

2025 Progress Report & 2026 Annual Action Plan



As approved by the Board on: March 26, 2026

Franklin County DD Strategic Plan Progress Report (for the year ended 12/31/2025)

Overview

As required in Ohio, county boards of developmental disabilities establish long-term strategic plans and provide periodic progress reports on those plans. Franklin County DD is in the latter years of its current strategic plan, which spans from 2019 to 2028 and outlines three types of strategies to:

- Cover basic regulatory requirements administered by state departments of education and workforce, developmental disabilities, and health
- Address focus areas mandated by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), including advocacy, integrated settings, gaps in services and waiting lists, competitive integrated employment, and sufficient provider pool
- Phase out directly provided home- and community-based services no later than February 28, 2024, to meet federal “conflict-free” case management requirements

Summary of progress

By ceasing to provide direct services, Franklin County DD has successfully completed the major initiative of the current strategic plan. Collaboration among DODD and our community partners made this transition as seamless as possible for those we serve.

The agency’s Adult Services program was fully privatized by ARC Industries in 2019, and Franklin County DD’s alternative transportation function transitioned to ARC in December 2023. The final milestone occurred in February 2024, when Goodwill Columbus began billing for the Work and Community Services program.

The following provides highlights of progress on focus areas as required by the state:

Advocacy: With the creation of a new Director of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations position in 2024, Franklin County DD established a primary coordination point for advocacy efforts. This led to many accomplishments in 2025: Frequent meetings and growing attendance at Self-Advocate Advisory Council meetings; collaboration and resource-sharing with community partners such as ElevateDD, Best Buddies, Next Chapter Book Club and more; a second annual disability-friendly Trunk or Treat event that drew 500 people; sponsorship for 19 people to attend the Synergy Conference; Project STIR leadership training for seven people; and continued promotion of the We Thrive Together online platform for advocacy and activity.

Franklin County DD’s signature Legislative Advocacy Day moved to a new location at the Columbus Metropolitan Library main branch in 2025, and featured a bipartisan panel of state senators and representatives engaging directly with the audience. Each legislator received a resource booklet with information about the Ohio Self Determination Association and other key organizations.

Integrated settings: Franklin County DD Early Childhood programs offer services in integrated settings, where children with disabilities can learn, play and grow alongside their peers. Franklin County DD has operated an inclusive preschool with the Child Development Council Head Start for 35 years, and in 2025 had approximately 40 children with disabilities and 95 typical children participating in the program.

Early intervention services through Franklin County DD supported 3,280 children under 3, and their families, in the places where young children naturally thrive—at home and in community childcare settings. Franklin County children with disabilities also participated in a collaborative Franklin County DD-YMCA program, enjoying full-day, inclusive childcare that fosters learning, social growth and family connection.

Franklin County DD hosted water-safety classes at its West Central School pool during the summer of 2025, a new collaboration with Columbus Public Health that drew 56 children ages 3-16 (with and without disabilities), along with 65 parents who received caregiver education, including written materials, one-on-one discussion, and hands-on CPR instruction.

Franklin County DD board member Marci Straughter, who has disabilities, teamed with DODD staff for a presentation to Franklin County DD service coordinators and other staff on assistive technology and remote supports.

Reduce number of people waiting for services: During 2025, 273 people were newly enrolled on Medicaid home and community-based waivers, while another 72 who were already enrolled moved to a different waiver type (primarily from Level One to Individual Options).

Additionally, the agency's Early Childhood Education program collaborated with partner agencies Childhood League, Easterseals, Hattie Larlham and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, adding new technology tools and streamlining documentation requirements to create capacity to serve an additional 349 children under the age of 3 who are in need of early intervention.

Plan and set priorities to address gaps in services: The following priorities were established in 2025, with progress noted in each area:

- Continue to collaborate with Franklin County Children Services, Franklin County ADAMH and provider I Am Boundless to ensure that young adults who are served by multiple systems (Multi-System Youth, or MSY) receive the intensive treatment needed. *Ten youth are currently participating in the MSY collaboration. The final phase of building renovations needed to support a total of 16 MSY youth at a single site, specifically designed to support their complex needs, will occur in early 2026. Franklin County DD also is actively engaged with the Franklin County Family and Children First Council, Children Services, and ADAMH through the Ohio RISE partnership.*
- Increase participation in the annual Community Survey from 500 to 600 by exploring additional ways to reach out to people served and their families. *Franklin County DD did not reach its goal of 600 respondents for the survey launched in September 2025, but did receive a significant number of comments and hosted an in-person focus group to allow individuals and families to meet with administrators and provide feedback.*
- Continue to collaborate with Creative Housing on projecting supported living needs and development opportunities. *Collaboration with Creative Housing is successful and ongoing, supporting 976 residents in Creative Housing-owned homes and another 572 residents, through rent subsidy, in third-party dwellings.*
- Increase capacity for early intervention. *More than 3,280 children and families received a continuum of early intervention services during the 2025 calendar year.*
- Recognize and support dental care as a vital part of pediatric health care. *Franklin County continued its support and funding for the Johnstown Road Dental Clinic in 2025, a unique partnership between Franklin County DD and the OSU Nisonger Center. Services are provided regardless of ability to pay, with bilingual (English-Spanish) staff.*

Community integrated employment: In 2025, Franklin County DD referred 164 adults for vocational rehabilitation services through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities and the Employment First partnership.

