Murray Ridge Center

Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities (LCBDD)

2025 Strategic Plan Progress Report



Review of Progress on the 2025 Strategic Plan

<u>Strategic Objective</u>: Promote advocacy for and by individuals served by the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities (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

- Actively encourage Individuals served to consider carefully who to include in their person-centered planning processes.
    - As part of the annual planning process, Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) ask eligible individuals to identify who, including both paid and natural supports, they would like to have participate in their person-centered planning process. SSAs encourage eligible individuals to invite people who support and know them best. Additionally, throughout the year, SSAs encourage eligible individuals to include support people in their ongoing planning processes and review of desired outcomes.
- Assist Individuals served with community connections that have the potential to increase advocacy on their behalf, either collectively or as individuals.
    - Through the utilization of the Myrtle Endowment Fund, SSA Management and the Provider Compliance & Resource Specialists (PCRSs) assisted Individuals served to make connections with community agencies and politicians in order to increase advocacy on their behalf.

- Throughout 2025, a variety of community connection programs were made available to Murray Ridge Adult Program participants with all types and levels of abilities and disabilities.

- Ensure that service plans developed within the SSA Department include individualized supports to assist with improvement of self-advocacy skills.

    - Through the utilization of the Ohio Individual Service Plan (OISP) assessment section, which includes questions about self-advocacy, SSA staff continued to develop individualized supports to assist eligible individuals with developing and/or improving self-advocacy skills. The questions within the OISP provided teams with a clear picture of what eligible individuals were capable of and what supports should be written into their service plans. Based on the answers to the assessment questions, SSAs wrote into Individuals Service Plans (ISPs) the specific self-advocacy supports indicated, including assistance to utilize technology to promote and practice self-advocacy.

- Assist interested individuals to develop and include in their service plans desired outcomes related to self-advocacy.

    - As identified 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. Regarding the desired outcomes, ISPs included support strategies related to the pursuit of desired outcomes, and identified a specific person to assist with each support strategy.

- Identify consumers interested in participating in advocacy activities; ensure that supports necessary to achieve the participation of these individuals in advocacy activities 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 related services in their OISPs.

    - The SSA Manager responsible for advocacy events and the 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 2025, 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 being safe on-line, at home and in the community; developing friendships; communicating with your medical team; community connections; transitioning to adulthood; and recognizing and communicating feelings. 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 2025, the SSA Department continued to provide information about self-advocacy to providers of Residential and Adult Day/Employment Services. The SSA Department met with five of the Adult Day/Employment providers and two 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 2025, the SSA Department offered advocacy events through grant dollars provided by the Myrtle Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County. Throughout the year seven cooking classes, hosted by the Culinary Institute, were held at Lorain County Community College. Twenty eligible individuals attended each class, with an ultimate goal of further developing their skills. Each class focused on basic cooking essentials and provided a way for citizens with disabilities to advocate for an independent life. During each two-hour class, the culinary staff taught basic cooking skills and led the class through making an entire meal. From start to finish, the class is involved at every step of the way! Participants are taught different culinary techniques. Eligible individuals learned how to make tacos, make pizza, make a breakfast meal, grill chicken, make brownies, prepare a cookout, and prepare soup and sandwiches. After all the cooking, the participants enjoyed their meals as a group, and shared their culinary delights with their friends, family, and caregivers who attended with them.

    - Throughout the year, individuals attended eight sessions of Self-Defense classes through Tracy's Karate Studio, using the above-referenced grant

money. Six of the classes were held during the day, and eligible individuals from eight different Day Program providers attended these events. There were two evening sessions where twenty eligible individuals attended with family and caregivers. 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 grant money, a luncheon was held for eligible individuals with Sexual Assault Services Director Emeline Clyburn. Ms. Clyburn held a group discussion on healthy boundaries and safe relationships on July 9, 2025. The two-hour event was held at Valley of the Eagles in Elyria. Approximately 60 eligible individuals attended the luncheon discussion. Ms. Clyburn shared strategies and tools on how to develop a healthy relationship, and then asked individuals to share and ask questions. LCBDD-eligible individuals were very involved in the discussion. They shared stories related to healthy and safe relationships, and also times when things went wrong and how they dealt with the issues. The eligible individuals expressed feeling supported by Ms. Clyburn and the group, and were comfortable sharing personal experiences.

