



Mission: To build and serve a community of great providers.

# OPRA Annual Board Retreat

August 11 – 13, 2025





# OPRA 2025 Board Retreat

**Dates:** August 11 – 13, 2025

**Location:** The Summit Hotel, Cincinnati, OH

**Website:** [The Summit Hotel](#)

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### Safe Place Statement

We would like to thank you for attending this meeting. This meeting, like all of the OPRA Committee meetings, are designed to offer a safe place for OPRA Members to share thoughts, opinions and ideas. The OPRA Team and the OPRA Board relies on these discussions to inform our efforts to provide Advocacy, Information and Resources. We are respectfully asking you, as a participant, to assist us to make this a safe place for professionals to openly share without fear. It is important that when personal experiences are shared, there is an assurance that what is shared stays within this group. We are looking forward to an open and honest conversation and we would like to thank you for being a part of this important meeting.



## OPRA 2025 Board Retreat Agenda Overview

### Monday, August 11, 2025

3:00pm Hotel Check-In  
5:00pm – 6:00pm Welcome Reception  
6:30pm Dinner on Own

### Recommended Restaurants: (no dress codes)

#### [Alfio's Buon Cibo – 10 min drive](#)

10 top reserved

- [Forno Osteria & Bar – 10 min drive](#)

10 top reserved

- [The Precinct](#)

10 top reserved – Jeff Ruby's first restaurant (4 seats left – Jamie is one of them)

- Note: [Alara – 3 min walk](#)

***Did not reserve any here. There are mixed reviews.***

### Tuesday, August 12, 2025

At Leisure Breakfast Buffet at The Market Restaurant  
9:00am Board Meeting  
12:00pm Lunch Buffet at The Market Restaurant (working lunch)  
1:30pm Board Meeting Concludes  
3:30pm Transfers to The Banks by American Ballpark  
4:00pm Free Time at The Banks  
5:40pm Reds Suite Opens (Buffet & Bar available – “Game Food”)



## OPRA 2025 Board Retreat Agenda Overview

### Tuesday, August 12, 2025 – Cont.

6:40pm – 9:30pm	Cincinnati Reds Game
9:45pm	Transfers Return to Hotel
10:15pm	Bus Leaves (approx.) – <b>If you stay, uber back on own</b>

### Wednesday, August 13, 2025

At Leisure	Breakfast Buffet at The Market Restaurant
9:30am	Board Meeting
10:45am	Begin Hotel Check-Out
11:00am	Hotel Check-Out Deadline
12:30pm	Lunch Buffet at The Market Restaurant (working lunch)
1:30pm	Retreat Concludes



## BOARD MEETING AGENDA – DAY 1

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

9:00am – 1:30pm

**9:00am – 9:15am Welcome and What to Expect**

**9:15am – 9:45am Board Member introductions**

- Name
- Organization
- Number of years on the OPRA Board?
- First job in the field
- What are you most proud of about your organization?
- What is the biggest challenge you are facing?
- One word to describe the current state of our system (write it down before we begin the introduction process)

**9:45am – 10:30am Introduction to the Build Your Own Business Activity**

*Goal: Create a fictional business that explores a totally new idea. This could be serious, strategic, or even silly.*

- **Step 1: Team Formation**
  - Break into small teams (3–5 people).
  - Each team will receive a worksheet with the activity instructions and templates.
- **Step 2: Business Creation – Each team creates a new fictional business that is not directly related to the developmental disability system... They must answer:**
  1. Business Name
  2. What do you do? (Describe the service or product)
  3. Mission Statement (What problem are you trying to solve)
  4. Who are your customers? (Target audience)
  5. How do you make money? (Revenue model)
  6. What's your secret sauce? (What makes you different/special?)
  7. What's your slogan or motto?
  8. Create a simple sketch of your logo
  9. Key characteristics/services of your trade association

**10:30am – 10:45 Break**

### **10:45am – 11:30am Build Your Own Business Activity – Continued**

- **Step 3: The Pitch – Each team presents their business to the group in a fun Shark Tank style pitch:**
  - What is the business?
  - What makes it special?
  - How will it succeed?
  - Why should we invest?
  - 1 minute pitch for your trade association
  
- **Step 4: Voting & Debrief... Everyone votes on:**
  - Most creative
  - Most likely to succeed
  - Most aligned with our mission
  - Best presentation

### **11:30am – 12:00pm Discussion Topic: Strengthening Business Practices Among Providers**

#### **Part 1: Opening Remarks & Context Setting**

*Objective: Frame the conversation and explain why this matters now.*

- **Talking Points:**
  - Many providers are navigating financial strain, workforce turnover, compliance complexity, and growth challenges.
  - Strong business operations — including finance, HR, compliance, and data use — are foundational to sustainability.
  - OPRA’s role is to advocate, educate, and strengthen the provider community.
  - We want your input on where OPRA can add the most value.

#### **Part 2: Identifying Key Gaps & Needs**

*Objective: Prompt discussion about where providers are struggling and what supports are needed.*

- **Discussion Questions:**
  - What are the top 2 – 3 business challenges you see providers facing today?
  - Where do you believe the biggest knowledge or skill gaps are (e.g., budgeting, rate analysis, workforce strategy, leadership, data use)?
  - What would it look like for a provider to be well-run and resilient in 2025?
  - Are there risks (e.g., closures, mergers, non-compliance) that OPRA could help mitigate through stronger business support?

### **Part 3: OPRA's Role: What Should We Do?**

*Objective: Generate ideas for how OPRA can support stronger provider business practices.*

- **Discussion Prompts:**
  - Should OPRA create a Business Support Toolkit for members?
  - What about hosting Finance/Operations-focused workshops or a leadership bootcamp?
  - Should we partner with accounting firms, HR consultants, or technology providers for preferred vendor discounts or guidance?
  - Could OPRA lead an Executive Peer Network focused on operations and strategy?
  - Is there a role for us in mentoring smaller/younger providers?

### **Part 4: Wrap-Up & Next Steps**

- **Summarize Key Takeaways:**
  - Top 2–3 areas of need
  - Most promising roles for OPRA
- **Propose Next Step:**
  - Create a working group or task force to draft an “OPRA Business Practice Initiative” proposal
  - Include pilot programs, sample resources, or a fall business webinar
- **Invite Board Members to volunteer for follow-up conversations or planning**

**12:00pm – 1:30pm Lunch Buffet at The Market Restaurant and Networking**



## **BOARD MEETING AGENDA – DAY 2**

**Wednesday, August 13, 2025**

**9:30am – 1:30pm**

- 1. Welcome & Safe Place Statement**
  - Review of Safe Place Statement
  - Welcome new District 7 Board Member – Nikki Jaras, Executive Director, Lifeworks Autism Services
- 2. Approval of Agenda**
  - Review and approve today's meeting agenda
- 3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
  - Review and approve minutes from May & June 2025.
- 4. Finance Report**
  - Financial Statements Review and Approval
- 5. Officer Elections**
- 6. OPRA Business/CEO Report**
  - Review Upcoming Board Elections
  - OPRA Employee Handbook
  - OPRA Code of Regulations
  - Conflict of Interest
  - PAC Committee
  - Strategic Plan Update
- 7. Board Report**
- 8. Open Forum**
  - Member Comments



**Board of Directors**

Date: May 28, 2025

Time: 10:00 – 11:30

Location: Hilton Easton – Pre-Conference

**Board Members:**

Present			Absent
District 1	District 4	District 7	
Felicia Hall (virtual)	Roy Cherry	Tami Honkala	
Jim Steffey	Steve King	Nikki Jarras	
Jamie Steele	Tim Menke	Laura Lamb	
District 2	District 5	At-Large	
Ashley Brocious	Steve Colecchi (virtual)	Bob Gaston	
Scott DeLong	Jeff Johnson	Kurt Miller	
Dennis Grant	Michelle Madden	Chris Wolf	
District 3	District 6		
Mary Thompson Hufford	Adam Guinther		
Lisa Reed	Bob Heinzerling		
Tim Neville	Liz Owens		

