OACB

43RD ANNUAL CONVENTION

NOV 11-13, 2026 • COLUMBUS

Schedule-At-A-Glance: Breakout Sessions

Last Updated: Friday, November 6, 2026

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

Track: Advocacy

Necessary Conversations During Challenging Times (1:00-2:00)

County boards are navigating significant system changes that require difficult but necessary conversations. This panel will explore how boards can engage people with developmental disabilities, families, local officials, and other stakeholders during times of change. Panelists will discuss approaches for listening to diverse perspectives, ensuring local voices are represented in statewide discussions, and building understanding as boards and communities navigate changes together.

Presenters: Jake Dowling, Legislative Affairs Manager (OACB), Amanda Carte, Board Member (Lawrence DD), Nick Comstock, Speaker and Advocate (Nick Speaks Podcast)

Moving Advocacy Groups into Action Groups (2:15-3:15)

Many county boards have helped build strong local self-advocacy groups that give people with developmental disabilities a voice in their communities. How can those groups take the next step from advocacy to action? Hear from self-advocates who are strengthening local networks and learn how county boards can support them in engaging their communities, participating in important conversations, and taking action on issues that matter to people with disabilities and their families.

Presenters: Jennifer Kucera, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Outreach, Center for Disability Empowerment and Chair (Ohio Olmstead Task Force), Kristina Kapp, Executive Director (Center for Disability Empowerment)

Making the Case: From Budget Challenges to Levy Campaigns (3:30-4:30) Hybrid

As local funding challenges put pressure on essential services, more county boards are facing difficult decisions about asking voters for additional support. This session will explore practical strategies for navigating the levy process in a challenging environment—from communicating budget realities and working with local fiscal officials to developing clear, objective, and appropriate messages that build community understanding without crossing the line into campaign persuasion. Speakers will share lessons and approaches county boards can use before and during the levy process.

Presenters: Gloria Llewellyn, Superintendent (Belmont, Harrison, Noble DD), Lee Ann Emmons, Superintendent (Butler DD)

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

Track: Governance

Leading Through Change: Expectations for Today and Tomorrow (1:00-2:00)

Today's leaders are navigating increasing complexity, evolving expectations, and significant organizational change. This executive- and board-level session will explore practical approaches for leading with focus and resilience when traditional solutions may no longer be enough. Participants will examine decision-making under pressure, effective communication, and leadership strategies that can help teams remain aligned and engaged while adapting to today's challenges and preparing for what comes next.

Presenter: Jeff King, Ph. D., (The Ohio State University Leadership Center)

County Board Initiatives: Looking Ahead to 2027 and Beyond (2:15-3:15) Hybrid

After months of work to identify solutions for long-term fiscal sustainability, county board-led initiatives are beginning to take shape as potential policy proposals for the next General Assembly. This session will provide an update on these efforts, including perspectives from Capitol Square and recent legislative discussions. Participants will learn what may come next, potential challenges to advancing these initiatives, and opportunities for county boards to help shape the path forward.

Presenters: Dave Salisbury, Vice President (Statehouse Impact Group), Mike Hartley, President (Swing State Strategies)

Communicating Financial Hardship to Local Fiscal Partners (3:30-4:30)

County board finances, and particularly the use of local dollars for Medicaid match, can be difficult to explain to those outside the DD system. This session will explore how county board leaders can clearly communicate financial challenges and system realities to board members, county auditors, treasurers, and other local fiscal partners. Participants will learn strategies for presenting complex financial information in ways that build understanding and support productive conversations about local needs and priorities.

Presenters: Neil Townsend, Director, Office of Budget and Administrative Operations (Hamilton DD), Bill Green, Superintendent (Stark DD), Maria Heege, Board Member (Stark DD)

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

Track: Fiscal Sustainability

Funding the Future: Fiscal Modeling (1:00-2:00) Hybrid

This session provides an update on the Funding the Future fiscal modeling work group, presented jointly by OACB and DODD, including an in-depth discussion of the new models developed. The presentation covers what's changed, what the updated projections show, and how this modeling work is shaping the joint funding request for the next state budget. Attendees will see the latest tools and have a chance to ask questions before the next phase of work begins.