- Using the above-referenced grant money, a luncheon was held with an Estate planner/trust attorney from the Hoover Cayceon Law Firm to review and discuss individual rights in great detail. The attorney reviewed all 21 rights, the importance of each, and what to do if you believe your rights have been violated. The two-hour event was held on August 13th at the Valley of the Eagles. Approximately 65 people attended the event.

- Using the above-referenced grant money, a luncheon was held with Erin Beese from CommStar Credit Union to discuss banking basics. Ms. Beese discussed how to set up an account, how to save money, how to keep your account safe, and how to report fraud. She provided resources for individuals to take with them to further discussion with caregivers and family. Approximately 35 people attended the two-hour event at Valley of the Eagles.

- Using the above-referenced grant money, LCBDD funded the attendance of 36 people at the Synergy Conference on October 1st-3rd, 2025. Twenty individuals and sixteen '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 meeting notices were disseminated when the information was available.

- 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 2025. Topics covered at the meetings included self-advocacy, dream jobs, the Synergy Conference, carrying identification at all times, speaking up for oneself, and facial expressions and body language as a form of communication. The participants have provided Murray Ridge Speaks Up! with suggestions that have contributed to the overall self-advocacy experience. The program has received much positive feedback from participants and continues to be well-attended.

    - The Murray Ridge Consumer/Employee Committee held quarterly meetings in 2025. The meetings mainly focused on community-based services. One event the committee suggested was a trip to Put-In-Bay, which ended up being an all-day adventure; much positive feedback about the trip was received from participants and their families. Many other suggestions focused on trips to various restaurants to explore different foods. All suggestions from the committee were carefully reviewed, and acted on to the extent feasible.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> Ensure that individuals receive services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their needs:

Goals	Expected Outcomes
Address the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements related to community-based, integrated service delivery	1. Provision of services to Medicaid waiver recipients and others in integrated community settings, as desired/feasible
Support/enhance community activities and membership of people with developmental disabilities in the county	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 2025, SSA staff continued to utilize the DODD-prescribed process to complete person-centered assessments and develop ISPs; this involves planning for community-based activities that will assist individuals to work toward desired outcomes. Through the OISP assessment questions, SSA staff and eligible individuals' teams identified desired outcomes, support strategies to achieve those outcomes, and specific community places where the support strategies may 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 2025, two Adult Day Services agency providers started services in Lorain County, which included community integration. There were many newly certified Independent providers in 2025 (approximately 45). Through the annual person-centered planning process and throughout the year, the SSAs provided information about certified providers that could meet identified needs in the community. SSAs educated eligible individuals and their advocates about the providers' availability, so that the eligible individuals could determine which providers were best able to serve them and support them in accessing desired experiences within the community.
- Facilitate utilization of the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community places and opportunities.

- In 2025, 16 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the Medicaid waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access places in their community. The majority of these individuals primarily used the service to get to and from work, while two used it to get to and from volunteering opportunities. One individual used the service to travel to and from medical appointments and family visits out of county.

- 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. Keep updated 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 2025, a multitude of SSA Department staff attended trainings related to the promotion of community membership and natural supports 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 Department.

- 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.

    - During 2025, MRAS continued to assign a Habilitation Manager/Director from each OVC to work directly with program participants to plan services outside the OVCs. During this timeframe, the assigned Habitation Manager/Director 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 his/her interests 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.

- 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.

