Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Summer 2026 Newsletter

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Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities

From the desk for Superintendent Larry Gray

It is hard to believe it is already July, and the year is going by so quickly. Here at the county board, we are experiencing many changes in our system. As we transition from legacy programs like the preschool, we are excited to announce new services we have been able to start this year like our mobile changing trailer and our new Multi System Youth (MSY) home. Many times, when a door closes, there are new doors that will open. I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and as always, thank you for your ongoing support of our county board.

Larry Gray
Superintendent

Fayette Progressive Preschool – Bright Futures Begin with New Beginnings

After many meaningful years of service to children and families in our community, Fayette Progressive Preschool has officially closed its doors at the conclusion of the 2025–2026 school year. This marks the end of an era for a program that has touched countless lives through education, inclusion, and family support.

Although the preschool program has concluded, the Board's commitment to children and families remains unchanged. We recognize that transitions can bring both uncertainty and opportunity, and we are dedicated to ensuring continued support in ways that best meet the evolving needs of our community. Moving forward, Miami Trace Local School District will reestablish preschool services, while Washington Court House City Schools is expanding preschool programming and will operate out of the Starting Gate Facility. The students' transition back to their home district allows a seamless educational experience as they grow.

The Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities extends its deepest gratitude to the dedicated staff, families, and community partners who helped make this program a success. Together, we created a learning environment where children of all abilities were supported, encouraged, and celebrated. The impact of this work will continue to be felt for many years to come.

While we reflect with pride on the legacy of Fayette Progressive Preschool, we are equally focused on the future. This transition opens the door for new partnerships, innovative support models, and expanded opportunities for children to thrive within their local communities.

We are looking forward to new beginnings with the same commitment to support every child to reach their full potential.

Service and Support Administration

Starting Strong: Understanding the Intake Process at FCBDD

First Contact: Reaching Out - The intake journey begins with a phone call or inquiry. Staff gather details about needs, services, school involvement, and guardianship to guide families through next steps.

Step Two: Intake Packet - An intake packet is sent to the person or family. Once returned, staff review it for completeness and follow up on missing information.

Gathering Documentation - Supporting documents such as evaluations, psychological assessments, and diagnoses are collected, often with staff assistance.

Eligibility Determination - An eligibility evaluator reviews all information, verifies diagnosis, and determines eligibility. Applicants are notified of the outcome.

If Eligible: What Comes Next - An SSA is assigned to begin service planning and connect the person to supports and resources.

If Not Eligible - Written notification, appeal rights, and referrals to alternative resources are sent to the person via email, mail or hand delivery.

Our Commitment - FCBDD is committed to a respectful, person-centered intake process, supporting individuals and families every step of the way.

Congratulations Chance! Chance graduated from Miami Trace High School as part of the Class of 2026. We are so proud of Chance. Chance is ready to start his next chapter exploring new opportunities and interests with the support of his loved ones and services through the Fayette County Board.

Matthew has had a busy year! He finished his first year of high school, participated in Special Olympics Bowling, and continued equine therapy at Dreams 2 Reality in Good Hope. Matthew enjoys his time with Cowboy!

OOD Mobile Services Unit Visits Fayette DD

Highlighting innovative tools and building future partnerships

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Mobile Services Unit visited the Fayette DD offices on Wednesday, June 17, offering staff and community partners an inside look at the resources the unit brings to job seekers. Representatives from OOD highlighted how they engage individuals at every skill level through hands-on activities designed to spark interest in employment.

A highlight of the visit was the demonstration of *Works4Me*, a virtual reality program that simulates real-world job tasks. Three participants from Goodwill's Vocational Rehabilitation program tested the VR experience as oil change technicians, giving them the chance to explore the job in a realistic environment—without getting their hands dirty.

OOD staff also shared the many ways the Mobile Services Unit can support community organizations. The unit can function as a mobile medical screening office, a workspace for hiring events and career readiness activities, or an accessible meeting space. OOD is actively seeking partnerships to bring the Mobile Unit into communities for public use.

The visit sparked meaningful conversations about collaboration and opened the door to future opportunities to support job seekers across the region.

Self-Directed Transportation: Independence and Opportunities

Access to reliable transportation plays a critical role in promoting independence, community involvement, and overall quality of life. For individuals enrolled in the Medicaid Waiver Program, Self-Directed Transportation offers a flexible and empowering solution.