Presenters: Clay Weidner, Chief Operating Officer (DODD), Tyler Davis, Fiscal Sustainability Advisor (OACB)

Long Term Forecast to Contingency Plan (2:15-3:15)

This panel session moves the conversation from long-term fiscal forecasts to actual contingency planning, focused on the decision points and triggers county boards use when facing a financial cliff. Panelists will share what their counties are doing to prepare, the thresholds that prompt a change in course, and how those decisions get made in practice. Attendees will leave with a clearer picture of how other counties are planning for and responding to financial challenges.

Presenters: Neil Townsend, Director, Office of Budget and Administrative Operations (Hamilton DD), Hailey Quinn, Business Services Director (Butler DD)

How Cost Projections Drive Advocacy Efforts (3:30-4:30)

Accurate, timely cost projection data is the foundation of effective advocacy for county boards. This session covers how county-level financial data feeds into models used in budget and policy advocacy, and what that means for county boards heading into next year's filing cycle. Walking through how the data gets used, where accuracy matters most, and what to check before submitting it to DODD. Attendees will leave knowing what to file, when, and why it matters.

Presenter: Tyler Davis, Fiscal Sustainability Advisor (OACB)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Track: Health, Safety and Wellness

Assessing Suicidality in People with Developmental Disabilities (10:30-11:30) Hybrid

Suicidality among people with developmental disabilities can be difficult to recognize and assess, particularly when warning signs present differently or communication barriers exist. This session will explore risk factors, self-injurious behaviors, and systemic factors that can affect crisis care. Participants will learn approaches for recognizing warning signs, conducting accessible assessments, and implementing responsive intervention strategies that respect the needs and autonomy of people with developmental disabilities.

Presenter: Elizabeth Reynolds, Clinical Mental Health Counselor

Intensive Treatment Teams: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Complex Behavioral Needs (1:00-2:00)

Supporting people with complex behavioral needs often requires creative solutions and strong collaboration. This session will explore how an Intensive Treatment Team uses a multidisciplinary approach to develop individualized strategies, strengthen partnerships with providers and families, and respond to local needs. Participants will hear real-world examples of collaborative approaches that have helped people remain successfully supported in their homes and communities.

Presenters: Chris Watts, LISW-S, Senior Manager, SSA, Hannah Segers, LISW-S (Summit DD)

Beyond Awareness: How Ohio's DD System Can Support Survivors of Sexual Exploitation (2:15-3:15)

People with developmental disabilities can face increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation, while access to specialized supports may be limited. This session will examine Cuyahoga DD's approach to supporting survivors, including a specialized therapy group for women. Participants will explore risk factors, trauma-informed and survivor-centered responses, and practical strategies county boards can use to strengthen prevention, identification, reporting, and support within their communities.

Presenters: Katherine Antall, MS, Human Sexuality Specialist in the Behavioral and Health Services Department, Ashley Burt, M.Ed, LPCC-S (Cuyahoga DD)

Building Competence Through Mentoring (3:30-4:30)

Effective mentoring can help new employees build the skills, confidence, and consistency needed to succeed. This session will highlight Lucas DD's mentoring programs for Investigative Agents and SSA staff, including how they differ from traditional orientation. Participants will explore program structure, roles and responsibilities, documentation tools, and practical strategies for developing mentoring programs that strengthen employee competence, teamwork, and service quality.

Presenters: Erica McElmurry, MSW, LSW, MUI Coordinator; Jackie Titsworth, SSA Training Facilitator (Lucas DD)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Track: Human Resources

Building an Organization-Wide Mentoring Program (10:30-11:30)

A successful mentoring program requires more than matching experienced employees with new staff. This session will explore Lucas DD's organization-wide approach to mentoring, from mentor selection and assignment to roles, documentation, communication, and program evaluation. Participants will learn how a structured mentoring program can support employee development, strengthen performance, and help new employees successfully transition into their roles and the organization.

Presenters: Hunter Egbert, Training and Development Administrator, and Erica McElmurry, MSW, LSW, MUI Coordinator (Lucas DD)

Creating Inclusion and Belonging from Within (1:00-2:00)

Creating an inclusive workplace takes engagement at every level. This session will highlight Montgomery DD's employee-led Inclusion and Belonging initiative and its approach to building awareness, education, and shared responsibility. Participants will explore practical strategies related to disability inclusion, employment practices, harassment prevention, and respectful workplace conduct, while learning how employee engagement can help create a culture where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute.