    - A Habilitation Manager/Director was assigned at each OVC to work with staff and program participants to plan services away from the OVCs. The Proposal for Community-Based Services Form addresses equity in providing all consumers with opportunities for community-based services, regardless of whether or not they have a desired outcome/ISP provision that 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 to assist staff in planning for services to occur outside of the OVCs. The form requires the identification of the community destination the Program participants will go to, as well as the interests, desired outcomes, and support strategies that will be addressed for each participant 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 participant's identified interests, support strategies, and desired outcomes; (2) how the participant will be involved in planning/organizing the activity; (3) who, other than paid staff and participants, will/might be involved in the activity; (4) how the activity may foster relationship-building between Program participants and community members; and (5) how the activity is expected to help participants 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.

- 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 2025, 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. The assigned Adult Habilitation Manager/ Director 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 Adult 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.

    - MRAS continued to follow the established system to identify and communicate with Team Leaders when MRAS 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 acknowledges that services that can be provided in the OVCs should also be delivered in community settings, and that all OVC attendees should have opportunities for community-based services. This system aims to maximize

the integration of individuals into their communities. In 2025, MRAS was able to deliver all requested 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 2025, the Director of Adult Programs, Recreational Specialist along with Program Specialists continued to receive notice of MRAS OVC program participants 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 2025, 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 SSA, the impacted eligible individual, and the 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 at the OVCs throughout 2025, and participation remained consistent. The following table shows the number of "Acts of Giving Back" performed in 2022 - 2025. The number of Program participants involved with these acts remained relatively steady, despite OVC census reductions.

	January 1 – December, 2022	January 1 – December, 2023	January 1 – December, 2024	January 1 – December, 2025
Number of "Acts of Giving Back"	159	202	194	162
Number of program participants that participated in "Acts of Giving Back"	83	88	81	83

- Some on-going Acts of Giving back in 2025 included:
    - Attendees of both 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 the Lorain Opportunity & Vocational Center (LOVC) volunteered with the Amherst Office on Aging and delivered 'Meals on Wheels' on a weekly basis to elderly residents.
    - Oberlin Opportunity & Vocational Center (OOVC) attendees volunteered multiple times at the Lorain County Safe Harbor-Genesis House throughout the year.

- 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 2025, activities that promote 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/Directors and the LCBDD Recreation Specialist continued to promote community-based activities that enabled people with DD to interact meaningfully with those who do not have DD. In 2025, some 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", preparing meals for "Meals on Wheels", and volunteering at several community senior centers throughout Lorain County.
    - The PCRSs identified community-based activities that enabled people with DD to interact meaningfully with people who don't have DD, and distributed/promoted these activities on a monthly or weekly basis.
- 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 2025, 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.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> Reduce 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; and everyone on the HCBS waiting list who was on the HCBS waiting list in 2021 and, as defined in OAC 5123-9-04, has two or more needs	2. A minimum of 30 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 some 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

- 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.
    - The LCBDD Alternative Services List was reviewed and updated quarterly to include new resources and updated contact information. In 2025, the list was updated to include additional categories.
- Enroll a minimum of 30 additional individuals on locally-funded Level I Waivers.
    - This objective was met by the end of 2025.
- 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.
    - Throughout 2025, the SSA Department completed 62 initial (standardized) waiver waiting list assessments as requested by the eligible 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.

    - Using Supported Living funds, SSA increased services in "Small Group Settings" (supports for individuals living in a setting with four or fewer people with DD) within the parameters of the established budget. During 2025, two additional individuals received Supported Living-funded services in "Small Group Settings".

- Within the resource capacity of three and a half 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.

    - In 2025, the SSA 'Behavior Team' consisted of two and a half FTEs for nine months of the year, and three and a half FTEs for three months of the year. The SSA Manager responsible for behavior program oversight provided case coverage throughout the entire year. In 2025, all referrals were received and screened by the SSA Manager prior to case assignment. Approximately 55 referrals were assigned to the SSA 'behavior staff,' and another 30 were screened and not assigned. The SSA Manager provided the teams of the 30 people who were not assigned to LCBDD 'behavior support staff' with education and additional resources that met the needs associated with the referrals.

