



# The Stakeholders say ...

a newsletter to help with strategic planning

In this summary-issue we will list the themes or ideas that have appeared most often in the records of the conversations that we've held to get ready for writing a new Strategic Plan for the Butler County DD Program. First, there will be a list, in no particular order, of the ideas that have been talked about MOST OFTEN. After that will be a short list of those forces that conversational-participants thought would have the greatest effect on the agency as we move into the next few years. Finally, there's a list of other ideas or suggestions that were important to people but NOT so frequently mentioned.

## "HOTTEST" Issues:

The uncertainty about direct support staff, especially in residential or supported living situations. Low pay and work conditions, among other things, result in high turnover. People in those jobs need more training and more recognition. We want high quality support for people we care about, and direct-support staff members are the key to that quality.

Public Transportation—we don't have it (or much of it) and people with disabilities and their families need it badly. Transit must be usable by and available to people with disabilities, because it's crucial to people's ability in spread-out communities to get to the variety of places they want and need to go.

Jobs—most people with disabilities don't have them, many or most people want them, and there's no good system for working on this problem. We need job-finders/developers, coaches, trainers, follow-up workers, and others. We need an orientation toward employment-first.

We have to be better at individualizing/personalizing our responses to individual people. The plans we make are complicated...hard for anyone to understand. The lack of a consistent personal touch shows up in comments about issues like: a) need for more personal-planning approaches, b) uncertain room-mate matches, often resulting in conflict or dissatisfaction, c) need for a match between the interests of an individual and the activities that services make available to that individual, d) more personal attention to each individual's health and health-care.

People with disabilities and families are often CONFUSED by the array of resources, rules, procedures, etc. that fill our systems. It's crucial that they be helped to understand all that better, and currently people tell us they're not getting enough guidance about all this.

People are often lonely and isolated and need help to build and sustain relationships or friendships with others, both so that their lives can be richer and so that the people with disabilities will be safer.

We need more accountability in service arrangements, including the capacity of someone (preferably local) to act to correct things when they go wrong. People should get the assistance that's promised to them in their plans; citizens should be able to see what they've voted and paid for. We must maintain a high standard of quality around everything we do and have ways to make sure we're adhering to that standard.

**FORCES that may affect the Butler County DD Program in the future:**

The growing number of people who request or are presented for services—especially people with whom the Program has, in the past, been unfamiliar. For example, a growing number of individuals with autism are likely to want supports, and the kind of supports that may be called for differ with each individual and with each other. Group responses may not be very useful.

The economy, revenue-cuts, economy's effect on future levy-votes, and threats (arising from the economic situation) to future benefits on which people with disabilities rely.

The ways that people with disabilities are interpreted and portrayed—in the public mind and in the media. We still have evidence of “not in my backyard” feelings about people. We may have to deal with possible backlashes against the expenses made for programs for people with developmental disabilities.

Competition with other programs, both within and outside the “developmental disability” field.

**Other ideas mentioned by participants at conversational sessions:**

We need to keep trying to address the fears of families about the long-term security of their family-members with disabilities.

In growing numbers, people with disabilities will need good housing in our communities in Butler County.

Supports for people, and the funds that pay for them, need to be as flexible as they can be. For example, we have to deal with personal but perhaps low-frequency needs like making homes and other buildings accessible, responding to insect-infestations or other health-threats in people's homes, replacing damaged but needed furniture or equipment. People's wants and needs are highly personal, and only flexible systems of support and money will enable us to respond in personal ways.

People want and need to be listened to, heard, and treated fairly by those who support them, as well as by their fellow citizens.

We'll have to pay special attention to those individuals who don't easily fit into our established patterns of services—who are often said to have “fallen through the cracks.” There are people who are sometimes found to be “in crisis.” There's uncertainty about how to be effective with people who are tagged with a “mental health” label, and each such person likely requires a different kind or pattern of response.

Early Intervention is especially appreciated, but there are enhancements suggested that might make it even more effective—more variety and frequency of specialty groups, more bi-lingual (Spanish-English) personnel, lower case loads for Early Intervention specialists.

There's said to be growing dissatisfaction about the lack of enough production work for workers in “production centers.”

Many families would benefit from more readily available short-term respite care.

We all need to keep on working to enhance the portrayal and public image of people with developmental disabilities.