



**OACB25**

**SPRING CONFERENCE**

**MAY 8-9, 2025 • COLUMBUS**

## **Schedule At-A-Glance: Breakout Sessions**

*Last updated: Tuesday, April 1, 2025*

Day 1: Thursday, May 8

**Track: Strategic Leadership**

**Strengthening SSA Recruitment, Retention, and Workplace Morale (11:00 - 12:00)**

This session will explore effective strategies for retaining staff after successful recruitment with a focus on transforming SSA positions into long-term careers. While finding qualified SSAs is challenging, keeping them engaged and committed can be even more difficult, as doing so requires strong leadership and proven retention methods. Attendees will learn how to foster a workplace culture that enhances performance, instills a sense of purpose, and builds lasting pride in the work.

*Presenter: Sheila Eason, Founder and CEO (Elevate People Solutions)*

**The Value of Reliable Data: The Power of Tableau (1:15-2:15)**

Accurate, reliable data is critical for informed decision-making, especially when advocating for resources and policies at the local and state levels. This session will explore the importance of data-driven advocacy and the tools available to help county boards collect, analyze, and present key information effectively. Presenters will introduce Tableau, the powerful platform behind DODD's newly-created database, which offers extensive options for sorting, visualizing, and generating reports. Attendees will learn how to leverage this tool to enhance reporting capabilities and strengthen their ability to communicate essential data to stakeholders.

*Presenters: Abby Hammond, Data Scientist and Revy Tabin, Data Administration Manager (DODD), Matt Glidewell, Director of Operations and Human Resources (Ashtabula DD)*

**Understanding the Impact of Major Policy Changes on People with DD (2:30-3:30) Hybrid**

Many are questioning how major changes in federal and state policy will impact people with developmental disabilities and the county board system that supports them. In this session, presenters will provide a comprehensive overview of key state and federal policy issues being monitored and discuss their potential implications. Attendees will gain insight into policy developments, funding considerations, and advocacy strategies to help navigate the evolving legislative landscape.

*Presenter: Mark Seifarth, Principal (G&S Policy Advocates)*

**Emotional Intelligence: An Essential Ingredient to Good Leadership (3:45-4:45)**

Building on the foundational concepts of Emotional Intelligence introduced at the Fall Convention, this session will take the next step—turning knowledge into action. Michael O'Donnell will guide participants through practical strategies for applying Emotional Intelligence in leadership, fostering stronger relationships, and creating a more positive, engaged work environment. Attendees will leave with actionable insights to enhance team dynamics, communication, and overall workplace culture.

*Presenter: Michael O'Donnell, Consultant (MJ Clark Integrated Leadership Systems)*

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Track: SSA

### **Serving Multi-System Youth through Cross-System Collaboration (11:00 - 12:00)**

Hamilton County's Multi-System Youth (MSY) Team, launched in February 2024, is transforming support for youth with complex needs. By uniting SSAs, behavior specialists, psychologists, and community navigators with key partners like Hamilton County JFS, OhioRISE, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, the team enhances placement stability, behavioral health access, and transition planning. With cross-agency training, intensive case management, and smaller caseloads, this initiative is strengthening services and empowering youth and families. Learn how to apply their methods and lessons learned in your community!

*Presenters: Jen Meadows, Medicaid and SSA Director, Allison Leedy, SSA Supervisor, Michelle Vargas, SSA Supervisor (Hamilton DD), TBD (Hamilton County JFS)*

### **When Chloe Met Eloise: A Story of Autistic Mentorship (1:15-2:15) Hybrid**

This presentation explores the powerful and transformative relationship between an autistic mentor and mentee, highlighting the profound impact mentorship can have on people with disabilities, their families, and their communities. Through real-life examples, we will illustrate how mentorship helps navigate societal barriers such as masking, "appropriate" interests, and communication expectations—empowering autistic people to embrace their authentic selves. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how mentorship can be a critical tool in supporting self-determination, personal growth, and long-term success.