    - In 2025, the SSA 'behavior staff' worked directly with approximately 120 individuals and teams to identify and implement 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; they personally demonstrated the strategies when necessary. The 'behavior staff' provided techniques, tools, and tips to families to assist with challenges related to behaviors.

    - In 2025, the 'behavior support staff' also worked with approximately 30 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. LCBDD behavior staff provided education to all team members on services and supports available through LCBDD and the Ohio Medicaid State Plan.

    - The LCBDD 'behavior support staff' connected three families to the DODD Keeping Families Together (KFT) grant 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.

- The 'behavior support staff' referred several individuals for technical assistance programs for addressing damaging behaviors of youth and adults, including DODD technical assistance and the Multi-System Youth Comprehensive Assessment Team (MCAT). Each of these programs includes a meeting of professionals to review the individual's current situation and history, in order to provide recommendations to the team.

- 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 resources; and ensured that the teams of the eligible individuals were working as a unit to address behaviors.

- The 'behavior support staff' attended routine training on available resources throughout the state at Regional Behavior Meetings. The resources were incorporated into LCBDD's Behavior Resource Padlet.

- Additionally, the 'behavior support staff' provided technical assistance to address challenging behaviors to Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) staff in Lorain County.

- 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 KFT grant, the SSA Department offered 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 2025.

  - Through Board funding, the SSA Department offered BITS training for families of LCBDD-eligible children that were not multi-system youth, and families of

LCBDD-eligible adults who lived in the family home, to assist these families to determine/know how to proactively and reactively address verbal and physical aggression. This training was provided for three families throughout 2025.

- 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 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 2025, two families received this assistance for items including a special TV covering to prevent a child from shattering the glass, and protective wall covering to prevent a 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 funding provided by the DODD KFT grant, in 2025 the SSA Department covered the cost of implementing five safety devices for family caregivers of multi-system youth with challenging/destructive behaviors. The grant provided funding for a safety helmet and face guard, blocking pads, and a weighted blanket. Four families received one or more of the safety devices.

- LCBDD will initiate coverage of the cost of equipment/safety devices for caregivers to use to address challenging/destructive behaviors of eligible adults so that they can remain in the family home without significantly harming other household members, or remain in their own apartment in the community while retaining and not harming their service providers.

    - Through Board funding, the SSA Department covered the cost for two safety devices (blocking pads and bite guards) for caregivers to use to address challenging/ destructive behaviors of eligible adults.

- 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; the need for this has arisen, with no identified funding to address the need.

    - Due to inability to resolve an issue involving contract content, this strategy was not implemented in 2025.

- 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 2025 covered a wide variety of topics, including connecting with Managed Care, OhioRise, using visual supports and schedules in the home, de-escalation techniques and proactive tips, documenting challenges and behaviors to discuss with care team, caregiver respite and mental health, identifying triggers and patterns, communication challenges, planning for transitions, technology supports for individuals and caregivers, and social skills.

    - See also, on p.15., information about training offered through the newly created Community/Provider Education Coordinator position.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> 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	

- Create a professional-level Community/Provider Education Coordinator position to address the identified need to increase the knowledge of local child serving and other providers that are not part of the DD system about developmental disabilities/delays, including autism spectrum disorders, and their pertinent support implications. While this position will be housed within the Early Intervention (EI) Department, it will be available to educate community providers that serve children of all ages, as well as adults (including senior adults) with developmental disabilities.
    - A Community/Provider Education Coordinator was hired in July, 2025. During the year, this employee was fast to become acquainted with the pertinent workings of LCBDD and the Children and Families First Council, and to learn about unmet training needs of local community members/providers that are not part of the DD system, but do serve (some) individuals with developmental disabilities/delays. She provided childcare consultations; and training to childcare providers, parents, Lorain County Children Services personnel, foster care providers, and other community partners.
- 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, three FT SSA positions will be added in 2025.
    - One additional SSA was hired in March, 2025; two additional SSAs were hired in June, 2025.
- The LCBDD Early Intervention (EI) Program will be operated in 2025 with one FT Speech & Language Pathologist, one PT Developmental Specialist (DS), 13 FT DSs, and contracted OT

and PT consultation for the EI teaming process.

