

Investing in Inclusion



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

2024 Annual Report

Dear Friends of Cuyahoga DD:



Every year, I am more excited to see better accessibility in our community.

In 2024, Cuyahoga County organizations and providers stepped up in new and exciting ways.

Dozens of them applied for our accessibility and inclusion grants. Many installed Universal Changing Tables. Some even appeared on the news.

It was a great year for inclusion and accessibility. So great, it was hard to decide what to feature in our annual report “yearbook.”

I am especially proud of:

- Everyone who made their businesses and organizations more welcoming for people with DD — particularly those who installed Universal Changing Tables!
- Support Administrators who transitioned more than 5,000 previous ISPs to the new OhioISP format.
- All of the students in our first DSP-U class.
- The healing achieved by everyone in our trafficking and exploitation support group.
- Our virtual reality partnership that develops systems to help people with DD in real life.
- The families that use weekend-respite camps.
- MUI professionals who help people in crisis receive safer emergency responses.

We must carry—and share!—this energy into 2025 and beyond.

Sincerely,

DR. AMBER C. GIBBS
Superintendent & CEO

Year in Review

Financials 2024

Revenue

Levy	75.53%
Other	13.21%
Federal Funds	10.76%
State of Ohio	0.51%

\$149,215,883

Expenses

Medicaid Services Match	45.79%
Community Services (Support Administration and Residential Services)	25.97%
Behavioral Health, Therapies, and Assistive Technology	8.36%
Building Operations	4.15%
Family Support Services	4.11%
Business Operations (Finance and Information Technology)	3.48%
Children's Services (0-6)	2.73%
Administrative Operations	2.07%
Major Unusual Incidents (MUI)	1.39%
Employment Services	1.20%
Provider Support	0.76%

\$158,298,257

By the Numbers

Stats
2024



6,842

People supported
by support
administrators



18,082

Individual service
plans completed by
support administrators



15,530

Number of
people supported
in 2024



5,618

Referrals made for
services to help people
find providers/caregivers



\$2.4 million

Awarded to service
providers through
grants



369

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

34,964

Early intervention
home visits

\$295,214

Spent on home
modifications

1,831

Major unusual
incident investigations



2,809

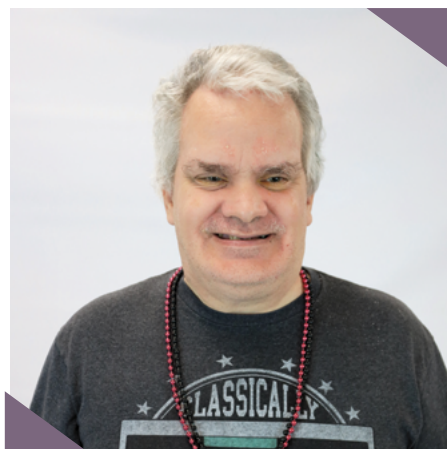
Children served
through early
intervention

1,228

People who
received behavioral
health supports

4,713

People enrolled
in the family
supports program



279

People supported
by forensic services

79

Families who used
respite care

1,340

Items borrowed from
the lending library

Increasing Accessibility

in Cuyahoga County

In 2024, Cuyahoga DD awarded \$304,000 in grants to support Cuyahoga County organizations.

These grants helped organizations improve their accessibility and expand inclusive, adaptive, and accessible programming for people of all ages with disabilities.

2024 Grant Recipients

Arts and culture:

- Art of Me Productions
- ARTFUL Cleveland
- Berea Arts Festival
- Broadway School of Music & the Arts
- Dancing Wheels
- Future Ink Graphics
- LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland
- North Point Ballet
- NPower Services/Rockability
- Oh Sew Powerful, Inc.
- Valley Art Center

Library:

- Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library
- Westlake Porter Public Library

Physical space and access:

- Beck Center for the Arts
- City of Independence Recreation
- Lake Erie Nature and Science Center
- Musical Arts Association dba The Cleveland Orchestra
- Nature Center at Shaker Lakes
- Parma Area Historical Society
- Solon Recreation Department
- University Circle, Inc.