*Presenters: Chloe Rothschild, Educational Consultant-Board Member (Vanderbilt University - TRIAD Program and The ARC of the USA), Alexis Eggenberger, Director of Education (Avenues for Autism)*

### **Navigating Critical Health and Safety Policy Changes (2:30-3:30)**

Join Scott Phillips and Connie McLaughlin from DODD for a comprehensive update on key policy changes affecting county boards and providers. This session will cover the CMS Access Rule and Critical Incident Management System, detailing their impact on Ohio's Major Unusual Incident (MUI) System, rules, and processes. Attendees will gain insights into reporting requirements, emerging trends, and best practices for ensuring the safety and well-being of people receiving services. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of how to navigate these changes, maintain compliance, and promote quality outcomes.

*Presenters: Scott Phillips, Assistant Deputy Director (DODD), Connie McLaughlin, Regional Manager Supervisor (DODD)*

### **What's New in Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) (3:45-4:45) Hybrid**

Join representatives from DODD and the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) for an in-depth update on the state's Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system. This session will cover the latest developments, policy updates, compliance requirements, and best practices for providers using EVV. Attendees will gain insights into system enhancements, troubleshooting common challenges, and upcoming changes impacting service delivery. There will also be an opportunity for Q&A to help county boards address provider concerns and ensure a smooth EVV implementation.

*Presenters: Allan Showalter, Deputy Director Medicaid (DODD) Brandi Nicholson, Interagency Policy Section Chief (Ohio Department of Medicaid)*

#### **Schedule At-A-Glance**

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Day 1: Thursday, May 8

## Track: Human Resources

### **Best Practices for Hiring and Supporting Employees with Disabilities (11:00 - 12:00)**

This interactive workshop provides best practices for fostering a workplace that is inclusive of people with disabilities. Learn the business case for disability inclusion and the benefits of having a formalized organizational commitment. Presenters will share examples of inclusive recruitment processes, a reasonable accommodation statement, and ways to engage with resources to support disability inclusion.

*Presenters: Julie Lasher, Business Relations Specialist (OOD), Tanya Kimball Vela, Accessible Ohio Specialist (OTR/L, ADAC)*

### **Free Speech Rights of Public Employees: Best Practices (1:15-2:15)**

Workplace speech and discrimination claims can be complex. What are the boundaries of public employee speech? When an employee claims discrimination in response to online speech, what should an employer do? If an investigation is necessary, who should conduct it? Attorney Steve Postalakis will provide essential legal insights on First Amendment considerations, best practices for handling discrimination claims, and workplace policies. Gain practical guidance to ensure compliance while fostering a fair and professional work environment.

*Presenter: Stephen P. Postalakis, Esq, Attorney (Haynes Kessler Myers & Postalakis, Incorporated)*

### **Supports for Mental Health Crisis & Suicide Risk (2:30-3:30)**

Explore how Ohio's 988 crisis services can help county board employees, direct support professionals (DSPs), and people with lived experience. Ohio 988 staff are trained to support those with cognitive impairments and diverse communication styles, ensuring accessible crisis intervention for those in need. Attendees will learn how 988 services can be a vital resource for employees and the people they serve, as well as how HR professionals can integrate these services into workplace wellness initiatives.

*Presenter: Doug Jackson, OhioMHAS 988 Administrator (Ohio MHAS)*

### **The Fundamentals of Workplace Accessibility (3:45-4:45)**

How can we make sure Ohio's venues are accessible and inclusive for all? In this session, presenters will share how county boards can prioritize accessibility, set accessibility goals, and implement accessibility enhancements—all while partnering with Accessible Ohio as a highly effective resource in the process! Through practical examples and an interactive exercise, participants will gain a better understanding of accessibility guidelines under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and know how to adopt a Universal Design approach.

*Presenters: Julie Lasher, Business Relations Specialist (OOD), Tanya Kimball Vela, Accessible Ohio Specialist (OTR/L, ADAC)*

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## Track: Communications

### **Advanced Digital Accessibility for Communicators (11:00 - 12:00) Hybrid**

Digital accessibility is more than just a best practice—it's a legal and ethical necessity. While many communicators understand the basics, achieving WCAG 2.1 AA compliance and meeting ADA Title II standards requires a strategic, proactive approach. This advanced session will explore common compliance challenges, best practices for inclusive digital content, and real-world case studies where accessibility gaps led to legal and reputational risks. Attendees will learn practical strategies for auditing websites, documents, and social media, ensuring multimedia accessibility, and seamlessly integrating accessibility into content workflows.