    - In 2025, the LCBDD EI Program operated within the above-identified staffing constraints.

- During 2025, 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 2025, LCBDD department heads and personnel prepared and presented Significant Financial Considerations addressing both routine and emergent needs for budgeted, and some unbudgeted expenditures.

- During 2025 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 2025, throughout which emphasis continued to be placed on identification of and referral to third-party resources. Pursuant to a strategy included in the Strategic Plan section on Addressing Gaps Noted in Services, in July of 2025 all LCBDD SSAs and Developmental Specialists were queried about what resources/resource categories they had found to be of particular interest to LCBDD-eligible individuals/their families. Based on the outcome of the survey and utilizing the current information on the Alternative Services List, the SSA Department created a Padlet with vast resources of known interest to Lorain County residents with DD and their families. The Padlet was made available on the Agency website in an easy to access, searchable format.

- LCBDD department heads will be actively involved with the annual budget process/ development of the 2026 Budget proposal.

    - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the development of the 2026 Budget proposal, which was approved in December of 2025.

- A detailed fiscal forecast will be prepared and presented to the Board in conjunction with the annual budget process.

    - Extensive information about the impact of rapidly accelerating Medicaid waiver match liability was presented to the board in August of 2025.

    - In-depth information about the fiscal forecast was shared with the board in the final third of calendar year 2025, as it related to the 2026 budget, and especially as it related to a ballot issue recommendation. Great care was taken to request no more additional funding than what was needed to preserve essential and highly valued services, and to meet requirements.

- In the event that a shortfall in resources necessary to meet the goals of his objective is identified, strategic prioritization of planned expenditures will occur.

    - Although additional SSAs and a Community/Provider Education Coordinator were hired in 2025, a significant reduction in force occurred during the year. There were no

layoffs in the Early Intervention Department, but it was recognized that this department would be impacted significantly should additional funding not be secured.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> Increase the number of Individuals of working age engaged in competitive integrated employment:

Goals/Benchmarks	Outcomes
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*	**In 2025, 27 eligible individuals were placed in jobs that meet the definition of competitive integrated employment. Of those, 15 were placed through the Murray Ridge Supported Employment (SE) Program, and 12 were placed by other providers.**
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	**Twenty of the 27 (or 74% of the) individuals placed in jobs that meet the definition of competitive integrated employment retained employment 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.	**Twelve of the 15 (or 80% of the) individuals placed through the Murray Ridge SE Program retained employment for at least 90 days; one of these individuals left the job because of a better job offer, and another of these individuals left because she decided she'd rather work part time than full time. Discounting those voluntary resignations, the percentage rises to 93%.** **Eight of the 12 (or 67% of the) individuals placed by providers other than Murray Ridge Supported Employment retained employment for at least 90 days.**

- Actively participate in meetings of the Transition Collaboration 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 SE attended the only scheduled quarterly meeting of the regional Transition Collaboration Network, which is coordinated by the State Support Team. LCBDD staff actively networked at this meeting, and engaged with resources made available by the State Support Team through the Transition Collaboration Network.

- Through on-going participation in the Transition Collaboration 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.
    - 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 aged 16 and older through transition and with efforts to obtain community employment. This collaboration has reduced duplications of effort.
    - Through active engagement with resources made available by the State Support Team through the Regional Employment First Transition Team, LCBDD staff, were exposed to employment strategies and philosophies that local school district personnel 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. LCBDD and local school districts were able to participate in a variety of trainings about ways to support youth who are in transition planning and desire community employment.

- Implement and enhance service planning protocol for assisting eligible individuals to move forward on their paths to competitive integrated employment.
    - In 2025, 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.
    - When eligible individuals were terminated or dismissed from their jobs, the SSA met with the individual's team to discuss the concerns from the recently lost employment

and develop a plan on how to address the concerns or find employment opportunities that do not include the recent employment concerns.