**OPRA Staff:** Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Christine Touvelle

**Guests:** Stacy DiStefano (Consulting for Human Services), Barb Merrill (ANCOR), Mary Sowers (NASDDDS)

**Minutes\*:**

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<i>Call to order</i>	Adam Guinther called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. The Safe Place Statement was read and the Board welcomed new District 7 Board Member, Nikki Jaras, Executive Director of Lifeworks Autism Services.		
<i>Approval of Agenda</i>	The board reviewed and approved the meeting agenda.  <i>Motion to approve:</i> Michelle Madden  <i>Second:</i> Tami Honkala	Passed Unanimously	
<i>Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes</i>	The board reviewed and approved the minutes from the April 2025 board meeting.  <i>Motion to approve:</i> Lisa Reed  <i>Second:</i> Ashley Brocious	Passed Unanimously	
<i>Finance Committee Report</i>	The finance committee presented April financials, .  <i>Motion to approve the audit:</i> Michelle Madden  <i>Second:</i> Tim Neville	Audit: Unanimously Approved  April Financials: Unanimously Approved	
<i>Board Report</i>	Pete, Christine, and Scott provided a state and federal budget update, noting financial pressures and challenges in advocating for increases at the federal and state level. The group discussed the 14C bill and its potential impacts, as well as the Reform Amendment, property tax issues and implications for the future of county boards and the		

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<p>Department of Developmental Disabilities. A draft quality framework was introduced and discussed.</p>		
<p><i>CEO Report</i></p>	<p>Teresa shared updates on the strategic plan, including progress in the areas of community advocacy, resources, experiences, and training. She welcomed guest speakers Barbara Merrill (ANCOR), Mary Sowers (NASDDDS), and Stacy DiStefano (CFHS) to discuss provider quality, national perspectives, and future strategies. Discussions focused on building a culture of continuous improvement, data-driven decision making, and value-based payment structures.</p> <p>Board members shared additional comments and perspectives. Topics included workforce retention, business acumen for DSPs, supporting unaffiliated providers, and enhancing collaboration between providers and state agencies. The board discussed the potential for adopting a quality rating system for adult day programs and emphasized the importance of continuing to monitor developments in other states.</p>		
<p><i>Adjourn</i></p>	<p>Motion to adjourn: Michelle Madden Second: Tami Honkala</p>	<p>Unanimously approved</p>	

\* More detailed information available upon request



**Board of Directors**

Date: June 25, 2025

Time: 10:00 – 12:00

Location: Virtual

**Board Members:**

Present			Absent
District 1	District 4	District 7	Roy Cherry
Felicia Hall	Steve King	Tami Honkala	
Jim Steffey	Tim Menke	Nikki Jarras	
Jamie Steele		Laura Lamb	
District 2	District 5	At-Large	
Ashley Brocious	Steve Colecchi	Bob Gaston	
Scott DeLong	Jeff Johnson	Kurt Miller	
Dennis Grant	Michelle Madden	Chris Wolf	
District 3	District 6		
Mary Thompson Hufford	Adam Guinther		
Lisa Reed	Bob Heinzerling		
Tim Neville	Liz Owens		

**OPRA Staff:** Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Sonya Summers, Christine Touvelle

**Guests:** None

**Minutes\*:**

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<i>Call to order</i>	Adam Guinther called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.	Safe Place Statement read.	
<i>Budget Update/Future Considerations</i>	<p>Pete Moore opened with discussion of budget concerns, particularly the impact of property tax reliance on schools and county boards. Pete shared insights from local conversations and state-level trends. Scott DeLong shared additional perspective based on his knowledge of school boards/levies, and there was discussion about provider involvement in/support for local levy campaigns.</p> <p>Conversation shifted to long-term system reform, including the future structure of the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) and county boards. The Board expressed support for developing a proactive reform plan for the next administration.</p>	Pete will meet with Senator Romanchuk to discuss the Reform Amendment. OPRA will continue pursuing system reform efforts, regardless of the Budget Bill outcome.	Pete OPRA Team
<i>Federal Updates/Future Considerations</i>	Pete and Christine updated the Board on the status of the Budget Bill and related federal legislation. Key amendments—such as flat waiver ICF and rate changes—remain intact as of the latest version.	Continue monitoring legislation; prepare for post-budget advocacy.	OPRA Team
<i>14(c)</i>	<p>The 14C Considerations bill has been tabled. Discussion also addressed potential line-item vetoes and the political landscape around DODD's future leadership.</p> <p>Christine expressed concern over gaps in understanding among some legislative staff and others currently involved in 14C bill efforts.</p>	Continue monitoring legislation; prepare for post-budget advocacy.	OPRA Team
<i>Director Retirement/New Director</i>	Pete shared that Director Hauck will retire. Lindsay Nash will serve as interim director. The group discussed possible long-	Pete will meet with Director Hauck to clear up outstanding	Pete

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	term leadership changes and implications for agency relationships and reform momentum.	issues.	
<i>Governance Committee Update</i>	Bob Gaston shared that the Governance Committee has recommended and made changes to the Code of Regulations to ensure they align with recent conversations among the Board and between the Governance and Executive Committee.	Board members will received copies of proposed changes to the Code of Regulations ahead of the retreat for review.	Board members OPRA Team
<i>Board Executive Committee Nomination Process</i>	Pete reminded the Board of the governance election process, and that election will take place at the August Board Retreat.		Sonya/Pete - elections
<i>Great Provider Summit Review</i>	Pete reviewed the recent provider summit, noting positive feedback on the venue and location despite higher costs, though the keynote speaker was less dynamic than hoped. The group explored ideas for future keynote speakers, with Michelle suggesting Judy Carter, a comedian with relevant experience, and Adam proposing a more strategic approach based on the event's mood and theme. Pete mentioned positive vendor feedback and encouraged board members to thank sponsors personally.		
<i>Capital Housing Rule</i>	The group discussed the capital housing rule, with Teresa pointing out an inconsistency between the rule and statute regarding who can apply for funds. Finally, they decided to cancel the July meeting and meet in person at the August retreat, unless a major federal issue arises.	They Board agreed that the rule should align with statute, allowing both county boards and nonprofit agencies to apply.	Teresa will submit clearance comments.
<i>Adjourn</i>	A decision was made to cancel the July meeting and meet in person at the August retreat, unless a major federal issue arises.  Motion to adjourn: Felicia Hall  Second: Michelle Madden	Unanimously approved	

\* More detailed information available upon request

# OPRA Business / CEO Report

## 2025 OPRA Board Elections Overview

- **Class I** Board of Directors are up for election in 2025.
- Call for Board nominations will begin on Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup> (2-week nomination period)
- Voting begins on Monday, October 13<sup>th</sup> (2-week voting period ending on last day of conference)

## OPRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION CYCLE

<u>Class I – term exp. 12/31/25</u>	<u>Class II – term exp. 12/31/26</u>	<u>Class III – term exp. 12/31/27</u>
Dist. 1 – Jamie Steele	Dist. 1 – Felicia Hall	Dist. 1 – Jim Steffey
Dist. 2 – Dennis Grant	Dist. 2 – Scott DeLong	Dist. 2 – Ashley Brocious
Dist. 3 – Lisa Reed	Dist. 3 – Mary Thompson-Hufford	Dist. 3 – Tim Neville
Dist. 4 – Steve King	Dist. 4 – Roy Cherry	Dist. 4 – Tim Menke
Dist. 5 – Jeff Johnson	Dist. 5 – Steve Colecchi	Dist. 5 – Michelle Madden
Dist. 6 – Bob Heinzerling	Dist. 6 – Adam Guinther	Dist. 6 – Liz Owens
Dist. 7 – Nikki Jaras	Dist. 7 – Laura Lamb	Dist. 7 – Tamara Honkala

## Summary of Employee Handbook Updates for Board Review – 2025

The OPRA Employee Handbook was reviewed and updated in partnership with legal counsel to ensure clarity, consistency, and alignment with current law and best practices. Most updates reflect **clarifications, modernization of policies, and added detail** to support staff and protect the organization.

