



## STRATEGIC PLAN for 2010–2014

### Introduction

Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities historically prepares and operates under a formally written Strategic Plan. The last plan was prepared for 2005-2009. Throughout 2009, the agency went through the strategic planning process by soliciting input from citizens, families, people who receive supports, other providers of supports and staff members.

The strategic planning process includes asking what we want for people with developmental disabilities, looking at the current environment and projecting what is likely to happen within the next 5 years, and then determining the strategies we would like to employ to accomplish what we want to see.

## Our Vision and Hopes for People with Developmental Disabilities

We want people with developmental disabilities to have....

- (1)...options about the supports and providers of supports they choose and direct use of funds that they can utilize for needed supports.
- (2)...employment that brings dignity and financial independence and access to typical life activities that they desire.
- (3)...a choice of decent and affordable housing and ability to get the support they need to create a good home for themselves.
- (4)...access to transportation so that they can have independence and to participate fully in community life.
- (5)...access to individualized supports that do not separate or isolate them from their families and communities even when they have multiple challenges and specialized needs.
- (6)...support in planning for and adjusting to transitions in their lives, if desired.
- (7)...paid support workers (if they need them) that they can trust because of the workers' knowledge and commitment.
- (8)...favorable experiences with the DD program because it is a dynamic, flexible and agile organization that is highly responsive to the voice of people who rely on its services and is concerned about quality, effectiveness and efficiency.
- (9)...acceptance and direct support from the community at large (i.e. businesses, faith-based groups, and taxpayers) as well as from individual community members who see them as neighbors, friends, and individuals worthy of supporting and knowing.
- (10)...lives that are safe from abuse and harm.
- (11)...confidence in their long term security and well-being.
- (12)...support and information for their families, especially when the individual is a child, so that families can promote the developmental growth of their child and experience family life as other families do.

## Issues that affect us: The Current and Future Environment

### The Ailing Economy

The most striking issue that affects us now and for the next few years is the economic crisis in the United States and around the world. Nationally, the crises in the banking industry, the housing industry and the automotive industry are resulting in high unemployment, high home foreclosure, declined profitability in businesses and inability to get credit. The projection about the longevity of this economic crisis is a couple of years, at best.

In June, 2009, Ohio was in the top 5 states for unemployment numbers, the top 10 states for foreclosures and four out of the top 10 “dying” cities are in Ohio. The state budget was facing a huge deficit and the Governor and state legislatures struggled to create a balanced biennium budget that does not devastate the infrastructure and major service systems in Ohio.

The Butler County Government was experiencing its own budget deficit. It was also facing devastating cuts to county services as it projected at least a deficit of millions of dollars in 2009 without knowing just where the crisis will bottom out.

This economic environment impacts us in a variety of ways. First, it affects our major revenue streams. It means that our state revenues are not likely to flow; our levy collections are at risk due to the Tangible Personal Property Tax legislation, and the likelihood of voter approval of any tax levy replacements or increases in the near future seems low.

Second, the private providers of services are at great risk because they rely on Medicaid payments and bank lines of credit to do a viable business.

Third, our collaborations with other agencies are strained as everyone faces cuts and competes for fiscal support via levies, grants and the state budget.

Our fiscal planning must rely on less money than projected. In 2009, our planned budget was \$3.9 million less than in 2008. We will have to operate in a flat and/or declining budget for the next few years; these times are unprecedented.

Finally, people with disabilities and their families are experiencing unemployment and financial woes. This creates more emergencies and requests to fulfill basic needs of shelter, safety and food.

### The Growing Needs for Supports

Even without the economic conditions, our trend for service requests is rising. Butler County is a growing county and more people are requesting services. The numbers of families who request Early Intervention has gone up significantly over the last few years and that growth shows no signs of slowing. The increase in the incidence of autism is evident in our Early Intervention program, as it is nationally.

Another consistent trend is that we are getting more requests for services from individuals who have multiple disabilities and challenges and/or who are facing complex issues. We spend more time with individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities, persons with sexually aberrant behaviors, people accused or convicted of unlawful behaviors and those who come from unstable family situations, and therefore, are facing homelessness.

There are also individuals with complex medical issues that request our support in the community settings. This includes an aging population that has ongoing need for medication and medical attention.

The requests for residential supports continue to grow. Many aging caregivers, after many years of caretaking, now need supports for their sons and daughters. Many young people, who have been in Children Services custody, are aging out of the system and have no family or system to support them. Many families of children and young adults are asking for residential supports. Although Ohio has a system for getting Medicaid support through waivers, resources to draw down the numbers of waivers needed are inadequate. The system has been addressing emergencies and priority cases almost exclusively. The economic situation will not help us with either the demand or the supply!

### Personnel

Over the last couple years, the number of people that the Board hires has declined due to the increase in private providers and the movement of enrollees to other day habilitation programs. The Board typically experiences low employee turnover. One issue we face is the loss of experienced personnel, particularly in leadership positions who are likely to retire in the next several years. The good news is that right now there should be a large number of people in the pool of available workers.

This may also help the private providers, who often have problems with frequent staff turnover.