  - The Murray Ridge SE Department analyzed job losses so that the reasons for individual job loss could be taken into consideration when facilitating future employment opportunities. One new thing learned was that some employers sometimes present job parameters (such as hours per week, or days per week scheduled) as being more attractive to the potential employee than they actually end up being. Now when placing consumers in jobs, SE staff make it very clear that hours and days can change, and that people newly placed into jobs should communicate with the Vocational Placement Specialist (VPS) when this happens, rather than just quit.

- Develop and implement a program based on the OOD Works4Me project for those program participants engaged in piecework at the OVCs or participating in enclaves (community-based crews that perform work under contracts between Murray Ridge Production Center and businesses) who want to learn more about or obtain competitive, integrated employment. Develop associated timelines, tasks and budgets, as indicated.

  - A total of sixteen individuals (divided into four groups) went through the program, based on the OOD Works4Me project. SE staff found that identifying groups with comparable skills/needs made the classes run most efficiently, and each of those groups studied a particular topic. The four group topics were social behaviors, hygiene and appropriate work wear, the benefits of working overview, and job readiness.

- Refer individuals, as appropriate, to 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 record, on a monthly basis: (1) information regarding all individuals on their caseloads who have been referred to OOD or the Workforce Development Agency of Lorain County (programs through which funding and technical assistance are made available to assist referred individuals with exploring and obtaining competitive employment), and (2) the outcome of the referral. The data recorded by SSAs are submitted to and maintained in a spreadsheet by SSA clerical staff.

  - Based on the data collected through the established tracking mechanism, in 2025, 42 eligible individuals were referred to the OOD by SSAs. Eight of these individuals obtained employment and maintained it for at least 90 days.

  - Starting in the latter part of 2025, the Murray Ridge SE Department began to directly refer for OOD funding some of the individuals for whom it was providing assistance with job development/securement.

- 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. VPSs then communicated information to the applicable OOD counselor and reviewed progress and issues for those already employed. Four individuals in the Murray Ridge SE Program were served through the OOD/DODD partnership in 2025, with 13 authorizations for services which generated more than $20,000 in revenue.

- 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 2025 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 Patient Services Manager from Mercy Health Hospital in Lorain, 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.

- Facilitate utilization of the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community work sites and opportunities.

    - In 2025, 14 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access community work sites and opportunities.

- Facilitate utilization of the new waiver service Non-Medical Transportation to/from Community Integrated Employment as a way for eligible individuals to access community employment.

    - In 2025, 15 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the waiver service Non-Medical Transportation to/from Community Integrated Employment as a way for eligible individuals to access community employment.

<u>Strategic Objective</u>: 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 On-going awareness of unmet needs/desires for providers, and information on providers to support LCBDD-eligible individuals Provision of user-friendly, readily accessible information about providers/resources desired by LCBDD-eligible individuals and known to LCBDD Recruitment/identification of more providers to meet unmet needs/desires of LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families Secure providers willing to commit to implementation of most provisions of person-centered plans Targeted recruitment of Adult Day Support and Supported Employment providers capable of effectively addressing the desired outcomes of LCBDD-eligible adults	1. Increased availability of providers, including providers of Participant-Directed Services, to meet needs of individuals receiving services in the county 2. Improved access to desired resource information by LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families; improved ability to compare resource/provider options 3. Increased access to desired providers/resources by LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families 4. Increased ability for eligible individuals to find/utilize providers of preferred person-centered plan provisions 5. Sustained satisfaction of HCBS waiver recipients with Adult Day Support and Supported Employment services 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 SSA management contact to explain services and the DODD certification process.
    - The PRCSs discussed the need for providers in Lorain County at each advocacy event and while attending conferences and informational events. Based on the PRCSs staff sharing this information, one new day provider (Phazes) met with the SSA Manager responsible for provider support.

- 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:

  For Residential and Adult Day Support (ADS) 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.

