

Published by the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities
"Helping people to live, learn and work in our community"

Franklin County DD launches Blue Envelope safety program

Flashing lights approaching behind our vehicle give all of us a little jolt – no matter the situation. That anxiety is often amplified for drivers and passengers with disabilities, whose ability to communicate with police and other first responders may be affected by their disability. Thousands of Ohioans know this feeling – and a simple blue envelope can help.

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities has teamed up with the Southern Ohio Council of Governments (SOCOG) to launch the **Blue Envelope Program** in Franklin County. The program makes it easier for people with developmental disabilities to convey basic information during interactions with law enforcement and emergency personnel.



"By fostering better communication between law enforcement and individuals with disabilities, it builds a safer, more inclusive community for everyone," said SOCOG Executive Director Kelly Rosler.

The program packets include the Blue Envelope, Blue Envelope Car Decal, and Blue Envelope Wallet Card.

- **The Blue Envelope** has space on the outside for information about the disability and/or medical conditions of the driver or passenger. A copy of ID/driver's license, vehicle registration, and vehicle insurance card can be kept inside the envelope to give to a law enforcement officer during a traffic stop, or for first responders to access in the event of an accident.
- **The Blue Envelope Car Decal** features a small logo that can be placed on a vehicle's windows to discreetly communicate to law enforcement and first responders that the occupants participate in the Blue Envelope Program.
- **The Blue Envelope Wallet Card** is for people who want a method of communication they can carry in their pocket or purse. It's a smaller version of the envelope that can be used anywhere.

"Disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, dementia, physical disability, or mental health conditions may require additional accommodation or awareness during a law enforcement interaction," said Southern Ohio Advocacy Group (SOAG) co-coordinator Travis Dresbach. "It's amazing that something as simple as an envelope can do so much."

Blue Envelope packets are available during regular business hours at Franklin County DD, 2879 Johnstown Rd, and at Franklin County DD Service Coordination, 1600 Watermark Dr. The program is free at participating county boards to anyone with a developmental disability.

Designed by the San Diego Sheriff's Department, the Blue Envelope program was first introduced in Ohio in 2024 through the Mahoning County Prosecutor's office.

Franklin County DD's participation in the Blue Envelope Program is supported by a collaboration of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, Southern Ohio Council of Governments, and the Southern Ohio Advocacy Group.

Make your voice heard: complete our Community Survey by Oct 17

Our annual community survey is brief and anonymous, but very important: Responses help us know how we are doing and identify ways to improve. The survey also helps guide the development of our annual action plan, which will be shared with the public.

People receiving services, parents or guardians, direct-service providers and partner agencies are encouraged to take a few minutes to provide their input. The community survey is not intended for Franklin County DD staff, who will receive a separate survey at a later time.

The deadline to complete the survey is Oct. 17, 2025. For assistance with language or other accommodations, including to request a printed copy of the survey, email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org

To take the survey, go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/commsurvey2025>



Hundreds turn out for Franklin County Provider Fair

Though Franklin County DD can't quite verify that it hosts the world's largest provider fair, the event is undeniably big: More than 700 visitors, 150 providers and 50 community resource organizations filled Kasich Hall for this year's fair.

"We're thankful to everyone who helped make it a success," said Larry Macintosh, Franklin County DD Director of Administrative and Support Services.

The fair gives people with developmental disabilities and families the opportunity to connect in person with potential providers, and that face-to-face meeting can be key, parent Amanda Lynch said.

She said that while the on-paper information about one provider didn't spark her interest, she felt different after speaking with her. "You could tell from the way that she connected with my daughter that she understood," Lynch said. "I thought, 'Okay. We have a win here.'"

Lists of waiver providers, day programs, intermediate care facilities and community resource agencies that took part in the 2025 Provider Fair are available at: <https://fcbdd.org/publications/printcommunications/>



Franklin County DD Trunk or Treat set for Oct. 29

Save the date and plan to join us on Wednesday, Oct. 29, for an accessible, disability-friendly Trunk or Treat.

Kids, families, and people of all ages from the local DD community are welcome. Franklin County DD held its first-ever Trunk or Treat last year, and it was such a hit, we're aiming to repeat the magic.



Set up/decorating is from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and trunk-or-treating is from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., all in the lot at Franklin County DD, 2879 Johnstown Rd.

For questions, email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or call 614-342-5984.

Register or update voter registration by October 6

To vote in the general election on November 4, Ohioans must register or update their registrations by October 6.

No matter a person's disability, Franklin County can provide a secure voting experience via absentee, early or Election Day voting.

Accessible voting equipment is available at all precincts. Staff members can assist, or voters may bring a helper if they cannot mark their ballot.

For information or to register, visit: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/>



West Central pool open Mondays to families, staff

The newly remodeled aquatics center at West Central School is open to the Franklin County DD community during the school year for Monday Evening Swim.

This program is for people served by Franklin County DD, their families, and Franklin County DD staff. Please note this is a recreational opportunity and does not include swim or water-safety lessons.

The heated pool ranges from 3 to 5 feet deep, with a diving area that is 10 feet deep. A lift is available for non-ambulatory access; new changing areas are fully accessible and private. The aquatics center also includes a baby pool.