*Presenter: Matisse Hamel-Nelis, Owner (Matisse Nelis Consulting)*

### **Simple Strategy: Communicate Effectively (1:15-2:15)**

This hands-on workshop introduces a practical and adaptable approach to communication planning, enabling agencies to formulate, refine, and execute effective strategies. Participants will learn the AMMO method (Audiences, Messages, Methods, Objectives), a proven framework used by organizations across government, nonprofits, corporate, and educational sectors. By prioritizing audiences, setting measurable objectives, developing compelling messaging, and selecting the most effective methods for distribution and engagement, participants will have a clear, actionable strategy to enhance their communication efforts and achieve meaningful results.

*Presenter: Sean D. Williams, M.A., Associate Teaching Professor, Media and Communication (Bowling Green State University)*

### **Unlocking Digital Communication Success with Canva Hacks (2:30-3:30)**

Join us for an engaging session designed specifically for Ohio's county developmental disability professionals! Discover Canva hacks to create stunning visuals effortlessly for outreach, staff training, or community engagement. Learn how to leverage different tools to amplify your county's impact, streamline communication, and enhance advocacy efforts. Don't miss this chance to elevate your digital strategy and better serve people with developmental disabilities!

*Presenter: Melanie Farkas, Director of Integrated Marketing (Burgie MediaFusion)*

### **Lights, Camera, Impact: Creating Social Media Videos That Resonate (3:45-4:45)**

Do you want to create social media videos that genuinely connect with your target audience? This session will guide you! Learn the best practices for crafting engaging, accessible, and impactful video content that speaks directly to your audience. Discover the top tools and strategies, including how to maximize Canva's video features for easy, professional-looking content. From storytelling techniques to straightforward editing tips, you'll leave with actionable insights to enhance engagement and raise awareness of your county's services. Get ready to create videos that inform, inspire, and empower!

*Presenter: Barb Burgie, Owner (Burgie MediaFusion)*

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Day 2: Friday, May 9

## Track: Health, Safety, and Wellness

### **Empowering Adults with DD Through Literacy (10:00-11:00)**

The ability to read is essential for independence, yet only 23% of adults with disabilities in the U.S. have basic literacy skills. For those with developmental disabilities, the rates are even lower. From reading medication labels to navigating public spaces, literacy impacts health, safety, employment, and overall well-being. This session will explore the urgent need for stronger literacy support and highlight the success of Adult Literacy Ohio. Key findings from a statewide survey conducted in partnership with OCALI will be shared, along with participant stories that illustrate the program's impact. A collaborative county board partnership model will also be featured, demonstrating how increased literacy access can enhance inclusion and opportunity.

*Presenter: Rachel Heibler, Program Manager, Adult Literacy Ohio (Elevate DD), Kari Jones, President & CEO (ElevateDD)*

### **Understanding Mental Health Risks and the 988 Lifeline for People with DD (11:15-12:15)**

People with disabilities face an increased risk of suicide and mental health challenges, yet these issues are often overlooked. This session will explore key risk factors, with a special focus on the intersection of autism and mental health. Attendees will gain insights into the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline as a vital resource for people with I/DD, caregivers, and providers. The session will cover general and disability-specific mental health risk factors, strategies for raising 988 awareness, the role of suicide prevention coalitions, and practical tools to support both people with DD and employees. Participants will leave with actionable steps to enhance mental health support and crisis intervention within their communities.

*Presenters: Doug Jackson, OhioMHAS 988 Administrator (Ohio MHAS), Mary Wolff, MS, OCPC ICPS (Hamilton County Suicide Prevention Coalition)*

### **Evan's Voice: Abuse from a Parent's Perspective (1:15-2:15) Hybrid**

For any parent, discovering their child has been abused—especially by someone trusted—is devastating. Nicole Moehring, author of *Evan's Voice* and *Evan & Gillian Say*, became a fierce advocate after her son Evan, who has developmental disabilities, was abused and failed by protective systems. Committed to driving change, Nicole will explore the need for stronger protections, barriers to justice people with DD often experience, and the urgent need for prevention and advocacy tools to build safer communities.

*Presenter: Nicole Moehring, Founder (Voices of Change)*

### **Elements of a Healthy HRC (2:30-3:30)**

Navigating Human Rights Committee (HRC) meetings can often feel overwhelming—especially when seeking approval for restrictive measures. Understanding what qualifies as a restriction, how to justify its necessity, and ensuring compliance with regulations are critical challenges. This session will provide a comprehensive guide to developing and maintaining a strong, effective HRC. Attendees will explore rule requirements, best practices for consistency, and key elements for fostering a fair, transparent, and person-centered approach. Gain the knowledge and confidence needed to navigate HRC meetings with clarity and purpose.

*Presenter: Jeanne Stuntz, President and Owner (Dynamic Pathways, Inc.)*

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Day 2: Friday, May 9

## Track: Community Integration

### **Building Connections: Empowering People through the Inclusion Seekers Program**

**(10:00-11:00) Hybrid**

Starfire's Inclusion Seekers program is dedicated to reducing social isolation for people with developmental disabilities by fostering meaningful community relationships. This session will explore the innovative approach of Inclusion Seekers, highlighting how the program works alongside people with DD, families, neighbors, and service providers to create environments where people are celebrated for their gifts rather than their disabilities. Attendees will gain insights into collaborative strategies, the impact of social connectivity, and how such programs are transforming communities.

*Presenters: Jan Goings, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, and Carol Combs, Family Network Coordinator (Starfire)*

### **Enhancing Quality in Adult Day Services: The DODD Pilot Program Experience (11:15-12:15)**

This session will explore DODD's Adult Day Services (ADS) Quality Pilot Project, aimed at assessing and improving care quality. Presenters will share key findings, challenges, and successes, emphasizing collaboration with providers, families, and those receiving support. Attendees will learn how continuous feedback drives meaningful outcomes and the pilot's impact on statewide service delivery.

*Presenters: Kelly Schuck, Community Life Engagement Project Manager, and Anne Tapia, Community Life Engagement Project Manager (DODD)*

### **Choice, Control, and Community: Enhancing Lives Through Self-Directed Waiver Services**

**(1:15-2:15)**

Since launching the SELF Waiver in 2012, Ohio has been a leader in self-direction, empowering people with disabilities to take control of their services and live more independently. This session will highlight the evolution of self-directed services, key milestones in expanding choice and flexibility, and the impact on those who use them. Presenters will also explore opportunities for continued growth, innovation, and ways to strengthen self-direction across the state.

*Presenters: Nyoka Craddolph, Asst. Deputy Director (DODD), Dana Charlton, Executive Director (OSDA), Steve Oster, Superintendent (Knox/Coshocton DD) Nancy Richards, Executive Director (Clearwater COG), Kathy Brunton, SSA Director (Mahoning DD), Elizabeth Beu (Franklin County)*

### **OACB Executive Development Program: Celebrating Innovation and Leadership in Developmental Disabilities (2:30-3:30)**

The OACB Executive Development Program Showcase is the culmination of a year-long collaboration in which emerging leaders tackle key challenges in Ohio's developmental disabilities system. Through their capstone projects, participants developed innovative, strategic solutions to pressing issues such as healthcare access, accessible housing, and transportation. This session will feature winning presentations that highlighted bold ideas and leadership in advancing sustainable, person-centered services. Join us to celebrate these changemakers, gain valuable insights, and explore the future of developmental disabilities services in Ohio.

*Presenters: 2024 OACB Executive Development Program Graduates — Capstone Project Awards: Most Practical, Most Creative, and Best Overall*

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## Track: Children and Families

### **Inclusive Leadership Fellows Tackle Problems of Practice (10:00-11:00)**

Experts in early intervention, preschool special education, and school-age special education have collaborated to address common challenges in supporting children with disabilities from birth through third grade. This session will feature a dynamic, fast-paced presentation from six leadership fellows, highlighting key insights, innovative solutions, and best practices developed through their work. Attendees will gain valuable strategies for improving services and outcomes for young children and their families.

