

WAYNE COUNTY BOARD OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

2026
ANNUAL
STRATEGIC
PLAN

January 1 to December 31, 2026

ADOPTED BY THE WAYNE COUNTY BOARD OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
December 9, 2025

Table of Contents

Component of the Organization	Page
Introduction to the Wayne County Board of DD 2026 Annual Strategic Plan	3
Table of Organization	4
Mission Statement	5
Vision Statement	5-6
Financial Consideration	6
Public Notice	6
Public Hearing	7-8
Public Input	9
Goal Summary	10-15
Enrollment Data	16
2025 In Review	
Administration	17
Service and Support Administration	17-18
Person Centered Planning	18
Provider Development	18
Waiver Waiting Lists and Support Needs	18
Ida Sue School	18-20
Early Intervention and Home Visiting	20
Community Transitions	20-21
Nursing/Health Services	21
Technology	22
Transportation	22

Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Introduction to the 2026 Plan

This Annual Strategic Plan is developed in compliance with section 5126 of the Ohio Revised Code and Section 5123 of the Ohio Administrative Code. The Plan will be adopted by the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities at its December 9, 2025, Board meeting. This Plan represents input provided by the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities employees, parents and guardians of enrollees, enrollees, residential providers, public schools, agencies, Board and members of the Wayne County community.

A public hearing was conducted on Friday, December 5, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to solicit public input and comments to the plan.

Although it is not possible to address every area of need, this Plan represents what is considered to be the priority needs that must be addressed by the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities during 2026. Some of the goals and action steps contained in the plan are a result of information and recommendations resulting from our Ohio Department of DD Accreditation review and annual self-reviews.

The goals and action steps are subject to change; modification and deletion during the year may be made at the discretion of the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Additional goals and action steps may be added to this plan at the discretion of the Board.

The approval of this plan does not indicate the obligation of the Board to fund each component of the Plan. Although an effort has been made to assign financial resources to each area, the Board is not obligated to expend those resources without further discussion and details concerning the expenditures. The resources assigned to each component are an estimate of expenses. During 2026, it will be necessary to budget conservatively in an effort to extend the life of the levy and aggressively seek all available federal resources. We must be aware of the impact of the current economic condition of our community, state, and country as we develop the goals and objectives that we plan to achieve.

This Plan provides a direction for the program. To be successful this plan will require further discussion and detail. There must also be enough flexibility to allow change based on the judgment of the Board.

Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities
 Board: Kathy Helmuth, MD Leticia Fatzinger, Mary Ann Frantz, Elizabeth Krieder Wright, Paul McGhee, Melodie Stroud

Superintendent (Shared)
 Dave Ashley

Assistant Superintendent (Shared)
 Ken Kelly

Office Manger
 Terri Heffelfinger

Investigative Agent Supervisor
 Darlene Pido

Director of Education
 Jennifer Chong

Early Childhood Supervisor (Shared)
 Patti Baumgartner

Service and Support Admin Director
 Sarah Carter

Business Director (Shared)
 Kim Meehan

Community Transitions Manager
 Patrick Johns

Operations Director
 Mary Jo Starr

Investigative Agent
 (1)

Administrative Assistant
 Patti Schattschneider

Intervention Specialists
 (5)

Intervention Specialist Assistant
 (11)

Physical Therapist Assistant
 (1)

Speech Therapist
 (1)

Occupational Therapist
 (Also Early Childhood)

Nurse Manager
 (1)

Home Visiting Supervisor
 Krista Fitzsimmons

Home Visitors
 (3)

Assistant Supervisor/Service Coordinator
 Payton Viator

Service Coordinators
 (5)

Developmental Specialist
 (2)

Speech Therapist
 (1)

Physical Therapist
 (1)

SSA Supervisor
 Chris Yurick

Administrative Assistant
 Julie Stephens

Intake and Eligibility Coordinator
 (1)

Service and Support Administrators
 (19)

Medicaid Services and Provider Support Coordinator
 (1)

Senior Finance Analyst
 (1)

Payroll and Benefits Manager
 (1)

IT Manager
 (1)

Records Retention Office
 (1)

Records Clerk
 (1)

Transition Coordinator
 (2)

Transportation Supervisor
 Bob Dailey

Bus Drivers
 (6)

Transportation Maintenance Technician
 (1)

Maintenance Technician
 (1)

School Nurse
 LPN

Mission Statement

The mission of the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities, in partnership with enrollees, families, staff, and the community, is to provide choice and options based on individual and family preferences enabling a quality of life satisfying to the individual in learning, living, working, and participation in the community.

