



Stark County
Board of
Developmental
Disabilities

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2026

It is my honor and privilege to unveil the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities 2024-2026 Strategic Plan—a comprehensive guide that reflects our commitment to meaningful impact and positive transformation in our community.

This strategic plan is the result of an intensive four-month process, during which we actively sought feedback from the people we support, their families, our dedicated employees, providers, and community leaders. This collective effort has shaped a plan with clear and focused goals, centered on the core mission of being the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people.

The plan prompts us to be better, to continuously learn and grow, and to change so we can effectively turn our new vision, mission, and values into action.

The plan's goals include:

Goal #1: Supporting the next generation to learn, achieve, and succeed.

Goal #2: Helping people of all ages achieve security, equity and belonging.

Goal #3: Strengthening supportive connections and community engagement.

Goal #4: Building a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.

This strategic plan is not just a roadmap; it is a dynamic call to action. We invite you to join us on this exciting journey as we work towards creating not just good, but great lives for everyone we support.

Welcome to the future we are shaping together.

Sincerely,



William Green



William Green, Superintendent

Board Members



Daniel Sutter, President

Dr. Jessica Falvo Lang, Vice President

Jennifer Moff, Recording Secretary

James Anderson

Maria Heege

Carmelita Smith

Cindi Sutter



“I’m not sure how many people in the general public are aware of all the supports Stark DD provides, but I do believe they are highly respected.”
- Parent

Our Vision

Stark County is enriched by the people we serve.

Our Mission

Supporting people with disabilities and their families.

We Value

With the shared goal of supporting the well-being of the children and adults we serve, we confirm our commitment to cultivating meaningful relationships and building trust among the families, providers, community partners, and our staff.

Committed

We show our commitment to upholding the dignity of each person by the ways in which we treat them: fairly, truthfully, and with care and compassion. We recognize our employees are our most important asset.

Trustworthy

We are responsible to people we serve and to the Stark County community.

Supportive

We lead with empathy and compassion and strive to make a meaningful difference in the quality of life and overall well-being of the people we support.

Person-centered

We prioritize each person, recognizing their needs, preferences, and aspirations are at the forefront of everything we do.



“Stark DD should be partnering with schools, identifying kids they could be assisting, teaching parents what they can be doing before the child ages out at 18.”

- Stark County Educator

GOAL 1

Support the next generation to learn, achieve, and succeed.



Help children, youth, and their families learn about and access the support they need to have a good life.

Connect with every family in Stark County that has an infant or toddler with a delay or disability.

Prepare transition-aged youth for adulthood.

Learn more about
[Goal 1 - Outcomes and Strategies](#)



“When conversing with families who feel uncertain about post-graduation options for their child, their primary concern revolves around how their child will become a valued member of the community and find purpose in the next step.”

- Focus Group Participant

GOAL
2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Improve the health and developmental outcomes for people with disabilities.

Increase the number of people we support who have competitive, integrated employment.

Transform support for people with disabilities through the use of technology.

Strengthen provider capacity, proficiency, and quality.
Improve community access and opportunities for inclusion.

Increase access to affordable housing and accessible transportation.

Learn more about

[Goal 2 - Outcomes and Strategies](#)



“... they have events and dances, strictly for us with disabilities, but could we merge with people in the community who don't have a disability?”

- Self-Advocate

GOAL 3

Strengthen supportive connections and community engagement.



Create opportunities for and encourage the people we support to engage in self-advocacy.

Help people with disabilities, families, and the larger community become aware of available services and supports provided by the Board.

Strengthen partnerships with businesses, civic organizations, and local universities to promote supportive connections for people with disabilities.

Learn more about
[Goal 3 - Outcomes and Strategies](#)



“Stark DD should offer more trainings on diversity and give employees a voice in the trainings that we want.”

- Stark DD Employee

GOAL 4

Build a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.



Increase capacity to recruit and retain a diverse, high-quality workforce.

Provide employees with the necessary tools to do their best work.

Nurture a workplace culture that positively impacts the Board’s overall performance and success.

Ensure fiscal health and sustainability through continuous improvement and learning.

Learn more about

[Goal 4 - Outcomes and Strategies](#)



Our Process

Gretchen Kunkel, President of GHK Consulting, facilitated the Strategic Planning process, including collecting the stakeholder surveys, conducting focus groups and third-party interviews. Ms. Kunkel also led the steering committee through a series of eight, two-hour work sessions beginning in November.

Early in November 2023, the Board requested input from stakeholders on the Board's strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities that may exist, as well as possible threats that could impact our future. By December 1, 161 Stark DD Employees and Board members, 50 Providers and 90 community partners responded to the survey.

In addition, we hosted focus groups with parents/caregivers and self-advocates to get their direct input on what is working, what is not working and what they think Stark DD should focus on in the next three years. Ms. Kunkel also conducted one-on-one interviews with community partners to draw out additional feedback to help us set priorities for the future.

With Ms. Kunkel's guidance, the committee created a new vision and mission for Stark DD's future, as well as four action goals with strategies and measures of success.

