



C U Y A H O G A   C O U N T Y  
Board of Developmental Disabilities



**2023** Annual Report  
Plainly **Speaking**

## Dear Friends of Cuyahoga DD:

I am pleased to present the 2023 Cuyahoga DD Annual Report.

This report highlights some of the bigger things we did last year to support people with developmental disabilities.

“Communicate” is a goal of our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. Part of that goal is using Plain Language.

Plain Language looks different. It uses smaller words, shorter sentences, and more one-sentence paragraphs.

We wrote this year’s report in Plain Language to help more people understand.

You will see more writing from us that looks like this.

It may take time getting used to. That’s OK!

I hope you enjoy what you read in the Annual Report. Thank you for your support in 2023.

Sincerely,

**DR. AMBER C. GIBBS**  
Superintendent & CEO



## 2023 Financials

### Revenue

» Levy	75.64%
» State of Ohio	0.29%
» Federal Funds	10.37%
» Other	13.70%

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**\$147,642,645**

### Expenses

» Medicaid Services Match	37.97%
» Community Services (Support Administration and Residential Services)	26.37%
» Family Support Services	4.98%
» Provider Support	1.81%
» Behavioral Health, Therapies, and Assistive Technology	8.98%
» Employment Services	2.27%
» Children’s Services (0-6)	2.69%
» Building Operations	4.50%
» Business Operations (Finance and Information Technology)	5.96%
» Major Unusual Incidents (MUI)	1.39%
» Administrative Operations	3.07%

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**\$152,140,186**

# By the Numbers 2023



**15,530**

Number of people supported in 2023

**34,964**

Early intervention home visits

**2,809**

Children served through early intervention



**6,842**

People supported by support administrators

**18,082**

Individual service plans completed by support administrators



**4,713**

People enrolled in the family supports program

**79**

Families who used respite care



**369**

New waiver allocations (Includes Level 1 I.O. and SELF.)

**\$295,214**

Spent on home modifications



**5,618**

Referrals made for services to help people find providers/caregivers

**\$2.4 million**

Given to service providers through grants



**279**

People supported by forensic services

**1,228**

People who received behavioral health supports

**1,831**

Major unusual incident investigations

**1,340**

Items borrowed from the lending library



# Fowles ICF: It Feels Like Home

Cuyahoga DD's Fowles Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) opened in 2023.

Youth with developmental disabilities (DD) who need extra behavior supports live there. The adults who work at Fowles help the youth learn to become safe and successful community members.



Fowles from the front yard.



LED lights in the sensory room.



A craft table in the family/therapy meeting space.

## Fowles ICF is Important

It is hard to find local live-in homes or facilities for youth with DD who need extra help with their behavior.

Sometimes, these youth must live in a state developmental center far away. Sometimes, they must live in a center out of state.

When a bed is available at an ICF, most do not offer all the help these young people need. This is why the Fowles home is so important.

## Extra Help at Fowles ICF

Cuyahoga DD developed Fowles ICF in partnership with North Coast Community Homes. ViaQuest staff work at the home.

Youth who live at Fowles ICF receive many kinds of support.

Medicaid funding, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Intense Behavior Support Rate Add-On, and local funding pays for this.

With this Ohio add-on, youth can get different kinds of behavioral help. Cuyahoga DD specialists and other partners provide this help.

Without the add-on, the Medicaid rate might not pay for it.

Cuyahoga DD is the first Ohio County Board to structure an ICF home this way.

In 2023, art-therapy interns from Ursuline College also provided extra help.

## An Innovative Idea

In 2021, Cuyahoga DD held an Innovative Ideas contest.

Fowles ICF is the result of an idea for “a youth ICF that feels like home.”

Fowles is a place where youth can feel comfortable. It looks like a typical house, only bigger. There is a large yard for playtime and activities.

The skills youth can learn there will help them after they leave.

After staying at Fowles ICF, many youth will return to their family home.