The above mission statement is in alignment with what is occurring both statewide and nationally with respect to community integration and the resurgence and state by state review by the Department of Justice of the Olmstead Decision of 1999. It is also inherent in the mission statement and Olmstead Decision that a County board must be efficient and effective in their use of public funds, while maintaining choice and providing options for as many people with intellectual disabilities as possible while maintaining health and Safety. The WCBDD continues to strive to fulfill our mission through new creative and collaborating initiatives with our community partners to provide the best services possible.

Vision Statement

The Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities exists to serve Wayne County children and adults with Developmental Disabilities. This is accomplished by providing comprehensive programs in the areas of early childhood, pre-school, school age, adult services, service coordination, behavior support, residential services, family support, and transportation services. To fulfill this vision, it is necessary to employ a strong dedicated staff committed to recognizing the rights and embracing the responsibility for meeting the individual needs of each enrollee. It necessitates providing resources that enable employees to complete their tasks in the most efficient and effective manner possible. It requires a community that is supportive of the program including its policies, practices, staff, administration, and Board. Most importantly, it requires everyone to have a consistent desire to enable persons with Developmental Disabilities to be responsible, make informed choices, indicate their preferences and desires, and to work toward maximizing their independence through self-determination.

With each of the ingredients listed above and using a comprehensive annual planning process, the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities will move toward:

- ◆ Assisting individuals served with making responsible informed choices and maximizing independence through self-determination without sacrificing health and safety.
- ◆ Providing supervision that ensures the health and safety of the individual.
- ◆ Providing services and support through the Individual Family Support Plan, Individual Education Plan, and Individual Service Plan process that meets the needs of each individual served and results in the development of a Plan that addresses each aspect of the person's life.
- ◆ Providing a safe and healthy environment.
- ◆ Providing quality assurance in the provision of services to children and adults with Developmental Disabilities.
- ◆ Demonstrating accountability through individual and program accomplishments and outcomes that address the preferences, choices, and needs of children and adults with Developmental Disabilities and their families.

- ◆ Working in partnership with educational systems, industries and companies, families, and community agencies to maximize services to children and adults with developmental disabilities in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment.
- ◆ Providing leadership, information, and services for all children and adults with developmental disabilities, their families, and the Wayne County community.
- ◆ Increasing awareness about the Bill of Rights for persons with developmental disabilities.
- ◆ Making residential housing a reality through careful team planning, implementation of the various Medicaid Waiver programs, acquisition of property, and program development that addresses the needs of the individual in the area of home and personal care and independent living.
- ◆ Providing safe and dependable transportation for enrollees using a well-trained and dependable staff.
- ◆ Providing a positive behavior support system that is directed at protecting the individual from harm and enhancing their quality of life.
- ◆ Providing families with services, supports, and information in order that they might live in a stable home, enjoy membership in a family, participate in the life of their community, and experience enduring relationships with family and friends.
- ◆ Embracing a zero reject policy by allowing all individuals who chose to receive services through the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities the best in scope and quality of services.
- ◆ Providing an effective and efficient program by using the financial resources in a prudent manner.

Financial Consideration

The annual plan will be used for financial decision-making and assigning resources to programs based on a plan to address the preferences and needs of each individual served. The Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities will be held accountable to the people of the Wayne County for providing the best services possible, with the resources available, enabling greater independence for each individual served, providing quality services to people with Developmental Disabilities and their families, maintaining safe and healthy environments, and using financial resources prudently.

Public Notice

Notice of Public Input to the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities Annual Strategic Plan for 2026.

The Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities will hold a public forum on Friday, December 5, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving public input to their 2026 Annual Plan. The Public Forum will be held in the administrative conference room located at 266 Oldman Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691. The public is invited to come in throughout the day to review a draft of the Plan and provide comments and input.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Wayne County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

Friday, December 5, 2025
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Administrative Conference Room
266 Oldman Road, Wooster, Ohio

This hearing allows for public input to the
2026 Annual Strategic Plan

The public is invited to review a draft
of the 2026 Annual Strategic Plan
and provide comments and input

WAYNE COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

December 5, 2025

To: Public Hearing Participants

From: Dave Ashley, Superintendent

Re: Participation in the Public Hearing

Thank you for taking the time to attend the Public Hearing of the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public constituency with the opportunity to view a draft of the 2026 Annual Strategic Plan of the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities and provide comment and input.

Your input and comments are important. Please provide me with your written comments or express your comments to the Administrator who will record them. A record of your comments will be contained in the Annual Strategic Plan document and will be considered as we develop and adopt the 2026 Annual Strategic Plan. Please understand that not all items submitted will be included in the 2026 plan. They will be prioritized and given continuous consideration. The constraints of time and resources prohibit addressing every need in one year.

Again, I thank you for taking the time and interest to assist with the planning process.

Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities

2026 Annual Strategic Plan Public Input December 5, 2025

1.

2.

3.

4.

5

6

7

8

9

GOAL SUMMARY

2026 Goals: Administration - Board Members

To improve services to people with Developmental Disabilities in the areas of early childhood services, school age services, provider development for adult services, service support administration, residential services, transportation services, family support services, and behavior support services with a focus on community inclusion.

To in-service all Board members about their roles and the changes impacting County Boards of Developmental Disabilities especially rules related to Medicaid Services, Employment First, Self-Advocacy and keep the policies of the Board up to date and in compliance with new rules and regulations and accreditation standards.

To acquire all available state and federal resources before seeking additional levy dollars, redevelop appropriate service contracts, and form a long-term plan to transform all programs to meet the needs of the individuals served in a manner conducive to available financial resources and trends in service delivery models.

Persons Responsible: Board Members, Superintendent, Program Administrators

2026 Goals: Administration - Self Advocacy

To provide the resources and information necessary to expand and grow an organization which gives individuals that have a disability the chance to be recognized as a person first by having the opportunity to speak for themselves and to be given the opportunity to learn parliamentary procedures and make decisions about what they want to do with their lives by empowering them to carry out their own plans.

Persons Responsible: Board Members, Superintendent, Program Administrators

2026 Goals: Administration – Staffing

To create an effective service delivery model that allows for the most efficient operation of programs and services utilizing current and future financial resources.

To assess the need of all current positions or the modification of existing positions for the efficient operation of all programs and explore the combination of current positions.

To assess the feasibility of shared services with Ashland County Board of DD and to explore collaboration of services with other Wayne County Departments and school districts.

To continue the succession plan for the Superintendent position to include mentorship and training.

To successfully transition the new Business Director upon the retirement of the previous Business Director to take place the 1st quarter of 2026.

Persons Responsible: Superintendent, Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities

2026 Goals: Administration - Policies and Procedures

To update policies and procedures as needed.

To assess all policies to be sure they are current and in compliance with Ohio Law and Ohio Administrative Code, and determine which policies need to be changed and conduct the research to make the modification to bring the policy up to date.

To write new policy, make adjustments and modifications to current policy, prepare policies for presentation to the Wayne County Board of DD, and have the Board of DD adopt the policies.

Persons Responsible: All Administrators, Administrative Assistant, Superintendent, Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities

2026 Goals: Service Coordination

Collaboration and Expertise Development: SSAs will engage with DODD's regional OhioISP support team and Community Life Engagement Team, including "open office hours," to strengthen expertise in OhioISP writing and implementation. The department will collaborate with regional liaisons to identify additional training opportunities in plan writing and assessment ensuring high-quality, compliant plans.