West Central School at Franklin County DD provided vocational opportunities for 35 transition-age students with potential employers such as Mount Carmel Health, Columbus Metropolitan Library and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective.

The Transition to Work summer experience program operated by community partner Hattie Larlham served 30 Franklin County students and offered opportunities with 19 employers. Franklin County DD also continues to partner with the OSU Nisonger Center for the Pre-Vocational Integrated Campus Experience (PIECE) program, which provides an on-campus opportunity for adults to build skills and gain vocational experience with employers such as OSU Dining and COSI. Since inception in 2017, 81 people have graduated from this intensive program.

Recruit and support sufficient providers: There are approximately 2,000 providers who have signed up to provide services in Franklin County, and about half of them are active. The sheer scale can make it difficult to help people and their families to select the providers that best match their needs. To assist, Franklin County DD developed a Connector Program that allows both individuals and providers to submit profiles as a way to match needs and services. By 2025, more than 630 people had requested a connection through the program, which has more than 500 participating providers.

During the March 2025 Self-Advocate Advisory Council meeting, a preparation for Legislative Advocacy Day, individuals were encouraged to speak up about how their needs are—or aren't—being met.

A total of 655 direct support professionals attended training through Franklin County DD in 2025. In collaboration with DODD, Franklin County DD staff completed 216 compliance reviews of providers throughout the year.

The 2025 Community Star Awards, held in October, included additional awards and emphasis on self-advocates and direct support professionals.

The Franklin County DD Service Coordination Department offered in-person Crisis Prevention and Support Training through the OSU Nisonger Center's Train the Trainer certification program throughout 2025 for service providers, family members and staff. Twenty service providers and community partners participated along with 10 Service Coordinators and one family member.

Improve Customer Experience: Service coordinators are expected to be available and responsive during scheduled workdays, and should return calls and messages within 24 hours—or sooner if the matter is urgent. When a staff member is out of the office, automatic email replies should include the name and number of another staff member designated to respond. In 2025, Franklin County DD gave service coordinators the option of receiving an agency-owned cell phone to reduce communication barriers (call forwarding, missed messages, unknown numbers) while working in the field or remotely.

Also in 2025, two paths of special programming that focused on children transitioning to adult services and on aging caregivers, was offered through "What's Next?" and "Future is Now" sessions. At least 40 families participated.

Sustainability: Franklin County DD administrative staff performed an in-depth analysis in 2025 of the agency's growing Medicaid waiver enrollment, projecting the required funding for the "match," or non-federal share of costs.

We continue to identify opportunities to increase revenues and reduce costs as part of ongoing efforts to "Close the Gap" between expenditures and revenues in an environment where revenues are relatively flat as expenses rise.

Service Coordination leadership and staff are scrutinizing requests for intensive staffing and seeking technical assistance from DODD as needed.

Service Coordination offices at 1600 Watermark were renovated in 2025 to accommodate the Intake Department staff. MUI investigative staff have moved to the administration building on Johnstown Road. These changes allowed Franklin County DD to discontinue the lease of 1650 Watermark, saving \$250,000 annually.

Franklin County DD 2026 Annual Action Plan

The following identifies tasks proposed to support both the focus areas required by DODD and additional areas identified by Franklin County DD after receiving feedback from the Community Survey (see Appendix for details), follow-up meetings with parents and people served, and also with key staff.

Promoting advocacy

1. Support the self-advocates planning a legislative town hall to take place prior to the November 2026 election.
2. Implement an activity fund for self-advocate fundraising to support additional attendees at Synergy Conference.
3. Continue to sponsor 20 people to attend the annual Synergy Conference.
4. Continue to sponsor one Project STIR workshop and increase the number of attendees from 10 to 15.
5. Identify opportunities for public speaking and create "Telling my story" videos to assist self-advocates with their personal goals.
6. Work with Advocacy and Protective Services, Inc. (APSI) to provide information and assistance to up to 25 self-advocates who are interested in supported decision-making (legislation is pending).

Support the delivery of services in the most integrated setting appropriate for the needs:

1. In collaboration with the Ohio State University Allied Therapies Department and Columbus Public Health, support a project to teach water safety to a minimum of 100 children with and without disabilities, and the wider community, at the therapeutic pool at Franklin County DD's West Central School. The first phase of this project launched in summer 2025.
2. Offer opportunities for individuals and families to learn about assistive technology and remote supports by hosting presentations for self-advocate meetings, family support meetings and Service Coordination Department trainings.
3. The University of Cincinnati continues a study to review current procedures at West Central School.
4. Offer 'Inclusion Seekers' virtual training series to families, staff and providers. The goal of this program is to create more inclusive lives and local connections with people with disabilities and their families. The second phase will include micro-projects for 10 children and adults and their families to expand their individual community.