What is Self-Directed Transportation?

Self-Directed Transportation is a Home and Community-Based Waiver Service available to individuals who have an assessed need for transportation assistance. Through this service, a person works with their Service and Support Administrator (SSA) to identify their specific transportation needs and evaluate their ability to safely and effectively use public cab services or other certified transportation providers.

Unlike traditional transportation supports that depend on staff schedules or the availability of family and friends, Self-Directed Transportation allows individuals to arrange rides according to their own plans and timelines. This increased flexibility helps reduce reliance on paid supports while promoting greater independence.

With Self-Directed Transportation, individuals can participate more fully in everyday activities that matter most to them. This service opens the door to increased choice, autonomy, and community engagement, such as transportation to work, to go shopping and run errands, connection to friends and church, and eating out at a restaurant.

The Self-Directed Transportation service is more than just a ride—it is a pathway to greater independence and self-determination. By giving individuals control over when and how they travel, this service removes barriers, expands opportunities, and supports people living more connected and fulfilling lives. Here are a few ways this service is helping people:

Clarence has been using Self-Directed Transportation for several years. He uses this service to use the local cab company to get to work and go to places around town. Having transportation available to him makes him feel more confident in getting to the job he loves

Buffy relies on Self-Directed Transportation to keep her connected to professional engagements with advocacy meetings, trainings, and conferences, along with going to the YMCA, visiting her Aunt, going shopping, and running errands. Buffy values being independent to go places on her own and not having to rely on others. Having this ability makes her feel more positive.

Matthew uses Self-Directed Transportation to pay for his cab service to get to work at Taco Bell, to go to the store and out to eat. For Matthew, having reliable transportation for work is important to him, so that he has extra income to pursue his love for photography.

Deaf Community Resource Center: Helping Others Directly and Indirectly

The Deaf Community Resource Center (DCRC) is making a meaningful impact in Fayette County by connecting individuals to opportunities that extend far beyond a single interaction. Through direct support to one individual, those benefits are being shared and multiplied throughout the community.

Erica has participated in many DCRC events over the past year and is a consistent attendee at the monthly "Silent Dinner." This event provides her with an opportunity to connect with other American Sign Language (ASL) users while strengthening her communication skills. Erica can take part in these experiences with the support of her provider, Friends of Leroy Brown.

Her involvement with the Deaf Community Resource Center has significantly increased her confidence. According to her provider, Erica now helps others with similar abilities learn and use ASL and even assists staff members. As her provider shared, "She has amazing patience as a teacher!"

Erica's story highlights how access to resources and participation in meaningful activities can have a ripple effect—empowering one individual while positively influencing many others.

For more information, visit dcrcohio.org

Making a Difference in the Community

Kyler is making a meaningful impact in the community through his dedication to helping others. Inspired by his family and guided by his faith, Kyler has developed a strong commitment to service and compassion.

Over the past year, Kyler has become actively involved in volunteer work throughout the community. At Copper Knoll Nursing Home, he supports the activities department, where his outgoing and caring personality helps create a welcoming and engaging environment for residents. He takes time to connect with individuals, ensuring they feel valued, supported, and heard.

Kyler also volunteers at the Hands of Christ Food Pantry, where he helps serve individuals and families in need. His contributions include unloading and organizing deliveries, as well as assisting with a variety of tasks to support the pantry's mission of providing essential food and supplies to the community.

His passion for helping others began at a young age. According to his mother, Pam Thornburg, Kyler started assembling and distributing care packages and blankets to individuals in need when he was just seven years old, a reflection of the compassion that continues to guide him today.

Kyler's kindness, positive energy, and dedication make him a valued member of the community. His efforts help strengthen Washington Court House and the surrounding area, and we are proud to recognize his continued commitment to making a difference.

Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow Early Intervention

EARLY INTERVENTION

Helping children and families wherever they choose to live, play, and spend their day.

Transitions, Community & What's Ahead

School's Out, But We're Still in!

This summer, our Early Intervention team continues to stay actively connected with families and community partners. We are supporting smooth transitions from EI for our program graduates by continuing to collaborate closely with local school districts through transition meetings - ensuring children and families feel prepared for the next steps in their journey. Pre-school? Daycare? Out-patient therapies?
- Let's talk about it!