Others will get help from their Cuyahoga DD team as they move to another home that meets their needs.

## Grand Opening Event

Cuyahoga DD held a grand-opening event in October. Board Members Steven Licciardi and Allison Frazier, former Cuyahoga DD Superintendent Kelly Petty, and North Coast Community Homes board members were in attendance.

Cuyahoga DD Superintendent and CEO Dr. Amber Gibbs and North Coast Community Homes CEO Chris West spoke at the event.

Cuyahoga DD staff led tours of the home and its unique features.



Left: Backyard games and the teen shed.



Right: Bedroom with swing.

# Dental Sedation Clinic: Patient-Based Dental Care

Some people with DD cannot go to a regular dentist. They might have medical or other reasons for this. No matter why, these patients cannot handle dental procedures while fully awake. They need a type of medicine called sedation. Sedation helps them stay calm and not feel pain during a dentist visit. One stronger type of sedation is general anesthesia. General anesthesia makes the patient go to sleep safely and not feel pain during a dentist visit. A trained medical professional must give a patient general anesthesia. Patients with DD can wait 1-2 years for general anesthesia dental visits. That is a long time to have tooth pain.

## MetroHealth Partnership

There are very few in-office sedation clinics in Northeast Ohio. Wanting to help, Cuyahoga DD partnered with the MetroHealth System. Together they opened a Dental Sedation Clinic in 2023. The clinic helps patients who do not need an operating room and general anesthesia. It will help to reduce wait times for visits that need sedation. The Ohio City clinic currently serves 16–20 people each month. When it is fully running in 2025, it will serve between 30–40 patients each week. The clinic will reduce wait times for patients who only need sedation, which will also reduce wait times for patients who need general anesthesia. The Dental Sedation Clinic is located in the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland.



MetroHealth staff supporting the dental sedation clinic.



The first patient receives care at the dental sedation clinic.



The first group of RISE students takes a break on campus.

## CSU Rise

In Fall 2023, Cleveland State University (CSU) and Cuyahoga DD launched a new program.

It is for high school graduates with DD who are interested in going to college.

It is called the Reciprocal Inclusive Student Experience (RISE) Program.

RISE is a transition certificate program. It helps young adults with DD attend CSU.

RISE lasts 2-4 years, depending on the student.

Cuyahoga DD Support Administration staff joined with CSU staff, led by Dr. John Schaefer, to create the program. They worked together for two years before launching RISE.

## RISE Admission Process

The RISE Program Admission Committee made an admission process.

This helped them learn about each student.

Then, RISE staff interviewed applicants and their families.

Each student said why they want to join the RISE Program.

Interviews also included a review of tuition costs.

RISE began in Fall 2023 through a Cuyahoga DD grant. Seven students enrolled. Five of them receive services from Cuyahoga DD.

“We worked together to develop RISE with passion and vision. RISE will help ensure that people with DD are prepared to live, learn, work and play in the community.”

**- HEIDI KSIEZYK-SKRADA**  
MANAGER OF SUPPORT  
ADMINISTRATION FOR  
CUYAHOGA DD



Edward at his on-campus job at Starbucks.

## RISE Coursework

RISE students have access to all CSU services. They take courses in:

- » General education
- » Independent living
- » Career development
- » Self-determination
- » Advocacy

RISE students attend inclusive CSU general-education courses. They can choose these based on their interests.

In career development, students learn about interviewing, on-the-job skills, and advocacy for working at a paid job. All seven students have jobs on campus.

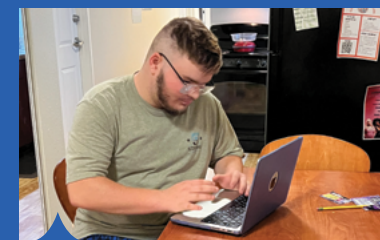
During the Fall 2023 semester, students learned how to travel between home and campus safely. They also learned how to take public transportation to popular Cleveland locations.

