and acceptable providers were identified for all but three of the 18 Medicaid waiver recipients. As of the end of 2024, the SSA Department was continuing to search for providers of Nursing, Residential Respite, and HPC with certification to administer medication.
- **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.**
 - Based on the data collected in 2024, a service provision that no provider operating in, or with an expressed interest in operating in Lorain County was willing and able to provide was Adult Day Support at a 1:1 ratio for an individual with significant behavioral needs. One individual had an unmet need for this service in 2024. On behalf of this individual, the SSA staff conducted a thorough search of providers in Lorain County and surrounding counties. Unfortunately, the SSA could not locate a willing provider for this person who needs 1:1 staffing while attending Adult Day Services. The Individual does have 24-hour care in his residential setting to meet his needs. At the conclusion of 2024, the assigned SSA was continuing to work to locate a provider to meet the Individual's needs.
- **In discussion with/recruitment of providers of Day Array Services, provide information about the expressed unmet needs/desires relative to Adult Day Supports and Supported Employment, respectively.**

- SSA Management and the PCRSs discussed unmet needs of LCBDD-eligible individuals with all Day Array Service providers in the county. Multiple ADS providers expanded in 2024, and one (new to Lorain County) provider (Ability Works) opened an ADS site in Sheffield. Additionally, in 2024 approximately fifteen Independent providers became certified to deliver Non-Medical Transportation, a service for which there had been unmet demand.
- **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 information to Independent and Agency providers about providing group social/recreational opportunities. Numerous Independent providers of HPC and NMT successfully provided services in this manner to two or three Individuals at a time through the Level One and Individual Options Waivers. These providers coordinated the services based on the day provider location, friendships, desired outcomes, and likes and interests of the Individuals served.

Strategic Objective: Identifying and addressing gaps noted in services:

Goals

Expected Outcome

Identify and address gaps in service that are creating hardship for LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families*

Unmet and emerging needs will be identified and addressed

Monitor for and take steps to proactively address the potential for systematic barriers to the availability of transportation options for eligible individuals

Note: Elsewhere in the 2024 Strategic Plan, there are examples of unmet needs that were identified, and will be/are being addressed. See, in particular, the sections on Reducing the Number of Individuals in the County Waiting for Services, and Planning and Setting Priorities Based on Available Resources...

*See also section on Recruitment of Sufficient Providers of Service

- **During 2024 LCBDD department heads and personnel will continuously monitor resource needs, and explore the use of third-party resources to (help) address needs, as applicable.**
 - This strategy was implemented throughout 2024. Particular emphasis was placed on the systematic identification of third-party resources, and this was reflected in the 2025 Strategic Plan which included the following strategy: Survey SSAs and Developmental Specialists regarding those resources/resource categories that have been found to be of particular interest to eligible individuals/families and professionals; create a broad web-based resource hub to provide resources/resource categories that are of known interest to eligible individuals/families, and professionals within the DD system as well as to those to whom LCBDD provides general information and referral.
- **Authorization of LCBDD resources to meet newly identified/emergent/unbudgeted needs will be considered.**
 - This objective was applicable in 2024, with the most notable example being the handling of an unanticipated need for a significant one-time increase in the cost of busing to Agency programs; through strategic negotiations with the vender and use of some budgetary flexibility, transportation services with a provider experienced in meeting the highly specialized needs of LCBDD program participants were preserved.
- **LCBDD department heads will be actively involved with the preparation of the 2023 Strategic Plan Progress Report.**
 - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the preparation of the 2023 Strategic Plan Progress Report.
- **Strategic Plans will be developed and adopted annually; LCBDD department heads will be actively involved with the development of the proposed 2025 Strategic Plan.**

- LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the drafting and development of the 2025 Strategic Plan, which was adopted in December of 2024.
- **LCBDD Department heads will be actively involved with the annual budget process/development of the budget proposal.**
 - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the development of the 2025 Budget proposal, which was approved in December of 2024.
- **Through a NEON COG contract, Root Consulting will be engaged to provide insurance resource and navigation assistance to each family referred for these services by the LCBDD SSA Department; SSAs will refer families that are struggling, on behalf of eligible family members, to find coverage of medical treatments, ABA, OT/SLP/PT, mental health services, etc.**
 - LCBDD engaged Root Consulting through a contract with the NEON COG. SSAs referred families that were struggling to find coverage of medical treatments, therapies and/or mental health services for LCBDD-eligible individuals. Approximately 15 Lorain County families formally connected with Root Consulting for insurance resource and navigation assistance.
- **Continue to actively participate in the development and promotion of Lorain County's Coordinated Transportation Plan to identify community resources for transportation and mobility, to understand the gaps and unmet needs within those resources, and to determine the approach to addressing those gaps and unmet needs, particularly with regard to people with disabilities.**
 - The LCBDD Director of Vocational and Transportation Services continued to serve on a committee that developed a coordinated transportation plan for Lorain County. A new iteration of the plan, which is to run through 2028, was adopted in July of 2024. The goals of the plan were developed based on geographic analysis and responses to public surveys. The Director of Vocational and Transportation Services made the survey available to LCBDD-eligible adults through the SSA and SE Departments.
 - The goals of the (new) Lorain County Coordinated Transportation Plan are to: (a) improve transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, (b) improve and promote workforce transportation options, (c) increase access to medical and food locations, (d) advocate for transit infrastructure upgrades that increase transit rider satisfaction, and (e) coordinate countywide efforts by evaluation of transportation pilot projects.
 - An interesting pilot project was implemented late in 2024: Via LC was established as a new public transit service provided by Lorain County Transit in partnership with Via Transportation; with this initiative, through an app, people needing transportation between ten specific zones in Elyria and Lorain can book rides for \$2.
 - Move Lorain County also maintained a Lorain County Transportation Guide on the Move Lorain County website, which lists area transportation providers.