Recreation:

- BAYarts
- City of Bedford Parks & Recreation
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Empower Sports
- Jacob's Ladder Special Needs Fitness
- Rec2Connect
- Special Olympics
- YMCA of Greater Cleveland
- Youth Challenge



Annika (Anni) Lark and her mother Emily Lark (Spectrum News/Tanya Velazquez)

Universal changing tables

Also in 2024, Cuyahoga DD awarded grants for a universal changing table (UCT) at:

- Achievement Centers for Children
- The City of Seven Hills Community Recreation Center
- Cleveland Public Library: Main Library
- East Cleveland Public Library
- Euclid Public Library
- HELP Foundation, Inc.: Lakewood
- MMS Adult Day Center
- North Olmsted Recreation Center
- Vocational Guidance Services: E. 55th
- Welcome House, Inc.
- Westlake Porter Public Library

Universal changing tables provide dignity for all

Increasing the number of adult-sized changing tables in Cuyahoga County is important for many reasons:

- First, it gives people with disabilities or other medical needs a safe, private space to manage their restroom needs.
- Second, it increases accessibility in public spaces and helps people with disabilities participate more in their communities.
- Third, it helps caregivers to know a universal changing table is available where they are going, and they won't have to go back home when there is a restroom need.

Cuyahoga DD's \$132,000 investment installed 14 UCTs across Cuyahoga County.

Also in 2024, Cuyahoga DD installed a UCT at its Big Creek, Green Road, and Lakeside buildings.

BOOTCAMP

Beyond the Essentials of Life Skills

This bootcamp doesn't wake people up at 6:00 a.m.

It doesn't make them run muddy obstacle courses.

Just the same, Beyond the Essentials of Life Skills: Bootcamp participants (students) learned life-changing skills.

Bootcamp featured daily interactive classes in the Green Road Center kitchen, classroom, and community.

Bootcamp students were age 18 and older and eligible for Cuyahoga DD services.

A Medicaid waiver was not required for participation.

An instructor and her aide shared independent living skills for:

- Finances.
- Relationships.
- Work.
- Health.
- Community.
- Living alone.

"We are teaching students skills that will fill in any gaps that may be preventing them from living on their own or contributing more in their family homes."

MEGAN KUNTZ
Cuyahoga DD Support
Administration Manager

Beyond the Essentials of Life Skills: Bootcamp students received a certificate when they completed the program.

The program is co-sponsored by Cuyahoga DD and the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio.

We look forward to hosting new students in 2025! Learn more about signing up for future camps on our website.



Bootcamp



Bootcamp Classroom



OHIOISP

Adopted Statewide

In 2024, Cuyahoga DD changed its Individual Service Plans (ISPs) to Ohio Individual Service Plans (OhioISPs).

Now, if you live in Ohio and have a Medicaid waiver, you have an OhioISP.

The OhioISP format is the same no matter where you live in Ohio. If you move to a different county or facility in Ohio, your OhioISP moves with you.

This helps our support administrators (SAs) and providers work from the same template.

“Developing a thoughtful plan takes work and collaboration across the team. The result is a plan that reflects the person’s life: not just their services,” said Cuyahoga DD Support Administrator 2 Nautica Vance.

The OhioISP also helps Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) find what they need to help the people they serve.

“Transitioning more than 5,000 previous ISPs the new OhioISP template was a big job. I’m grateful for the work of our Support Administrators and our SSA Leadership team,” said Director of Service and Support Administration Jo Elle Barath.



DSP-U

‘University’ for future Direct Support Professionals

Cuyahoga DD’s free DSP-U program lets high school juniors or seniors earn a DSP basic certificate after just two weeks of classes and field trips.



DSP-U students learn about:

- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).
- Ethics.
- History of service for people with I/DD.
- Major Unusual Incidents and how to make a report.
- Positive behavior supports.
- Providing personal care with dignity.
- And more!



DSP-U also introduces students to provider agencies and locations. This helps them find jobs.

Cuyahoga DD became affiliated with DSP-U in 2024, but the DSP-U program was established in 2014.

Learn more about signing up for a future class on our website.



Photos top down: Students in DSP-U sessions and graduation

Supporting Survivors & their Caregivers

In 2024, Cuyahoga DD won an Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services grant for over \$26,000.