RISE students can gain social skills by attending university events.

Each RISE student received a college student mentor. Mentors answer questions about college life. Mentors also encourage RISE students to join campus clubs and recreation sports teams.



RISE students learning how to use public transportation at the Tower City rapid station.



RJ working in his CSU dorm room.



RISE students in the classroom.

## Recruitment Presentation

During the final quarter of 2023, CSU Program Manager Michael Morrow presented RISE to high-school graduates with DD and their families. He encouraged the graduates to apply.

Current RISE students shared how their confidence, independence, and knowledge has increased.

Families and caregivers have already seen positive changes in their RISE students.

CSU and Cuyahoga DD plan to grow the program.

{To learn more, visit [csuohio.edu](https://csuohio.edu). Fill the Search bar with Reciprocal Inclusive Student Experience.}

## Let's Get Together: Social Group & Safe Space

Many adults with DD seek independence, friendships, and a love life. These goals can lead to confusing questions with hard-to-find answers. To help, Cuyahoga DD started Let's Get Together. Let's Get Together is a social group for young adults. It is also a safe space to discuss things that can be hard to talk about.



Let's Get Together participants at Wild Eagle Saloon.



Let's Get Together participants at the Spirit of Clay.

"Based on the positive feedback we received from our 2023 Let's Get Together members, we are excited to offer Let's Get Together 2024 to adults with DD."

**- MORGAN MCPARLAND**  
LET'S GET TOGETHER ORGANIZER  
MORGAN MCPARLAND, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST



"People we serve, caregivers, and providers all said that people with DD need reliable information about dating and relationships."

**- MORGAN MCPARLAND**

Let's Get Together participants at Forest City Shuffleboard.

## Monthly Meetings in the Community

A group of young adults met monthly between June and Sept. 2023 to explore important topics in a public space. They met at Topgolf, Spirit of Clay, Forest City Shuffleboard, and Wild Eagle Saloon.

Cuyahoga DD staff from Behavioral Health, Community Development, and Human Sexuality led discussions. They also offered tips for success.

Group members learned about:

- » making friends
- » how to start dating, and
- » appropriate physical and emotional interactions.

After that, the group had fun together. They talked about how they would practice these new skills.

Let's Get Together helped the group members understand more about adult relationships.

It was also a chance to have fun in the community!

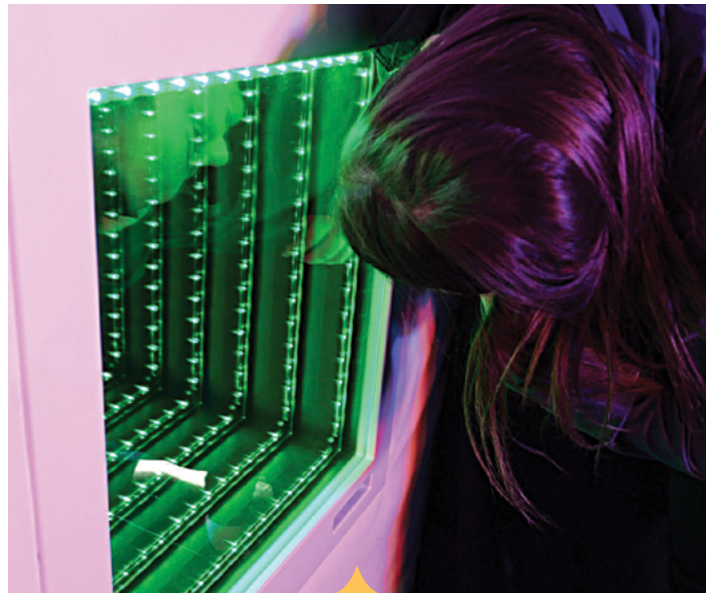
# Mobile Sensory Space

Cuyahoga DD launched its Mobile Sensory Space in July 2023. It is a calming space for anyone who may become overstimulated at community events.