  - LCBDD offered to all providers of day services in Lorain County an agreement under which they could receive up to 30% reimbursement of their costs (salaries, benefits, contracts, etc.) for the provision of nursing services/nursing availability. One provider of Adult Day Services, Empowered Community Services, took advantage of this funding; this provider used the subsidy to offset the cost of providing nursing services to LCBDD-eligible individuals on-site at its day center, and while serving individuals out in the community.

  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.

  - Targeted recruitment of residential and ADS providers willing to serve individuals with intensive medical/health-related needs occurred throughout 2025. Two new residential provider agencies (Empowering Angels and LifeBridge) were identified in 2025, and by year-end were actively serving Lorain County residents in individual settings.

  For Residential and Adult Day Support (ADS) Providers That Are Willing to Serve Individuals with Intensive Behavior Support Needs:

  Contact providers in surrounding counties to inquire about serving individuals with intense 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.

- Targeted recruitment of residential and ADS providers willing to serve individuals with intensive behavior support needs occurred throughout 2025. Two new (to Lorain County) residential provider agencies (Empowering Angels and LifeBridge) were identified, and by year-end were actively serving Lorain County residents with intensive behavior support needs in family settings. In 2025, no new ADS providers were identified to serve LCBDD-eligible induvial with intense behavior support needs.

- 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.

<u>For Provider of Employment Support:</u>

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.

- Recruitment of providers of employment support occurred throughout 2025. 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 2025, LCBDD SSA staff developed relationships with one new (to Lorain County) employment services provider (Ability Works) 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.

For Provider of Foster Care:

At each informational and training session for independent providers, discuss the need for certified Adult Foster Care providers, and later 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 recruited in 2025.

- 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 25 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, the intensive behavior or medical needs of the individual, or the need for modified vehicle transportation. The services being sought by the 25 individuals were Homemaker Personal Care (HPC), HPC modified vehicle transportation, Interpreter, Nursing, Adult Day Services, Self-Directed Transportation, Residential Respite, and Non-Medical Transportation (NMT).

  - Ultimately, due to the statewide search process, willing, able, and acceptable providers were identified for all but 6 of the 25 Medicaid waiver recipients. Two of the waiver recipients chose to utilize Self-Direction Cards to pay for Uber instead of using a provider. As of the end of 2025, the SSA Department was continuing to search for a provider of Nursing, Interpreter, HPC with and without medication certification, and an HPC modified vehicle transportation provider.

- 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 2025, 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 Interpreter Services through the waiver. One individual had an unmet need for this service in 2025. 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 the person who needed 1:1 tactile interpreter service while attending Adult Day Services; this individual does have 24-hour care in a family setting to meet her needs. The SSA will continue in 2026 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 PRCSs discussed unmet needs of LCBDD-eligible individuals with all Day Array Service providers in the county. Multiple ADS providers expanded services in 2025 to include more community integration. Ability Works expanded services to include Supported Employment. Additionally, in 2025 approximately ten Independent providers became certified to deliver Non-Medical Transportation, a service for which there had been an 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.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> 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
Pursue options for addressing transportation needs of eligible individuals	
*See also section on Recruitment of Sufficient Providers of Service	

- During 2025 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 2025. Elsewhere in the 2025 Strategic Plan Progress Report, there are examples of unmet needs that were identified, and will be/are being addressed, particularly through the use of third-party resources. 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...
- Authorization of LCBDD resources to meet newly identified/emergent/unbudgeted needs will be considered.
    - This strategy was implemented, as applicable in 2025.
- LCBDD department heads will be actively involved with the preparation of the 2024 Strategic Plan Progress Report.
    - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the preparation of the 2024 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 2026 Strategic Plan.
    - LCBDD department heads were actively involved with the drafting and development of the 2026 Strategic Plan, which was adopted in December of 2025.
- 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 2026 Budget proposal, which was approved in December of 2025.