Quality and Compliance Assurance: SSAs will use an internal OhioISP self-review checklist to ensure plans meet DODD compliance requirements and reflect high-quality person-centered planning. The SSA department will integrate cross-departmental collaboration with the MUI team to ensure risk management and prevention plans are embedded in service planning.

Technology First and Innovative Supports: The SSA Department will explore technological solutions, including remote supports and assistive technology, to meet individual needs. SSAs will pursue training and attend relevant events to expand knowledge of the Technology First initiative and its practical applications.

TCM Alignment and Billing: The SSA Department will align procedures with TCMS best practices and collaborate with the Business Department to ensure accurate and timely billing and documentation, supporting efficiency, compliance, and high-quality service delivery.

Person Centered Planning/Ohio ISP:

SSA's will continue to collaborate with the DODD regional liaison for any additional training needed to continue to develop strong person-centered plans in the Ohio ISP format. The SSA department will invest in training opportunities for SSA's in plan writing and assessing.

SSA's will begin the use of an internal self-review Ohio ISP checklist to ensure compliance requirements are met with the utilization of OhioISP.

The SSA Department will explore the use of technology to assess whether individual needs can be met through remote supports and/or assistive technology before considering other alternatives. SSAs will pursue training opportunities to enhance their knowledge of Technology First initiative by engaging with provider presentations and attending relevant technology events. Additionally, one SSA has been

designated as the Technology Liaison within the department to serve as a point of contact for technology-related inquiries and support.

Provider Support

The WCBDD will support independent providers by offering First Aid/CPR training with CB staff to help meet DODD certification requirements.

The SSA Department will provide training sessions for local independent and agency providers to foster collaboration, deliver technical assistance, and strengthen the provider network to enhance quality programming for the individuals served.

Waiver Waiting Lists and Support Needs

Continue developing an alternative resources list to help SSAs, individuals, and families address identified needs that do not require waiting list placement, and to provide support until waiver enrollment occurs.

Waiting List Assessments: New requests for waiver services or known unmet needs will be initiated through an interview conducted within 15 days by the Assessment Specialist SSA and completed within 45 days, in compliance with DODD regulatory requirements.

Maintain specialized caseloads for children under age 14 to provide targeted, age-appropriate support.

Immediate and Current Needs Waiver Allocation: A total of 12 waivers will be allocated for immediate and current needs in the 2026 budget year. Additionally, replacement waivers will be utilized to support individuals with current needs and address any additional immediate needs that may arise throughout 2026.

Person Responsible: Service and Support Administration staff

2026 Goals: School

Professional Development: Growth Mindset: Foster a culture of continuous learning by engaging all staff in collaboration, ongoing professional development, and reflective practice to strengthen instructional quality and improve student outcomes.

Connection & Community: To strengthen partnerships with local school districts by providing specialized resources, training, and consultation that build capacity for educators to effectively support students with diverse learning and developmental needs.

Student Experience & Inclusion: Expand collaborative academic and social experiences with area schools where all students (disabled and non-disabled) have an opportunity to interact and experience activities like that of typical school-aged children.

Transition: Continue building the framework for the N.E.X.T. Step (transition) program with more community partnerships and opportunities for our students.

Maintain existing community work sites and develop new community work sites to meet transition goals on the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) program to allow students to develop skills necessary for post-graduation employment opportunities (ages 14-22).

Positive Behavior & Intervention Supports (PBIS) – Year 3: Implement consistent, proactive strategies that promote positive behavior, celebrate student successes, and build a safe and respectful culture.

Person Responsible: Director of Educational Services

2026 Goals: EI HV

Early Intervention is working to improve the quality of IFSP outcomes. We are working on strengthening the effectiveness and clarity of outcomes written in the IFSP. To work on this outcome, we will continue to collaborate with the state consultants to align IFSP outcomes with best practices. We will target team training and focus on writing measurable functional outcomes.

Ensure children are referred to Early Intervention services earlier, ideally well before the last six months prior to their third birthday. We are working on strengthening partnerships with doctors' offices, daycares/early head start, and other community partners. Provide training to Community partners on the impact Early Intervention has on children when referrals are made early.

Parents/Caregivers understand parents' rights and the transition process. EI families will be aware of and understand their rights under Early Intervention and the transition to preschool special education services. We will work with families to make sure they have a clear understanding of Parents Rights as they move from an IFSP to their first IEP.

Person Responsible: EI Supervisor/Program Manager

2026 Goals: Community Transition, Support and Outreach

Partner with schools to develop a navigation and transition program to bridge the gap between school to adulthood.

Offer high quality programming to 100 plus students through created and expanded vocational training curriculum.

To maintain and grow relationships with local school districts to grow and encourage independence and choices for all students in both Wayne and Ashland.

Link students and families to the WCBDD for follow along services from school to adulthood.

Build relationships with DD providers and recruit new providers.

Reach out to new manufacturing community businesses.

To foster partnerships with businesses in creating new outcomes and supports all individuals with disabilities.

Expand current programming with businesses to offer internship opportunities for seniors in real life work settings.

Person Responsible: Community Transitions Manager.

2026 Goals: Nursing/Health Services

Nursing Department will continue to provide medication administration and consultation to families and staff members.

Nursing staff will continue to meet the routine medical needs of all students at Ida Sue School.

Nursing Department will assist local school partners when needed to educate and support necessary services to DD eligible children in the public-school systems.

Nurse Manager will designate nursing delegation and oversight as deemed necessary and appropriate for off-site activities

Nursing staff will provide all trainings for Medication Certifications and annual certification renewals, CPR and First Aid, and all Medical Protocol and Procedures for county board staff persons and community partners as necessary and/or requested.

Nursing staff will present and educate staff members on school wellness policy, mandatory trainings such as bloodborne pathogens and seizure protocols.

Person Responsible: Nurse Manager and Nursing Department

2026 Goals: Technology

Continuing support of students, staff, and community through technology services and security while ensuring cost-effective solutions.

Further development of our Security Program to comply with House Bill 96 July 2026 requirements.

Ongoing evaluation of technology agreements and services with critical vendors.

Lifecycle management of computer equipment as needed or out of warranty status.

Persons Responsible: IT Manager, Superintendent

2026 Goals: Transportation

We will continue to develop new and existing relationships with private providers to ensure all transportation needs are met for our enrollees. These relationships will align with our program mission statement.

The Transportation Department will continue to administer the Transportation Portal for use by our Stakeholders as well as review and approve all locally funded transportation invoices.

The Transportation Department will strive to meet the needs of the Ida Sue School and N.E.X.T. Step students as they pursue opportunities for integration within their community.

Our fleet of vehicles will continue to be maintained at the highest level of safety and performance as measured by annual inspections.

Routes will continually be reviewed for any opportunity to reduce ride length and increase comfort for the students.

We will continue to pursue staff training opportunities to ensure our employees have all the tools available to them to provide excellent service to our passengers.

Persons Responsible: Director of Operations, Transportation Supervisor, Superintendent

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

PROGRAM	2025
Early Childhood (EI and Home Visiting)	190
Ida Sue School	25
Transition Services	75
Service Coordination	550
Individuals in system but not receiving services	61
Total Individuals Served	901

2025 In Review

Administration (Board Members)

The Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities is made up of seven members: five appointed by the County Commissioners and two appointed by the Probate Judge. The Board is well aware of the services provided under its direction. It will be necessary to continue to provide in-service training based on the ever-changing role of the Board. The Board will also need to develop a long-range plan, annual plan, upgrade policy, redevelop service contracts, rewrite position descriptions, and define its services to the community.

Administration (Self-Advocacy)

The Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities is dedicated to assisting individuals served with making responsible informed choices and maximizing independence through self-determination without sacrificing health and safety.

Administration (Staffing)

Due to changing requirements resulting from changes in legislation and rule, as well as fluctuating enrollment due to the enrollees' choice in programming, it has become necessary to monitor all staffing levels in each program very closely and only replace positions, which have proved to be operating in the most efficient manner. In addition, there is a need to change the configuration of the administrative team to streamline services to the enrollees.

