

2015 Brings New Challenges and New Opportunities

In a newsletter in 2014 I shared how change was in the air for services to Ohioans with Developmental Disabilities. I spoke of the perfect storm driving us to change how we provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Use whatever metaphor you like, but the parts of this storm are the Supreme Courts Olmsted decision, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) new rule for home and community based waivers, and Ohio's Employment First Initiative. All of these have two common goals 1) increased opportunities for community employment and 2) increased opportunities for community integration.

Since that newsletter there have been two recent developments that will impact the future DD system in Ohio. The first development involves conflict-free case management which in CMS jargon separating the function of the Service and Support Administrators' (case managers) from that of service provision. Many County DD Boards, including Greene County, perform both these services. Ohio submitted a proposal to allow Boards of DD to continue to provide services in this manner. Although at first CMS seemed to indicate they would consider the proposal, in late December Ohio received word this proposal was not acceptable. CMS is not pushing for Boards of DD to phase out of their role as direct service providers in the upcoming years. The State Association for Boards of DD is continuing to lobby CMS to modify their position, as of yet we have not had a change of position from CMS.

A second development pertains to the State's transition plan, which was submitted March 17, 2015. CMS has requested all states be in compliance with the new rules by 2019, Ohio has asked that deadline be extended until 2024. We do not expect an answer to that question until later this summer.

The Greene County DD Board has taken active measures to respond to the anticipated changes:

- Our strategic plan which is currently under development will focus on services to adults and the proposed changes.
- The Board has made significant investment in community based employment through partnerships with Kettering's Soin hospital, and as a leading partner in the Employment First Initiative.
- The Atrium has increased the number of community experiences for individuals.

Greene County has expanded choice of providers.

We will continue to update as best we can when new information is available, and plan to hold a family forum in late May. Once that date has been scheduled we will notify you through our Web page and other communications.

I want to ensure everyone that Greene County DD is committed to playing a vital role in supporting the needs of all individuals with developmental disabilities in the County, and will work to minimize any disruption caused by these changes, and to develop new strategies as needed to provide services.

Listed below are some questions that I have received from families and staff regarding these issues. Thank you, John LaRock

Frequently asked questions about system transformation

Are services going away?

No, Greene DD will support providers to create new service models that promote community employment and integrated day services. Depending on the outcome of discussion between CMS, the State of Ohio, and our associations lobbying efforts, the Atrium and Greene Inc. may continue to be affiliated with the Board of DD. As expected of other providers, we continue to integrate those services. Greene DD will continue to honor the choices of individuals and work diligently to create more community options for individuals who want them, and allow those who wish to remain in their current setting to do so – as long as that setting does not isolate them from the broader community.

What about individuals who do not want to work in the community?

Every person should be provided with the opportunity to make an informed choice to decide if community employment is a good fit for them. This is not just about community jobs. Integration is about what a person experiences; it is not defined by a physical setting. An individual can remain in their current setting as long as the setting does not isolate them from the broader community.

Will Greene DD continue to be my provider if they are now?

Conflict of interest continues to be an issue that DODD and CMS are in conversations about and we can't say with any certainty the outcome or the timeframe of those discussions. In Greene County there are a variety of choices, with about 12 organizations currently providing services. Transition will occur over a period of time to give families and individual's time to carefully review their service options. All providers of day programs and employment programs will work under the same requirements for integration that the transition plan requires.

When does this begin?

There is a lot about future changes that we just don't know yet. CMS announced that states needed to be in compliance by 2019 and Ohio asked for a plan that spanned until 2024. We expect CNS to respond to Ohio's transition plan by late summer and will provide you with details as we know them.

When will I know if my loved one's current situation will be permissible under the new initiative?

Integration is about the experience that one has and not about the setting itself. Once CMS and Ohio agree to a transition plan, current settings will be reviewed to determine if it needs modifications to come into compliance with the new rule. Providers will have a period of time to

make adjustments to ensure individuals have the opportunity to experience integration in the broader community.

What happens to transportation?

Non-medical transportation, or transportation to your day program or work, will continue to be funded. If you are eligible for transportation services you will be able to choose from a variety of willing providers.

How can I be sure we don't get pushed into a decision we are not comfortable with?

Person-centered planning provides choices to individuals about what they do and do not want. Our goal is to make sure that more integrated experiences are available to those who want them.

Who decides and what does it look like when you say "as long as it does not isolate them from the broader community?"

This means that those with disabilities are able to experience the same things as people who do not have disabilities. When settings are reviewed, they will seek input from the individual or the family to determine if the setting isolates them from the broader community.

What if I disagree?

As always, if you disagree with your service, you are entitled to due process.