Key changes include:

### 1. Clarified Employment Classifications & Pay Policies

- Clear definitions of full-time, part-time, and temporary status
- Additional detail on payroll schedules, timekeeping, and overtime
- New language outlining how pay is determined (based on experience, role, performance, etc.)

### 2. Updated Leave Policies

- Military, jury duty, and leave without pay policies expanded and clarified
- All absences must be submitted through the payroll system
- One week of PTO payout now available in some cases of resignation or layoff (with conditions)

### 3. Stronger Language on Ethics, Conduct, and Performance

- Clear expectations around professionalism, confidentiality, social media, and respectful behavior
- Expanded sections on performance evaluation, discipline, and employee conduct
- Added flexibility for OPRA to act quickly on performance or misconduct issues

### 4. New Sections & Additions

- **Open Door Policy:** Encourages employees to raise concerns directly to the CEO or Board Chair
- **Searches:** Clarifies OPRA's right to inspect property
- **Breaks for Nursing Mothers:** Added in compliance with federal law

### 5. Modernized Drug-Free Workplace and Vehicle Use Policies

- Reinforced prohibition of drug/alcohol use during work hours, including marijuana (regardless of state law)
- Clear expectations for safe driving when using personal vehicles for OPRA business

### 6. Harassment & Discrimination

- Strengthened policy language and clarified procedures for reporting and investigating complaints
- Includes specific guidance on sexual harassment and retaliation

In addition to the major changes listed above, we also made a number of **technical updates** throughout the document, including renumbering sections, correcting typos, and updating the table of contents for consistency and accuracy.

**(See the full version of the OPRA Employee Handbook attachment sent with Board Packet)**

## Summary of Code of Regulations Updates for Board Review – 2025

Based on conversation with and recommendations from the Governance Committee and following legal review, the following **substantive updates** were made to the OPRA Code of Regulations to align the document with current practice and clarify areas that have raised questions over time:

### Addition of Public Entity Member Definition

- A new **Public Entity Member** category is formally defined in Article 2.1.
- References to Public Entity Members are added throughout the document to reflect their distinct role and limitations (e.g., no voting rights, not eligible for Board service).

### Designation of Corporate Office and District Assignment

- New language clarifies that each member organization must **designate a corporate office**, which determines its **district assignment** (Article 2.2).
- This clarification supports consistent application during Board elections and regional representation.

### Clarified Board Eligibility Criteria

- To run for the Board of Directors, an individual must:
  - Represent a **Regular Member in good standing**
  - Be part of a **dues-paying member organization**
  - Have been a member for **at least one full year** prior to the election (Article 4.2)
- Ensures that only established, committed members are eligible for Board service.

### Updated Language on At-Large Board Members

- Clarifies that **At-Large Directors** may serve **one-year terms**, renewable annually (Article 4.3).
- Reflects current practice of inviting individuals with unique perspectives or expertise outside the elected regional structure.

### Distinction Between Association and Board Committees

- Clarifies that OPRA may have:
  - **Standing Committees of the Association** (e.g., Public Policy, Membership) established by the Chair
  - **Standing Committees of the Board of Directors** (Article 6.1)
- This distinction helps formalize governance and operating structures that have evolved over time.

### Other Technical and Formatting Updates

- General cleanup of section numbering, punctuation, and consistency
- Updated officer role descriptions and minor adjustments to voting language and quorum

**(See the redline version of the OPRA Code of Regulations attachment sent with Board Packet)**

## Strategic Plan Update

(Please see the Strategic Plan attachment sent with Board Report)

# Board Report

(Please see “The Future of Our System” attachment sent with Board Report)

# Policy Committee

The policy committee serves as the clearinghouse for most issues affecting any aspect of DD services and makes recommendations for action to OPRA’s board of directors. Every effort is made to allow sufficient time to discuss issues in detail in order to understand the impact on individuals and providers, and to consider what position OPRA should take on a given issue. OPRA Committees examine issues and may pass them on to the Policy Committee for review. Ad hoc workgroups may also be established from time to time to examine issues more fully. The policy committee is chaired by the vice chair of the board of directors with a representative provider group selected to serve as the core committee. This core committee is tasked with convening and commenting on policy issues as they arise, whether during a meeting or between meetings. Other committee workflows through policy committee to the board of directors, and vice versa.

Core Committee: Scott DeLong, Jeff Johnson, Dan Conners, Anne Haning, Ryan Knodel, Anthony Kukura, Steve Maenle, Jo Spargo, Shelly Wharton, Kenneth Hughes, Paul Soprano and Christina Webb

### **Policy Core Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, May 14, 2025 10am – 12pm (Virtual)**

#### **Summary of Discussion**

##### **Welcome and Introductions**

Teresa Kobelt welcomed participants and introduced Anthony Kukura as the newest member of the Policy Committee, replacing Chris Wolf. Scott DeLong read the Safe Space Statement. Due to Statehouse activity, the agenda was adjusted to prioritize the 14c (subminimum wage) discussion.

## **Legislative Updates and Policy Discussion**

### **Subminimum Wage (14c) Legislation**

Scott Marks discussed recently reintroduced legislation to eliminate subminimum wage. The bill has bipartisan support, including a Republican co-sponsor. OPRA is exploring whether to re-establish a formal position statement and offer proposed amendments. The group agreed to engage thoughtfully and proactively, offering alternatives rather than opposing the bill outright.

Jeff and others raised concerns about the bill's impact on productivity and employer viability. Suggestions included incorporating assistive technology and wage subsidies for targeted populations.

### **Transition Away from 14c Services**

Participants acknowledged the need to move away from 14c models but emphasized that timelines and solutions must be community-specific. Concerns were raised about eliminating 14c-linked vocational habilitation services without adequate alternatives.

### **ICF System Vision and Reimbursement Issues**

Scott DeLong and Dan shared concerns about a proposed rate model for Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) that would eliminate the DDP. This could negatively impact providers serving individuals with high medical acuity. The group emphasized the importance of defining a clear, sustainable vision for ICFs and protecting high-need populations.

Teresa noted that the state claims there's no correlation between DDP scores and costs, but many in the group questioned that assertion. Dan highlighted that DDP data correlates with medical but not behavioral needs.

### **System Sustainability and Payment Reform**

Teresa led a conversation about future system shifts, including:

- Managed long-term services and supports (MLTSS)
- Alternative payment models
- Provider networks and mergers
- A renewed focus on outcomes and quality

A poll was conducted to assess members' familiarity with these concepts. The group agreed on the need for proactive engagement and readiness planning.

### **Guest Presentation: Mary Lou Bourne – Quality & Data-Driven Systems**

Mary Lou presented on balancing innovation with healthcare quality and person-centered practices. She emphasized:

- Moving from compliance to performance and value
- Shifting away from medical models toward social support
- Reducing variation to improve person-centered outcomes
- The need for consistent, standardized data and operational definitions
- Starting small with quality indicators like referral-to-service timelines



Mary Lou also highlighted Pennsylvania’s experiment with provider self-certification and Tennessee’s managed care experience as models to learn from.