The stress level of current personnel is climbing and likely to become higher as individual families experience loss of jobs, fear the loss of jobs and related financial difficulties. The board needs to be concerned about the health of the personnel, their mental health supports and should watch for signs that the stress is affecting their work. There is some concern that there may be increases in abusive situations and misappropriation of funds against people with disabilities by employees and other providers.

### Opportunities

There are some opportunities that need to be recognized and capitalized on. One is that the availability of choices for individuals may actually increase in some areas. Systems generally respond to stressors by finding new and different ways to do things. This could be an opportunity for more individual providers to surface, families to become more active in providing supports, and funding mechanisms to be developed.

Families, particularly ones who have young adults, have shown an interest in developing more “natural” supports as a way to provide opportunities and engagement for their sons/daughters in community life. Families are also looking at forming networks of support that can follow their son/daughter throughout their adult life, in preparation for the time family members will not always be there.

The combination of the economy and a growing interest of a viable community-oriented life will create more commitment and opportunity to tap into community services and resources outside of the DD program. Colleges and universities have curricula that expect community engagement by their students; some companies expect community engagement by their workers. We will have opportunities to engage them in supporting individuals.

There may be more interest by agencies to collaborate. For instance, there are overlapping interests with agencies serving the senior population and with the mental health organizations. The growth in Butler County has included more medical facilities, companies, and educational facilities that can offer more choices for individuals as well as more collaboration opportunities with the agencies/organizations.

The County Boards in the southwest region of Ohio have also expressed interest in sharing resources and becoming more efficient in operations. A Southwest Council of Government was formed with Clermont, Hamilton, Warren and Butler County Boards of DD. This offers many more opportunities to collaborate and open more options for how to work more efficiently.

## KEY STRATEGIES

- A. *Focus diligently on finding ways to support more people with fewer funds.*
  - 1. Continue self-determination practices. We will need to continue to encourage and support individuals and families to use person-centered planning and to be responsible for individual budgets.
  - 2. Assist individuals and families to tap into other community resources (e.g., faith-based groups, businesses, educational systems and individual citizens).
  - 3. Continually review what services and supports we provide directly, and their costs.
  - 4. Monitor and project out our budget
  - 5. Find ways to allocate more resources for individuals to manage and for waiver match of residential waivers and options.
  
- B. *Continue to look at how we have provided services in the past and think very creatively about how to adjust traditional staff roles in order to better meet individuals' needs.*
  - 1. Analyze and make operational adjustments to be more effective and efficient. In some cases, this will take a significant re-education of current staff. As caseloads increase, we cannot expect to do things how we've always done them and expect the same results. The organizational culture will have to change at all levels towards innovative thinking, support for trying new things, accepting failures as learning experiences, and increased staff members' comfort with changing roles .
  - 2. Consider utilizing the Council of Government as another way to get things done.
  - 3. Utilize technology for things such as on-line training and on-line case consultation.
  
- C. *Become effective at helping individuals and families find other supports that they can accept responsibility for choosing and nurturing.*
  - 1. Keep board employees informed about current available resources; teach them to be good "networkers" and to utilize various ways to communicate information to families.
  - 2. Broaden scope of communication beyond the individuals who are currently well known to us. Communication must include families, particularly of younger children, who we may not even be aware of because at present they are more connected with the public school system than with our agency.
  - 3. Learn how to effectively empower individuals and families so that they are not so dependent on our "system" to find and receive services.

4. Adjust satisfaction surveys and measures of success, personnel evaluations accordingly.
- D. *Continue to seek out knowledge, information and expertise to help us plan appropriate supports and to be mobile with these supports.*
1. Improve collaboration with families and agencies.
  2. Build on “technical team” delivery of support, consultation supports to other providers and highly planned and available training to our staff and others.
  3. Plan with others for support to individuals during their major life transition points and the provision of information and resources to assist families in the future planning for their adult children.
  4. Look at using electronic/technological methods for keeping in touch with individuals.
- E. *Facilitate employment, transportation, social networks, respite, and other valued services by expanding our collaborative efforts.*
1. Find new partners (businesses, community members, faith-based groups, etc).
  2. Nurture deeper collaborations with families and family groups so that they can stretch out their circles of influence.
- F. *Educate Butler County citizens about the role the agency plays in the community to support individuals with developmental disabilities and families. At the same time, create trust and confidence about the agency’s management and ability to fulfill its mission prudently with tax payer money.*
1. Step up our marketing efforts by identifying the messages we need to convey and then deliberately and effectively presenting those messages to the various groups of people, including individuals and families who need our support.
  2. Simplify our complex and bureaucratic operation so that others can understand it, access it, and support it.

**The six strategies above connect to, and are consistent with, the Board’s “long-term goals,” which continue to form the basis for our Annual Action Plans. Those goals are:**

- I. Individuals choose their life activities and goals.**
- II. Individuals will control and be responsible for allocated personal budgets.**
- III. Individuals are healthy, safe and treated with respect.**
- IV. Individuals are supported to carry out plans and budgets in order to meet their individual needs.**
- V. The public will be knowledgeable about how we accomplish our mission and will trust how resources are managed.**