

# OPRA FRIDAY FIVE

News, Resources and Events for OPRA Members

June 19, 2026



OPRA's "Call for Award Nominations" is now open for the 2026 OPRA Annual Awards. The Annual Awards Ceremony will be held at the Hilton Columbus/Polaris on Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The purpose of the OPRA Annual Awards is to honor dedicated service professionals, groups and volunteers who have made outstanding contributions in the I/DD Field. All nominations must be submitted no later than Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. [Click here to learn more and submit a nomination.](#)

**HB 795/SB 315:** Following a frenzied few weeks of legislative activity, enormous advocacy and major changes, the Ohio Senate unanimously passed SB 315 (formerly HB 795) last week. The bill is still waiting for Governor DeWine's signature. If you haven't joined our last few calls and/or committee meetings, [Christine shared this presentation](#) that outlines the pertinent bill provisions and legislative timeline and process. Please reach out to the OPRA team with any questions.



## NEW SUPERVISOR TRAINING

**Supervisor Training:** Registration is still open for our next quarterly New Supervisor Training on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 am on Zoom. "This session will focus on what effective supervision looks like in our field; building trust, leading with purpose, and creating a team culture that supports both staff and the people we serve. This training is intended to satisfy the '90-day' training requirement for new supervisors." [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

**Speaker Proposals:** OPRA is pleased to announce "The Call for Speaker Proposals" is officially open for the 2026 OPRA Annual Conference on October 22-23, 2026 at the Hilton Polaris, 8700 in Columbus OH. All proposals must be submitted with a clear outline ensuring your sessions are practical, forward-thinking and offer concrete tools and strategies for driving excellence in I/DD services. We look forward to seeing your proposals. [Click here to submit!](#)



This week Pete had the opportunity join leaders from Ohio's DD System at The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) in Washington DC. It was a great few days of learning and sharing with other states on emerging and promising practices and the policy landscape for DD services. This morning, Pete shared this new publication from the [Link Center on 'Cross-System Strategies to Support Children with Complex Behavioral Health Conditions'](#), a presentations from the conference.



# In Case You Missed It...

Additional Updates From The OPRA Team and System Partners

**Memo Monday:** Click here to read this week's [Memo Monday](#), which includes MSS Transition Updates, Fiscal Year End Payment Delays and Resources for the DSP Compensation Survey.



We have just expanded capacity for this year's CEO/DOO Training Day on July 29<sup>th</sup> at the Quest Center. This training day will satisfy the 6 hours of required annual training for agency Directors of Operations. Sessions will include:

- Empathy-Based Leadership
- Navigating Generations in the Workforce
- MUI/DODD Updates
- Strategic Planning
- High Stakes Communication and more

**[Space is limited... Register Today!](#)**

**Call for Celebrations!** In 2026, we're excited to close out our Friday calls with member celebrations, ending each call on a positive note and a bit of good news. If there's something you'd like Pete or the team to celebrate during a Friday call, we'd love to hear it! This could include retirements, milestones, big events, great stories, birthdays, or any other moments worth recognizing. Please email [Scott](#) with the subject line "OPRA Celebrations" and let us know what you'd like us to celebrate.

**We Would Like to Welcome These Newest Provider Members to the OPRA Community**

**Patty's People First**

**Autism Society of Greater Akron**

**Gifted Touch Home Care Solutions**

**Innovative Support Services**

**Optimum Care Corporation**

## Upcoming Events

6/23: OPRA New Supervisor Training

7/2: Employment Services Committee Meeting

Click [here](#) for a full list of upcoming DODD training events

## News & Resources

"Department of Education moving special education and civil rights responsibilities"

"States aren't required to provide community-based care for people with disabilities, new DOJ opinion claims"

"Budget correction bill includes one-time property tax credit for some elderly, disabled Ohioans"

**[Sedgwick June Safety and OSHA Articles](#)**



# Strategic Thinking in a Changing IDD/A Services Landscape

*By: Catherine Thibedeau, CFHS Principal Consultant*

Disability service providers have always been grounded in mission. That commitment to helping people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and autism (IDD/A) live full, meaningful lives remains their greatest strength. But today's environment demands more of providers; mission alone is no longer enough. Organizations need strong business practices, modern infrastructure and systems, and an intentional strategy to remain viable and effective. Many providers are still operating with structures that have changed only incrementally since their founding. While small administrative improvements have been made over time, true transformation has often lagged. Meanwhile, other sectors, such as hospital systems, retail, banking, telecommunications, and airlines, have adapted dramatically to market pressure. The IDD/A sector is now facing similar forces, and the pace of change is accelerating as a path of adaptation emerges.

