

Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Annual Report 2024



Photo courtesy of CM Play Photography



From Our Superintendent: Our Year in Review

The Franklin County DD community tackled both new and existing challenges in 2024, a year that delivered on change. We notched significant accomplishments and continued building on a strong foundation of excellent relationships, good communication and accountability:

Strategic Plan. In 2014, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) agreed with the federal government that a policy of “conflict-free case management” would be fully implemented by February 2024. This meant that county boards of developmental disabilities could not have the dual role of authorizing and directly providing services. Franklin County DD made that transition a primary goal of the agency’s long-term strategic plan for 2018-2028, and took a big step in that process with the privatization of ARC Industries in 2019. Final steps, including divesting from commercial transportation and direct Medicaid billing, were completed in January 2024 with much support from Goodwill Columbus.

Advocacy. We established a new department of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations to better focus on person-centered services and supports. A key effort in this initiative was the revamping of our annual community survey, which drew nearly 500 responses. While 349 responses, or 76%, indicated satisfaction with their services, Franklin County DD aims higher. Based on survey feedback, our 2025 Annual Action Plan identifies specific areas where we seek to improve.

Integrated Settings. As services for adults are increasingly delivered in small and community-based settings, large facilities—initially built as “sheltered” workshops—are in significantly less demand. Accordingly, two of the four Franklin County DD-owned adult centers were no longer needed. ARC East and ARC South sold in 2024, generating nearly \$4 million.

Sustainability. Approximately \$100 million, or nearly 40% of our agency’s \$258 million in annual expenditures, goes toward paying the non-federal share of match for Medicaid Home and Community Based waiver services. The next-largest expenditure is \$55 million to 170 community partners for non-waiver funded adult and ancillary services, multi-system youth, behavior support for children and adults with intensive needs, therapies and other supports. The remaining expenditures support case management, early intervention and preschool, school-age services, and related transportation and building services. These needed services impact approximately 13,000 residents each day and are made possible through the real estate taxes supported by county residents and property owners, which account for more than 80% of our annual revenue.

Board Members. We’re grateful to John Bickley and Marie Crawford, who completed their third and final terms on our board in 2024, and to Samuel Davis, who served one four-year term. All three are parents of people receiving services from our agency. They also are passionate, dedicated and effective advocates, and we benefited from their insights.

Dot Yeager
Superintendent/CEO

2024 Board Members



Marie Crawford
President



Samuel Davis
Vice President



Marci Straughter
Secretary



Michael Underwood
Past President



John Bickley



Dean Fadel



Karen Wilkins

Debuting a Fresh New Look

As 2024 wound down, the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities began rolling out a new logo. Bold, rich hues of teal and gold show off an outline of the state, with a star marking our location in the Columbus area.

Though our name hasn't officially changed, the logo offers a shortened, easy-to-say way for us to boost awareness of both the agency identity and mission: Franklin County DD.



We appreciate your patience—and support—as we continue to update documents, online pages and signs. And thanks to the awesome advocates who helped us create a video introducing the new logo. Scan the code at left to watch it. They say it best: We are Franklin County DD.



What We Do

Franklin County DD is a public agency providing support, services and advocacy to Franklin County residents with developmental disabilities.

Since our creation nearly 60 years ago, in 1967, Franklin County DD has helped growing numbers of children and adults live, learn, work, play and engage in their communities.

We provide early intervention and preschool services for young children, partner with local districts, and operate a transition-focused school for older students. Our adult services include case management, access to day programs, employment support and residential placement. We're a family resource system, community partner and 24/7 monitoring system, investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and other safety concerns.

Fulfilling our mission of inclusivity and accessibility for all is a big job. Thanks to the support of our community, we're up to it.

13,546

Average number of children and adults served each day

6,195

Medicaid waiver recipients

10,046

People supported by Franklin County DD service coordinators

+60%

Two-year increase in people using remote support and assistive technology

699

Special Olympics sessions provided

23

Universal changing tables purchased for public venues

684

Agency employees

\$10 million

2024 investment in higher wages for direct-support professionals

98%

Young children and transition-age students showing improvement in educational skills development

1,490

Major unusual incident investigations, by category

\$55 million

Funding provided to community partners



Early Childhood Services

More than 3,400 young children from birth to age 6 received high-quality early intervention and preschool services in 2024 through the Early Childhood Education program operated by Franklin County DD and its community partners.