This vehicle showcases sensory equipment that can help people feel calmer. Some of the equipment is featured here.

This portable unit is perfect for events and conferences. We can provide a sensory environment practically anywhere!

A request form is available online at [CuyahogaBDD.org](https://www.cuyahogaBDD.org).



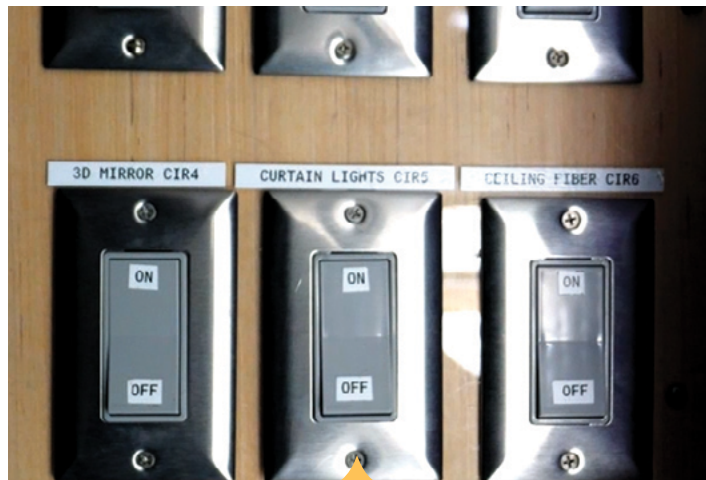
**This LED interactive wall panel is like looking into a never-ending tunnel.**



**Mobile Sensory vehicle new in 2023.**



**This brightly colored bubble tube is five feet tall. It scrolls through multiple colors and shades. It provides a calming, relaxing effect. A mirror behind the tube adds to the calming sensation.**



**A driver's side control panel powers the sensory equipment.**



**The purple ergo seat allows for subtle movements and adjustments while sitting. This helps keep the mind and body alert. The yellow chair gently squeezes the body. It applies soothing pressure and sensory input throughout the seated person's torso.**



**Users receive soothing visual and tactile input from a reversible sequin wall panel.**



**Touch-sensitive lights provide sensory and visual stimulation.**



**The Mobile Sensory Space includes a color-changing LED Fiber Optic Cascade curtain that helps with stress reduction and calming, a Music Touch Wall.**



**A lighted ceiling and LED light-up floor provide sensory enjoyment above and below.**



# Portable Universal Changing Station

Community events are best when everyone can enjoy themselves. Everyone should be able to access a restroom while they are away from home. This is why events should provide a universal changing table. Universal changing tables can go up or down to be the right height. They help people of all ages comfortably manage self-care needs like diaper changes and colostomy or catheter maintenance in a clean, private space. In 2023, Cuyahoga DD created a portable universal changing station.

It includes:

- » 10'x10' four-walled privacy tent
- » Height-adjustable universal changing table
- » Wipes and gloves
- » Changing pads
- » Covered rubbish bin
- » Disinfectant products
- » Transport, set up, removal
- » Staff support



Cuyahoga DD's portable universal changing station was at these 2023 events:

- » Asian Lantern Festival Quiet Night at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- » Disability Pride event, Wade Oval
- » Buddy Walk (Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Ohio)
- » Ohio Adaptive Open (Seneca Golf Course)
- » My Walk 4 Friends (Friendship Circle)
- » March for Access
- » Neurodivergent Cultural Festival
- » Family and Provider Resource Expo (Cuyahoga DD)
- » Leaf Party from Community Life Collaborative



We encourage event organizers in Cuyahoga County to provide clean, safe restrooms for everyone.

The Cuyahoga DD Portable Universal Changing Station is available for community events.

Visit [CuyahogaBDD.org](https://www.CuyahogaBDD.org) to fill out the request form.