### **Data, Quality, and System Readiness**

The group explored how to better use cost report data and internal benchmarks to compare ICFs and demonstrate value. Members discussed the potential impact of Medicaid funding changes and the need for providers to shift from compliance-based approaches to quality-focused models.

Teresa shared updates on OPRA’s learning labs and benchmarking work, and Mary Lou emphasized the need to track satisfaction and service delivery across different populations.

## **Policy Core Committee Meeting Minutes Monday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 12pm – 2pm (Hybrid)**

### **Summary of Discussion**

#### **Budget Amendment for Provider Reforms**

The committee discussed a proposed budget amendment focused on provider reforms and quality improvements. Pete explained that the amendment was developed outside of the broader coalition to maintain the integrity of its intent. While there were concerns from county boards and DODD about increased scrutiny, the group agreed that transparency and improvement require courage and continued dialogue. Members committed to ongoing conversations about the amendment’s nine components and stakeholder feedback strategies.

#### **Sustainability Goals and Legislative Strategy**

The group reviewed the broader goals for an upcoming legislative committee focused on long-term system sustainability. Key priorities include leading the reform process, ensuring outcomes-based efficiency, and preserving key system strengths. Jo raised concerns about representation for people with high support needs, and Shelly and Scott DeLong emphasized caregiver support as a necessary goal. Teresa outlined a proposed structure for system reform workgroups should the amendment go forward.

#### **Work Group Structure for System Reform**

Three main work groups were proposed:

- **Sustainability and Innovation**
- **Access to Services**
- **Quality and Outcomes**

Each group will focus on issues such as rate structures, system capacity, access barriers, case progression, quality metrics, and workforce development. Participants recommended cross-group collaboration and diverse representation in the work group makeup.

### **Services for Individuals with Complex Needs**

The group discussed service gaps for individuals with co-occurring developmental disabilities and mental health diagnoses. Members cited a lack of training, appropriate rates, and flexible service models. There was agreement on the need for a new service line or approach tailored to this population and investment in staff training.

### **Managed Care Overview and Considerations**

Guest speakers from Advancing States (Camille and April) provided an overview of managed care implementation across the U.S. They emphasized planning, stakeholder input, and the risks of rushed implementation. Camille noted that only a few states have IDD services in comprehensive managed care contracts, and many have faced challenges with service coordination and payment systems.

April presented strategies for provider readiness, including business acumen tools like SWOT analysis, job aids, dashboards, and scenario planning. Participants discussed how Ohio might prepare for or avoid managed care by improving efficiency, sustainability, and quality internally.

### **Managed Care in Ohio**

Teresa reflected on her experience during the Kasich administration and noted that managed care could return as a serious policy option in a future administration. The group discussed how to preserve system strengths and build viable alternatives, using Tennessee's model as a potential reference.

### **Group Employment Services Proposal**

Scott Marks shared updates on the final group employment and career planning proposal. Concerns remain about group size limits and the removal of the integrated community rate. There was interest in analyzing the impact of new rates and exploring a potential grandfathering approach for current integrated community voc participants.

### **Medicaid Funding and Policy Changes**

Scott Marks explained that while proposed federal Medicaid cuts are concerning, they are largely tied to work requirements and not expected to result in direct 10% annual reductions. The group emphasized the importance of monitoring changes closely and preparing to respond to financial pressures.

### **Implementation and Coalition Engagement**

The meeting concluded with discussion about on-going "check-ins" with the Budget Coalition to maintain alignment and track progress. Teresa and the OPRA team will incorporate staff training, workforce development, and case management into the broader reform strategy.

**(Please see the June Policy Committee Presentation attachment sent with Board Report)**

**Quarterly Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**  
**12pm – 2pm (Virtual)(Open)**

**Summary of Discussion**

**Welcome and Framing**

Teresa Kobelt, Chief Innovation Officer, opened the meeting by reiterating OPRA’s intent to shape a clear, data-driven modernization proposal to present to Ohio’s next administration in 2027. She emphasized balancing bold system reforms with practical implementation strategies and grounded the conversation in data that aligns with policymaker interests.

Scott DeLong welcomed members to the meeting, read the safe space statement, and emphasized the importance of confidentiality always, and especially during this time as we’re discussing the future of our system.

**Medicaid System Overview and Data Review**

Teresa walked participants through a high-level overview of the Medicaid landscape, including:

- **National trends:** Medicaid now exceeds 28% of state budgets and HCBS comprises over 60% of LTSS spending nationwide.
- **Ohio-specific data:** The Ohio Medicaid budget has doubled in a decade, driven by waiver growth and managed care expansion.
- **Cost drivers:** Population growth, acuity increases, workforce shortages, and system inefficiencies.
- **Managed Care Savings Potential:** Analysis suggests transitioning the ABD population from FFS to managed care could save \$2.9B annually.

**Key data points included:**

- Waiver costs increasing more rapidly than enrollment
- Significant growth in state-funded waivers (264% from 2015 to 2024)
- Per-person cost growth in both ICFs and waivers
- Declining County Board reserves and variation in match funding
- Provider network fragmentation, with a high number of independent providers

**Breakout Room 1: Data Reactions**

Participants moved into breakout rooms to reflect on the data. Prompts included:

- What stood out?
- What challenges or opportunities does the data present?
- What should we be preparing for?

**Common themes included:**

- **Sustainability and Efficiency**
  - Concerns about whether the current model (especially 1:1 service, small providers) is sustainable.

- Emphasis on resource allocation: people and dollars are both limited.
- Efficiency pressures driven by MCOs, audits, and stagnant funding.
- **System Cost and Medicaid Pressure**
  - Several noted the alarming share of Medicaid consumed by services and the long-term implications.
  - Discussion of benchmarking Ohio’s costs and services against other states.
- **Provider Landscape**
  - Growing pool of small providers, with pressure to merge, regionalize, or consolidate.
  - Specific concerns about how many small agencies will survive the transition.
- **Transition Planning**
  - Clear need for a vision and roadmap for system transition.
  - Emphasis on understanding and planning for:
    - Role of County Boards
    - Managed care potential
- **Workforce and Demographics**
  - Aging population and workforce shortages as key risk factors.
  - Direct link between workforce availability and system sustainability.
- **Settings and Service Models**
  - There may need to be movement toward larger settings (e.g., 8-bed homes), away from smaller or more individualized services.
  - Tension between desired person-centered models and financial/staffing realities.

### Policy Survey Results

Teresa shared results from OPRA’s summer policy priorities survey, which had 44 responses across diverse roles and regions. Respondents validated five key “buckets” of system priorities:

1. **Sustainability** – Concerns about long-term funding and workforce shortages; support for rate models and shared services.
2. **Access** – Geographic and service-type disparities; support for regional intake models and stronger network adequacy.
3. **Quality & Accountability** – Calls for meaningful metrics, outcome-based payments, and performance transparency.
4. **Case Management** – Frustration with SSA variability; interest in structural changes, including COG or regional models.
5. **Efficiency** – Widespread support for reducing duplication, streamlining documentation, and shared back-office services.

### Non-negotiables (ranked by consensus):

- Maintain a cabinet-level DODD (78%)
- Preserve some form of local/county-based system (69%)
- More divided views on Managed LTSS (58% preferred to avoid it)

### **Poll Results: Managed LTSS**

A live poll asked participants their current stance on Managed LTSS. Responses showed a range of opinions:

- Only 2 expressed strong opposition
- Many supported preparing proactively
- A notable group was open to shaping a model that addresses system inefficiencies
- A smaller subset indicated they needed more information

### **Breakout Room 2: Scope of Modernization**

In a second round of breakout rooms, participants discussed:

- Whether system reform should focus solely on provider-side changes or also address county boards, funding, and case management
- Risks of being too narrow or too broad in scope
- What type of plan would be most useful to deliver to the next administration

### **Key takeaways:**

#### **Tension Between Narrow Efficiency Focus and Broader System Reform**

- Some participants favored a narrower scope focused on efficiencies and concerns about getting sidetracked if CBs are included.
- Others pushed for a broad, inclusive scope that addresses all parts of the system and centers quality outcomes.

#### **System Fragmentation and the Need for Alignment**

- Several comments reflected frustration with fragmented communication and misalignment between entities (providers, CBs, DODD, OACB).
- Need for reform scope to include alignment strategies and partnership building.

#### **Resource Scarcity and Strategic Framing**

- The importance of how resources and choices are framed—strategic vs. tactical.
- Suggested that how we talk about and share resources affects relationships and decision-making.
- Emphasized the need to confront realities of scale and sustainability.

#### **Messaging, Advocacy, and Unity**

- Strong theme around needing unified messaging, avoiding “winners vs. losers” rhetoric.
- Leverage relationships with legislators and DODD, but from a position of collaboration, not blame.

# OPRA Committee Reports



# Day Array

## Summary

This committee provides a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to leaders in the day array. Topics covered in meetings may include, but are not limited to, updates from the field, national and state trends, policy and rule review, best practices in organizational leadership, operating fiscally sound organizations, and identifying and mitigating organizational risk as relates to the broad array of services and supports, including day programs, active treatment, vocational training, career development, and employment. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the policy committee for review and action.

**Committee Chairs:** Anne Haning (Belco Works), Chelsea Ashcraft (Ohio Valley Goodwill Cincinnati)  
**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks

**OPRA Joint Meeting of Day Array and Day & Employment Services Committee Report**  
**Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025**  
**1:30pm – 2:30pm**

### Quick recap

The meeting focused on reviewing rule drafts for basic employment skills training and group employment services, with discussions centered around compliance requirements, service definitions, and documentation needs. The team explored concerns about competitive integrated employment requirements, benefits for group employment services, and the interpretation of service tiers, particularly for individuals over 50. Technical issues cut the meeting short, but the group agreed to continue discussions on Friday and provide feedback regarding group size requirements and provider-owned social enterprises.

### Next Steps

- Scott to submit formal feedback to the Department on Friday afternoon regarding the BEST and Group Employment Support rules.
- Scott to seek clarification from the Department on whether groups larger than 8 are allowed with additional staff for Group Employment Support.
- Scott to request clarification and simplification of the small group arrangement and enhanced rate structure in the Group Employment Support rule.
- Scott to ask the Department about the intent behind combining career planning services with group employment in the rule definition.
- Committee members to send any additional feedback to Scott by Friday morning for inclusion in the formal feedback submission.

## **Summary**

### **BEST and Group Employment Rule Review**

The joint committee meeting focused on reviewing rule drafts for basic employment skills training (BEST) and group employment services. Scott led the discussion, starting with the BEST rule, which includes definitions and two tiers of service: Tier 1 for individuals seeking prevocational services, and Tier 2 for those over 50 years old already receiving vocational services. Scott highlighted concerns about the rule's compliance with CMS regulations and the need for clear marking of new and changed sections. The committee agreed to review the group employment rule next, as they anticipated more discussion around that topic.

### **Competitive Employment Definition Debate**

The group discussed concerns about the definition of competitive integrated employment in the rule, particularly regarding the requirement for "evidence by documentation" of interactions with people without disabilities. Jeff suggested removing the integrated community setting definition from the best rule since it no longer interacts with best services. The group also debated the appropriateness of requiring documentation of interactions with people without disabilities, with Tim and Megan expressing concerns about the discriminatory implications of such a requirement.

### **Group Employment Services Interpretation Concerns**

The team discussed concerns about the interpretation of benefits for group employment services, with Megan expressing hesitation about offering the same medical benefits as state employees when the organization primarily focuses on building employment skills. Scott acknowledged these concerns and revealed he had a meeting scheduled with the department to clarify the misunderstanding about group employment services, as there was confusion about whether host sites were hiring people directly or providing services through contracts. The team also discussed documentation requirements for integrated community settings, with Michelle raising questions about whether daily documentation was needed, and Ashley highlighted the distinction between true community-based employment and services like Vocation and Ges that are on the path to employment but not yet employed.

### **Clarifying PTO and Service Tiers**

The group discussed concerns about PTO and improper payments in vocational services, with Scott explaining that a 2018 memo's guidance on guaranteed pay for non-working time was misinterpreted as paid time off, creating a conflict with current rules. They explored the definitions and implications of service tiers, particularly for individuals over 50 authorized for vocational services, noting that while Tier 2's original purpose of earned/timeout provisions had been weakened, the tiers might still serve a useful monitoring function after the 4-year period. The discussion highlighted tensions between wage and hour requirements for part-time employees and the unique needs of vocational service providers, with Michael and others expressing concerns about creating unrealistic expectations for employer benefits.

### **Group Employment Support Rule Concerns**

Scott discussed the group employment support rule, highlighting concerns about the exclusion of unpaid volunteering and community-based exploration activities, which contradicts previous expectations and could impact services for many individuals. Ashley and Jeff raised questions about the department's

intent and the potential loss of community-based rates, while Scott expressed optimism that this might have been an oversight and emphasized the need for formal feedback to address these issues. The group agreed that the rule, as currently drafted, does not align with the intended goals, and Scott will submit feedback to clarify the department's stance on including unpaid services.

### **CMS Group Size Discussion**

The group discussed concerns about CMS's recommended group size of 8 or fewer participants, with Tim and others questioning the rationale and impact on providers. Mary raised a cautionary note about county boards scrutinizing group sizes, particularly for integrated community rates. Scott explained that the 8-person group size comes from CMS's Technical Guide for Supported Employment, though the group size requirement is not mandatory. The discussion was cut short due to technical difficulties with Scott's charging block, with plans to continue on Friday morning.

### **Provider-Owned Social Enterprise Arrangement**

Scott discussed the new service arrangement for regular or industry business, which allows for provider-owned social enterprises to operate like community-based retail businesses. He expressed satisfaction with this compromise, which was made to remove the previous prohibition on provider-owned settings. Scott also raised concerns about the complexity of the small group size rules and requested clarification, suggesting a simpler approach based on group size and acuity. The group agreed to provide feedback on these issues, with Scott planning to submit comments to the Department by Friday.

## **OPRA Day Array Committee Report Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 9:30am – 11:30am**

### **Quick recap**

The meeting covered updates on upcoming RFPs and employment-related projects, including discussions about business engagement assessments and blueprint proposals. Key topics included the development of new training modules, challenges with Medicaid spending and workforce shortages, and updates on legislation affecting employment services for individuals with disabilities. The group also reviewed the newly developed Pre-ETS curriculum and discussed concerns about counselor retention and case management approaches, while Scott announced his role in a new national employment services community of practice.

