

A Call to Action The Developmental Disabilities System in Licking County

Background:

Since 1967 the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities has served the Licking County community as the entity required by state law to plan for, provide and pay for services to eligible individuals. The Board performed its responsibilities initially by educating eligible children at the ES Weiant “Starlight” school at 116 N. 22nd Street Newark.

In 1973 the non-profit corporation Licco Incorporated was established to perform the employer functions for Board eligible adults. Licco Inc., in partnership with the Board, provided services using the sheltered workshop model with support from area manufacturing. When the Board built the current workshop facility at 600 Industrial Parkway, the building was named Licco. The Board also referred to its adult services program as Licco. Transportation to the school and workshop was provided by the Board’s transportation services.

Over the years the Board added additional programs. These included an infant stimulation program, a preschool program, two group homes, a community employment program, case management services and a family support services program. Research in the field sometimes influenced state and federal law, associated rules and funding for services and programs.

By the early 1990s the numbers of school age children being educated at the ES Weiant Starlight School were declining as families took advantage of special education programs in their home school districts. Working collaboratively with the Licking County Educational Services Center the Board started to phase out of its historic role as a special education school for children ages 6-22. The last high school aged student “graduated” in 2000.

The Board continued to provide a special education preschool program until the fall of 2009 when Newark City Schools expanded their own preschool program to accommodate children living in the school district who attended ES Weiant. Flying Colors, the public preschool program operated by the Licking County Educational Services Center, accommodated additional students from county schools into their well-established program. State financial support for preschool programs received by the Board was re-allocated to Newark City Schools and the Licking County Educational Services Center.

Meanwhile, the Board’s early intervention services for infants and toddlers (formerly called infant stimulation), grew to approximately 300 young children annually.

As its role as an educator changed, the Board committed available resources to non-educational services and supports for children and their families. The Family Support Service program was initiated in the early 1980s. This program made respite care, equipment, therapies, insurance co-pays, and other ways of contributing to quality of life needs for families possible. Case management known locally as service coordination, was initiated for youth in the late 1990s.

The rate of change in the developmental disabilities system increased in the late 1990s. The state delegated many administrative and financial responsibilities to local Boards. This was particularly true of residential services. Many local Boards were the earliest providers of group home living. Driven by changes in Ohio law, local Board's responsibilities with respect to residential services changed to funding and monitoring services provided by privately operated non-profit and for profit agencies. As a result, the individuals living in the two group homes operated by the Licking County Board of DD chose Newark Resident Homes, a local not-for profit residential provider agency, to provide their residential services. When this occurred, the local Board ceased to be a direct provider of residential services. Funding and monitoring responsibilities for all locally provided residential services became a critical function of the Board.

In 2002 the state Department of Developmental Disabilities began to decrease its financial support to local Boards. Historically the state paid for most residential services and provided financial subsidies to local Boards to contribute to the cost of early intervention and adult services. At the federal level, a Medicaid program called the Community Alternative Funding System, which previously provided considerable revenue to local Boards for workshop and school programs, was discontinued in 2005.

In an effort to replace some of this lost funding the state of Ohio actively promoted the use of Medicaid waivers to pay for long term residential services, transportation and adult services programs. The Medicaid waivers require local boards to contribute approximately forty percent of the cost, known as "match". The federal government's contribution to the cost of the service being purchased is approximately sixty percent. This shared financial arrangement resulted in a leveraging of local dollars to generate additional federal funding to pay for services.

One of the most significant consequences of Ohio's use of Medicaid waivers in the developmental disabilities system is the growth of privately operated service provider organizations willing to provide residential, day program and transportation services. The number of private providers in Licking County has grown significantly since 2006. Individuals and families are now afforded choice of service providers, something new in the history of our system. At the same time, providers do not have to be all things to all people. They can specialize and create a niche in terms of their service delivery, thereby serving the individuals who choose them more effectively.

The federal funds generated by the Medicaid waivers have not replaced the monies formerly received by the state and federal government. The Board currently collects 2.3 mills in local property taxes through two levies. One levy is a continuing levy. The other is a five-year levy and must be approved by the voters every five years. The levy money is more than 65 percent of our total revenue. Since 2002 local levy funds have become a larger percentage of the Board's shrinking revenues. Yet, the voted mills (2.3) are the same since 1988 when the Board served fewer than 500 individuals.

In calendar year 2011 the Board served more than 1,400 individuals annually in a variety of ways. Approximately 900 of these individuals are children from birth through age 22. We engage their families primarily through our early intervention services, the service coordination system, and family support services program.