Presenters: Candis Brown, Human Resources Generalist, Traci Craig, Investigative Agent, Elena Dupree, SSA, Celia Moreira, Waiver Coordinator, Danielle Worland, Early Childhood Support Specialist (Montgomery DD)

WHAT IF? Breaking Through Barriers to Creative HR Thinking (2:15-3:15)

What if HR professionals challenged the assumptions that limit new ideas? This interactive session introduces the "WHAT IF" approach to breaking through traditional thinking and creating space for innovation. Participants will explore concept mapping and other strategies for generating ideas, challenging long-held practices, and shifting from "that won't work" to "what if it could?"—leaving with practical tools to bring more creative, strategic thinking to their organizations.

Presenter: Jill Kopanis, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, MOL, Vice President, Human Resources (Dynamic Dies, Inc)

Strengthening Culture Through Total Rewards (3:30-4:30)

Attracting and retaining employees takes more than competitive pay and benefits. This session will explore how Total Rewards strategies can strengthen workplace culture, engagement, and the overall employee experience. Through real-world examples, participants will discover practical, low-cost approaches to recognition, mentoring, career development, flexibility, wellness, communication, and leadership engagement—and leave with scalable ideas they can adapt and put into practice within their own organizations.

Presenter: Stacy Pettit, HR and Organizational Development Director (Miami and Preble DD)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Track: Communications

Rethinking ROI: Measuring What Matters (10:30-11:30)

How do you measure communications success when the goal isn't a sale or immediate conversion? For county boards of DD, meaningful outcomes may include greater community awareness, stronger engagement, increased participation, or progress toward organizational priorities. This session will explore how communicators can move beyond clicks and impressions, identify meaningful indicators, and connect communications efforts to the outcomes that matter most to their organizations and communities.

Presenter: Elizabeth Kennedy, Vice President, Client Engagement (Fahlgren Mortine)

Communicating Your Message in a Tumultuous Time (1:00-2:00) Hybrid

In times of change and uncertainty, effective communication is more important than ever. This session will explore how public-sector communications have evolved over the past five years and the challenges facing today's communicators. Aligned with the convention theme, *Possibility in the Pivot*, participants will learn practical strategies for developing clear, consistent messages that build trust and help boards, leaders, employees, and communities navigate change.

Presenter: Tom Speaks, Co-Founder (The Impact Group)

When Inclusion Becomes Community Culture (2:15-3:15)

How can county boards help move inclusion beyond individual programs and into the fabric of everyday community life? This session will explore five leadership shifts—positioning, orchestrating, building systems, fostering trust, and embedding inclusion into community norms. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, participants will learn how to strengthen accessibility and belonging, build community ownership, and create inclusive practices that can continue long after individual initiatives end.

Presenters: Steve Oster, Superintendent and Brittany Coon, Public Outreach Manager (Knox/Coshocton DD)

Effective Communication for Advocacy: Engaging Policymakers, Families, and Stakeholders (3:30-4:30)

Effective advocacy starts with effective communication. This session will explore strategies county boards of DD can use to communicate about state and federal policy developments, build productive relationships with policymakers, and engage families and communities. Participants will also learn ways to elevate the voices and experiences of people with developmental disabilities and their families to strengthen advocacy efforts and inform policy discussions.

Presenters: Jake Dowling, Legislative Affairs Manager, and Andy Jesson, Policy Coordinator (OACB)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Track: SSA

Beyond the Behavior: Understanding Complex Needs and the SSA Role in Systems of Care (10:30-11:30)

Children with complex behavioral health needs often require coordinated support across multiple systems. This session will explore the clinical factors underlying severe emotional and behavioral dysregulation and strategies centered on three essential needs: a safe place, treatment to heal, and opportunities to grow. Participants will learn practical approaches for supporting children with complex needs and the important role SSAs play in building effective systems of care.

Presenter: Stacy L. Nonnemacher, PhD, Director of Cross-Systems Strategies (NASDDDS)

Person-Centered and Beyond: The Changing Lens of SSA Monitoring (1:00-2:00)

SSA monitoring in Ohio is evolving. While person-centered planning remains at the heart of the SSA role, today's monitoring requires a broader lens that includes health and safety, HCBS Settings requirements, service quality, rights, and the person's overall experience. Hear perspectives from Ohio DODD, county board leadership, and a family member on balancing these responsibilities while keeping the person at the center of monitoring.