Welcome Katie Fouch, a familiar face in a new role!

EI Program Director

EARLY INTERVENTION Continued

www..ohioearlyintervention.org

Katie Fouch, Developmental Specialist, EI Program Director

Katie brings 10 years of EI experience between Highland & Fayette counties. Her passion for Early Intervention began over 12 years ago after her daughter spent her first seven months of life in the hospital. Coming home with a medically fragile child, she welcomed the support of her local Early Intervention program. Through nearly two and a half years as an EI parent, she gained a deep appreciation for the meaningful impact these services had on her child and family inspiriting her to do the same for others. Katie is dedicated to supporting both families and colleagues, with a focus on fostering team growth, process improvement and ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality, compassionate services within the community.

SCAN ME!

Learn More about your local EI Program!

We're moving to 1330 Robinson Rd, WCH

As our staff prepare for an upcoming office move, we will be pausing our community playgroups for the time being, but look forward to resuming them soon in our new location! We appreciate your understanding and look forward to reconnecting with families in our new space!

LOCALLY GROWN
FAYETTE COUNTY COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER

We are excited to partner with Fayette County Public Health and other local community partners in hosting the 2026 Fayette County Community Baby Shower, on Thursday August the 26th from 11 a.m to 1 p.m. The event will be held at the WCH middle school and is designed to provide essential baby supplies and support to families who are welcoming our newest little community members into their homes.

Community Baby Shower Committee Pictured Above

Special Olympics

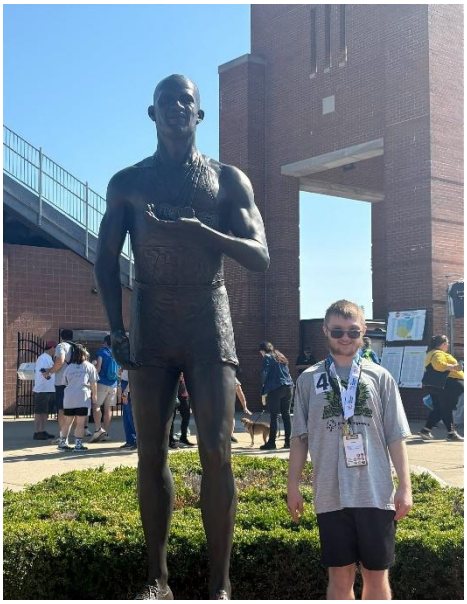
The Fayette County Dragons have had great success in the past few months. The bowling team consisted of seventy-eight bowlers, which was the most that ever participated. Our track athletes earned four gold medals, in the areas of softball throw and the 50-meter dash. Several other Fayette County athletes reached the podium as well in the 100-meter dash, the long jump and softball throw.

Our D1 flag football team won the state championships for the seventh year in a row! Our D3 team finished third in regional competition.

The Dragons unified softball team finished second at the state finals. The traditional team finished second at the regional competition.

The basketball D3 team finished second in the region.

We are proud of all our athletes for their continued focus on their sports and their sportsmanship towards others!



Let me win.
But if I cannot win,
let me be brave
in the attempt.
- Special Olympics athlete oath

Community First

Fayette County Youth Build Confidence and Workplace Skills Through 2026 Summer Program

Fayette County teens spent their summer gaining valuable experience and preparing for future work life through the 2026 Summer Youth Work Program. Organized by the Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Community First Department in collaboration with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities—offered paid, hands-on employment opportunities for local youth ages 14 to 20.

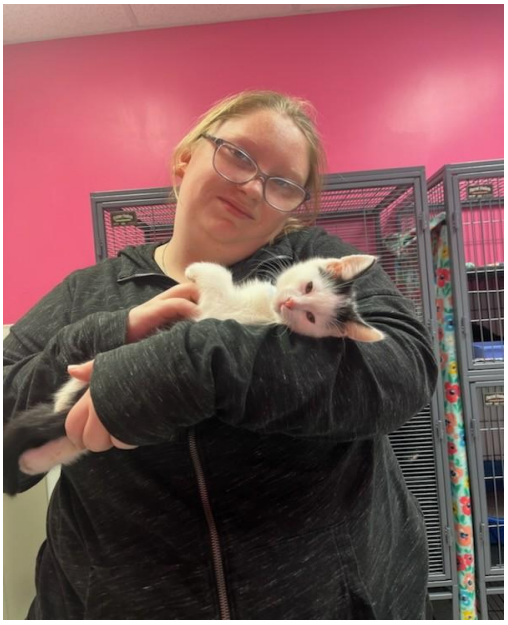
Participants earned minimum wage while working at businesses throughout the county, where they received guidance from coaches and contributed to daily operations. These partnerships allowed students to explore real workplace expectations while providing employers with extra help during the busy summer season at no cost.