Early intervention services are always tailored to the needs of each child and family, and focused on providing the best opportunities to learn and grow: in home environments, in community spaces, and in our award-winning early childhood centers, which also enroll typically developing children as peer models.

Our efforts, successes and reach expanded throughout the year:

- The Home-Based program consistently served more than 1,200 children and families.
- The Early Intervention program made changes to increase capacity and to reach more underserved populations.
- Both the Franklin County DD Early Childhood Learning Community and our Early Childhood Education Family Center received Gold Star ratings from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth.
- More than 120 staff members adopted an electronic documentation system to improve efficiency and collaboration.
- Our Early Childhood Education Family Center partnered with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to host monthly drive-through produce markets that served nearly 9,180 people and distributed 120,486 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to our community.

“They really gave me the confidence to take care of her. And that meant more to me than any, you know, hands-on instructions. They coached me into being a mom confident enough to advocate for her needs.”

Megan

Parent of child with disabilities



Special Olympics, Recreation & Aquatics

From sports competitions to social gatherings and travel, Franklin County DD supports a wide array of recreational activities for people with developmental disabilities.

Hundreds took advantage of the offerings in 2024 as Franklin County Special Olympics athletes, members of the Franklin County Recreation Program, or visitors to the agency's Olympic-sized pool at West Central School.

- The Special Olympics program, with more than 300 registered athletes in 2024, named Megan Bender as its new manager.
- Franklin County Recreation, operated by community partner organization Hattie Larlham, counted nearly 300 active members taking part in evening and weekend social activities—everything from riverboat cruises and comedy clubs to dances and restaurant outings.
- As the city of Columbus hosted MLS All-Star Week and the USA Volleyball tournament, both events included unified team competitions featuring Franklin County athletes with and without disabilities. Franklin County DD athletes were on the winning teams in soccer and volleyball.
- During the second half of 2024, an extensive renovation project began at the West Central pool, which also is used by community organizations. Franklin County DD is adding therapy rooms, an office and new restrooms with universal changing tables.



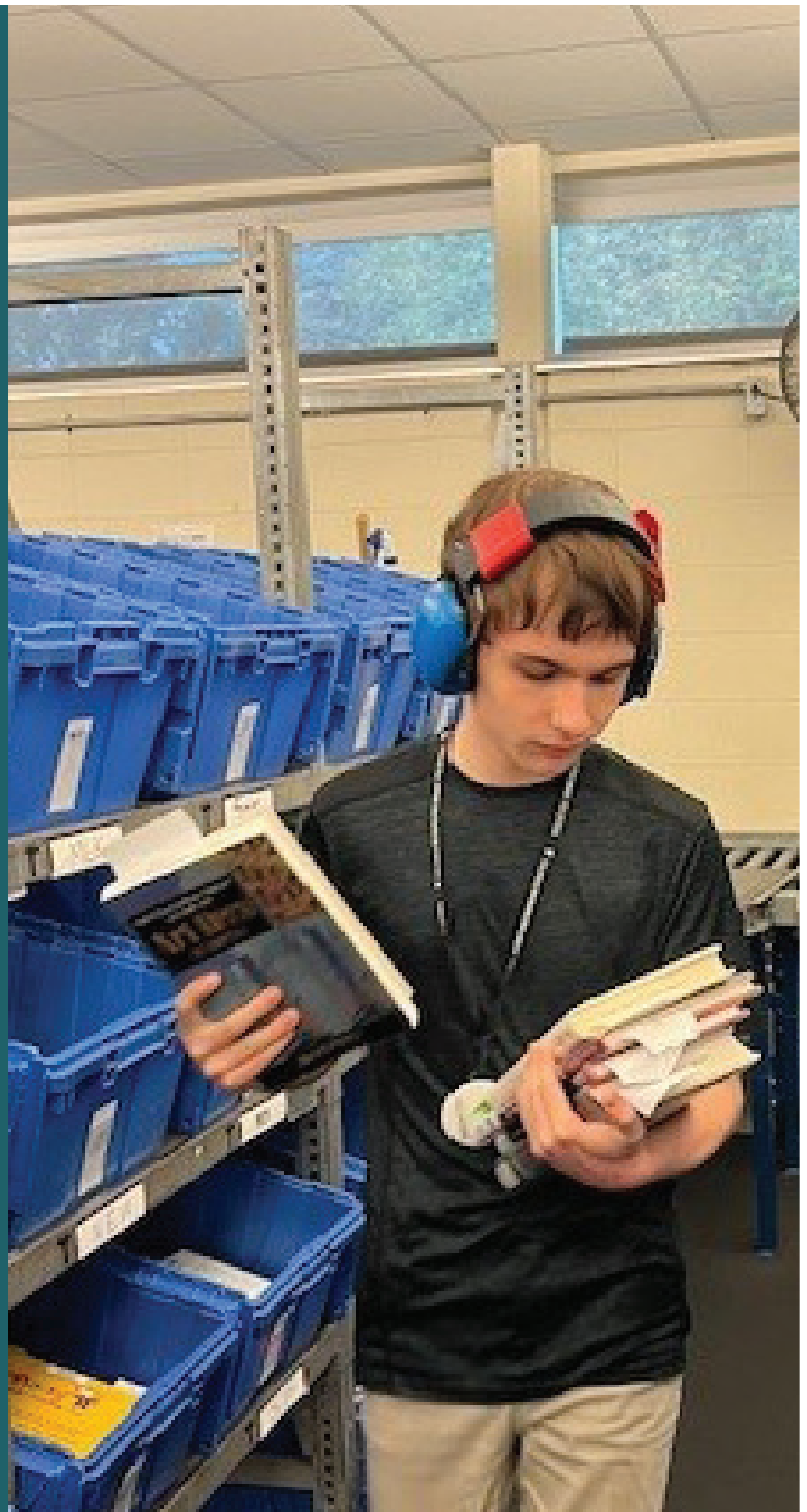
School-Age Services

Franklin County DD offers a dynamic program to accommodate the needs of transition-age students who benefit from intensive therapy services and one-to-one support in the community.

In 2024, West Central School—the anchor of our agency’s transition program—operated 16 classrooms for students ages 14-22. We also staffed two resource rooms in South-Western City Schools, for a total of more than 120 transition-age students with multiple disabilities.

Throughout the year, as we continued to sharpen our focus on helping students with high needs gain skills to increase their independence, our program:

- Hired a Transition Coordinator, allowing us to secure volunteer opportunities for students at community locations such as Ronald McDonald House, NNEMAP food pantry and the Columbus Metropolitan Library.
- Established regular visits to LifeTown, a 5,000-square-foot model city where students with disabilities can practice skills in a safe, nurturing environment.
- Complemented our on-site, professional therapy services at West Central with the addition of Lion, a licensed facility/service dog, and Blondie, a certified therapy dog. Teachers reported reduced anxiety and increased positive behavior among students throughout the building.
- Transported students to an inclusive playground under development at Blendon Woods Metro Park, where they were among the first to try out the zipline, wheelchair-accessible merry go round, double-wide ramps and more.



“West Central is amazing, and Briana has come such a long way. To see her walk across that aisle and get her diploma? I can’t tell you how it filled my heart.”

Shannon
Parent of a 2024 West Central grad

“Oftentimes, when our folks are having behaviors, it’s a way to communicate the control that they don’t think they have. I always tell them, I’m here to help you become the best version of yourself that you can be.”

LaTonya

Franklin County DD service coordinator

Person-Centered Plans for Life

Service coordinators at Franklin County DD provided support to more than 10,000 people in 2024, embracing a person-centered approach that empowers people with disabilities to create—or maintain—lives they enjoy.

For Joey, that meant advocating for himself and working with his team to overcome transportation and attention challenges so that he could succeed on the job.

He and his dad were employed by the same company, and they rode to work together until his dad retired. Joey switched to self-directed transportation, learning to navigate the schedule, monitor tips and track expenses. He even caught a driver overcharging him. Joey addressed it with the driver, told his supervisor and called his mom to make a report.