Presenters: Tina Haggerty, Compliance Manager, Joelyn Karlson, Policy Administrator MDA (DODD), Kathy Brunton, SSA Director, Ashley Wortman, SSA, Phyllis Bowman (parent) and Liz Luman (person with a disability) (Mahoning DD)

From Purpose to Practice: Putting the New TCM Guidebook to Work (2:15-3:15) Hybrid

Explore what's new in the TCM Guidebook and what the updates mean for SSAs in their day-to-day work. This practical session will connect the broader purpose of service and administrative tracking with updated guidance, useful tools, and real-world examples. Participants will learn how to apply the guidebook in practice while supporting quality, compliance, and meaningful outcomes for the people they serve.

Presenters: Amanda Seigle, Director of Individual and Family Support Services (Auglaize DD), Leia Snyder, Superintendent, and Todd Bowersock, SSA Training and Administrative Manager (Hamilton DD), Mandy Camden, Director of Services and Supports (Sandusky DD)

Strengthening SSA and Provider Support Partnerships Across Ohio (3:30-4:30)

As Ohio's DD system navigates changing rules and expectations, collaboration between county board SSA and Provider Support departments is more important than ever. Presenters will share how they're working across departments and county lines to improve communication, address inconsistent practices, and provide clearer guidance to providers. This session will highlight lessons learned, ongoing challenges, and opportunities for stronger regional and statewide collaboration.

Presenters: Drew Williams, Asst. Superintendent (Summit DD), Mary Grzegorek, Senior Provider Relations Mgr. (Summit DD),Jennie Petrarca, SSA Dir. (Medina DD), Nichole Richter, Community Supports Mgr. (Medina DD), Kathy Brunton, SSA Dir.(Mahoning DD), Ryan Weaver, Dir. of Community Svcs. (Muskingum DD)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Track: Early Intervention

Better Together: Activating the Strengths of Your Team (10:30-11:30)

Effective teams make the most of the different experiences, perspectives, and strengths each person brings. In this interactive session, Early Intervention leaders will explore practical ways to strengthen trust, participation, and collaboration across their teams. Participants will learn strategies for drawing out individual strengths, incorporating diverse perspectives into team decisions, and applying these approaches to real-world situations—leaving with practical ideas to help their teams work more effectively together.

Presenters: Cassie Kane, Founder and CEO, and Lisa Russell, Senior Learning and Development Consultant (Kane Learning)

Beyond Compliance: Maximizing the Impact of Early Intervention (1:00-2:00)

How can Early Intervention programs move beyond meeting requirements to maximize outcomes for children and families? This interactive session will explore how county boards can embed fidelity and program integrity into everyday practice while navigating financial, staffing, and compliance pressures. Participants will examine practical tools, real-world approaches, and sustainable strategies for strengthening implementation—and leave with an action plan for applying these concepts within their own EI programs.

Presenters: Kathy Lawton, Kathy Lawton, Megan Middleton, Emily Norris, Henry Matthews, and Jen Rigano, Franklin DD Early Intervention Team (Franklin DD)

Moving from Chaos to Connection: The Power of Meeting People Where They Are (2:15-3:15)

During times of change, meaningful connection often begins not with having the right answers, but with meeting people where they are. Grounded in *The Mommy RESET Framework* and real-world Early Intervention leadership experiences, this session will explore a relationship-first approach to building trust, strengthening communication, and supporting teams through uncertainty. Participants will leave with practical tools for navigating difficult conversations, fostering engagement, and leading with empathy and confidence.

Presenter: Shelley Clifford, Director of Early Childhood (Lawrence DD)

The Cost of Caring: Practice Leadership Strategies for Compassion Fatigue (3:30-4:30) Hybrid

Compassion fatigue is not the same as burnout—and addressing it requires more than telling staff to practice self-care. This interactive session will explore individual and workplace factors that contribute to compassion fatigue and what leaders can do to help. Participants will learn practical strategies for recognizing warning signs, having supportive conversations, strengthening protective factors, and creating a workplace culture that supports both meaningful work and employee well-being.

Presenter: Michaela Little, LISW-S, LICDC, Outpatient Telehealth Therapist/Psychotherapist (Lindner Center of Hope)