- Create a professional-level Community/Provider Education Coordinator position to address the identified need to increase the knowledge of local child serving and other providers that are not part of the DD system about developmental disabilities/delays, including autism spectrum disorders, and their pertinent support implications. While this position will be housed within the EI Department, it will be available to educate community providers that serve children of all ages, as well as adults (including senior adults) with developmental disabilities.

    - A Community/Provider Education Coordinator was hired in July, 2025. During the year, this employee was fast to become acquainted with the pertinent workings of LCBDD and the Children and Families First Council, and to learn about unmet training needs of local community members/providers that are not part of the DD system, but do serve (some) individuals with developmental disabilities/delays. She provided childcare consultations; and training to childcare providers, parents, Lorain County Children Services personnel, foster care providers, and other community partners.

- 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.

    - A survey was provided to the LCBDD SSAs and DSs in July of 2025. Based on the outcome of the survey and utilizing the current information on the Alternative Services List, the SSA Department created a Padlet (a web-based resource) with vast resources of known interest to LCBDD-eligible individuals and their families. The Padlet is available on the Agency website in an easy to access, searchable format.

- Facilitate utilization of the waiver service Participant Directed Transportation as a way for eligible individuals to access community places/resources and work opportunities.

    - In 2025, 16 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the Medicaid waiver service Participant Directed Transportation to access places in their community including work opportunities.

- Facilitate utilization of the new waiver service Non-Medical Transportation to/from Community Integrated Employment as a way for eligible individuals to access community employment.

    - In 2025, 15 LCBDD-eligible individuals utilized the waiver service Non-Medical Transportation to/from Community Integrated Employment as a way for eligible individuals to access community employment.

<u>Strategic Objective:</u> 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
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 2025, 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. This will include the provision of monthly 'office hours' by the SSA Tech Team in a technology space at Murray Ridge Center of Elyria.
    - Throughout 2025, the SSA Department TECH Team members attended trainings on individualized assessment of the potential for various 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, during monthly tech office hours 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 twenty-six individuals and teams, based on SSA referrals, to discuss and demonstrate assistive technology options to meet assessed needs.

    - The SSA TECH team arranged remote supports and assistive technology presentations for school transition coordinators, OhioRise staff, and DD day service providers. Two technology vendors, THS and Safe in Home, demonstrated the technology and supports available.

- Provide information and training opportunities to Individuals served, their families, and providers of service through 'technology events' to be held at day service sites of various providers in Lorain County, in order to expand awareness and use of technology solutions by LCBDD-eligible individuals.

    - In 2025, the SSA TECH Team provided training opportunities at four adult day services sites. The team presented information and a selection of technology devices at Ability Works, Echoing U, Alpha Care and Empowered Community Services. Families and residential caregivers were invited to each day services site presentation. The TECH Team presented on how to access technology and the benefits of technology. The team also provided demonstrations of each of the assistive technology items that were brought to the presentation. After the presentation, individuals and caregivers were invited to try out the devices and ask questions.

- 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.

    - The technology suite moved from Academy Court in Elyria to a room at the Murray Ridge Center of Elyria during 2025. However, due to space constraints the suite was moved to a larger room at the end of 2025. The suite was not fully functioning until the end of 2025. Therefore, this strategy was not fully executed in 2025.

- Move the technology suite from an emergency suite in a house on Academy Court in Elyria, to a room at Murray Ridge Center of Elyria; this move will allow for greater access of eligible individuals to the opportunity to explore technology-based options because the emergency

suite at Academy Court has been occupied approximately 75% of the time, and individuals cannot view and experiment with technology in this space when it is occupied.

    - This objective was completed in 2025.

- Within the constraints of the 2025 Budget, expand and update the technology suite.

    - This objective was met throughout 2025. The TECH Team purchased reader pens, assistive handles, alarms, a smart oven, an Echo show and other items to expand the technology suite.

- 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 20 LCBDD-eligible individuals.

    - In 2025, the SSA Department TECH Team initiated technology solutions for 26 individuals through referrals from the assigned SSA. 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.