The school age program has successfully operated one collaborative classroom in the Chippewa Local School District. It is prudent to continue to explore and open additional collaborative classrooms throughout Wayne County when feasible. This allows for freed up space within our own facilities and provides eligible students with a well-rounded education provided in the least restrictive environment.

Prudent to explore opportunities for collaborative or shared services in the school system.

Administration (Policies and Practices)

The current policies and practices of the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities need to be examined and modified to comply with changes in law and rules and regulations. There are some areas of policy that need to be re-written, some that need rescinded, and other policies that need to be brought up to date.

Service and Support Administration (SSA)

The SSA Department is comprised of 24 staff, including 17 caseload SSAs, 1 Assessment Specialist SSA, 1 Intake/Eligibility SSA, 1 SSA Supervisor, 1 Medicaid Services and Provider Support Coordinator, 1 SSA Department Secretary, and 1 SSA Director. The same facility also houses the MUI Department, which includes 1 MUI/IA Supervisor and 1 Investigative Agent. The SSA department supports approximately 556 individuals and families in the Wayne County community across 18 caseloads. The SSA department administers approximately 401 waivers across all caseloads. The Service and Support Administration (SSA) Department plays a vital role in assisting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to understand, access, and coordinate available resources within the community. SSA staff connect people to a wide range of supports, including Medicaid eligibility and applications, residential and housing

options, transportation coordination, employment services and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) referrals, mental health and community agency linkages, and adult day or vocational habilitation programs. SSAs promote and facilitate the health, safety, and independence of each individual served. They determine eligibility for County Board services, conduct needs assessments and develop person-centered plans that reflect the individual's choices and desired outcomes. SSA staff also monitor ongoing service delivery to ensure quality, compliance, and satisfaction.

In 2026, the Service and Support Administration (SSA) Department will focus on person-centered planning, timely eligibility, waiver coordination, and ensuring quality, health, and safety in all services. The department will strengthen collaboration with providers, families, and community partners while using data and feedback to drive continuous improvement and equitable outcomes for individuals served. The SSA Department is focusing on four areas of service coordination: **Person Centered Planning/Ohio ISP, TCMS, Provider Support, and Waiver Enrollment and Alternative/Community Based Services.**

Person Centered Planning/OhioISP

SSAs will utilize the OhioISP format for all Individual Service Plans (ISPs) and continue training from a variety of sources to enhance expertise in person-centered planning and develop outcomes that reflect individuals' goals for learning, living, working, and community participation.

Provider Support

The provider community has experienced a shortage of Direct Care Staff causing some delays in the implementation of services. This includes shortages both in direct care services and transportation.

Waiver Waiting Lists and Support Needs

Since September 1, 2018, SSAs have been utilizing the OAC 5123-9-04: Home and Community-Based Waivers – Waiting List, along with its Appendix: Ohio Assessment for Immediate Need and Current Need. Waiting List Assessments (WLAs) will be initiated within 15 calendar days of a request or identification of an unmet need. WCBDD will complete the WLA within 45 calendar days of the interview and will notify the individual, guardian, or family of the outcome within 10 calendar days of completion. The WLA determines whether an individual has a "current need" or an "immediate need." A "current need" is defined as a need for supports within the next twelve months. Individuals with a current need that cannot be met through local resources will be placed on the Waiting List. Those determined not to have a current need will not be placed on the Waiting List. An "immediate need" is defined as a situation that poses a substantial risk of harm to the individual, caregiver, or others if action is not taken within thirty calendar days to mitigate the risk. For individuals with an immediate need, the county board will take appropriate action, either through local resources or waiver enrollment, to address the situation. SSAs will explore all available community resources to address both current and immediate needs, ensuring individuals receive the necessary supports in a timely manner.

Ida Sue School Services

In the 2025-2026 school year, Ida Sue School serves 25 children affected with multi-disabilities with support in academics, therapies, social skills building, and peer relations: community-based learning activities, vocational experiences, and recreational activities. An additional 2 students are placed in our collaborative classroom in the Chippewa Local School District. The Chippewa classroom integrates students into activities and learning experiences in the local school settings with opportunities for students to interact with typically developing peers.