### **Next Steps**

- Keith: Share the business engagement assessment report and recommendations after the August 21st Employment First Task Force meeting
- Keith: Provide updates on the timeline for rules going out for clearance after consulting with Becky Phillips
- Keith: Keep the committee posted on sustaining lessons learned from the ADS Poly pilot
- Keith: Share the video featuring providers discussing lessons learned from the ADS Poly pilot by the end of the month

- Committee members: Register for ADS Poly pilot provider "at a glance" events in August if interested
- Scott: Provide more information about Group Employment Supports and Basic Employment Skills Training later in the meeting
- OPRA members: Provide feedback on their Learning Management Systems to Scott for integration of the new empathy-based care training module
- Scott: Continue discussions with Learning Management System providers to integrate the new empathy-based care training module
- Scott: Explore potential pilot project utilizing 300 learner licenses in the reach 360 LMS for OPRA members
- Scott: Share updates on the training module integration progress in future meetings
- Committee: Continue discussions on future of day array services in the context of Medicaid system changes
- OPRA team: Gather more data from states that have switched to the InterRAI assessment to evaluate potential funding impacts
- OPRA team: Develop advocacy strategies for maintaining a Cabinet Level Department of Developmental Disabilities in preparation for potential administration changes
- OPRA team: Further analyze transportation costs and consider proposing changes to the Cost of Doing Business categories for transportation services
- OPRA team: Investigate the possibility of separating Non-Medical Transportation trips and miles units to address budget allocation issues
- Scott: Continue advocating for maintaining a Cabinet Level Department of Developmental Disabilities
- Scott: Continue pushing on key issues through the clearance process and public comment
- Scott: Collaborate with other advocacy groups on the BEST and group employment support service concerns during the public comment period
- Scott: Monitor the progress of the reintroduced Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act at the federal level
- Scott: Prepare for potential renewed discussions regarding the Ohio state bill on 14c elimination
- Committee members: Monitor OOD leadership changes following Deputy Director Susan Pugh's retirement
- Committee: Review and provide feedback on OOD's new counselor view job aid and statewide case management approach
- Committee: Continue discussions with OOD regarding administrative burden on providers due to counselor turnover
- Scott: Share the Pre-ETS curriculum resources with all members
- OPRA members: Provide feedback to OOD regarding the counselor view job aid and new referral/intake process challenges
- OPRA members: Engage with DODD regarding the employment first partnership concerns
- Interested providers: Sign up for the remaining Pre-ETS curriculum training sessions
- Providers: Share any existing patient liability policies with Scott via email
- OPRA members: Consider joining the national day in employment service community of practice launching in October

- Scott: Share collected patient liability policies with inquiring members
- Members: Watch for announcements about the September Day Employment Committee meeting
- Members: Send agenda suggestions for the next meeting to Scott or Anne

## **Summary**

### **Meeting Welcome and Agenda Overview**

The meeting began with Scott and Anne welcoming attendees and requesting camera activation. They noted a full agenda for the 90-minute to 2-hour session. Anne highlighted the nature of their business, which often results in a crowded agenda. Keith Banner from Dodd joined the meeting and apologized for background noise, expressing his pleasure at being present.

### **Employment RFPs and Advisory Meeting**

Keith discussed upcoming RFPs for employment-related projects, including resources, capacity building, and enhancing the job seekers guide, with funding ranging from \$100,000 to \$350,000. He also announced an in-person meeting of the Employment First Advisory Committee on August 21st to review the business engagement assessment report and discuss recommendations for aligning messaging and improving collaboration with employers. Keith clarified that the assessment focused on how organizations support people with developmental disabilities in accessing employment, aiming to streamline communication with businesses.

### **Blueprint Updates and Training Initiatives**

The meeting covered several key topics. Keith provided an update on the blueprint proposals, with a waiver amendment date set for July 2026. He also discussed upcoming events in August where pilot providers will share their experiences and lessons learned. Scott introduced a new online empathy-based care training module developed by Opra, which is seeking integration into existing learning management systems. The conversation ended with a condensed presentation on modernizing Ohio's developmental disability system, sharing data and discussion points for future consideration.

### **Medicaid Spending and Workforce Challenges**

Scott discussed the challenges facing Medicaid spending in Ohio and nationwide, highlighting the increasing costs due to factors such as growing enrollment, rising acuity of support needs, and workforce shortages. He noted that home and community-based services, including developmental disabilities, account for a significant portion of Medicaid spending. Anne added that the workforce shortage is exacerbated by population migration to urban areas, leaving rural areas with fewer workers and potentially higher costs of living in urban areas. Scott mentioned that Dr. Ron Cox has presented on these demographic shifts and their implications for the workforce.

### **Ohio DD Services Landscape Review**

Scott presented data on the provider landscape for developmental disabilities services in Ohio, highlighting the importance of maintaining a dedicated Cabinet-level department and county-based local rule system. He discussed the potential for managed long-term services and supports, noting that while 58% of members want to avoid this transition, preparation is necessary given national trends. Scott also addressed concerns about the new InterAI assessment and its potential impact on funding.

The group discussed the need to rethink cost-of-doing-business rates, particularly for transportation services in rural areas. Finally, Scott provided an update on proposed rule changes for group employment and best career planning services, expressing concerns about the removal of the community integration rate and group size limitations.

#### **14(c) Certificate Phase-Out Legislation**

Scott discussed updates on 14 C legislation, noting that the Department of Labor's rule to eliminate 14 C has been rescinded, and new legislation, CIE, was introduced in Congress. He shared resources from a Pre-ETS curriculum developed by OOD and OCALIE, which he found valuable for all employment providers, and mentioned that OOD held their Quarterly Stakeholder meeting, where it was announced that Deputy Director Susan Pugh of BVR is retiring at the end of the month. Scott highlighted Susan's significant influence on VR and OOD policies and expressed cautious optimism about the leadership changes.

#### **Counselor Retention and Case Management**

Scott led a discussion about a new counselor view job aid and statewide approach to case management, seeking feedback from the group. Ann expressed skepticism about statewide changes affecting services, while Dr. shared challenges with counselor turnover and increased administrative work in the Northwest area. The group discussed issues with caseload transitions, counselor training, and communication difficulties, with Ann mentioning counselor resignations and reduced authorization of certain services. Scott acknowledged these approaches as band-aid solutions for systemic issues in counselor retention and hiring, suggesting a need for further discussion with Ood and Dodd.

#### **Pre-ETS Curriculum Development Update**

Scott presented the newly developed Pre-ETS curriculum, created in partnership with Ood, which is designed to support employment services for individuals with disabilities. He highlighted that while the curriculum is not mandatory, it aligns with Pre-ETS requirements and includes comprehensive resources such as lesson plans, staff instructions, and materials that can be customized. Scott also mentioned that Ocali was funded by Ood to develop this curriculum, which received positive feedback for its accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with varying skill levels. Additionally, Scott announced his role as co-lead for a new national employment services community of practice launching in October through Anchor, and requested members to share their patient liability policies to address challenges in collecting fees.

**The next Day Array Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 9:30am**

The day array committee has two standing subcommittees:

- **Day Services Committee:** This committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, and direct support professionals who are providers of adult day support. Meetings include information sharing, networking, problem-solving and discussion of best practices and trends in day support for adults with DD. Training and updates from the state concerning adult day supports, vocational habilitation, career planning, and non-medical transportation is provided. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array Committee for review and then forwarded to the policy committee.

**Committee Chair:** Nicole Smith (RHDD)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks

- **Employment Services Committee:** The employment services committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, certified employment support professionals, job developers, and job coaches. This committee is a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to providing integrated, competitive employment services. Topics covered may include, but are not limited to, policy and rule review, state trends, understanding and implementing DODD, OOD, and ODM rules, braiding funding, best practices service delivery, establishing relationships with employers, supervising remote employees, operating fiscally sound programs, and dual customer model, and identifying and mitigating individual and programmatic risk. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array committee for review.

**Committee Chairs:** Paul Soprano (UCP of Greater Cleveland), Justin Blumhorst (Capabilities)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks

### **OPRA Day & Employment Committee Report**

**Thursday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

**10:00am-11:30am**

#### **Quick recap**

The meeting began with administrative updates and technical difficulties before moving into discussions about provider services and staffing changes. The main focus was on proposed rule changes for employment services, including updates to community vocab services, group employment settings, and career exploration programs, with extensive discussion of concerns and potential advocacy strategies. The conversation ended with budget updates regarding state and federal funding, including discussions about Medicaid funding implications and provider tax reductions.