This grant let us start a support group for women with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their paid caregivers.

These women are all survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Katherine Antall, Cuyahoga DD's human sexuality specialist, leads the group. She has helped trafficking survivors for more than a decade.

The support group began in 2024 at Cuyahoga DD's Big Creek Center.

"This is the first support group of its kind in the United States," Ms. Antall said. "It's also the first to offer tandem training for the Direct Support Professionals caring for these women."

The first group will end in mid-2025. The two-year grant will fund groups until mid-2026.

Katherine Antall speaks with WKYC's Lindsay Buckingham about plans for the support group.



“Group helps me to talk about my feelings in a safe place. I am also able to make new friends, and I am able to go to them when I am feeling sad.”

“I like focusing on self-care and forming relationships with my friends.”

“It’s amazing to come and meet people my age who can relate to what I’ve gone through.”

“I like making new friends in a group and also learning about what is and is not a healthy relationship.”

“I like seeing everyone in the group and being able to share my feelings. I feel comfortable.”

The grant paid to renovate a conference room. The therapy space has comfortable seating for 15 people. The community-building side has a large table for activities and meals.



Virtual Reality for Real Learning

Floreo uses virtual reality to support the social, behavioral, and communication development of neurodiverse people.

Floreo's evidence-based immersive lessons help learners build real-world skills in a safe, engaging environment.

Behavior Curriculum Intervention Specialist Holly Winterstein has seen Floreo work firsthand with school-age youth.

Holly also noted how it helps in day-to-day life as well:

"I worked with a 10-year-old on how to have conversations and how to handle being bullied. Floreo helped him to practice various social scenarios in a safe, less-stimulating environment. With practice, he could use new skills in school. This boy was able to successfully develop new friendships. He could also walk away or tell a teacher when he was being bullied."

"I worked with a 21-year-old man to teach safety skills for crossing the street. It worked well because it broke down the safety steps: there were small repetitive steps paired with auditory cues. As we faded prompting, he gained more independence. His parents were grateful he could practice this skill in a safe environment."

Differentiate Banter from Bullying



11 and up

Nelson (A Peer Who Sometimes Uses Banter And Sometimes Bullies); Brandon (A Friend Peer); Ms. Emma (A Teacher); 2 Other Friendly, But Non-Interactive Peers



The Learner will differentiate between banter and bullying.

Help the Learner differentiate banter from bullying. In this lesson, the Learner is introduced to Nelson, a peer who might engage in verbal banter or engage in bullying behavior.

The Coach determines whether Nelson will deliver a bantering line of dialogue or engage in one of three levels of bullying:

- (1) verbal put-down;
- (2) verbal intimidation;
- (3) physical intimidation with verbal intimidation.

The Learner is asked to label Nelson's behavior as either banter or bullying. Next, the Learner is given an opportunity to notice how a second peer would respond to Nelson in the same circumstance.

Banter: When Nelson makes a bantering comment, the second peer responds with another bantering comment.

Bullying, level 1 (verbal put-down): When Nelson delivers a verbal put-down, the second peer defuses the verbal put-down by turning the put-down into a joke.

Bullying, level 2 (verbal intimidation): When Nelson makes a comment that is intended to be verbal intimidation, the second peer ignores the comment and moves to be with a group of friendly peers.

Bullying, level 3 (physical and verbal intimidation): When Nelson physically intimidates and verbally intimidates, the second peer refrains from showing emotion to Nelson and then reports this threat to an adult. Additional Coach guidance is available while the lesson is running. The Coach may want to recommend breathing to stay calm or grounding techniques.

In this image, the setting is a school hallway, with lockers along the walls. Nelson (the main character) has his teacher to the left and a group of friends to his right. They are all in a school hallway. This model is to practice friendly banter versus bullying.

The blue-backed text is the directions of what the person will do in that simulation.

Check for Cars



The Learner will use a routine for crossing at a crosswalk with moving cars.

The Learner practices a routine for crossing at a crosswalk with moving cars. In this scene, there are moving cars so the Learner must notice the moving cars before beginning the routine.