“Stark DD has demonstrated success in delivering community services, offering opportunities for families, and notably improving the early identification of developmental issues in children.”

- Community Partner



The Strategic Plan Steering Committee

Facilitating the strategic plan process was Gretchen Kunkel, President, GHK Consulting. She was supported by Bill Green, Superintendent. The full steering committee included: Jeremy Ballinger, Supervisor, Provider Compliance and Support; Leigh Donatella, CFO; Tiffany Dozier, School Programs; Denise Frangos, SSA Supervisor; Ryan Heckert, CEO, TWi; Farah Jafri, Artemis Care; Edward Lewis, Director, Service and Support Administration; Shelia Meyer, SSA; Julie Palmer, School Programs; Lisa Parramore, Communications Manager; Connie Poulton, Director, Human Resources; Kristen Quicci, Director, Early Intervention and Nursing Services; and Dan Sutter, Board President.



“Stark DD does a great job connecting and building relationships with the community and those we serve.”

- Focus Group Participant

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Committed and dedicated workforce
- Overall financial health
- Abundance of resources
- Legacy of advocacy
- Strong provider network
- Strong partnerships
- Strong community outreach and public awareness

WEAKNESSES

- Decreasing financial resources over the next 5 years
- Sustainability of services
- Employee retention and compensation concerns
- Complex and challenging processes
- Lack of diversity
- Employee promotional opportunities
- Technology

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continued efforts for public awareness
- Ongoing efforts for employee training and development
- A systematic effort to address the needs of multi-system youth and children with complex needs
- Direct Support Professional recruitment, retention, and recognition efforts
- Increase competitive integrated employment
- Access capital assistance funding to create more affordable housing
- Taking advantage of new technology
- Waiver modernization may assist the system to be easier to navigate
- Supporting the children and youth in our 17 school districts

THREATS

- Lack of delegating nurses in the field
- Rules are complicated
- 2028 levy failure when requesting new money
- Societal issues coming into buildings/safety
- Cyber threats
- Ongoing recruitment and retention issues for Direct Support Professionals



GOAL 1

Support the next generation to learn, achieve, and succeed.



Our Strategies

Help children, youth, and their families learn about and access the support they need to have a good life.

How we will accomplish this

- Offer information and training about the services and supports the Board offers to families and educate them using Charting the Life Course principles and tools to define and achieve their “good life.”
- Assess and manage SSA children and youth caseloads to ensure we are meeting needs.
- Sponsor events and programs where children/youth and their families can connect with SSAs and the Board.
- Launch a respite program for youth 6-17 years of age to support the goal of family stability and provide families a break when needed.
- Expand access to short-term residential treatment options to support youth with complex needs in the Stark County community.
- Increase residential options for youth with complex needs who cannot remain with their families.
- Examine the Family Support Services program and see if it can be expanded to support more families in years two and three of the plan



GOAL 1

Support the next generation to learn, achieve, and succeed.



Our Strategies

Connect with every family in Stark County that has an infant or toddler with a delay or disability.

How we will accomplish this

- Conduct outreach to healthcare providers and pediatricians to encourage referrals to Early Intervention and central intake for early identification, intervention, monitoring, and preparedness.
- Enrich relationships with local school districts to support seamless transitions from early intervention to preschool and obtain an SSA if needed.
- Perform customer satisfaction surveys on the level of support families have with the services they receive in Early Intervention.
- Assess and manage Early Intervention caseloads to ensure the Board is meeting family needs



GOAL 1

Support the next generation to learn, achieve, and succeed.



Our Strategies

Prepare transition-aged youth for adulthood.

How we will accomplish this

- Within our Empowering Youth efforts, provide transition-aged youth and their families information and trial use of remote supports and assistive technology to demonstrate how it can foster independence.
- Through deepening the partnership with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), school districts, and the Board, ensure more transition-aged youth have competitive integrated employment upon graduation.
- Provide self-advocacy training to transition-aged youth with the curriculum of PROJECT STIR (Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility).
- Support the healthcare transitions and experiences of young adults with disabilities, emphasizing promoting health and well-being into adulthood.
- Coordinate a mentoring event to unite youth and adults with disabilities who are part of the workforce.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Improve the health and developmental outcomes for people with disabilities.

How we will accomplish this

- Assure each person will have established standard of care identified and monitoring to ensure that doctor visits, consultations, and examinations are completed as scheduled and on time.
- Foster partnerships with healthcare systems and practitioners to ensure that every person with a disability receives equitable access and treatment, including oral care.
- Conduct training to build safety and awareness skills, reduce victimization, and know when to report.
- Educate and empower stakeholders on the rights of people with disabilities and the importance of preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disabilities through reporting.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Increase the number of people we support who have competitive, integrated employment.

How we will accomplish this

- Monitor and update employment data to ensure data are accurate and regularly monitored.
- Collaborate, mentor, and coach each person to move along the path to employment to provide opportunities for inclusion and economic sufficiency.
- Participate in job fairs and other activities that help people identify employment opportunities.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Transform support for people with disabilities through the use of technology.