N.E.X.T. Step Transition Program

Now in its third year and serving six students, the N.E.X.T. Step program continues to grow by expanding partnerships and hands-on learning opportunities. Community-based work experiences resumed in 2025–2026, including site visits with major partner SH Distributing, where students connected classroom tasks to real-world applications. Collaboration with the Wayne County Schools Career Center and local districts helps identify students ready to build skills and gain on-site job training as they prepare for employment. The program’s in-house work lab, developed with the County Board’s Community Transition and Outreach Department, provides structured pre-employment training and task analysis. N.E.X.T. Step remains focused on preparing students for independence, career readiness, and successful transitions beyond school.

Technology Integration and Classroom Innovation

New for the 2025–2026 school year, N.E.X.T. Step students will each be equipped with Chromebooks to enhance their technology readiness. Students will use these devices to develop essential digital skills such as composing professional emails, creating résumés, and completing online career-readiness assessments.

The high school classroom also received a new interactive SMART Board, marking Phase One of the school’s plan to update and replace classroom technology. In addition, teachers have been piloting a new instructional app called Lumio to increase student engagement and interactive learning opportunities. Based on positive feedback, the school plans to purchase a school-wide Lumio license to be implemented across all classrooms.

The intermediate classroom benefited from a generous donation from the Elk’s Club of Wooster last year. Those funds were used to purchase four iPads for middle school students this year, further supporting hands-on learning and access to interactive educational tools.

The DLS (Daily Living Skills) room, open to all students, simulates a home environment and allows all students to practice independent living skills. A committee has been formed to integrate technology into the Daily Living Skills Classroom to better meet the needs of people with complex needs. Last year the school added a new high-tech refrigerator and a 2-in-1 washer/dryer combo.

The school has recently adopted the Bluebird as the mascot for the building. The bluebird is a symbol of joy, hope, and community, which reflects the spirit of our school and the positive environment we strive to create each day. We look forward to cheering on our students and celebrating school pride together as Bluebirds! Last spring Ida Sue partnered with the Wayne County Center for Arts to assist in reaching local school districts to collaborate on a logo design for the Bluebird. The final design was inspired by a local Green middle school student and will be recognized this fall for her artistic talent.

Our Bluebird was also the inspiration of our school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) with our Bluebird Bucks system. This year, we are adding the Bluebird Store, where students are able to purchase small items as a positive reward. The sensory room added a few versatile seating to be used among classrooms. The squeeze seat is comfy chair that gently squeezes, applying soothing pressure and sensory input throughout the trunk. The supportive design helps align the spine for a better seating posture. It can rock back and forth to support focus during reading, listening and class time. It also is versatile to be used in multiple positions depending on a child's needs and preferences.

The Director of Educational Services along with various other Ida Sue staff continue to consult with county districts to provide expertise to educators and administrators in their schools. The goal of consultation services is to equip county schools with the tools necessary to keep students in their home districts where they can continue their education with access to their non-disabled peers. Local school districts continue to request feedback and assistance from the Ida Sue staff and WCBDD.

The collaboration with Kean Elementary has resumed. The administration from both Kean Elementary School and Ida Sue are collaborating to bring non-disabled and disabled students together for physical education and selected academic and social events. Students were invited to join Kean for their Club Day, which occurs quarterly. Students may sign up for various club activities and participate with typical peers. This year Ida Sue School would like to invite our Kean student neighbors to visit our school for an activity.

Early Intervention and Home Visiting

The County Board continues to provide Early Intervention services through the Department of Children and Youth. Early Intervention serves children ages 0-3 who have a diagnosed disability or are deemed eligible via assessment.

Early Intervention served over 276 children this year. This number is an increase of approximately 30 children from just last year. Since moving to the county board, Early Intervention has continually increased the number of children receiving services.

“Director Wente from the Department of Children and Youth shared that among children who receive Early Intervention, **1 in 3 no longer require additional support services later on.** This highlights the powerful role of Early Intervention in helping children thrive and reducing the need for future services.”