- **Systematically track and document circumstances 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.**
 - SSAs systematically recorded on a monthly basis, with regard to all individuals on their caseloads who were not in the Murray Ridge Adult Services Program, instances of: (1) occasions in which lack of transportation precluded a community employment opportunity, and (2) occasions in which lack of transportation resulted in job loss; the data recorded by SSAs was submitted to and maintained in a spreadsheet by SSA clerical staff. With regard to individuals who were in the MRAS Program, VPSs reported at weekly meetings of the SE Department instances of: (1) occasions in which lack of transportation precluded a community employment opportunity, and (2) occasions in which lack of transportation resulted in job loss; the SE Director then entered the information in a tracking spreadsheet.
 - Based upon data collected through the established tracking mechanisms, in 2024 there were two occasions in which an LCBDD-eligible individual was unable to accept a job offer due to lack of transportation. Additionally, in five cases, an LCBDD-eligible individual did not pursue community employment opportunities in which he/she was interested due to lack of transportation.
 - In 2024, based upon data collected through the established tracking mechanisms, no LCBDD-eligible individual lost a job due to lack of transportation options.
 - The above data provides insight about the extent to which lack of transportation has impacted employment options for LCBDD-eligible individuals, and suggests the benefit of a focus on Individual-specific solutions.
- **Facilitate utilization of the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community places/resources and work opportunities.**
 - Throughout 2024, 22 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the new waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access places in their community. Nine of these individuals primarily used the service to get to and from work, while two others used it to get to and from volunteering opportunities. One individual mainly used the service to travel to and from college classes.

Strategic Objective: Expand the understanding of technology solutions for LCBDD-eligible individuals and their caregivers; increase the number of LCBDD-eligible individuals utilizing technology solutions:

Goal	Expected Outcomes
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Increase and promote, as appropriate, the use of technology by eligible individuals to increase independence and enhance quality of life

1. Increased awareness by eligible individuals and their support teams of potential ‘technology solutions’
2. Increased use of technology solutions to support the achievement of desired outcomes by eligible individuals

- **Throughout the initial and ongoing person-centered assessment and planning process, technology solutions will be explored and documented, and, to the greatest extent possible, used to support the desired outcomes included in the individual service plan.**
 - In 2024, SSA staff continued to address the need for assistive technology through the person-centered assessment and development of ISPs. Through the utilization of the OISP assessment, which includes questions about potential technology solutions, SSA staff developed individualized supports to assist eligible individuals with identifying areas in which the use of technology might replace some reliance on human assistance. The questions within the OISP provided teams with a clear picture of what eligible individuals were capable of and what supports were needed. Based on the OISP annual assessment process and on-going monitoring throughout the year, SSAs assisted interested individuals to develop and include in their service plans supports related to the use of assistive technology and remote supports.
- **Provide information and training opportunities to LCBDD staff to increase their level of knowledge, skill, and comfort related to the use of technology solutions and assessing how technology may help meet needs of Individuals served or help them achieve desired outcomes.**
 - Throughout 2024, the SSA Department TECH Team members attended trainings on individualized assessment of the potential for various types of technology to meet needs of/provide solutions for those served by LCBDD. The trainings were hosted by OSU Nisonger Center, Ohio Tech Ambassadors, OCALI, OACB, and DODD. The TECH Team shared the information from the training sessions with all SSAs during staff meetings and through TECH referrals.
- **Provide information and training opportunities to Individuals served and their families, providers of services, and community partners (e.g., local schools, mental health agencies, Area Agency on Aging, Lorain County Department of Jobs and Family Services, public transit authority, local vocational rehabilitation centers, and employers) to expand awareness and use of technology solutions by LCBDD-eligible individuals.**
 - Through the annual person-centered planning process and ISP development, SSAs worked with teams to provide eligible individuals with information about technology solutions.

- The SSA TECH Team met with numerous individuals and teams, based on SSA referrals, to discuss and demonstrate assistive technology options to meet assessed needs.
- The SSA TECH team arranged a remote supports and assistive technology presentation for school transition coordinators and Lorain County Children Services staff. Wynn-Reeth, a provider of remote supports and assistive technology, presented information about these services and demonstrated devices.
- **Through the person-centered planning process, assist eligible individuals with identifying and accessing technology options to reduce reliance on caregivers, and increase independence; increase technology utilization by at least 35 eligible-individuals.**
 - In 2024, the SSA Department TECH Team initiated technology solutions for 36 Individuals following referrals from the assigned SSAs. Four eligible individuals initiated use of remote supports to reduce reliance on caregivers in group settings. During the year, LCBDD-eligible individuals increased independence by initiating use of a variety of assistive technology; examples included reader pens, adaptive light switches, adaptive toothbrushes, medication dispensers, wearable GPS devices, cameras with two-way speakers, fall detectors, smart speakers, and seizure detectors.
- **Provide information and opportunities for eligible individuals, families, and providers to experience the technology suite, a fully functioning apartment where various assistive technologies can be tested and experienced.**
 - Due to limited availability of the technology suite (which doubled as an emergency suite) for overnight stays, Individuals had limited opportunities to experience the suite overnight. Numerous Individuals and their families toured the suite to experience the technology, from remote support to door and window alarms to fall detectors to the smart microwave. The SSA TECH Team also demonstrated the technology devices outside of the suite, at the SSA Office and Individuals' homes.