

NEWS, VIEWS & NOTES



September 2021

A Message from the Superintendent

As you know, our work at Cuyahoga DD is person-centered, personal, and driven by in-person interactions. Like many similar organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic demanded that we consider how we can provide virtual services when necessary to ensure the health and safety of the individuals we serve and our Cuyahoga DD staff. Now that we're 18 months in, however, the demand for virtual services as a complement to our in-person services has been strong, and we are very pleased to share with you two new virtual offerings: our Shared Virtual Community (SVC) and our Custom Living Environment (CLE) Virtual Tour. These exciting new initiatives give people with disabilities the tools they need to actively engage in their communities and increase their independence, and you can read more about them in this newsletter.

While a lot has changed in the last 18 months, one thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to our community – to the individuals and families we serve as well as the individuals and agencies dedicated to providing the highest quality supports.

You may be hearing about how the workforce shortage is affecting the direct support professional (DSP) community. While it is true that there are fewer DSPs right now, we have had only a very few instances of services being disrupted in Cuyahoga County, and we're working to ensure that remains the case. We are in regular communication with our agency provider partners, and we're creatively working with families and independent providers (IPs) to help agencies fill their staffing needs. As always, but especially now, it is critical that you are in touch with your Support Administrator (SA) as we continue to navigate the workforce shortage together.

As we continue to move through the pandemic, we are happy to report increased attendance at day programs, from 1,130 in January 2021 to 1,835 now. We know how critical social interaction and routine are to the people we serve, and we are grateful to our partners for their commitment and for the work they are doing to ensure safety for individuals and their staff members.

Finally, I would like to share with you some of our latest efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since its founding, Cuyahoga DD has been committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, but we recognize that this commitment continuously evolves in response to the needs of our internal and external community. To ensure that we are responsive to these needs, we have hired a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Administrator and have developed a Diversity Steering Committee that consists of 20 Cuyahoga DD staff members from across the organization tasked with identifying initiatives we can implement as we work toward Cuyahoga DD's strategic goals. I look forward to sharing with you more about this important work.

Kelly A. Petty

Superintendent & CEO



DSP Shortage Requires Proactive Planning

The nationwide workforce shortage is affecting the supply of direct support professionals (DSPs). Fortunately, despite examples of the workforce shortage affecting the availability of services to individuals across the state, there are currently few cases of this happening in Cuyahoga County. Cuyahoga DD is monitoring the situation carefully, and we continue to work with families and providers to ensure consistent, high-quality care for the individuals we serve.

While Cuyahoga County has only seen a few cases of service disruption to date, we encourage you to work with your Support Administrator to develop a proactive plan should you experience a change in care from your provider.

You should:

- Work with your Support Administrator to review your services and identify your highest-priority needs to ensure your health and safety.
- Create a back-up plan in the event provider staff are not available. Natural support may be needed.
- Consider sharing services or using technology to meet your needs on a short-term basis if services are unavailable.
- Contact your Support Administrator ASAP if you experience a change in care from your provider or you are concerned about your provider's ability to meet your needs.

Virtual Tour of the Custom Living Environment

The Custom Living Environment, or CLE, is a smart apartment demo showcasing many assistive technology tools that can be used in a person's home to increase independence. Developed in 2019, it allows individuals to touch and try equipment and devices in a home-like setting.



Cuyahoga DD
Custom Living Environment (CLE)
Virtual Tour

This month, Cuyahoga DD launched a virtual tour of the CLE, which allows you to see the spaces and available technology at your own pace and learn more about the items that pique your interest. The virtual tour is organized by room. Within each room, there is a list of items containing a link to a video of Cuyahoga DD staff demonstrating the product as well as a link to more information about the product. Many of the items featured in the CLE are available for trial to eligible individuals from our lending library.

To take a virtual tour of the Cuyahoga DD CLE, visit CuyahogaBDD.org/clevirtualtour.

Join us for this upcoming, virtual Planting Seeds of Knowledge forum:



October 12: Ohio Managed Care

Gain a better understanding of managed care and the role of managed care providers.

Register at: www.cuyahogabdd.org/resources/educational-opportunities/planting-seeds-of-knowledge
A link to the event will be emailed to you.



Coming Up

Cuyahoga DD Board Meetings

September 23

October 28

Programs & Expenditures meeting,
5:30 p.m., Board meeting, 6:30 p.m.

November 18

Board meetings begin at 5:30 p.m.
unless otherwise noted.

Agenda and meeting information
can be found on our website:
www.CuyahogaBDD.org

Introducing Cuyahoga DD's Shared Virtual Community

In August, Cuyahoga DD launched its Shared Virtual Community, a user-friendly, interactive way for people with developmental disabilities, families, and providers to better connect to recreation activities and other desired community resources. Cuyahoga DD believes strongly that all people deserve to have equal access to and be equal participants in all aspects of community life. This includes where a person chooses to learn, work and play.

Resources available in the Shared Virtual Community have been vetted and meet Cuyahoga DD's *ALL means ALL* standards, ensuring that they have demonstrated commitment to welcoming all people and that they are able to support inclusion in the organization's activities, programs, and events. Additional resources and events will be identified and added to the Shared Virtual Community on a regular basis. The Shared Virtual Community is hosted on Cuyahoga DD's website and can be accessed through any device. Each listing will include the organization's contact information, location, activities, accommodations, and events for people to explore their community in depth and at their convenience.

To experience the Shared Virtual Community, visit CuyahogaBDD.org/shared-virtual-community.

If you know a business that is inclusive and *should be highlighted* on Shared Virtual Community OR one that *needs support/resources to be more inclusive*, please share this business with Janet Keeler, Division Manager of Community Development, at Keeler.Janet@CuyahogaBDD.org.



Winter Card Contest

Cuyahoga DD invites individuals with developmental disabilities who live in Cuyahoga County to help with the design of our annual holiday greeting! We are looking for artwork that depicts winter and/or the holiday season that we can use on greeting cards and electronic greetings for individuals and families we serve as well as our community partners.

The winning artist will win \$100, and a short artist's biography will be included anywhere their art is used. Get out those paints, pencils, markers, or cameras and THINK WINTER!

Here are the rules:

- Create your entry on 8.5 x 11 to 11 x 17 paper, or send in a photograph.
- Please do not represent any one holiday. Stick with winter scenes or symbols that represent the season or create an abstract, colorful design.
- Attach the artist's information to the back of the art or include artist information in your email.

Please do not fold artwork.

Submit artwork by mail or drop-off at Cuyahoga DD
1275 Lakeside Ave. Cleveland, OH 44114-1129
Mon. - Fri. from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

or

Email to Grady.Holly@CuyahogaBDD.org
(Please keep original artwork in case it is needed.)

Contest Deadline is October 15, 2021.