#### **Summary**

##### **Best/GES Proposal Review**

The meeting began with Gwyn discussing background check procedures and personal matters, before the main committee meeting started at 10:01 AM. Jay Burns from OD joined the meeting but experienced technical difficulties with audio, which were eventually resolved. Scott announced that after Jay's updates, he would present the final version of Best in Ges proposals and distribute a survey to the membership for feedback. Nicole and Justin also greeted attendees and mentioned the possibility of live polling during the meeting.

### **Quarterly Provider Meeting Updates**

Jay shared updates from the Quarterly Provider meeting, addressing concerns about staff changes causing delays in services and introducing a job aid to help providers find current counselors through the vendor portal. Jay also discussed efforts to standardize significant incident report forms and mentioned a positive budget outlook with additional funding for Accessible Ohio. Paul inquired about VR funding cuts, which Jay agreed to follow up on, and Justin asked about OOD's policy on AI, to which Jay explained the current approach of ensuring CPI is not used in AI models while exploring future protocols with legal and the Ohio AI Council.

### **Summer Youth Program Progress Review**

The group discussed the progress of the summer youth program, noting that referrals were at 75% of budgeted capacity, an improvement over the previous year but still below target. Ann shared that counselors received weekly updates on students' performance and attendance, which has been well-received. The team explored ideas for improving the program, including offering non-traditional hours and formalizing communication between providers and counselors about site needs. Jay expressed interest in these suggestions and mentioned ongoing efforts to update the site list system to better manage capacity and avoid confusion.

### **BEST Rule Change Proposal**

Scott presented a proposal for rule changes, focusing on the Basic Employment Skills Training (BEST) rule and its impact on community vocab services. He expressed concerns about the Department's honesty throughout the process and highlighted key disagreements, particularly regarding the removal of the integrated community rate for vocab services. Scott proposed a survey with two binary options to gauge membership support for the proposal, emphasizing that the results would not dictate an automatic opposition to all changes. He also discussed the Department's decision not to automatically grandfather current community vocab recipients into community ads, instead offering a one-year transition period before requiring a decision on service type.

### **Service Rule Monitoring System Changes**

Scott discussed the proposed rule changes for service settings, focusing on the two-tier system for monitoring services based on age and placement levels. He noted that the most significant challenge was what was not included in the rule, particularly the absence of an integrated community rate. Scott also highlighted improvements in the updated definitions for integrated community settings, such as the removal of problematic language about interacting with people without disabilities. He suggested that advocacy could still be done through the public comment process for less significant issues, while core fundamental concerns might require a stronger stance.

### **Career Service Payment Policy Concerns**

Scott expressed concerns about the language and implications of a proposed career exploration service, particularly regarding compensation and the distinction between paid and unpaid activities. He noted inconsistencies in how the Department has handled similar services in the past and questioned the logic behind the current proposal. Scott also highlighted the need for clarity and consistency in policy, suggesting that the Department may need to amend their state plan and waiver application to address

these issues. Paul asked for clarification on which activities would require payment, and Scott explained that while the CMS technical guide suggests unpaid activities are not allowed, current practices allow for both paid and unpaid career planning services.

### **Vocational Services Rate and Group Size Changes**

Scott discussed changes to community vocational services, including a new rate structure and group size limitations. He explained that the new rates would work well for small group sizes but might be less favorable for larger groups currently served. Scott also addressed concerns about reducing group employment to 8 people, noting that the department had rejected their request to grandfather existing larger sites. Tim raised specific concerns about a government center site where adding extra staff would not benefit workers but would increase costs. Scott suggested potentially challenging the group size limitation during the public comment process but acknowledged that some compromises might be necessary to move the overall proposal forward.

### **Employment Proposal Changes Explained**

Scott explained the changes in the group employment proposal, highlighting that provider-owned or controlled settings are now allowable, and small groups of 4 or less will receive an enhanced rate. He noted that the proposal simplifies the definition of small groups and aligns rates with integrated community VOC rates. Scott raised concerns about language distinguishing between people with and without disabilities and asked for feedback on whether the proposal would be beneficial for people in integrated community VOC. He emphasized the importance of ensuring the correct service is available for everyone, regardless of their pre-vocational outcomes.

### **Community Employment Services Proposal Discussion**

Scott led a discussion about a proposal for community integrated employment services, expressing both concerns and support for the initiative. He emphasized the need to decide whether to support the proposal overall, acknowledging both the potential benefits and issues with the department's clarity and honesty. Scott shared a survey for staff to indicate their overall stance on the proposal, requesting feedback by early next week. Mallory asked about the barriers for individuals transitioning from community integrated vocational services to community integrated employment services, which Scott addressed by highlighting the challenges of reauthorization with county boards and the need for tailored service plans.

### **Employment Rules Progress and Challenges**

The meeting focused on the progress made in employment rules and the challenges that remain. Jeff praised Scott's work in negotiating a 196% rate increase for group employment, which represents significant progress from the initial state of the system. Mary raised concerns about the transition from community vocation to community ads, with Drew suggesting that the transition would depend on the individual's goals and the availability of services. Scott emphasized the need to consider the impact of rate cuts and the lack of a viable alternative for some individuals, highlighting the complexity of the situation.

### **Budget Updates for Disability Services**

Scott provided updates on two budget items: the State operating budget and the federal budget reconciliation bill. He noted that the State operating budget remained flat for developmental disabilities, though there was a \$1 million haircut per year for the biennium, which they will follow up on for clarity. Scott also discussed the federal budget reconciliation bill, which is expected to be signed by President Trump by July 4th. He highlighted that while disability services were largely unaffected by the proposals, there are concerns about the long-term impact of reduced provider taxes on Medicaid funding in Ohio over the next decade. Scott thanked everyone for their advocacy efforts throughout the process.

**The next Day & Employment Services Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 4<sup>th</sup> @ 10:00am**

## Health Care

### Summary

The Healthcare committee is comprised primarily of nursing staff but does include other members who are interested in health and healthcare related issues. The committee focuses on nursing and medical services in the waiver and ICF settings. Areas of focus include but are not limited to: rules and regulations that affect the DD nursing community, training, education and best practices.

**Committee Chair:** Shelly Wharton (The Society)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Christine Touvelle

**OPRA Health Care Committee Report**  
**Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025**  
**10am-12pm**

During the June meeting, the group was supposed to be joined by two professors who were subject matter experts on health passports. However, the professors never responded to Christine's follow up emails close to the meeting day. The committee instead discussed some changes to the medication administration program and family delegation program that were included in the state budget. Christine, Rachel, and Teresa then gave an update on various conversations the OPRA team has been having about MAIS with DODD and other system stakeholders. Members of the committee shared their experience with using MAIS. The meeting ended with an open discussion of hot topics. The next meeting is scheduled for August 21<sup>st</sup>. The scheduled guest speaker is from Dexacom.

**The next Health Care Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> @ 10am**

# Human Resources

## Summary

The HR committee is comprised of HR professionals, or anyone responsible for the life cycle of employment for his/her agency. This group of professionals meets to discuss best practices in HR, from recruiting and hiring process, to keeping abreast of upcoming new regulations that affect employment law and/or training requirements.

**Committee Chair:** Michelle Madden (Epic)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Christine Touvelle

The July meeting was canceled in order to host an all-member call on the state budget and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

**The next HR Committee meeting is scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

# Residential Resources

## Summary

The ICF & Residential Waiver Committees was combined as a forum for providers offering residential services, including ICF and waiver-based models. The committee explores funding, staffing, regulatory requirements, and issues that have a direct impact on the programs and services our members offer.