The routine begins as follows:

The Learner checks for moving cars on the left.

The Learner checks for moving cars on the right.

(The routine continues as in the first Lesson.) The Learner looks at the Walk/Don't Walk signal across the street.

The Learner looks at the button to the left which activates the clicking and a countdown.

The Learner checks the Walk/Don't Walk signal (to ensure that it has changed to Walk).

The Learner looks left.

The Learner looks right.

The Learner looks left again.

The Learner looks at the Walk signal/straight across the street and the scene moves so that it feels as if the Learner is moving.

If the Learner looks left or right while crossing for any significant amount of time, the movement will stop. To continue moving, the Learner must look straight across the street.

When the Learner gets to the other side of the street, a voice calls out. It is Emma from the safari park and she has an elephant with her. The Learner is tasked with repeating the routine to get back to the original side of the street. When the Learner completes the routine, Emma offers praise language and the elephant produces star bubbles.

In this image, a crosswalk is featured in a street scene with buildings lining the street. A car is going left and a truck is going right, with stoplights on each side. This is to practice street safety.

Weekend Respite Camps

Using local tax levy dollars, Cuyahoga DD funded two weekend respite camps.

The two camps are the Achievement Centers for Children (ACC) Weekend Respite Camp WOW and the SAW Inc. Saturday Respite Recreation Program.

Teens and young adults enjoy time with their peers at these camps. They do fun activities in sports, art, dance, the outdoors, and much more.

While their campers are away, parents and caregivers can take a break. (Respite is a word that means “take a break.”)



Preparing a salad in a cooking

In 2024, an average of 17 participants attended the camps each month.

Camp staff are trained to support youth with diverse needs.

Parents felt comfortable knowing their children were receiving professional support.



**Elle at Camp WOW
making a sensory tube**

In feedback, 100-percent of families reported being highly satisfied.

A family said about the SAW weekend respite camp, "Our son loves this program!"

Families who participated in the ACC respite camp shared, "Staff and program are both great!" and "We SO appreciate Camp WOW."



**Kohhei out for a stroll
while at camp**



**Members of the
First CALL (Crisis
Assistance and
Local Linkage)
Program: Lavado,
Sydney, Angela,
Heather, Jessie
and LaVance**

Answering the CALL

Cuyahoga DD's Major Unusual Incident (MUI) Department's investigative agents and community liaisons work with the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office and local police, fire and EMS departments.

These Cuyahoga DD MUI professionals work to provide a safe emergency response for the people we serve and the first responders on the scene.

In 2023, MUI community liaisons began working with a program in Shaker Heights. It is called the First CALL (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage) Program.

In 2024, First CALL expanded to also serve Cleveland Heights, South Euclid, Richmond Heights and University Heights.

What is First CALL?

First CALL is an alternative crisis-response team.

The First CALL team includes behavioral-health clinicians and peer-support staff. They engage with people experiencing mental-health distress and substance-use disorders.

Collaborations like First CALL help Cuyahoga DD address the immediate needs of people with DD. It also helps our professionals gain perspective on the root causes of trouble and develop strong prevention plans.

What do first responders say about it?

“...I believe that the First CALL members have been very helpful with several juvenile calls as well as several instances of people dealing with mental health issues. They do a great job in gathering information and assisting them in programs that can help them with what they’re dealing with.”

INV. RYAN WARTON #11
Cleveland Heights Police
Department

“...Most recently, First CALL assisted with a female who suffers from mental health issues on two occasions within a week. First CALL assisted with speaking with the female’s mother about what the next steps should be to get the female the help she and her mother needed. First Call then also made sure they followed up with the hospitals and the probate courts to get the female the help she needed.”

P.O. TASONI COLLYMORE #82
Cleveland Heights Police Department

“First CALL has been an amazing resource for the Cleveland Heights Police Department. We have relied on First CALL daily with providing valuable resources to the residents of Cleveland Heights. They are professional and have the expertise when working with individuals that have mental health issues. This partnership has received positive reviews from all parties.”

ANNETTE WALLACE, MSW, LISW-S
First CALL Program Coordinator
City of Shaker Heights



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Mission

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

Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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**SOCIAL
MEDIA**



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