Reduce the number of people waiting for services:

1. The need for early intervention services for children under 3 and for preschool special education is expected to grow as Franklin County's population increases and as new state regulations take effect. In partnership with Franklin County Family and Children First Council Help Me Grow and other community partners including: Nationwide Childrens Hospital; Childhood League; Dahlberg; Easter Seals; YMCA; and OSU Nisonger Center, Franklin County DD will continue to work with community partners to create more capacity.
2. Franklin County DD plans to enroll 296 people (the significant majority of whom are under the age of 22) on the current needs list for home and community-based Medicaid waivers during 2026, increasing projections to 6,500 people enrolled at the end of 2026.

Plan and set priorities:

1. Continue to collaborate with Franklin County Children Services, Franklin County ADAMH and the provider organization I Am Boundless to support young adults who are served by multiple systems to ensure they receive the intensive treatment needed. Building renovations needed to support a total of 16 youth at a single site, one designed to support their complex needs, will be completed before mid-2026.
2. Increase participation in the annual Community Survey to 600 by exploring additional ways to reach out to people served and their families.
3. Assess housing needs for people served to guide partnership and collaboration with Creative Housing or other partners on supported living needs and development opportunities.
4. Increase the opportunities for children with special needs, especially age 3 to 5, to learn with children who are developing typically, in integrated settings.
5. Develop transition plans in cooperation with school districts for children, ages 3 to 5, transitioning from early intervention to preschool services and from preschool to school-age services, with focus on integrated settings.
6. Continue to provide leadership with agency partnerships, for children ages 3 to 5, especially the partnership with Child Development Council Head Start for inclusive preschool classrooms, since 1991, delivered in a Reggio Emilia – inspired learning environment, since 2001.

Increase community integrated employment

1. Increase the number of high school students in the Transition to Work summer experience from 31 to 48.
2. Identify and widely share how people can access benefits analysis resources to determine how to balance working and maintaining benefits.
3. The Franklin County DD Provider Council will launch an initiative to share best practices for innovative delivery of employment services for people with complex needs.

Recruit and support sufficient providers:

1. Implement the new provider selection tool developed by DODD to assist families in narrowing their review of the 2,000 providers in Franklin County.
2. Continue the Star Awards annual recognition program to assist with elevating the role of direct service professionals.
3. Communicate broadly to encourage individuals served and their families to speak up with their service providers (including county board staff) about how well their needs are being met.
4. Facilitate in-person training for a minimum of 300 providers to help support high-quality service and care.
5. Drive collaborative efforts with DODD to execute compliance reviews and deliver targeted technical assistance to at least 200 independent and small-agency providers.

Identify gaps in services:

1. Collaborate with community partners to expand in-home respite options for children ages 3 to 8 with complex needs.
2. Communicate broadly about options for facility-based respite for children and adults, both through waiver services and also through family resources funding.
3. Continue ongoing support for dental services for underserved children and adults at the Ohio State University Nisonger Center dental clinics at the Franklin County DD Early Childhood Education and Family Center and at the OSU Nisonger Center.

4. Continue to offer a continuum of evidence-based early intervention to families, with an emphasis on supporting more families in high-poverty ZIP codes. These services include home-based services as well as service delivered in a “blended” approach: both center- and home-based.

Improve customer experience:

1. The Franklin County DD Service Coordination Department will continue to remind staff of timeliness expectations and explore additional solutions, seeking feedback from staff.
2. To address proficiency of Service Coordination Department staff and achieve consistency, Franklin County DD will benchmark with other county boards to develop a process and tools to assist staff in staying up to date with evolving regulations.
3. Develop updated communication materials to address frequently asked questions: What supports are available, what happens after eligibility determination, how do services change over the life span (school aged child, adult), parents as paid caregivers, housing resources, etc.
4. To offer more opportunities for people and their families to learn about available services and to make connections with each other, a minimum of 30 persons will attend intensive in-person workshops presented by the Franklin County DD Service Coordination Department.
5. Complete the implementation of the new case management solution, CX360.

Sustainability:

1. Continue analysis of Medicaid waiver enrollment to project the required funding for the non-federal share of costs.
2. Identify opportunities to “Close the Gap” between expenditures and revenues in an environment where revenues are relatively flat while expenditures grow.
3. Conduct assessments to make sure programs achieve good results. Identify ways to improve both qualitative and quantitative measures for Franklin County DD Early Childhood Education and West Central School programs, and for services provided through community partners, including ARC Voyagers, I Am Boundless, Goodwill and Creative Housing.
4. Continue to invest in the Franklin County DD workforce, with formal and informal feedback opportunities, such as the Service Coordination Staff Advisory Council, and the development of the supervisor training curriculum toolkit.
5. Development of new case management system. Franklin County DD selected a new case management system in late 2024. This was the culmination of a cross-department team effort to thoroughly review case management solutions, including the Gatekeeper product, which has been in use for over 20 years. Staff from Service Coordination, Administrative Services and Supports, and the Information Technology Department have collaborated on this work. The team identified 26 potential vendors, thoroughly evaluated 12 proposals and selected Core Solutions software (new to Ohio) to replace the current system. Benefits of the new system include: streamlined processes for service coordinators and an updated technology platform. This will allow service coordinators to spend more time focused on people and less time with administrative tasks. Much effort has been expended toward a mid-2026 date to complete testing the new system, with implementation to follow.
6. Early Childhood and West Central school will continue to develop and refine staff development training for all staff to ensure skills are maintained and new staff are trained in current curricula and meet the requirements of DODD, ODEW and DCY.

**Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities
2026 Annual Waiver Allocation Projection per ORC 5126.04**

WHEREAS, Section 5126.04 of the Ohio Revised Code requires County Boards of Developmental Disabilities to develop and submit to the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities an annual plan, and

WHEREAS, the annual plan requirements were amended effective September 30, 2021, and

WHEREAS, one of the annual plan requirements is based on the Board's annual five-year projection report submitted pursuant to section 5126.053 of the Ohio Revised Code, and

WHEREAS, the five year projection plan was submitted in 2025, then

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE FOLLOWING PLAN FOR 2026 IS APPROVED:

1. The number of individuals who are on the Current Needs Waiting List as of November 1, 2025 is 296. The service needs of these individuals is for home and community based services, with a projected estimated annualized local cost of services for these individuals of \$5,695,937.
2. The projected number of individuals to whom the board intends to provide home and community based services in 2026 is 6,500.
3. Services will be phased in over the next year, with an estimate of approval of 75 (net) additional home and community based waivers granted each quarter of the year. All individuals will be assigned a Service Coordinator who will assist with development and implementation of an Individual Service Plan for each individual.

Motion to approve resolution: Mr. Underwood

Second: Ms. Kelly

Voting yes: Mr. Fadel; Mr. Harshaw; Ms. Kelly; Ms. Swartz;
Ms. Straughter; Mr. Underwood; Ms. Wilkins

Voting no: none

Approved: December 4, 2025

APPENDIX

Franklin County DD 2025 Community Survey Summary

Overview

Franklin County DD widely promoted its annual survey to help assess agency progress in meeting the needs of the people and families we serve. Of the 350 people who submitted responses, nearly 200 provided individual comments. (The survey questions and responses are included as an Exhibit with this summary.) In an effort to gain deeper understanding, we invited respondents to an in-person focus group session. All of the feedback received has been reviewed in detail by the respective department heads. Where enough specific information was provided, follow-up has occurred.

Strengths

Franklin County DD received 84 comments indicating that respondents were very satisfied with their services; 20 staff were mentioned by name for recognition.

Areas of improvement

Responses to several questions point to the need for significant improvement in areas of customer experience. Focused attention on these areas will be outlined in the 2026 Annual Action Plan.

1. Customer experience: While 76 percent of respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their services, Franklin County DD both desires and expects a higher share of people to be satisfied. The answers to some of the other questions touch on the underlying issues.

- *Are you treated with courtesy and respect?* 34 said sometimes; 6 said never.
- *Questions answered and helpful information provided:* 53 said sometimes; 16 said never.
- *How long does it take to hear back?* 39 said 3 to 5 days; 53 said more than 5 days.
- *Satisfaction with voice being heard:* 47 somewhat satisfied; 32 not satisfied
- *Overall satisfaction:* 50 somewhat satisfied; 29 not satisfied.

Analysis of the comments provides even more insight into the customer experience. A lack of timeliness was noted by 20 respondents; responsiveness/helpfulness by 19; and lack of proficiency and/or consistency was cited by 13. Insufficient knowledge or information about what supports are available for people served, how to proceed after an eligibility determination, and how services flow through different stages of development were recurring themes.

2. Build more inclusive communities: In response to this need, Franklin County DD is contracting with Starfire Council to launch a free Inclusion Seekers program aimed at all members of the community.

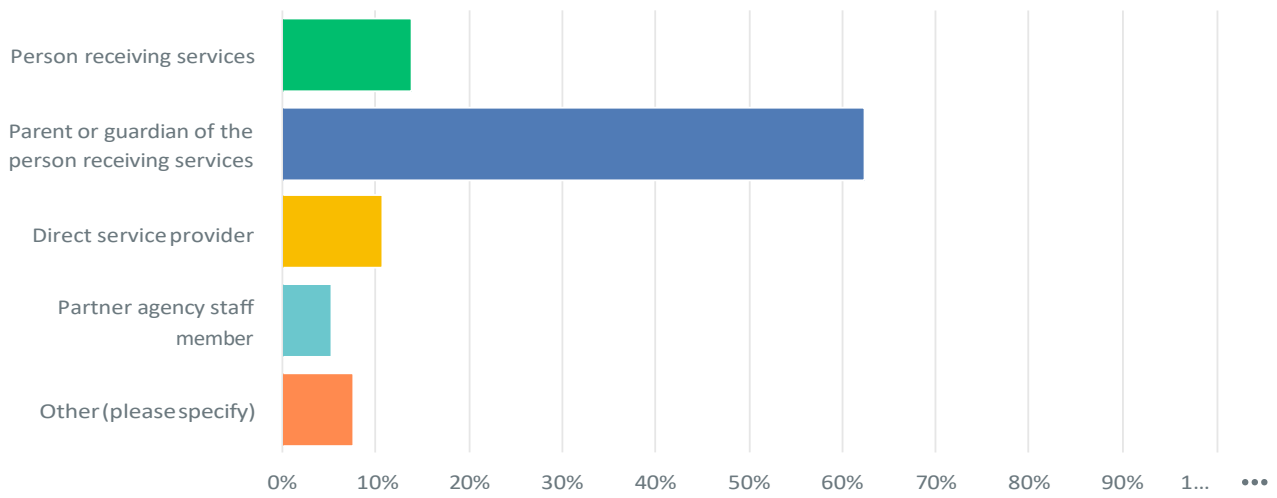
3. Access to and/or understanding of services: 10 comments indicated difficulty accessing services for children; 8 comments indicated difficulty accessing respite and/or recreational services.