Community Transition, Support and Outreach

Community Transition, Support and Outreach

The Wayne County Board of DD continued to provide programming through pre-employment transition services, resource development and public collaborations this past year. In partnership with Opportunities with Ohioans with Disabilities, Wayne County local schools, community partners, local leadership and many more, the board provided vocational training, life navigation and supports to any student who is on an Individual Education Program as well as growing opportunities for all school age individuals. The department continued to grow and expand in all facets of service.

During the School Year

The program served a total of 105 students. These services were offered at local schools as an extra resource for student education, through community exposures and job trials. The department worked with four of the local schools who were involved in these services.

Summer Internship Program

The department is very proud that they were able to offer a summer program to 44 students. We are anticipating this number to grow in 2026. The WCBDD partnered with Wooster City Schools this summer. Students from K-12th grade were able to participate. For the K-8th graders The Summer Internship Program offered creative hands-on learning to help bridge the summer gap to help students with disabilities to continue to learn and grow.

High School students were transported by the WCBDD Transportation Department and were able to go to 13 different local job sites. Students are supported by WCBDD summer staff made up of high school students, college students, teachers, and classroom aides. All staff went through a Job Coaching Academy to provide a more uniform process when job coaching in the community and at Ida Sue.

Community Business Partners

The Wayne County Board of DD also provided consultation and support services to build on site training opportunities at East of Chicago, The Holiday Inn, Everything Surplus, Clothing Warehouse, Dollar One, Wayne County Court House, Wooster Community Hospital & Garden, Tractor Supply, and the Wayne County Administration Building, Burbank and Creston United Methodist Church for Ida Sue students.

Local School Partnerships

Along with this programming, staff of the department attended IEP meetings for students from 14 to 22 years of age at all school districts when invited. During these meetings, staff provided the students and their families with resources and information that could assist them in navigating through school and through community providers to create the most positive outcome after the last day of education.

Additionally, the Wayne County Board of DD continues to expand pre-employment transition services and transition navigation into Ashland County schools, beginning to partner with local schools and community organizations to deliver vocational training and life navigations support for students on an IEP.

Social Service Partnerships

Transition team partnered with Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incident (OCALI) to build a Multi-Agency Planning Team. The MAP Team is working to address the root cause of why students are not being referred to OOD services or DD services in Wayne County. The group meets every other month.

The department continued to maintain a strong presence within local committees such as the local Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, State Support Team 9, OCALI, and the WCSCC Advisory council.

Self-Advocacy Training and Outreach

Furthermore, we have started a podcast. The title is Beyond the Diagnosis. Patrick Johns and one of our individuals receiving services record a new podcast every Wednesday. We are on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. We are working on gaining more members for our Self-Advocacy Group.

Staff Training and Development

Josh and Patrick are also trained to teach the Job Coaching Academy curriculum to school staff. The Transition Department is attending one day at the Synergy Conference in Sandusky. As well as the OACB Conference.

Nursing/Health Services

The Nursing staff of the WCBDD continues to provide quality and efficient nursing services throughout the 2025-2026 year with ensuing responsibilities established to best meet the ongoing nursing needs of the individuals served and the agency. All WCBDD nurses are under the supervision of the School Nurse Manager who ensures fulfillment of nursing needs within the agency and support to the community in transitional settings as well as supportive resources provided to peer agencies/school systems when requested or necessary to support the medical needs of the student/individual.

Technology

Technology implementations in 2025 included all Windows 10 devices upgraded or replaced with Windows 11 operating system. New SmartBoard, Chromebooks, and iPads added for Classroom learning enhancements. Door Access/Camera installations for improved physical security of building grounds. Updated Security Program to meet September 2025 requirements for House Bill 96. Support and software agreements renewed with technology vendors as needed.

Transportation

The County Board's bus fleet continued to be very well maintained with all units passing spot and annual inspections by the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The Transportation Department office staff continued to review and approve payments for all locally funded transportation invoices from our providers, as well as participating in and staying informed with local agencies and private providers' plans for county wide transportation services. Daily field trips were transported to promote community access and job exploration opportunities for our transition aged students. Seasonal routes were developed and operated for county-wide school district students to help facilitate our youth transition vocational program during the summer months.