

DARKE DD

2022-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

[September 2023 Updates in blue](#)

SUSTAINABILITY

- Renewal levy successfully passed in May 2022
- Continuing to monitor wavier costs and future projected costs – 6.5% provider increase given in July 2022 to increase DSP wages with 97% of Darke County providers opting in
- Partner with WestCON to develop a Direct Support Professional (DSP) recruitment campaign; efforts are ongoing to promote provider partnerships; 15 new independent providers were certified in 2022; [6 new independent providers certified so far in 2023](#)
- Adopted Technology First local policy in April 2022 to ensure that technology is the first option when identifying services for all individuals – trained Board members on technology options in May 2022 – SSA Amy Mauricio became in-house technology “expert” for other staff when needed.
- Community outreach efforts have resulted in new employers reaching out to the DD Board when seeking employment candidates – 3 new employers in 2022; [7 new employers so far in 2023](#)
- [Superintendent Clark served as a representative on the DODD Hardship Workgroup to quantify a rating scale for determining when a county board may be heading toward financial hardship and preparing new language for a revision to the hardship rule. This workgroup was comprise of 5 county board superintendents, 5 county board business managers, 2 representatives from DODD and 1 representative from OACB](#)
- Created an internal Fun Bunch committee to increase staff morale and improve internal culture – highlighting staff each month so others can share appreciation
- Contracted with Bolton Consulting (with other WestCON counties) to conduct a wage analysis for all DD positions to ensure we remain competitive in our field to attract and maintain a quality team; modified pay ranges for all staff for 2023 and analyzed where each employee should fall in the range based on experience
- Open discussion held with Darke County Commissioners and Darke County Educational Service Center regarding facility costs for the Anthony Wayne building and daily oversight of the facility; provided funds for the ESC to contract for custodial services starting January 2023 as a first step; prepare transition plan for presentation to the DD Board at February 2023 board meeting; [agreement reached, first year of funds transferred and transition of facility costs were effective July 1, 2023](#)
- Developed new talent management process allowing employees to create meaningful outcomes related to their employment; developed agency Guiding Principles and implemented process starting with 2023 goals and provided training for all staff and supervisors.
- [Darke DD Leadership Team reviewed numerous personnel policies and procedures and identified updates needed to meet the needs of a changing workforce, including flexibility in usage of vacation leave and an option for leave without pay](#)

- Darke DD Administrative Team met with Willie Jones from the Ohio Association of County Boards of DD in September 2023 to discuss successes, new ventures and challenges facing county boards of DD in Ohio. Challenges identified for Darke County included DSP workforce shortages, cost projections, behavior support services and transportation availability. These are similar challenges faced by most counties in Ohio

ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

- Continue to use the tools from Charting the Life Course as needed across all sectors of services - Superintendent and Community Connections Coordinator presented at the Ohio Showcase for Charting the Life Course in May 2022 to share successes; ongoing discussion among staff and other counties about the use of the tools for various discussions and planning from Early Intervention to transition services and beyond; [Leslie Zimmers is participating in the Early Intervention Statewide workgroup to provide input on how to best utilize Charting the LifeCourse during transition to preschool](#)
- Continue to promote technology and remote supports for all people to promote independence and adopted new Technology First policy and procedure; SSA Amy Mauricio became in-house technology “expert” as resource for other staff and people supported when needed; [hosted the Mobile Smart Home from Knox County in March 2023 to allow individuals and families to experience how technology can be used in and around their home](#)
- Supported Mary Trittschuh in a summer internship at Darke DD in 2022; she is a marketing major at Wright State University and developed an agency postcard to summarize our services
- Self-advocates and DD staff met with State Representative Angela King (84th district) on March 1, 2023 to advocate for higher wages for direct support professionals and express concerns regarding the financial impact of Ohio’s proposed tax reform legislation
- Continue partnership with Darke County Metropolitan Housing Authority for housing, housing assessments and future needs; [transitioned property insurance coverage from county plan to DCMHA, effective 5/1/2023; accessibility renovation completed at Hilltop Drive home for an individual moving from an Intermediate Care Facility \(ICF\) to community living \(home formerly used as respite home\)](#)
- Paula Laney served as the first Board Liaison and attended monthly board meetings for the DD Board of Directors from January – July 2023
- Hosted a statewide Project STIR Leadership Training by and for people with disabilities in Birchwood Training Center in April 2023 where 6 individuals from Darke County participated, along with 15 individuals from 8 other counties in Ohio and 1 county in Indiana, to learn how to be strong leaders in their communities

