



FOCUS



Lawrence County DD Highlights Services for Individuals with Autism

The Lawrence County DD provides services to those with developmental disabilities throughout the life span, and many of those served have a diagnosis of autism. According to the CDC, about 1 in 44 children have been diagnosed with autism, and it is the fastest growing developmental disability. The condition is often diagnosed in early childhood, and common symptoms include speech delays, restrictive or repetitive behaviors or interests, and difficulty with social interactions. Considering the prevalence of autism, nearly everyone has been touched by the condition in some way.

April was designated as Autism Awareness Month in 2011. Many organizations that support individuals with autism changed *awareness* to *acceptance* in 2021. The change was made to shift the focus more towards acceptance of autism as a natural condition. "Acceptance involves more than just being aware. It requires a deeper understanding and pushes us towards looking past the diagnosis to the person", said Julie Monroe, LCDD Superintendent.

The Lawrence County DD Open Door School serves students ages 5-22 with various developmental disabilities, including autism. The smaller class room size and access to speech therapy services and OT/PT on site helps tremendously. Also, Open Door School partners with the Autism Services Center (ASC) for behavioral intervention services. "Many of the behavioral issues we see with children with autism are due to challenges related to the condition such as communication and sensory difficulties", said Dr. Jimmie Beirne, CEO of the ASC.

The ASC provides Board Certified Behavioral Analysts to work with the students, their teachers, and other members of the team to develop behavioral interventions.

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(Top) Jackie Brewer, ASC Applied Behavioral Analyst with ODS Student Bella Anderson of Proctorville

(Bottom) Cindy Barker, LCDD Behavior Specialist with Devin Yeager of Ironton.

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"We want the best services as possible for those we serve, and I have seen what the right interventions can do for students," said Kendra Heim, Open Door School Principal.

In 2020, the ASC purchased the former Early Childhood Center (ECC) owned by LCDD. "ASC has operated clinics in Huntington for several years, and the availability of the ECC will enable us to further expand our services into Lawrence County," said Beirne. Currently, ASC provides applied behavior analysis treatment for 39 children in Lawrence County, and expects to double that number over the next year.

The Lawrence County DD also provides specialized behavioral support services in community settings. Cindy Barker, LCDD Behavior Support Specialist, holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology, and has worked with the DD population over 20 years. She now focuses on working with individuals and their families to develop interventions to help them live as independently as possible.

Several individuals who receive services from Barker have autism, and she feels linkage to other important services such as occupational and speech therapy are important for success. However, she feels that education is the key. "The best thing you can do to help someone with autism have a good life is to understand autism," said Barker. "Our job is to help educate the families and service providers about the aspects of the condition. Since every individual is unique, we rely heavily on observation and data collection," said Barker.

In addition to services, the Lawrence County DD has limited funding that can be accessed by eligible families for respite services. "The funding can help pay for a provider chosen by the family to assist in the home, or can be utilized to help pay for transportation to access specialized services," said Monroe.

Calendar of Events

MAY

Mental Health Awareness Month

May 2 - ODS Graduation 6:00 pm

May 3 - In-Service day (ODS)

May 4 - Special Olympics ages 5-11

May 5 - Special Olympics ages 12-21

May 10 - Board Meeting 6:00 pm Open Door School

May 26 - Students last day of school

May 30 - Memorial Day Parade

Stay Connected to the DD Community in Ohio

You and your family can stay up to date on many topics and issues across the state and close to home. You can also communicate with other individuals and families sharing the same concerns. Go to <https://dodd.ohio.gov>

Supporting You and Your Family, Click on Connecting Families to DODD and Family Resources.

OACB CEO Retires

The Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACB) announced today that Bridget Gargan, the organization's Chief Executive Officer, will retire this month after leading the organization for nearly nine years. Gargan, who spent more than two decades lobbying state lawmakers and elected officials on behalf of the Ohio Hospital Association before joining OACB, was appointed to her current position in 2013.



Walk for Autism and Egg Hunt



Open Door School Prom



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

What can you do to better care for your mental health.

SLEEP

Getting 8 hours of sleeps each night is crucial for anyone's mental health. For healthier sleep, try maintaining a steady sleep schedule, practice relaxation techniques before bed, and avoid electronic devices 30 minutes before bedtime.

EXERCISE

Aerobic exercise, such as jogging, walking, and cycling, have been proven to reduce anxiety and depression. Exercise helps relieve stress, improves memory and helps lead to better sleep. Try for 30 minutes of exercise at least three times per week.

PLAY

Hobbies offer a great level of engagement between the mind and body. They are a great way to offer distractions from stress by doing something that you enjoy. People with hobbies are less likely to suffer from low moods, stress and depression.

GET SUPPORT

Maintain your healthy connections with friends and family. Reach out to others that can have a positive impact on your wellbeing. A great support system is not only an excellent outlet to discuss your feelings, but can also offer a sense of purpose and being.



Contact Us!

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