# DSP Appreciation from Cuyahoga DD

DSPs are Direct Support Professionals. They provide care and support to people with DD in their homes and a community. DSPs are very important. In 2023, Cuyahoga DD appreciated DSPs, agencies, and independent providers.

Cuyahoga DD invested \$60,000 in a DSP Appreciation program.

Nearly 300 DSPs received tickets to the Greater Cleveland Aquarium, Urban Air Adventure Park, and Cedar Point to thank them for their work.

We hosted DSPs at a private event at Swings-N-Things Fun Park.

This event included door prizes and T-shirts.

## Cuyahoga DD Cares

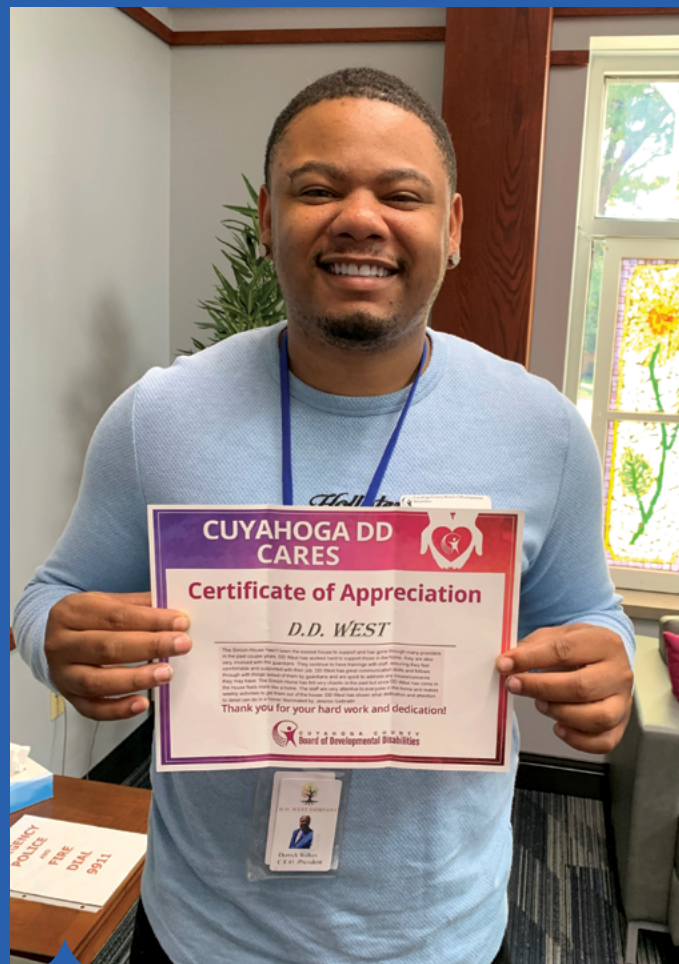
Cuyahoga DD Cares improved morale at 50 area agencies and independent providers.

Cuyahoga DD invested \$21,000 in Cuyahoga DD Cares.

Providers could pick from four-packs of tickets to the Greater Cleveland Aquarium, Urban Air Adventure Park, and Cedar Point.

Others received gift cards to Dave's Supermarket.

Some received food delivery from Barrister's Deli or Brain Freeze Shave Ice.



A Direct Support Professional (DSP) from DD West receives recognition through Cuyahoga DD Cares.



DSPs enjoy a day of fun and games at Swings and Things as part of the DSP Appreciation Event.

## Additional Grants

In 2023, Cuyahoga DD awarded \$594,000 in provider grant funding. These grants helped agencies hire and retain DSPs.

They used the grants for activities including:

- » Staff recruitment
- » Sign-on and retention bonuses
- » Professional development and trainings
- » Onboarding
- » Community outings

We are grateful for the DSPs, agencies, and independent providers who care for people receiving Cuyahoga DD services!



C U Y A H O G A C O U N T Y  
**Board of Developmental Disabilities**

## Mission

**Our mission is to support and empower people with developmental disabilities to live, learn, work and play in the community.**

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