**Committee Chair(s):** Susan Berneike (Help Foundation), Bob Heinzerling (Heinzerling Community), Kurt Miller (Empowering People) and Jamie Steele (OVRs)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Rachel Hayes

**The new meeting structure beginning in 2025:**

**9:30 AM – 11:00 AM | Residential Waiver**

Focused on updates, discussions, and presentations specific to the Residential Waiver service.

**11:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Department Updates/Presentations**

Content applicable to both Residential Waiver (RW) and ICF services.

**11:30 AM – 1:00 PM | ICF**

Centered on updates, discussions, and presentations specific to the ICF service.



## **OPRA Residential Resources Committee Report**

**Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**9:30am – 1:00pm**

### **Quick recap**

The meeting covered updates on state and federal budget developments, including Medicaid funding changes and new assessment tools for waiver services. Discussions focused on quality standards in HCBS services, medication error documentation requirements, and challenges with wrap back and background checks. The group also addressed concerns about the ICF program, including reimbursement rates, quality indicators, and upcoming rule changes, while announcing new initiatives for QIDP peer learning and compliance support.

### **Summary**

#### **State Budget and DD Funding**

The residential resources meeting covered several key topics, including a budget update from Christine. She explained that the Senate has passed their version of the state budget, which maintains Dodd funding at the Governor's proposed levels but does not include any waiver rate increases for the next biennium. Christine also discussed the Technology First initiative, which will receive \$2.7 million per year, and a new amendment requiring the General Assembly to review the DD system. The conversation ended with a reminder about ongoing federal developments, particularly regarding provider taxes in the reconciliation bill.

#### **Medicaid Funding and Assessment Changes**

The meeting focused on Medicaid funding changes and a new assessment tool for waiver services. Christine explained that provider taxes would be capped at 3.5% by 2031, with exceptions for ICF and nursing home taxes. Scott noted that while DD services are not directly impacted, overall Medicaid funding concerns exist. The group discussed a new assessment tool called the Inter Ray, which may replace the SIS. Jamie raised concerns about how the new assessment would affect current waiver recipients. The meeting also covered updates on remote supports, with Scott explaining a proposed new model that would give providers more flexibility in how remote support services are delivered.

#### **Medication Error Documentation Policy Review**

The group discussed concerns about medication error documentation requirements in the MAIS system, particularly regarding the classification of documentation errors as medication incidents. Rachel explained that while the Department of Developmental Services maintains their position that all medication errors must be reported in MAIS, regardless of severity, the group proposed a compromise where only serious medication errors (MUIs) would require MAIS notation while documentation errors would be handled through existing incident reporting systems. The discussion revealed that while the Board of Nursing does not require documentation errors to be reported as medication errors, the current interpretation is creating an unnecessary burden on staff and organizations. The group noted that with the director's retirement, they should prioritize meeting with the new director to address these concerns.

### **HCBS Quality Standards Discussion**

The meeting focused on discussing quality standards in HCBS services, with CMS's access rule highlighting the need for states to develop quality measures. Rachel led a discussion where participants explored how providers and county boards define quality, emphasizing health outcomes, community engagement, and safety, while focused on staff tools and personal reflection on quality delivery. The discussion concluded with a suggestion of a daily challenge for staff to reflect on their personal contribution to quality, moving beyond just data-driven measures.

### **Medicaid Quality Management Updates**

The meeting focused on quality management in Medicaid processes and upcoming rule changes. Harris emphasized the importance of measuring processes and staff performance to ensure quality delivery of services. Rachel highlighted the need for providers to have a voice in defining quality initiatives as the state pursues these efforts. Michele inquired about potential quality payment metrics for DD services, to which Rachel responded that it remains unclear. Lisa Burt from the Compliance department joined to discuss compliance and updates. The group also discussed upcoming EVV training and the current iteration of a review tool, with plans for updates in October.

### **Rapback and Background Check Challenges**

The meeting focused on challenges with rapback and background checks, with Lisa noting that these were consistently problematic areas. Lisa and Rachel discussed potential solutions, including training providers and forming a connection with BCI for direct questions. It was inquired about a quality assessment and the number of reviewers, to which Lisa responded that they currently have 32 reviewers statewide.

### **Improving Medicaid Provider Connectivity**

Lisa discussed challenges with independent providers being disconnected from the Medicaid system and emphasized the need for clear, detailed plans from county boards to ensure quality service delivery. She highlighted the importance of providers understanding rules and requirements, and encouraged collaboration to improve compliance. Rachel announced the launch of the "Great Provider Playbook," a new resource catalog aimed at providing practical guides and toolkits for Ohio providers, with the first issue expected in July.

### **ICF Budget and Reconciliation Updates**

Christine provided updates on the state budget process, noting that the Senate passed their version of House Bill 96, and both chambers are resolving differences. She highlighted that the ICF formula will continue as outlined with a 6% growth rate, maintaining the Governor's proposal for professional workforce development, and funding for personal needs allowance is still under review. Christine also discussed the federal reconciliation process, emphasizing concerns about the impact of reduced provider tax rates on ICF funding and future rate increases. She noted that the fate of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" remains uncertain, with potential implications for Medicaid services.

### **ICF Program Vision and Challenges**

The group discussed concerns about the ICF program, including an outdated vision paper from a 2012 white paper and issues with data accuracy in cost reports. They expressed frustration that the Department lacks a clear vision for the program's future, particularly regarding rates and active treatment. The discussion highlighted ongoing challenges with day programming capacity and the need for a more sustainable program model, with participants noting that ICFs played a crucial role during the pandemic.

### **ICF Reimbursement and Funding Challenges**

The group discussed concerns about reimbursement rates and the impact of changes to assessment tools and funding mechanisms, and expressing uncertainty about Deloitte's understanding of the ICF reimbursement system in Ohio. It was highlighted how rate increases for QDCs have created financial challenges, while suggested redeveloping separate cost centers for ADS funding. The team expressed concerns about declining collaboration with the department, particularly regarding the Peer Group 6 rule which restricts home-based services to five people despite a stated capacity for six, with Teresa noting that the department's approach lacks overall vision and may make it difficult to access an entitlement service

### **ICF Quality Indicators Discussion**

The group discussed quality indicators for the ICF program, focusing on satisfaction surveys, person-centered services, community integration, staff training, and retention. It was expressed there are concerns about the emphasis on person-centered plans, suggesting they may not always reflect quality. It was proposed a more holistic approach to quality indicators that considers both ICF and waiver-funded services, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive view of an individual's overall well-being.

### **QIDP Peer Learning Initiative Launch**

Rachel announced the launch of a QIDP peer learning initiative, with the first session scheduled for July 24th at Ann Grady in Toledo from 10 AM to 1 PM. The initiative aims to share best practices and address challenges faced by QIDPs, with topics including compliance documentation, staffing issues, and regulatory understanding. Rachel also mentioned upcoming rule changes, including the intensive behavioral support rate add-on in September and the quality incentive payments rule in December. The group discussed the need for more resources for QIDPs and compliance staff, with Rachel reviewing the QIDP survey results.

**The next Residential Resources Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup> @ 9:30am**

# Marketing and Communications

## Summary

The Marketing and Communications Committee is designed for organization leaders and their marketing and communication staff. The goal is to provide a focus on sharing strategies and tools, develop and hone innovative ideas, and provide feedback to other members of the group. The committee will periodically invite guest speakers to address identified needs of the group.

**Committee Chairs:** Liz Owens (The Alpha Group) and Carla McDonald (Weaver Industries)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Melissa Fannon

**The next Marketing & Communications Committee will be Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> @ 10am.**