4. Adequate number of providers: 15 comments described difficulty finding providers, or finding providers of suitable quality, for people with complex needs. Being able to use Uber was a positive, along with friendly drivers.

APPENDIX

Q1 What is your relationship to Franklin County DD?

Answered: 338 Skipped: 1

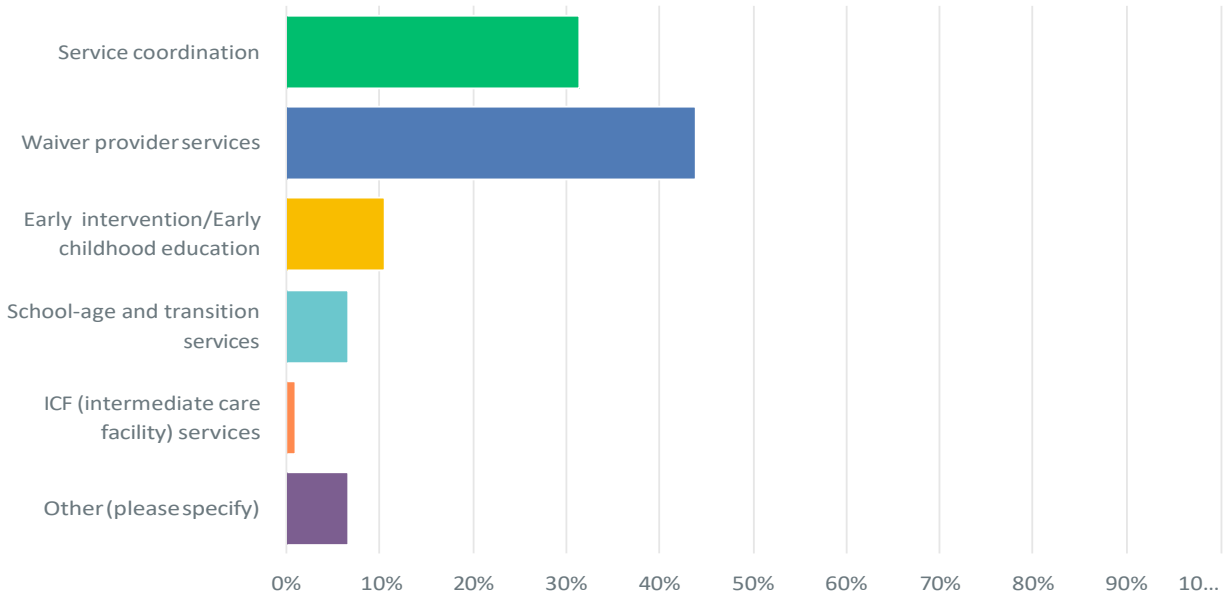


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓
● Person receiving services	13.91%	47
● Parent or guardian of the person receiving services	62.43%	211
● Direct service provider	10.65%	36
● Partner agency staffmember	5.33%	18
● Other (please specify) Show responses	7.69%	26
Total		338

APPENDIX

Q2 What program area affects you the most?

Answered: 331 Skipped: 8

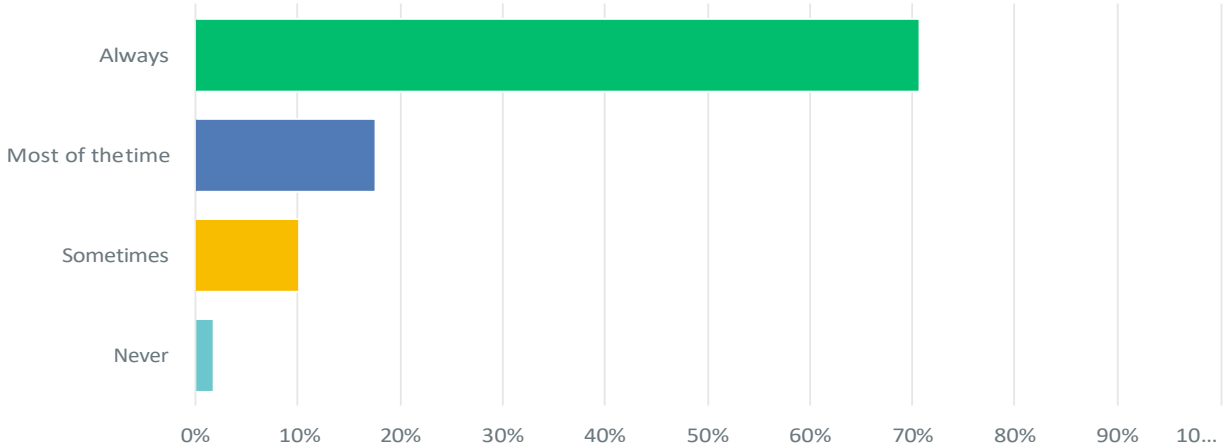


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓
● Service coordination	31.42%	104
● Waiver provider services	43.81%	145
● Early intervention/Early childhood education	10.57%	35
● School-age and transition services	6.65%	22
● ICF (intermediate care facility) services	0.91%	3
● Other (please specify) Show responses	6.65%	22
Total		331

APPENDIX

Q3 Do you feel that Franklin County DD staff treats you with courtesy and respect?

Answered: 337 Skipped: 2

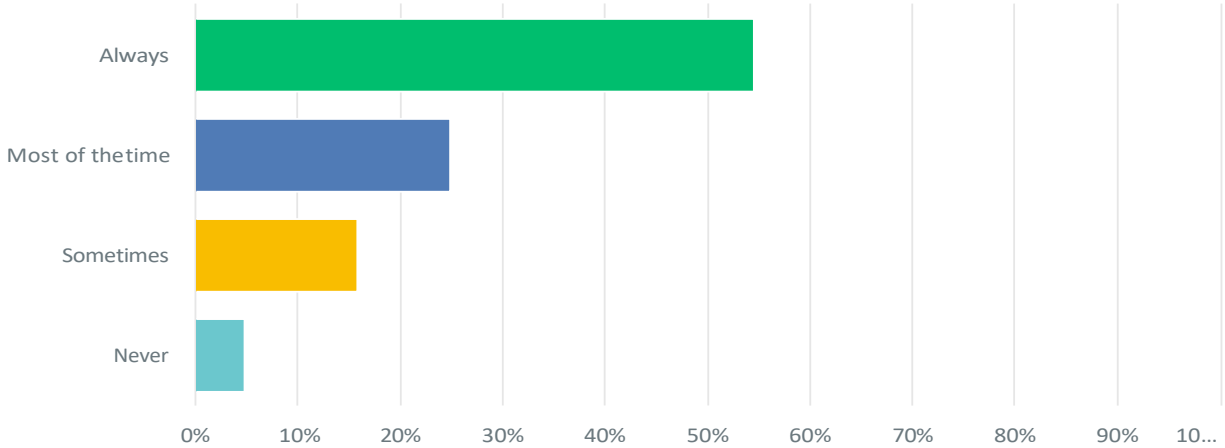


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Always	70.62%	238	...
● Most of the time	17.51%	59	...
● Sometimes	10.09%	34	...
● Never	1.78%	6	...
Total		337	

APPENDIX

Q4 Does Franklin County DD answer your questions and provide helpful information?

Answered: 337 Skipped: 2

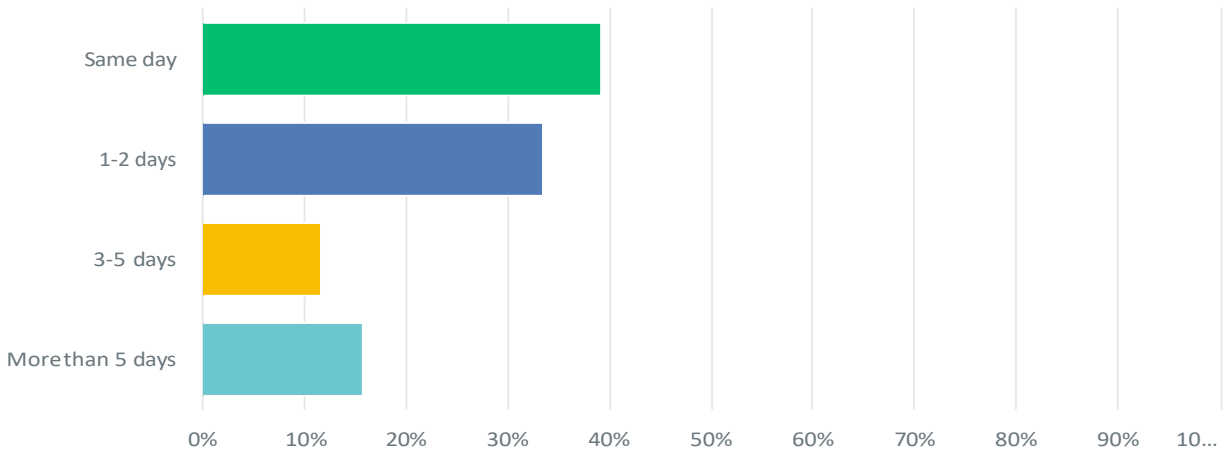


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Always	54.60%	184	...
● Most of the time	24.93%	84	...
● Sometimes	15.73%	53	...
● Never	4.75%	16	...
Total		337	

APPENDIX

Q5 The last time you contacted a Franklin County DD staff member, how quickly did you hear back?

Answered: 337 Skipped: 2

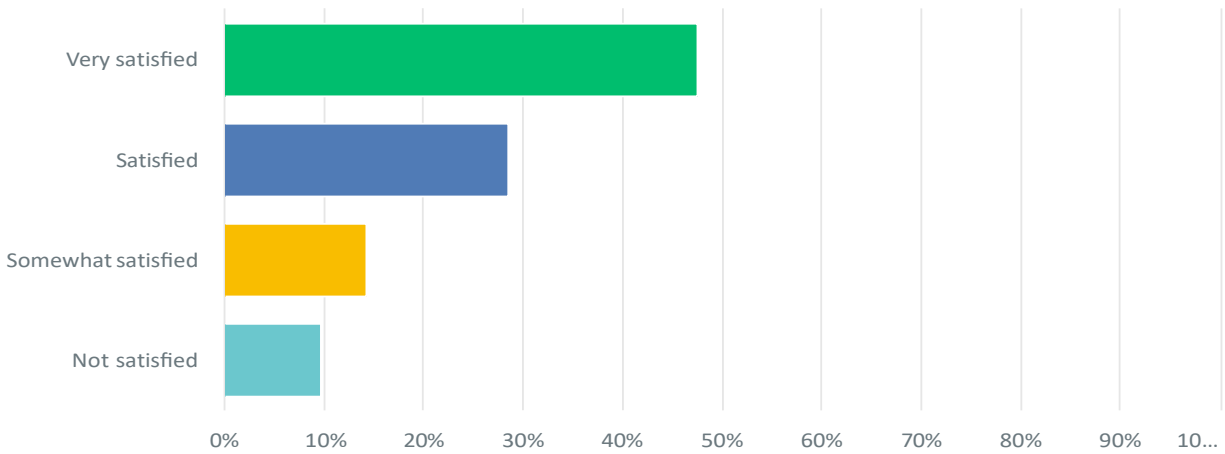


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓
● Same day	39.17%	132
● 1-2 days	33.53%	113
● 3-5 days	11.57%	39
● More than 5 days	15.73%	53
Total		337

APPENDIX

Q6 How satisfied are you that your voice is heard and that you can make decisions about your life? (If you are responding on behalf of a person receiving services, answers should reflect their views.)

Answered: 330 Skipped: 9

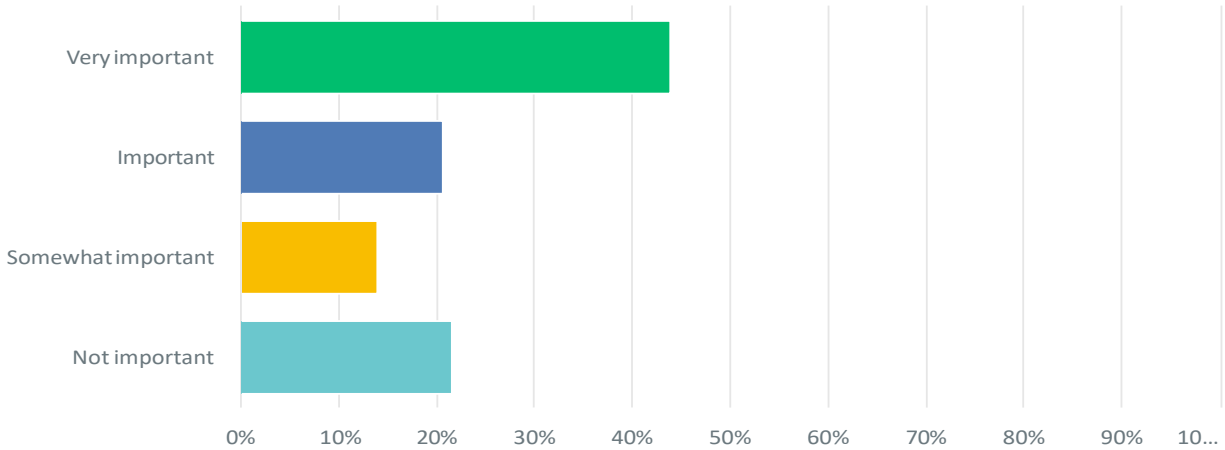


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Very satisfied	47.58%	157	...
● Satisfied	28.48%	94	...
● Somewhat satisfied	14.24%	47	...
● Not satisfied	9.70%	32	...
Total		330	

APPENDIX

Q7 How important is it for you to be informed about employment opportunities for people with disabilities?

Answered: 335 Skipped: 4

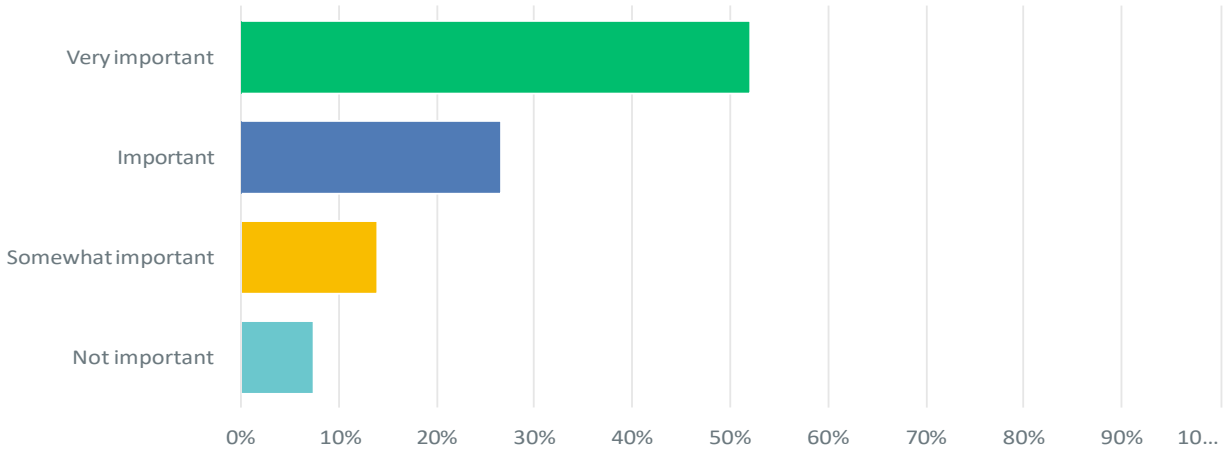


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Very important	43.88%	147	...
● Important	20.60%	69	...
● Somewhat important	14.03%	47	...
● Not important	21.49%	72	...
Total		335	

APPENDIX

Q8 How important is it for you to learn how technology, such as assistive devices and remote support services, can help people with disabilities?

Answered: 336 Skipped: 3

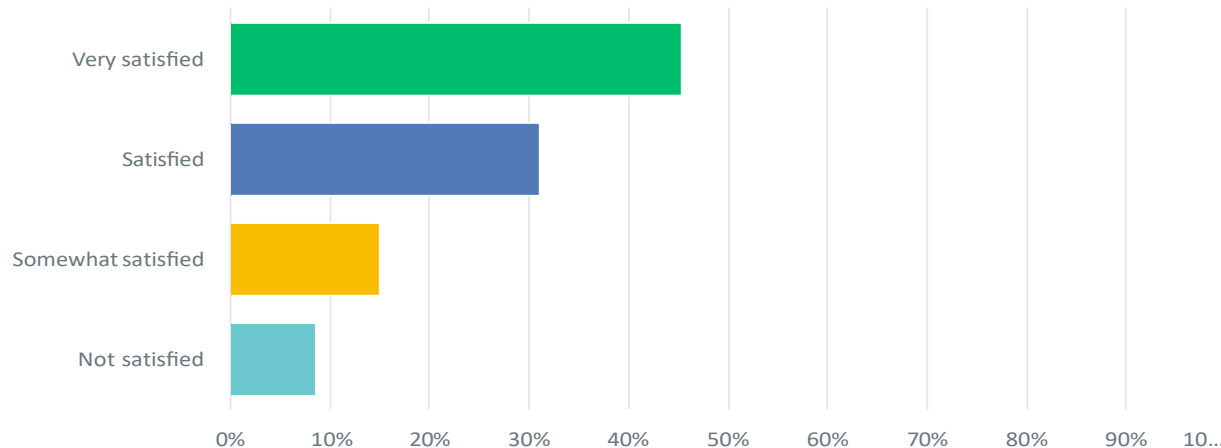


Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Very important	52.08%	175	...
● Important	26.49%	89	...
● Somewhat important	13.99%	47	...
● Not important	7.44%	25	...
Total		336	

APPENDIX

Q9 Overall, how satisfied are you with the programs and supports provided by Franklin County DD?

Answered: 335 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices ↓	Percentage ↓	Responses ↓	
● Very satisfied	45.37%	152	...
● Satisfied	31.04%	104	...
● Somewhat satisfied	14.93%	50	...
● Not satisfied	8.66%	29	...
Total		335	

APPENDIX

Q11 If you would like to speak to us about your experience, please contact Ryan Phillips at ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org; Rita Price at rita.price@fcbdd.org; or call 614-342-5161. You also can provide your contact information below and we'll reach out to you.

Answered: 103 Skipped: 236

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Name	99.03%	102
Company	30.10%	31
Address	0.00%	0
Address 2	0.00%	0
City/Town	0.00%	0
State/Province	0.00%	0
ZIP/Postal Code	0.00%	0
Country	0.00%	0
Email Address	98.06%	101
Phone Number	95.15%	98