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

- Successfully held an Awareness Breakfast in March 2022 to promote the services and successes of Darke DD and the people supported – over 80 people attended

- Encouraged all staff to invite their friends to “like” the agency Facebook page to increase awareness – 1,987 followers in 2021 to 3,353 followers in September 2022; increased to over 3,500 followers in March 2023 [and now over 3,800 followers in September 2023](#)
- Developed Constant Contact plan to send information at least monthly – developed a Darke DD Connect monthly summary of activities to increase awareness
- Develop new/enhance existing transportation partnerships – discussion held with Darke County Economic Development and Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission to analyze infrastructure and develop a transportation plan
- Partnered with Aktion Club to host a Block Party at South Park in June 2022 [and June 2023](#) with over 220 people in attendance each year
- Birchwood Training Center usage continues to grow as word continues to spread about the space - various community groups, provider agencies, schools and county agencies have used the space; in 2023 the training center is used almost daily by various groups and has expanded to 4-H clubs, gardening groups, political parties, county-wide safety trainings and numerous other events. Due to demand, renovations were completed in former lunchroom space of facility to update and provide an additional functional space for groups to gather
- Hosted Family Fun Night community event at Darke DD facility in July 2022 [and July 2023](#) as an outreach effort for families supported and the community in general
- Participated in the Darke County Fair in August 2022 [and August 2023](#) with an informational booth in the coliseum to promote services and partnerships with employers and providers
- Superintendent Clark presented agency information to the Darke County Republican Women’s Club in September 2022 to promote awareness about services
- Superintendent Clark continues to serve as an Ambassador for the Darke County Chamber of Commerce to encourage inclusion and support for DD services
- Hosted luncheon for all current employers of person with DD in Darke County in October 2022 to provide information about pre-employment training for youth, such as Project LIFE, Project LEAD and the Summer Roundhouse, to prepare for workforce
- [Partnered with the Darke County Center for the Arts to host a very successful and entertaining Make Music Day Darke County at YOLO Park in June 2023 with people with and without disabilities singing throughout the event](#)
- [Sponsored the first Annual Hearts of Darke Livestock show at the Darke County Fair in coordination with the Darke County Junior Fair Board, where 29 individuals with disabilities were able to show a goat, lamb or rabbit](#)
- [Purchased and provided an Adult Changing Table to be used during the Darke County Fair. Feedback provided was very positive and patrons were very appreciative. Adult changing table located at Darke DD facility after fair and listed on national map \(\[www.universalchangingtablemap.com\]\(http://www.universalchangingtablemap.com\)\)](#)
- [Darke County featured in the September 6, 2023 issue of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities \(DODD\) Pipeline newsletter in an article entitled “Community Inclusive to All at the County Fair” for efforts in sensory friendly rides, changing table access and Hearts of Darke Livestock Show. This same article is also posted on the front page of the DODD website and was shared on their Facebook page](#)

PROVIDER/PARTNER SUPPORT

- Darke DD supported the statewide initiative for a 6.5% increase in DSP wages; estimated annual match cost of increase for Darke County providers is \$137,100
- New Superintendent has met with agency providers to discuss workforce shortage and develop stronger partnership to support each other; ongoing discussion with provider partners continues
- Partner with ventureLINX in 2022 and 2023 for LEAD and Roundhouse programs to develop work skills and paid work experience
- Partner with the Academy to provide training to all providers at no cost; continues in 2023 by offering 6 different classes in Darke County
- Progress reports from providers received on a regular basis – regular outcomes monitoring; 2 independent providers and 1 agency provider certification revoked in 2022 due to non-compliance but no impact to people served; no revocations in 2023
- Continued partnership with Greenville City Schools for Project LIFE to support the path to employment for youth
- Provided DSP appreciation gifts to 180 direct support professionals working in Darke County to show our appreciation for their hard work and dedication
- Ongoing efforts continue in 2023 to promote and recruit direct support professionals to work for agencies or become independent providers; ongoing assistance from WestCON to coach providers through the certification process and ensure compliance

Updated September 2023