



# Ohio's Developmental Disabilities System: A System at a Turning Point

## Why So Many Conversations Are Happening at Once

Ohio's developmental disabilities (DD) system supports more than 110,000 Ohioans and their families across all 88 counties. For decades, the system has helped people live, work, and participate in their communities through a partnership of federal, state, local, provider, and family resources.

Today, that system is experiencing significant pressure from multiple directions at the same time. Conversations about modernization, workforce shortages, fraud prevention, funding, assessments, technology, managed care, County Boards, and service delivery are all connected to a larger question:



***How do we ensure Ohio's DD system remains sustainable, accountable, and responsive to people with disabilities and their families for decades to come?***

## Federal Pressures

### Medicaid Growth and Sustainability

Ohio's DD system is increasingly funded through Medicaid, making it part of a larger national conversation about healthcare spending, program integrity, and long-term sustainability. Medicaid expenditures continue to grow faster than state revenues, creating pressure on both state and local governments.



**Key Question:** *How do we preserve access to services while ensuring the system remains financially sustainable?*

### Increasing Accountability Expectations

Federal agencies continue to place greater emphasis on outcomes, quality measurement, data reporting, person-centered planning, and oversight of public dollars.

**Key Question:** *How do we demonstrate value and accountability without creating unnecessary administrative burden?*

### Expectations for Modernization

Across the country, states are adopting new assessment tools, technology solutions, quality measures, and payment models designed to improve consistency and better align funding with individual needs.

**Key Question:** *How can Ohio modernize while maintaining stability for people, families, and providers?*



## Statewide Pressures

### Multiple Major Changes Happening Simultaneously

Ohio is navigating waiver modernization, new assessment systems, technology upgrades, workforce initiatives, funding discussions, and potential changes to how services are administered and financed.



**Key Question:** *How do we manage significant change without disrupting services people rely upon every day?*

### Program Integrity and Public Trust

State leaders have increased their focus on fraud, waste, abuse, quality oversight, and accountability. Recent provider moratoriums and enhanced monitoring efforts reflect a desire to protect public resources and maintain confidence in the system.

Most stakeholders agree that individuals and families are harmed when bad actors exploit the system. At the same time, Ohio must ensure accountability efforts do not unintentionally reduce access to needed services.

**Key Question:** *How do we strengthen oversight while preserving access and provider capacity?*

### Workforce Challenges

Like many healthcare and human service systems, Ohio continues to struggle with recruiting and retaining Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), nurses, Service and Support Administrators (SSAs), and other critical staff.

**Key Question:** *How do we build and sustain the workforce needed to support people with increasingly complex needs?*



## **Leadership and Policy Transition**

Ohio is entering a period of political and administrative transition. Changes in state leadership often bring new priorities, new ideas, and new opportunities for reform.

***Key Question:*** *What should the future of Ohio's DD system look like over the next decade?*



## Local Pressures

### Reliance on Local Levies

Ohio's DD system relies heavily on local property tax levies. As a result, counties vary significantly in their ability to generate revenue and support local services.



**Key Question:** *How do we ensure equitable access to services regardless of where someone lives?*

### Growing Community Needs

Communities across Ohio face challenges related to housing, transportation, behavioral health services, nursing supports, and services for people with complex needs.

**Key Question:** *How do we build sufficient community capacity to meet growing demand?*

### Increasing Administrative Complexity

County Boards, providers, and state agencies are all managing growing regulatory, operational, and reporting requirements while simultaneously responding to workforce shortages and increasing service demand.

**Key Question:** *How do we reduce complexity and focus resources on supporting people rather than paperwork?*



## Questions About System Structure

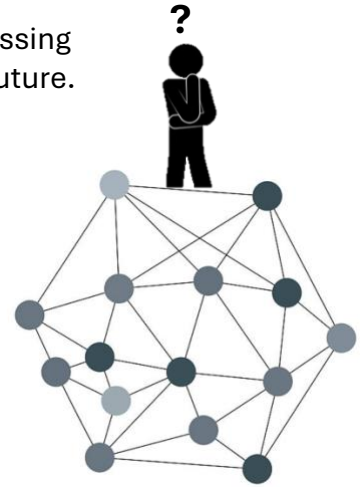
As pressures continue to grow, stakeholders are increasingly discussing whether Ohio's current system structure is the best model for the future.

Some advocate for strengthening and modernizing the existing County Board system. Others support greater regional collaboration, shared administrative services, or new statewide approaches. Some have proposed Administrative Service Organization (ASO) models, while others have discussed Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) or alternative approaches to administering long-term services and supports (LTSS).

There is no broad consensus on the right answer.

There is, however, growing recognition that these conversations are becoming increasingly important as Ohio seeks to balance local control, statewide consistency, financial sustainability, accountability, and equitable access to services.

**Key Question:** *What system structure best serves people with disabilities and their families in the future?*





## What's at Stake?

At the center of every discussion are people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The goal is not simply to change systems or policies. The goal is to ensure that every Ohioan with a developmental disability has access to quality supports, meaningful opportunities, trusted relationships, and the services they need to live a good life.



While stakeholders may disagree on specific solutions, most agree on the outcomes we are trying to achieve:

- Access to needed services and supports
- A stable and qualified workforce
- Strong accountability and public trust
- Efficient use of public resources
- Sustainable funding
- Person-centered planning and support
- Opportunities for community participation and independence
- Consistent quality across the state

The decisions made over the next several years will help shape Ohio's developmental disabilities system for generations to come.

If you have questions, please email [askOPRA@opra.org](mailto:askOPRA@opra.org)