Undeterred, he then found a new driver who schedules weekly and even likes to play vehicle identification games.

Joey also helped develop a plan for days when his productivity is affected by attention problems that cause him to talk to himself. Now, if that happens, his supervisor contacts his Individual Employment Support provider, and everyone evaluates for changes that help.

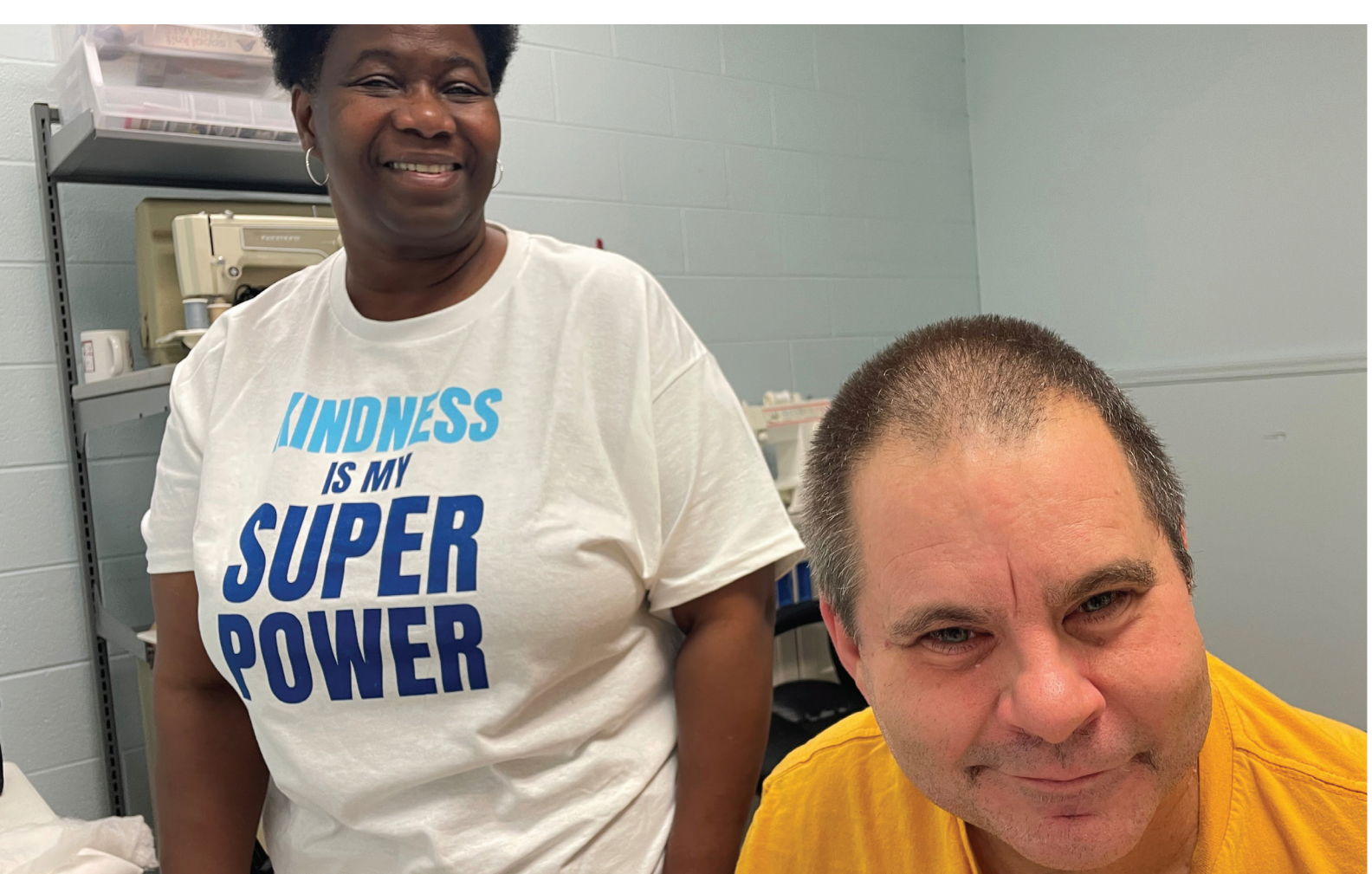
For Brian, ensuring person-centered service meant addressing his longstanding trauma. He had endured years of abuse and homelessness, which led to difficult behaviors, unwanted supervision and restrictions.

But with the support of his guardian, service coordinator and others, Brian entered counseling and gradually began to thrive. He no longer has a restrictive plan, enjoys all the alone time he wants, and moved from paid vocational training to restaurant work.

Brian is proudly committed to advocacy. He strives to speak up not only for himself, but for others who have struggled to succeed.

Both he and Joey recently celebrated five years of steady employment.





Community Partners & Medicaid Waivers

Franklin County DD provides funding for services, support and resources so that people with developmental disabilities can live safely in their homes, pursue educational and job opportunities, and take part in community life.

In 2024, we disbursed \$55 million to public and private partner organizations to help carry out our mission. And we had more than 6,000 people enrolled in the Medicaid waiver program, the most in any Ohio county.

Because the federal government pays a significant portion of Medicaid waiver costs, Franklin County residents received \$478 million in services—everything from transportation and employment to recreation and advocacy activities—at a local, or matching, cost of just \$100 million to our county taxpayers.

We also invested nearly \$10 million in 2024 to help increase Medicaid-funded wages for the workforce known as direct-support professionals. Whether they work independently or at an agency, direct-support professionals are the bedrock of person-centered services and inclusive communities.

Our staff conducts regular compliance reviews, helping to ensure that providers are informed and able to follow rules and regulations that keep people safe, healthy and empowered. In 2024, our provider compliance staff conducted 125 regular reviews, two special reviews and two fraud referrals.

2024 Financials

Receipts

Levy and Other Local Funds	Amount
Tax levy	\$184,706,891
Active treatment	1,177,695
Student services	1,211,277
Sale of personal property	3,963,415
Insurance reimbursements	4,941
Grants, gifts and donations	15,351
Other, including rental of real estate	2,380,895
Other tax-based reimbursements: Ohio Department of Taxation	17,465,038

State Funds	Amount
Ohio Department of Education	
Preschool	\$1,488,169
School-age	2,756,469
Transportation	1,152,652

State Funds	Amount
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities	
Other	\$66,165
DODD reconciliation - DSP match	2,166,117
Reconciliation of prior year match	10,607,351

Federal Funds	Amount
Adult day supports	\$1,256,257
Targeted case management	8,555,289
Title XX	802,030
2021 cost settlement	5,713,211

Federal Funds, continued	Amount
Department of Education	286,063
Medicaid administrative claiming	2,967,458
School lunch	40,599

Total receipts: \$248,783,333

Disbursements

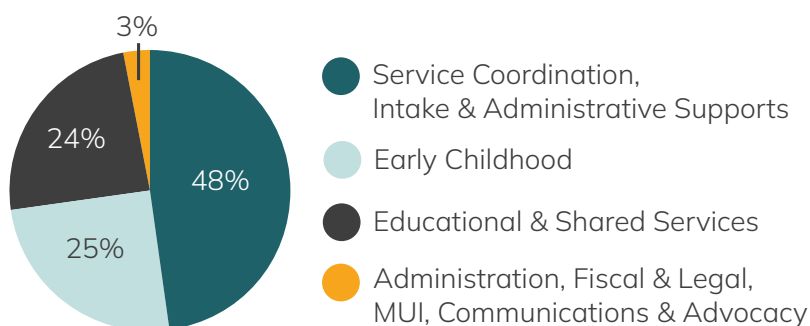
Type of Disbursement	Amount
Personal services	\$46,850,085
Fringe benefits	23,328,908
Social services	174,715,651
Services and materials	12,746,794
Capital outlay	848,059

Total disbursements: \$258,489,497

Consistent with the board's commitment to the community, receipts and expenditures are balanced with the board's Medicaid Stability Fund.

Franklin County DD Staff

Our 684 staff members represent many different areas of expertise and service. We employ teachers and therapists, social workers and school bus drivers, business professionals, investigators and more. The largest share of our staff is based in the Service Coordination Department, providing case management and support to thousands of Franklin County residents with developmental disabilities.



Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Helping people to live, learn and work in our community

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