How we will accomplish this

- Educate people we serve and their families about remote support and what supports are available to further independence and community participation.
- Provide people and families tours of tech homes and apartments within the region so they can see technology in action.
- Increase provider capacity and interest in using remote supports and technology.
- Hold a technology resource fair for people supported and their families and providers.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Strengthen provider capacity, proficiency, and quality.

How we will accomplish this

- Collaborate with providers on innovative service models to support people with complex needs.
- Build provider capacity for prevention and crisis management response.
- Improve provider awareness of and accessibility to training through information shared via newsletters, emails, and provider meetings.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Improve community access and opportunities for inclusion.

How we will accomplish this

- Streamline and improve the free choice of the provider process for people supported and their families by reducing the wait times.
- Make available additional funding each year to address the needs of people requiring long-term services and support.
- Make universal changing tables available for community events, as well as a mobile handicapped universal changing trailer, so that people with disabilities can have a dignified toileting experience.
- Address gaps in services for underserved, culturally, and ethnically diverse communities.
- Provide training to families on inclusion topics such as advocacy, disability-related issues, and any other important inclusion topics identified by families.



GOAL 2

Help people of all ages achieve security, equity, and belonging.



Our Strategies

Increase access to affordable housing and accessible transportation.

How we will accomplish this

- Build a network of landlords and rental properties that can be accessed by the people we support.
- Ensure at least one not-for-profit housing corporation will secure capital assistance funding with the Board's support to increase the number of affordable homes for people served in Stark County.
- Improve awareness and use of independent housing programs, such as the Rental Assistance Program, to increase the number of affordable and accessible housing options in Stark County.
- Increase the number of people who use flexible transportation options to increase their involvement in the community.



GOAL 3

Strengthen supportive connections and community engagement.



Our Strategies

Create opportunities for and encourage the people we support to engage in self-advocacy.

How we will accomplish this

- Provide the Board of County Commissioners a list of self-advocate(s) candidates for their review and selection for the next board member opening.
- Create a self-advocate advisory council.
- Promote supported decision-making as an alternative to the more restrictive guardianship option when possible.
- Expand opportunities for self-advocates to attend conferences, trainings, and workshops sponsored by the Board.
- Sponsor self-advocates participation to attend community events with an ally (if needed) in the Stark County community.



GOAL 3

Strengthen supportive connections and community engagement.



Our Strategies

Help people with disabilities, families, and the larger community become aware of available services and supports provided by the Board.

How we will accomplish this

- Launch a new website that is accessible and has needed information for the people supported, families, and other interested parties.
- Annually assess the Stark County citizens' perceptions of the Board.
- Kick off public awareness campaigns to highlight the reach of the Board and the growing need for services.
- Educate people with disabilities and their families with Charting the Life Course principles and tools to define and achieve their "good life."



GOAL 3

Strengthen supportive connections and community engagement.



Our Strategies

Strengthen partnerships with businesses, civic organizations, and local universities to promote supportive connections for people with disabilities.

How we will accomplish this

- Increase networking and partnerships with community entities to educate and connect people with disabilities with them.
- Host community breakfast/lunch with community leaders where we share what we do, promote disability awareness and address the diversity that people with disabilities can bring to workplaces, organizations, and schools.
- Engage high school and university students to connect with people with disabilities through summer camps, unified sports, mentoring, and participation in social nights.



GOAL 4

Build a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.



Our Strategies

How we will accomplish this

Increase capacity to recruit and retain a diverse, high-quality workforce.

- Review the agency’s comprehensive compensation plan and adjust as needed and within budget limitations to recruit and retain high-quality employees.
- Show pride and appreciation for the dedication and contributions of employees through expanded employee recognition opportunities.
- Conduct annual stay interviews for non-represented employees and use the results to improve systems, processes, and performance.
- Improve the diversity of the workforce.
- Expand internship programs to raise awareness of opportunities working in the field of developmental disabilities.



GOAL 4

Build a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.



Our Strategies

Provide employees with the necessary tools to do their best work.

How we will accomplish this

- Ensure staff have the workspaces, equipment, and training to support their work.
- Provide advancement and career development opportunities to build leadership skills and capabilities.



GOAL 4

Build a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.



Our Strategies

Nurture a workplace culture that positively impacts the Board's overall performance and success.

How we will accomplish this

- Support employees in their decision-making through coaching, mentoring, and learning to provide meaningful feedback loops to improve overall employee and agency performance.
- Increase opportunities for employees to make decisions that affect their jobs through department meetings, focus groups, and annual stay interviews.
- Develop and achieve efficiencies across work units through analysis, innovation, and the sharing of information and knowledge.



GOAL 4

Build a vibrant culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability.



Our Strategies

Ensure fiscal health and sustainability through continuous improvement and learning.

How we will accomplish this

- Evaluate semi-annually and make incremental decisions that will reduce the amount of new funding needed at the end of this 5-year levy cycle.
- Through the Superintendent, evaluate each vacancy to assess if the position will be re-filled.
- Provide the community with information and training opportunities to understand the growing need for lifelong services and support and that additional funding is needed in 2028.
- Strengthen the sustainability of long-term services and supports by ensuring they accurately reflect assessed needs.