In 2025, the IDD/A sector saw 31 documented M&A deals, the highest on record, while behavioral health M&A activity rose by 17 percent. These are not short-term anomalies; they point to deeper structural pressures reshaping the field, including workforce shortages, rising regulatory demands, increasing expectations for technology and data infrastructure, continued reimbursement pressures, and a growing emphasis on outcomes and value-based care. In this context, the central question for providers is no longer whether change is coming, but how to respond in ways that preserve mission and build long-term sustainability. Strategic thinking, especially around partnerships and collaboration, needs to move higher on the to-do list.

For many organizations, conversations about mergers, acquisitions, or affiliations (MA&A) can feel uncomfortable. Concerns about losing identity, shifting mission, or weakening community ties are real, and some large-scale transactions in the sector have reinforced those fears. Hesitation is understandable, but timing and positioning matter. Organizations that explore partnerships from a position of strength have far more influence over the outcome. They can be selective, define their non-negotiables, and shape agreements that align with their values. Those entering similar conversations under financial distress or during a leadership gap will inevitably have fewer choices and less leverage. There is a fundamental difference between a transaction that happens to an organization and a strategy that organizations design together.

The MA&A landscape exists on a continuum, with more options than often realized. At one end are full-integration models, such as statutory mergers, consolidations, and acquisitions, in which entities combine operations and governance structures. Other approaches offer more flexibility while still enabling scale and support, such as parent-subsidary models. In these structures, organizations remain as separate legal entities but are connected through a controlling parent organization. This can create alignment and shared oversight while preserving distinct identities and community presence.

*There is a fundamental difference between a transaction that happens to an organization and a strategy that organizations design together.*

Further along the continuum are strategic alliances, affiliations, and hub-and-spoke models. Rather than fully combining organizations, these approaches establish structured relationships that enable providers to share infrastructure and strengthen operations over time. They may include shared services agreements, management services organizations, or coordinated partnerships aligned with common goals. For many providers, these models are appealing because they strike a balance. They allow organizations to access expertise and efficiencies in areas such as finance, human resources, communications, information technology, billing, compliance, and purchasing without sacrificing governance control, brand identity, or local relationships. Just as important, they can create the scale needed to manage growing administrative and regulatory demands.

There are strong examples of this approach in the sector. One being Ardent Services Group, a CFHS-supported partnership between two organizations that came together to streamline their administrative functions while also keeping their own identities. Still, these models are not easy to implement. They require clear governance, thoughtful design, realistic timelines, and, most importantly, a high degree of trust between partners. These are not reasons to avoid collaboration; they are reasons to approach it with care, preparation, and strong advisory support.

At its core, the mission of IDD/A organizations has not changed. Supporting individuals to live with dignity, self-determination, and full participation in their communities remains the guiding purpose. Strategic thinking does not weaken that mission; it helps protect it. There is no single right approach to MA&A. Providers today have more options than ever, ranging from shared services to full integration and everything in between. The key is to approach these decisions proactively, grounded in a clear understanding of organizational priorities and long-term goals.

Resilience in the next chapter of the IDD/A field may look different than in the past. It may be less about standing alone and more about building thoughtful, intentional partnerships. The work starts with clarity about what matters most and begins long before a transaction is on the table. Change is already underway. The real question is how organizations will respond in ways that strengthen capacity, protect values, and position them to thrive in the years ahead.

**ABOUT CATHERINE THIBEDEAU**

Catherine is a consultant with CFHS, supporting their advisory partnership with OPRA. As a longtime nonprofit executive in the intellectual and developmental disabilities field, she brings expertise in strategy, operations, Medicaid policy, partnerships, and mergers and acquisitions. Catherine helps organizations navigate complexity, strengthen infrastructure, and pursue practical solutions that support long-term sustainability.

**ABOUT CFHS**

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