*Presenters: Moderator - Wendy Grove, Senior Advisor for Research, Evaluation, and Impact (ODCY)*

*Panelists: Erin Reynolds, Hudson City Schools (Hudson, Ohio), Jamie Sadowski, Akron Public Schools (Akron, Ohio), Jessica Hogan, Akron Public Schools (Akron, Ohio), Katie Rankin, Zanesville City Schools (Zanesville, Ohio), Shayleigh Holbrook, Summit Country Day School (Cincinnati, Ohio), and Shelly Engram, Child Care Provider (Hamilton, Ohio)*

### **Fentanyl Exposure, Overdose Recognition, and Naloxone Use (11:15-12:15)**

With the rise of illicit fentanyl, accidental exposure poses serious risks to children and families in home and community-based settings. This session will provide critical information on how opioid exposure can occur, the signs of overdose in infants and young children, and the immediate steps caregivers and Early Intervention providers should take in response. Attendees will also learn about the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to reduce exposure risks. Gain the knowledge and tools needed to recognize, prevent, and respond to opioid-related emergencies in young children.

*Presenter: Devin Quinn, Program Manager (Community Harm Reduction Bureau of Health Improvement and Wellness)*

### **Supporting Early Learners with IEPs: How Learning Aid Ohio Can Help (1:15-2:15)**

COVID-19 greatly impacted all students but students with disabilities faced immense challenges shifting to virtual learning during the early days of the pandemic. Ohio, being a leader and great advocate for our most vulnerable students, stepped up to create Learning Aid Ohio, a collaboration between ElevateDD and the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce. Learning Aid Ohio provides students with IEP funding for in-person, supplemental learning support.

*Presenter: Kelsey Frobeen, Program Manager (Learning Aid Ohio), Kari Jones, President and CEO (Elevate DD)*

### **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: Partnerships and Foundations (2:30-3:30) Hybrid**

This session will provide a practical look at Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) services, highlighting their benefits for children, families, and service professionals. Participants will explore how IECMH supports and enhances existing early intervention efforts, with real-world examples illustrating its impact.

*Presenter: Misty Cole, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Program Manager (ODCY)*

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Day 2: Friday, May 9

## Track: Fiscal Sustainability

### **Enhancing Decision-Making: Technology Tools for Business Managers (10:00-11:00)**

Business managers play a key role in generating reports that drive informed decision-making. This session will explore essential software and technology tools that streamline data collection, enhance accuracy, and improve reporting efficiency. Presenters will share best practices for leveraging these tools to create reliable, actionable insights that support financial and operational success.

*Presenters: Shane Smith, Director of IT (Licking DD), Alan Potter, Data Specialist (Wood DD)*

### **Clearing the Fog: Collaborating with SSA on Waiver Financial Planning (11:15-12:15) Hybrid**

Waiver planning at the local level can be unpredictable, with unforeseen challenges often shifting the course of decision-making. While some aspects are predictable, others require flexibility and proactive collaboration. This session brings together perspectives from Business Managers and SSAs to highlight the importance of regular joint discussions in navigating waiver planning effectively. Presenters will share strategies for improving communication, aligning financial and service planning, and ensuring better outcomes for those receiving support.

*Presenters: Christy Bugher, Business Services Director and Joseph Badell, Community Services Director (Darke DD)*

### **Effective Waiver Planning: Ensuring Accuracy and Accountability (1:15-2:15)**

Accurate and up-to-date information is essential for effective waiver planning, especially given the critical role of match funds in county board budgets. With DODD accountable to ODM and CMS, precision in planning and reporting is more important than ever. This session will cover key elements of sound financial planning, strategies for maintaining accurate data, and best practices for reporting to ensure compliance and sustainability.

*Presenters: Clay Weidner, Division of Fiscal Administration (DODD), Neil Townsend, Director of Budget and Administrative Services (Hamilton County DD)*

### **Understanding Stop Loss: Development, Implementation, and Future Impact (2:30-3:30)**

Members of the Waiver Sustainability Workgroup will provide an in-depth look at the development and implementation of the Stop Loss Program, created in collaboration with county boards and DODD. This session will outline the program's purpose, eligibility criteria, and operational framework—both at launch and as it evolves. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how the program supports waiver sustainability and its long-term impact on financial planning and service stability.

*Presenters: Michele Geiss, Superintendent (Richland DD), Neil Townsend, Director of the Office of Budget and Administrative Operations (Hamilton DD)*

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