



September 10, 2021

We write to you today to start an important conversation about the ability of Ohio's developmental disability service delivery system to continue meeting your needs in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Our system has been struggling with a workforce crisis for a long time. Unfortunately, with the end of the pandemic now predicted to be much later than we expected due to the Delta variant and other factors, and with direct support professionals (DSPs) leaving our field for jobs in other industries that have significantly increased their wages to attract new employees (like restaurants, retail stores, warehouses, and others), our system is entering a new, much more difficult phase of its workforce shortage.

Examples of actions that some DD service providers have recently had to take because they don't have enough employees to support them include:

- No longer accepting new people for services (also called "closing the front door");
- Ending services to some people they already serve because their level of need can't be met with the agency's current staff;
- Creating waiting lists for some services (such as residential/Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), Homemaker Personal Care, vocational and adult day hab, transportation, and others);
- Completely shutting doors and/or closing homes.

Our system's leaders, including the Ohio General Assembly, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, Ohio's 88 County Boards of DD, and thousands of DD service providers, have taken several action steps in response to these staffing shortages:

- Many providers have slashed all non-staffing expenses to significantly raise DSP and nursing wages.
- The Ohio General Assembly has allocated state funds to allow for a 4% rate increase for DD services when it passed its most recent two-year State Operating Budget earlier this year.
- County boards of DD across the state have provided millions of dollars in grants, resources, and—at times—even loaned their professional staff to provide direct care for people in need.

Unfortunately, these efforts are not yet enough to fix this problem. We will need your help to ensure our system can continue to meet everyone's needs.

The following are some ways you can help:

- **We are asking for your patience.** It has taken our system years to reach this point. It is going to take time and planning to work our way out of this crisis.
- **We are asking for your support.** Talk with your county board SSA about how this crisis might impact your ability to accomplish the goals in your plan. If you feel comfortable, check in with your provider and ask how they are coping with the current workforce crisis. Ask if there are ways you can help.
- **We are asking for your partnership.** Partner with your county boards and providers during the planning process to come up with creative solutions that can meet your needs with fewer staff by reading this guide (www.oacbdds.org/workingtogether).

This letter is only the beginning of our long journey with you. We will continue to keep you informed as to how you can be involved in this discussion as we move forward.

We look forward to working closely with you to ensure a bright future for all people with developmental disabilities and their families in Ohio.