More than 1,100 individuals are on the Board's waiting list for a Medicaid waiver. Approximately 85% of these individuals are under the age of 22. More than 430 families will receive family support services funding this year. All but a handful of these families have children under the age of 22. Approximately 185 individuals work in Licking County businesses. The numbers of individuals using private day services has grown substantially to approximately 50% of all adults eligible for adult services.

Strategic Planning:

Late in 2011 the Board engaged the services of a consultant to assist in development of a strategic plan for the future. The Board sought the services of the consultant to help identify how to modernize the organization in recognition of the fact that the Board's role has slowly changed from a primary "provider" of services to the "administrator" and "funder" of the local developmental disabilities service system. The Board also wished to increase its effectiveness with individuals and families with special emphasis on families with children at home.

The purpose of having a strategic plan is to guide the Board's efforts to transition resources and staff practices toward more sustainable, person-centered, family-centered, and community and employment-centered services and supports. This is necessary to address the present and future needs of people under 22, with the goal of reducing the life-long impact of disability. Equally important is the goal to modernize and improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of the choices offered to adults.

The Board has weathered the significant loss of funding and its expanded administrative and financial responsibilities by slowly reinventing itself. The establishment of partnerships was critical to this reinvention. These partnerships include, but are not limited to, the Licking County Transit Board, private day service providers, the Licking County Aging Program, The Licking County Family YMCA, The Mid East Ohio Regional Council of Government and others.

Administrative costs and overhead have been lowered. The Board employs half the personnel it did in 2002. Two of the Board's five buildings have been sold.

Despite these efforts, **the way forward was not clear**. A thorough analysis of the environment (See the Board's 2012 Annual Action Plan for detail) revealed these key facts:

1. Programmatic:

- The Board's research based early intervention practices are positively perceived by families and contribute to the attainment of positive outcomes for the child and family. These services empower families to be confident and competent to raise a child with developmental disabilities. Survey data collected over the years reveals that these same families feel somewhat abandoned by the Board when their child turns three and enters a special education preschool program. Offering targeted supports during school-aged years can help families to help their children learn to make choices, acquire skills and experiences, and build upon the developmental gains achieved in early intervention – thereby reducing the lifelong impacts of disability.
- Survey data reveals that families with children ages 6 through 22 are not receiving support from the Board in a way that they value and find useful. This is not because we don't have good staff, but we deploy them in the same manner we support adults and their families. Our current model for engaging these families is not effective.
- Families of most children, teens and young adults do not express an interest in using Licco in the future. These families express more interest in a future that includes community employment for their son or daughter. There is a definite generational difference between what the first and second generation of families found valuable and what families of children want from the Board today and in the future.
- Large congregate settings for people with developmental disabilities are not considered best practice. Research indicates they require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of available resources for the outcomes that they generate. Increasingly federal and state regulations require that large congregate settings be the last resort for the expenditure of public funds.
- Research (Cimera et al) indicates that sheltered employment costs more than supported employment. In addition, the cost to serve people in supported employment, who have previously participated in a sheltered workshop program, is higher. Job retention results are also less positive. Individuals with cognitive impairments do not easily or successfully transfer skills learned in one environment to another. Knowing this calls into

question the practice of using sheltered workshops to teach skills that people need in the community.

2. Financial:

- The Board does not have the financial resources to remove individuals from the Medicaid Waiver waiting list on a first come first served basis. There are two exceptions to this. The first is the use of the level one Waiver to “refinance” adult services and make our levy dollars stretch further. The second exception is emergency situations that threaten to leave an individual homeless due to loss of a parent or other caregiver. This occurs on average 5 to 7 times each year.
- The waiting list for a Medicaid Waiver exceeds 1,100 individuals. Approximately 85% of these are children under the age of 22 years. We do not always know what these families are “waiting” for. For many families placement on the waiver waiting list is an insurance policy against some future need they cannot yet identify.
- The Board uses local levy dollars to subsidize the cost of adult services provided in the Licco building. This subsidy is beyond the daily rate authorized in Ohio Administrative Code (state rules) and provided as payment for adult services provided. Eligible adults are currently accessing services from at least ten privately operated adult service providers. These providers are not subsidized. As a result, our expenditures on Board provided adult services are disproportionate to the total expenditures on all adults eligible for these services.
- The Licco building at 600 Industrial Parkway in Heath was built to accommodate manufacturing work. The loss of the formerly robust manufacturing economy in Licking County has resulted in sufficient work for a fraction of the number of individuals served there. Meanwhile the building is not conducive to the provision of habilitative activities.
- We continue to work on “unzipping” and restructuring our historic relationship with Licco Inc. as required by Ohio Law. In 2005 Senate Bill 5 was adopted by the Ohio legislature. It added to existing statute language which prohibits a Board of Developmental Disabilities from providing administrative services to a non-profit corporation.
- The Board ranks 82nd out of 88 counties in terms of its average annual spending per person.

