



Picture the Possibilities

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Local DD officials meet with Gov. Kasich, discuss regional collaboration

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Nancy Neely and Board President David Wigginton last week met with Gov. John Kasich and representatives of several other Boards of DD in an hour-long session.

Kasich requested the Sept. 26 meeting with local officials after hearing of their efforts to become more efficient as the state's level of financial contribution to local boards' budgets has significantly declined in recent years.

County Boards of DD in Ohio are facing tough financial times as slashes to state and federal funding, and loss of the tangible personal property tax portion of local property tax levies have cut substantially into their overall budgets. They say the goal is to minimize, where possible, the impact on services offered to eligible children and adults with developmental disabilities. In Licking County, cuts in state and federal funding have resulted in a loss of 2.3 million dollars annually in the last decade.

"We were glad to have an opportunity to discuss our efforts with Governor Kasich, and appreciate his interest in our cause," said Neely, who presented to the governor, along with Natalie Lupi, Superintendent of the Tuscarawas County Board of DD. "Governor Kasich is eager to support our progress in sharing services, and developing other strategies for reducing costs to the system that can result in more money for services to people. That means a lot and we are grateful to have that kind of backing at the highest level in state government."

In addition to officials from Licking and Tuscarawas counties, Gov. Kasich met with officials from Fairfield, Belmont, Harrison, Noble, Hocking, Perry, Morgan, Monroe, Washington, Guernsey, Carroll, Holmes, Muskingum, Knox, and Coshocton counties -- all of which are a part of the 18-county collaborative project being supported by John Martin, director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

"County Boards of DD have always been at the forefront of innovation when it comes to social service agencies," Martin said. "We are very supportive of efforts like these to make sure Ohio's most vulnerable citizens are not harshly affected by our state's tough financial situation."

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The Licking County Board of DD has implemented several new and creative measures in recent years to lower costs, explained Neely.

“In some cases, that means sharing costs for staffing and other services across county lines to save everyone money,” she said. “For example, we work with the 17 other counties in east-central Ohio to share administrative costs for certain functions we are required by the state to perform. That kind of approach has helped us at least tread water during the last several years of declining revenues.”

Kasich praised the efforts of the 18-county collaborative in the east-central Ohio region that is currently working to re-engineer and standardize eligibility determination, intake assessment, service planning and service monitoring functions. Meanwhile, the Ohio Department of DD is building new computer systems that support the standardized processes designed by the 18 counties. Currently, counties use separate systems and procedures that often result in inefficiency. Neely and Lupi lead the counties efforts and work in conjunction with Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Deputy Directors Patrick Stephan and Monty Kerr.

“We are pretty excited about this project and what it means for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families,” Neely said. “Gov. Kasich seems to truly care about the population we serve. We hope he will remain open to discussions like this one as we find new ways to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.”

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