Lifeguards are on duty, but people who need assistance in the pool must have a family member or provider in the water with them. Details:

- 5:30 to 7 p.m. Mondays, except for Dec. 22 and 29; Jan. 19; Feb. 16 and April 6
- West Central School, 1481 W. Town St.
- \$10 per family for the entire school year (last open swim is May 18)
- Registration is required; email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or call 614-342-5984



New dental clinic assistant was first a patient

Unlike many young children, Esmeralda Montoya always enjoyed going to the dentist. “I don’t think I ever cried,” she said. “You can feel someone’s energy – and Dr. Diego was always so calm and reassuring.”

Montoya is now a regular part of that warm, cheerful environment in the Johnstown Road Dental Clinic, working with Dr. Diego Solis and other staff as the newest member of the team.

The 21-year-old recently became a dental assistant in the pediatric dentistry clinic, a program of the Ohio State University Nisonger Center Dental Services that is housed in the Franklin County DD Early Childhood Education and Family Center. Montoya had first visited the clinic as a toddler, and she attended Head Start preschool in the building.

“I remembered her. So for me, it’s a full-circle moment,” said Solis, who noted that Montoya has been a clinic patient since age 1.

A graduate of Gahanna Lincoln High School, Montoya is learning American Sign Language and considering dental hygiene classes through Columbus State Community College. She loves being with young children at the busy Johnstown Road clinic, which averages 4,200 patient visits per year.

Solis said it’s wonderful to learn that the program had such a positive impact on Montoya and her family. “Even though she’s young, Esmeralda is very nurturing,” he said.

Montoya’s only hesitancy about taking the job was that “I had come here so long, I didn’t want to disappoint anyone,” she said with a smile. “I feel like it brightens my day to come to work.”



Celebrating Value and Talent
National Disability Employment Awareness Month

#NDEAM
80th Anniversary
dol.gov/odep

October 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The annual recognition began in 1945 as a weeklong national observance, and in 1988, Congress designated the commemoration as NDEAM to better reflect the importance of increasing opportunities for people with disabilities. We're proud of all the employees and employers, artists, advocates and abilities here in the Franklin County DD community!

Franklin County DD launches Combined Charitable Campaign

The Franklin County DD Combined Charitable Campaign aims to raise \$40,700 this year for local nonprofit organizations that help our neighbors in need.

This year’s campaign kicked off on September 17 and runs through November 14. Anne Albrecht, administrative specialist to the Early Childhood Education director, is coordinating the campaign at Franklin County DD.

All Franklin County employees have the opportunity to support causes of their choice through payroll deductions or a one-time donation. Department coordinators can answer questions or provide paper forms.

Thanks to this year’s Campaign Chairs: Franklin County Health Commissioner Joe Mazzola, Brian Barrowman (Labor Chair) and Maurice Clarett (Honorary Chair).

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Thanks to all who helped make the Summer Water Safety classes, a new project of Franklin County DD and Columbus Public Health, a big success. Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to offer the opportunity again next year.

After an outpouring of more than 3,500 emails, calls and letters, Congress was on track to maintain funding of several important programs for people with disabilities. The latest version of the federal budget included full funding for the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, Disability Rights Ohio, Ohio DD Council, the University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and Independent Living Centers. Keep up the advocacy!

Speaking of advocacy, shout out to Franklin County Special Olympics athlete Lakota McMillion, who joined the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Ohio director at the Columbus Division of Police Training Academy. Lakota spoke with the newest recruit class and worked out with them.



We're grateful to the Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals for inviting us to the 2025 DSP Recognition Event! It was a privilege to meet and talk with so many of Ohio's incredible DSPs.

Career Milestones

25 Years
Tonia Peoples

15 Years
Lisa Barker
Kimberly Reedy

10 Years
Wesley Barrett
Karie Griffin



Dateline

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The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities does not discriminate in employment or services on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, or disability.

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Information about Franklin County DD is always available on the internet at:

www.fcbdd.org



Calendar

October, 2025

- 8 Franklin County DD 2025 Community Star Awards at The Boathouse at Confluence Park. Social hour is held from 5:30-6:30 p.m. The ceremony begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. Registration is required and has now closed.
 - 8 Franklin County DD Early Childhood Learning Community (**ECLC**) and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective Produce Drive Through at 4:30 p.m. at **ECLC, 4141 Rudy Road**, Columbus, 43214. For more details, email Gretchen Uhl at gretchen.uhl@fcbdd.org
 - 10 Early Childhood Education and West Central Schools professional development day - classes closed. Classes resume on Oct. 11.
 - 16 Franklin County DD Early Childhood Education (**Johnstown Road**) and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective Produce Drive Through from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the ECEFC Bus Lane (accessed via Marilyn Lane). For more details, contact Sarah Gillilan at 614-342-5803.
 - 16 Franklin County DD Self-advocate Advisory Council, meets at 2879 Johnstown Road, 10 a.m. Contact Ryan Phillips for details: ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org OR by phone at 614-342-5984
 - 23 Franklin County DD Board meeting, at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. Board committee meetings begin at 4 p.m. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.
- FCBDD Board Meeting Link:**
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>
- 29 Trunk or Treat at Franklin County DD Administration parking lot. Contact Ryan Phillips at 614-342-5984 or by email at ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org for details. Set up begins at 5:30 p.m. and festivities begin at 6:30 p.m.