Strategic Focus:

Early in 2012 the Board adopted the following priority strategic areas of focus:

- Innovation and redefinition of the continuum of services and supports for children, youth and adults.

- Effective engagement with individuals and families, key partners, and the community/public.
- Cultivation of daily community connections for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Access to safe and affordable housing.

In addition, the Board adopted the following statement of purpose: ***The Board's fundamental value to individuals, families, and the community is its ability to provide a foundation for improving the quality of life. Over the next three years the Board will adjust its practices and priorities, recognizing the limits on available resources, in order to be in the best possible position to deliver value now and in the future.***

Additional work with our consultant involved several sessions with key people in the organization. The purpose of these sessions was to identify opportunities and barriers to inform planning for the transition envisioned by the Board. A key finding was the need to re-align staff resources to reflect the areas of strategic focus. This process resulted in the following proposed re-organization of the Board's traditional "components." The reorganization is dependent on re-allocation of resources over the next three years and further into the future. The purpose of this re-organization and re-allocation is to systematically address these strategic goals by focusing the efforts of the Board's most valuable resource: dedicated, knowledgeable and caring staff who are motivated to provide high quality, valuable services that improve lives.

Strategic Goals:

- The Board will use person centered thinking, practices and tools to balance what is important to the person, with what is important for the person. These skills and related processes will inform the Board's future purchasing and program development decisions.
- Maximize the benefits to young children and their families by expanding the use of evidence based practices with children through five years of age.
- Adopt a population risk based model for service coordination adjusted for the "ages" and "stages" of human development.
- Re-design the support system for families of youth ages 6 through 12 years.
- Enhance existing efforts to promote a meaningful "transition" from youth to adulthood with a focus on improving employment outcomes for young adults as they graduate from high school.
- Re-design the continuum of adult services. Recruit additional providers to fill unmet service delivery needs.
- Assist Licco Inc. to become a free-standing certified provider of adult services by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Work on these goals assumes the following:

- Technology will be used to foster communication and information sharing.
- Parents will partner with the Board to assist other parents.

- Resources will be allocated away from current activities that are not consistent with the priorities above so that they can be reinvested accordingly.
- Teaching and training at all ages should be conducted in natural environments where people will actually use what they learn.

In order to accomplish its strategic goals and modernize the organization the Board intends to re-organize its human and financial resources consistent with developmental “ages and stages”. These are:

- Early childhood/birth through age five;
- Middle childhood/six through twelve;
- Teen/adolescence/thirteen through twenty-one;
- Adult/beginning at age eighteen and older.

The Division of Service Coordination

Service Coordination is offered to eligible individuals using a population/risk based model. The purpose of service coordination is to help individuals and families plan for the future, access services and monitor those services for effectiveness and results. The Board is required by statute to assign a service and support administrator (aka service coordinator) to any Individual adult and child enrolled on a home and community based Medicaid waiver. Service and support administration is defined in OAC 5123:2-1-11 for those three years of age and older. Resources to this division are deployed as follows:

1. **Middle Childhood** includes children from six through twelve years of age. Beginning at age six a service coordinator will be offered to children who:
 - Are enrolled on any of the Medicaid waivers (level one, individual options, Transitions, SELF); and
 - Meet the definition of having an intensive need (as defined by OAC 5123:2-1-09). These children are likely to receive services funded by the Children and Family First Clinical Committee; receive services from Licking County Children’s Services; be in a priority category for enrollment on a Medicaid Waiver when funding for the Waiver slot becomes available; live in a family unit with one or more immediate family members who are eligible for Board services.
2. **Adolescence** includes teens and young adults ages thirteen through twenty-one. A service coordinator with special expertise in school to work/adult life transition will be offered to young people in this age group beginning at age 13.
3. **Adults** will be offered a service coordinator when they turn eighteen or graduate from or complete high school.

The Division of Family and Community Connections

This division includes roles for professionals and parents designed to support families with eligible children. It includes the following functions:

- 1) **Early Childhood Supports.** These are directed at young children birth through five years of age and their families. Early childhood professionals “coach” parents to increase their confidence and competence to promote their child’s social, emotional, language, cognitive, adaptive and gross motor development. The team includes a service coordinator (as defined in OAC 3701-8-07 through 10 for infants and toddlers birth through two years of age), a developmental specialist with knowledge and experience in early childhood development; and occupational, physical and speech therapy professionals to conduct evaluations and assessments, and consult with the child’s team. One member of the team acts as the primary service provider. Early childhood supports are provided at home or in other environments in which the child spends time.
- 2) **Community Connections Learning Community:** An intranet site is hosted by the Board with access provided only to families with eligible sons or daughters. The site offers families opportunities to network and access information such as newsletters, current research, developmental milestones, seminars and educational events, recreational and social events.
- 3) **Information/referral/linkage:** A “support line” staffed by personnel that are experts in community resources will be available Monday through Friday. Availability will be by phone and e-mail. These personnel will be knowledgeable about eligibility for various federal, state and local programs. They will assist families to identify potential solutions to problems and link them to available resources. They will also link families to other families with an eligible son or daughter. Information/referral/linkage is utilized primarily by families with children ages 6 through twelve who are not offered a service coordinator. However, any family is welcome to use the support line.
- 4) **Flexible funding:** The purpose of this funding is to assist families with the extraordinary financial obligations that sometimes are present for families with a child who is developmentally disabled. This is the old FSS program. Respite care, adaptive equipment, insurance co-pays, therapies, camps, supplies, and other items the family finds necessary and important for the care of their son or daughter can be purchased with this money.
- 5) **Parent mentoring:** The Board recruits and supports parents and other family members who are willing to use what they have learned through personal experience to educate, coach, and troubleshoot with other parents who want/need their help. For example, a parent may want coaching on how to prepare for an IEP meeting at school. These parents/families are offered a paid stipend for their services to other Board eligible families.
- 6) **Parent coaching:** Developmental specialists with expertise in middle and adolescent childhood development advise, coach, and “equip” parents of

- children with significant adjustment and learning challenges to use person centered tools and strategies for helping their child navigate life stages.
- 7) **Bridging school and adult life:** When a child turns thirteen years of age assistance to the family and school district, designed to prepare the child for future employment, becomes a developmental priority. A service coordinator will be offered to the family even if one has not previously been offered.
 - a. The “bridges to transition” program, a partnership between the Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), arranges short term work experiences so that students can try out and experience different kinds of work in various work environments. Staff works with parents, classroom teachers and aides to design and implement Job readiness instruction.
 - b. Students who wish to access adult day service programs post-graduation are assisted to explore and choose the one that best matches their interests.
 - c. People First of Licking County engages teens with peer to peer support to develop self-advocacy skills.

The Division of Adult Community Connections

The purpose of this division is to connect eligible adults with the following:

1. **Employment Services:** Includes Job development and job coaching services provided by the Board and other, qualified providers of supported and community based employment services. These services are designed to assist eligible individuals to locate, apply, interview, and accept a job based on their interests, aptitudes, and the local job market.
2. **Adult services:** Includes certified providers of adult services doing business in the Licking County region, which includes surrounding counties.
3. **Transportation:** Getting to work, medical appointments, shopping and recreation/ leisure activities is a need for adults. Access to public providers such as the Licking County Transit Board, and transportation offered by private providers certified by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities is available.
4. **Social and recreational connections:** These include those available generically in the community and those that are specialized for people with developmental disabilities.
5. **Support for self-advocacy and peer to peer connections:** This includes People First of Licking County and other resources for developing and using self- advocacy skills.
6. **Volunteer Opportunities:** These are available in the community for those who have a desire to contribute their time and talents.
7. **Housing:** That is safe, affordable, and accessible when needed.

The Division of Provider Network Development

The purpose of this division is to assure that the Board has a range of service providers with sufficient expertise and capacity to address priority outcomes for individuals and families. This work involves:

1. Periodic strategic gap analysis to determine whether the services available in the region are of the appropriate type, quantity, quality and frequency.
2. Recruitment of providers and arrangements for services that are identified through gap analysis to be strategic priorities. This includes preparing, circulating and evaluating requests for information and requests for proposals.
3. Development of written contracts consistent with legal requirements.
4. Development of performance measures for contractors.
5. Development of handbooks for providers that do business with the Board.
6. Organization of provider performance data so it is accessible to individuals and families.
7. Monitoring and responding to providers' skillset. Work with providers to identify, locate, and arrange opportunities for provider professional development.

The Division of Administrative Services

The purpose of this division is to provide for the range of activities that are required for the other divisions to fulfill their functions.

1. **Business Office:** This includes long and short term financial projections (revenue and expense); annual budget development, financial analysis, processing the purchase of and payment for equipment, supplies and services, and compliance with all financial reporting requirements.
2. **Human resources:** This includes employment related responsibilities such as the development of written position descriptions, recruitment, hiring and retention practices, compensation and performance evaluation practices, certification and registration of staff, drafting of personnel policy, education and professional development of Board staff.
3. **Facilities and grounds Maintenance:** This includes planning for the short and long term care of the Board's buildings and property.
4. **Information Technology:** This includes planning for the hardware and software required to deploy technology throughout the organization to enhance communication, create efficiencies and improve effectiveness.