**The State of Remote Supports in Ohio**

There are vast changes occurring in developmental disability systems nationwide. Today we see that shifts away from traditional models are happening in residential and day array services and focusing almost entirely on the private provision of service. If the volume and pace of change is not challenging enough the uncertainty over reimbursement and the increasing complexity of regulatory compliance leave providers feeling overburdened. All of this is combined with the pressures of a workforce shortage rarely if ever before experienced.

The question before us is how do we embrace new models of service amidst all of these operational challenges?

**Remote Monitoring (Support)**

Remote monitoring means the monitoring of an individual in his or her residence by live staff or automated reporting systems using one or more of the following systems: video feed, audio feed, motion sensor systems, radio frequency identification, web based monitoring system or other device. The system may also include devices to engage in live two-way communication with the individual being monitored as described in the ISP.

So why should OPRA embrace remote supports?

**Improves Individual Lives**

The results are in. We have enough experience to know that success stories are happening. Individual independence is increasing. Skill levels are on the rise and behaviors are down. The satisfaction rate for services are up. Obviously remote support is not for everyone we serve but where appropriate it is working well. In the experience of other states remote support can prove a successful alternative for individuals currently in group settings or even more attractive for the newer generation of individuals not yet receiving supports outside of the family home.

**Cost Effective Service Model**

In Ohio and nationwide, discussions are occurring as to the ultimate sustainability of our current service delivery system. Available financial resources will continue to be limited, certainly at the federal and state levels. If for no other reason we will be forced to look for more cost effective models of service delivery. Remote supports are often a less expensive model of service that can offer improved services.

**Eases Workforce Shortages**

Remote supports require less staff. By nature they are less staff intensive and may deliver improved outcomes. There is no end in sight to the labor shortage nationally and not just in the caregiving systems. Every business is having to adapt. In many, if not most cases, technology is the acknowledged answer to what appears to be a chronic shortage of workers to fill positions.

**Choice of Available Remote Monitoring (Support) Vendors**

In Ohio, we now have a variety of remote support providers each with their own niche and experience. As a residential waiver provider, these options allow the comfort and flexibility necessary to create services unique to the individuals they serve. And the experience and expertise is there to walk providers through the process and allow choices for the provider, the individual and their families.

**Other Considerations**

Remote supports are a tool for leveraging cost savings and improved outcomes in a managed care/shared savings environment. If remote supports are offered only on a fee for service basis, then this opportunity is likely lost. Currently, any savings from remote supports go to the state and counties, not to providers or DSP’s. On the other hand, the growing acceptance of remote supports in a managed care/shared savings environment would be critical to the level of success of these systems.

Substituting remote supports for current staff time in an existing setting can be difficult. Individuals and families may be reticent to rely on technology and to end or change their positive relationships with DSP’s. The staff’s perception of job security may be threatened by remote supports, which they may relay to the individual/family they support.

Individuals, families and SSA’s do not think “technology first”. Typically, it’s an afterthought, or in response to a challenging situation (with the unavailability of staff or a change in medical condition). The encouragement and acceptance of remote supports is growing, but much work needs to be done to bring it into the mainstream of our system’s thinking.

**The Coming Technology in Caregiving-It’s Inevitable**

“Welcome your new job takers and caregivers. The coming decade will see societies transform as humans learn to live among robots. The labor shortage will hit service-industry jobs like eldercare (and disabilities) with ferocity and will be exacerbated because caretakers have a high job turnover rate due to low pay and high rates of work related injury from lifting patients.

Our future caretakers are being developed in a Japanese factory right now. Just as Japanese companies reinvented cars in the 1970s and consumer electronics in the 1980s, they are now reinventing the family. The robots depicted in the movies and cartoons of the 1960s will be the reality of the 2020s.”

--From *The Industries of the Future* by Alec Ross 2016

The question for OPRA is what role do we play in the in the changing nature of service delivery particularly with respect to remote support. Do we lead its promotion and application, take a passive stance while other stakeholders (governor’s office/DODD, legislature, county boards, families) take the lead, or are we somewhere in between?