The program ran from May 26 through June 26 and included 6 students placed at a variety of community worksites. This year's locations included the Fayette County Humane Society, Fayette County Dog Wardens, and Carriage Court Senior Living Facility.

Throughout the month-long experience, students took on a wide range of responsibilities—maintenance work, landscaping, painting, debris cleanup, animal care and general facility care such as sweeping, mopping, and sanitizing restrooms. These tasks helped participants strengthen their work ethic, learn to manage their time, and practice accountability, all essential skills for future employment.

The program ties into broader career preparation efforts. In addition to the summer work experience, FCBDD provides Pre-Employment Transition Services and Job Development Services to help young people build a strong foundation for long-term success.

Thanks to the support of local businesses and community partners, the 2026 Summer Youth Work Program once again made a meaningful impact. The organizations that opened their doors played a key role in mentoring and shaping the next generation of Fayette County's workforce.



Hopeful Horizons

Making tomorrow a brighter place

Hopeful Horizons (multi-system youth respite care home) opened its doors May 1, 2026. Located in Greenfield, Hopeful Horizons is centrally located, which leads to its ease of accessibility by the agencies involved. A true collaborative effort put in motion by the Clinton, Fayette and Highland County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, Fayette and Highland Job and Family Services and the Paint Valley ADAMH Board. Through the combination of local dollars and the ENGAGE grant through the Department of Behavioral Health, Hopeful Horizons has already begun making a meaningful impact for youth and families across the region.

Hopeful Horizons provides both short-term respite care and emergency placement for children experiencing significant stressors or involvement across systems. Through a trauma-informed approach, trained staff create a stable, supportive environment where youth can feel safe, build trusting relationships, and begin to regulate during times of crisis or transition. Each youth and their family complete an intake process that helps identify goals to guide respite care.

In the first month and half, Hopeful Horizons has received over twenty referrals for youth from Clinton, Fayette and Highland Counties, reflecting both the regional need and the effectiveness of a shared, multi-county model. Early successes include strong engagement from partner agencies in our monthly Core Team meetings as well as providing meaningful support for families. Hopeful Horizons hopes to lay the foundation for stronger long-term outcomes across the communities it serves.

Interested in more information? Send an email to hopefulhorizons@fchcdd.org or complete a referral here.

Mobile Changing Station Brings Greater Accessibility and Inclusion to the Community

For many individuals with significant physical disabilities, attending community events, festivals, fairs, and public gatherings can be challenging due to the lack of appropriate changing facilities. The mobile changing station addresses this barrier by providing a clean, secure, and accessible environment, allowing individuals and their caregivers to participate more fully in community life. Accessible facilities such as these promote independence, dignity, and equal opportunities for everyone.

This important project was made possible through a collaborative partnership among the Highland County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities, South Central Power Company, The Community Foundation of Ohio's Electric Cooperatives, and the Highland County Community Foundation. Their shared commitment to accessibility and community inclusion has transformed a need into a meaningful resource that will benefit residents and visitors throughout the region. The project reflects the growing recognition that accessibility should extend beyond ramps and parking spaces. True inclusion means ensuring that all people have access to the supports and accommodations they need to enjoy community experiences. By investing in a mobile changing station, local organizations and community

The mobile changing station stands as a powerful reminder that inclusion matters—and that accessibility benefits the entire community. By removing barriers and creating opportunities for participation, this partnership is making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and families throughout the region. For more information or to schedule the station at your community event, please contact the county board office.

Highland County
Board Of
Developmental Disabilities

Fayette County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

South Central
Power Co.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Highland County
Community Fund
An affiliate of the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES