

**Highland County Board of
Developmental Disabilities**

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Annual Report 2025

Mission and Vision Statement

Mission Statement

“Ensuring effective systems are available to assist people in achieving their life goals.”

Vision Statement

“Enhancing the quality of life in our community – one person at a time.”

From the Desk of HCBDD Superintendent, Larry Gray



Welcome to our 2025 Highland County Board of DD Annual Report. We had another great year here at the County Board of DD.

Our annual report this year celebrates many successes and accomplishments. We have enhanced our use of technology, developed new housing opportunities, continued working with community partners to enhance opportunities for those we serve and maintained fiscal sustainability. We are looking forward to 2026 and working with those we serve. We hope you enjoy reading our report as we look forward to what the new year brings.

**Thank You.
Larry Gray
Superintendent**



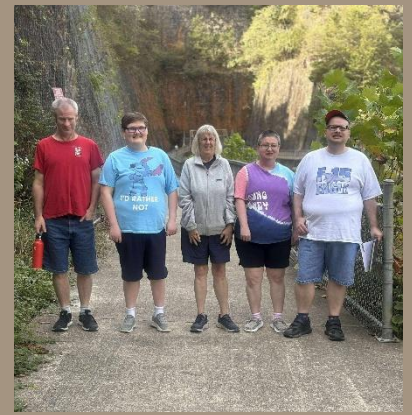
**Highland County
Board of DD**

Service and Support Administration

In 2025, our Service & Support Administration team proudly supported 204 individuals, collaborating with their team each day to strengthen independence, inclusion, and overall quality of life.

This year, we made measurable strides in improving access to services and ensuring that individuals received dedicated support. Our department successfully assisted individuals, providers, and families in navigating new requirements, contributing to greater accuracy in service delivery and Medicaid compliance. Our SSAs continued advancing person-centered planning practices advocating for the needs of our individuals. Staff training and development also remained a priority as we invested in equipping our team with the tools needed to respond effectively to evolving support needs.

We are proud of the impact our team made this year and remain dedicated to helping people thrive in their community



HCBD continues efforts in improving community housing

In a continuing effort to provide community housing for those we serve, HCBDD opened two new homes in 2025.



The Leesburg home has the capacity to hold four housemates. It was completed in partnership with and is owned by Highland Housing. This home opened in early 2025.



The Johnson Street home was opened in December of 2025. Two individuals can live in this home. It is owned by Highland Housing.

HCBD appreciates the partnership with Highland Housing in providing homes to those we serve. Incorporated into neighborhoods in the community, these homes provide excellent community inclusion opportunities.



HCBD joins the Blue Envelope Program efforts

The Southern Ohio Council of Governments (SOCOG) launched the Blue Envelope Program across the state of Ohio. The program uses communication tools to assist individuals with developmental disabilities during interactions with law enforcement and emergency personnel. Highland County Board of DD is a participant in this program. The key part of the program is the Blue Envelope itself. The envelope has space on the outside for information about the disability and/or medical conditions of the driver or passenger of the automobile. A copy of an ID/driver's license, vehicle registration, and vehicle insurance card can be kept inside the envelope which would be handed to a law enforcement officer during a traffic stop. Having this information in one place makes it easier to communicate with officers and reduces anxiety during a traffic stop. The second piece of the program is the Blue Envelope Car Decal. The three-inch decal features the program logo and can be placed on a vehicle's windows to discreetly communicate to law enforcement and first responders that the occupants participate in the Blue Envelope Program. For more information on the program, visit www.socog.org or contact the county board office.

Adult Changing Table Provides Needed Access at Community Events

Highland County Board of DD, in partnership with Gallia County Board of DD, was able to provide an adult-size changing station for the Highland County Fair in 2025. Gallia County Board of DD was gracious in lending this station for use by anyone in the community that was attending the fair and needed access to the changing area.

The changing station provided ample space for individuals that use a wheelchair for mobility. It has ramp access for easy entry, an adult-size changing table, and a door to ensure privacy for those using the facility. The changing station was located at the northwest side of the fairgrounds, next to the main bathrooms. Highland County Board of DD wants to thank the Gallia County Board of DD for the use of the station. It was greatly appreciated by those we serve, the providers and our community.

In 2025, Highland County Board of DD pursued grant opportunities to allow the purchase of our own changing table. Highland County Board of Developmental Disabilities was honored to receive funding from The Foundation for Appalachian Grant for a portable universal changing table. This table will be used to support our individuals in the community and increase inclusion in many events that are held throughout the year. The table will be housed inside a changing trailer, which is in development and will be available for community events around April of 2026. The trailer will be owned in part with the Fayette County Board of DD. We are pleased to be able to provide this needed support throughout the community. For use and scheduling of the trailer, contact the county board office for more information.



Community First

The Community First department is comprised of services including Pre-Employment Transition Services, Summer Youth Work Experience, Bridges Support Services, Job Development, Special Olympics, and the People First Advocacy Group.



Job Development

In 2025, we continued offering our Job Development services and supporting clients as they pursued meaningful employment opportunities. We assisted 18 individuals as they navigated the job-seeking process, with 8 achieving successful competitive employment, 5 still actively job searching and 5 that are deciding on what steps to continue next. We would also like to recognize our local and national employer partners, including Vallery Farmhouse Bakery, Walmart, FedEx, Community Market, Wilmington Public Library, Ollie's, Pilot Co. Flying J, and Dollar Tree, for helping create meaningful opportunities for individuals to contribute their talents across the community.

Bridges Support Services

Bridges Support Services (BSS) are designed to enhance participant engagement and provide short-term, targeted assistance to help individuals overcome significant barriers to employment. These supports focus directly on preparing participants for successful employment outcomes.

BSS can be used in a variety of ways, including assistance with obtaining or replacing identification, securing appropriate work clothing, building community connections, preparing for training programs, and exploring training opportunities.

In 2025, we supported 10 individuals through Bridges. Of these participants, five received assistance in obtaining their driving permits, and five received support in acquiring clothing or supplies needed for college or their chosen career path.



Summer Youth Work Experience

Transition students also have the opportunity to participate in our Summer Youth Work Experience program. Students work at a local business for five weeks during the summer alongside a job coach and receive a stipend that is above minimum wage for the work they complete.

In 2025, nineteen students participated in the program. A variety of indoor and outdoor work experiences were available, allowing students to build valuable job skills in real workplace settings. We extend our appreciation to our local business partners—Southern State Community College, Hillsboro Elks Golf Course, Ponderosa Steakhouse, Hillsboro High School, the Highland County YMCA, and Rocky Fork State Park—for welcoming our students and supporting their growth this summer.

One student was offered employment upon completing the program. She accepted the position and continues to work there today.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

In 2025, we served 38 students through our Pre-Employment Transition Services program. This group included students from local school districts, homeschooled students, and students from neighboring counties who are enrolled with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.

Through the connections built while working with these students, several participants received job offers upon graduation. Our program provides workplace readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, job exploration, work-based learning experiences, and counseling on post-secondary education options. Each course is person-centered, meaning it is tailored to the individual needs and goals of each student. Participants develop essential soft skills and research potential career paths to make informed decisions about their future after graduation.

Among the 2025 seniors, 6 out of 10 are currently employed, resulting in a 60% employment rate. Of the remaining four students, one is actively engaged in Job Development, one is enrolled in the Career X program at Laurel Oaks, one is taking college courses, and one is not employed currently.

People First of Highland County



Our local chapter holds monthly meetings at Southern State Community College on the first Wednesday of each month, starting at 12:30pm in room 184. This allows our local advocates to speak up about different issues that affect people with disabilities or share different opportunities that would have a positive impact on those with disabilities. Everyone is invited to join us!

The Southern Ohio Advocacy Group (SOAG) brings advocates from 11 counties together for collaborative meetings held every third Tuesday of each month starting at 11am in Chillicothe. Several of our People First group attended these meetings this past year. The Blue Envelope Program was a significant highlight, offering support to drivers or passengers with autism, developmental disabilities, anxiety, or hearing loss during traffic stops. This helps facilitate clearer communication with the law enforcement and reduces tension or anxiety to ensure the needs are met.

A few of our advocates participated in the DD Awareness/ Advocacy Day which took place in the Ohio Statehouse where our group met with the Ohio Senator, discussing different issues with the Senator.

Four of our local advocates attended the annual Synergy Conference held at Kalahari Resort located in Sandusky, where our group enjoyed listening to inspiring guest speakers and did some networking with other counties.





Highland County Special Olympics

Let me win.
But if I cannot win,
let me be brave
in the attempt.
- Special Olympics athlete oath

Highland County Special Olympics concluded another fun and successful year in 2025 with 104 registered local athletes participating in ten diverse sports. Our organization offered a range of different sports including basketball, bocce, bowling, competitive cheer, cornhole, flag football, track, and field (Spring, Summer, and Fall), unified golf, and unified softball. Our organization plans to offer pickleball and swimming soon.

As basketball season kicked off the year, the atmosphere was electric for our players and coaches. The Wildcats Basketball program is comprised of 19 players split into Team Blue and Team White. Both teams engaged in various competitions, racking up 12 wins alongside our cheerleaders. Team Blue was guided by Coach Bobby Thornburgh and Team White was led by Coach Doug Meddock. Both coaches demonstrated strong leadership. Under their mentorship, our players have improved in the game's basic fundamentals.

Following the regular season, our players and coaches were invited to participate in a fun basketball game at Hillsboro High School in March as part of the celebration of DD Awareness Month. This event featured an integrated game with the school's basketball players and coaches. The game drew a significant turnout involving students, faculty, families, and supporters from the community. This event promoted awareness in our communities for people with disabilities.

The annual Wildcats Bocce Tournament comprised 20 participants, divided into 10 teams of 2 players on each team, with medals and ribbons awarded to every team. This provided the players with an opportunity to gain their skills in this sport in preparing for the regional and state tournaments. In the Southwest Regional Tournament held in Lebanon, three of our bocce teams took part, with one team attaining a gold medal and the other two claiming silver medals in their division. Our local teams earned high acclaim and compliments.

In the Spring, we had three bowling matches scheduled, featuring two matches against Brown County and one match against Ross County, with participation from 35 local bowlers. Future plans include inviting more counties to participate in the fun competition. For the competition, bowlers are divided into divisions based on their scoring averages.

A group of 16 local athletes took part in the 2025 Summer Games held at Ohio State University, with 12 participating in track and field events and 4 competing in bocce. We proudly brought home 6 gold medals, 3 silver medals, and 2 bronze medals. The opportunity to travel to Ohio State and witness our local athletes compete at their best is always a pleasure.

Our annual Fall Games, a local track and field event, was hosted at McClain High School, offering local athletes and public-school student athletes a chance to compete and demonstrate their athletic abilities and skills. This event included 47 athletes who participated in this fun event. Volunteers from local public schools contributed to ensuring the event ran smoothly for the local athletes. The event was well-attended by families and supporters of the athletes.

Our unified golf team took part in the Southwest Regional Tournament and the State Tournament. Our local unified team earned silver medals in the Southwest Regional Tournament and bronze medals in the State Tournament in their division.

Our unified softball team consisted of 7 athletes and 4 partners (volunteers) who participated in a few fun games together competing against a few other counties. Our team engaged in an entertaining competitive game with Warren County, Madison County, and Pickaway County.

Our flag football team completed the year on a high note, finishing with an undefeated record and seven wins. Perseverance and teamwork were instrumental in their success, as the players demonstrated an ability to collaborate effectively. Importantly, good sportsmanship and positive attitudes were evident throughout the team. The experience was very enjoyable to witness.

A few of our local athletes participated in the cornhole exhibition at Countryside YMCA in Lebanon. Cornhole is now officially recognized sport by Special Olympics Ohio. Our local organization is pleased to offer cornhole as a new sport option for interested athletes.

Our local organization received an invitation to participate in the Special Skills Football and Baseball/Softball event. The football event took place at Ohio State University, and a baseball/ softball event was held at Bo Jackson Sports Facility. This is a wonderful program that offers athletes with disabilities the chance to develop their skills by engaging in different drills. Our local athletes gained great experience in both sports.



Hills and Dales Preschool

In 2025, Hills and Dales Preschool proudly served 66 children, including 33 students with IEPs. By year's end, enrollment included 38 actively engaged learners, 20 of whom were receiving specialized IEP support. The program also welcomed 11 children transitioning from Early Intervention, providing them with a warm, smooth, and supportive start to their preschool experience.

Students demonstrated encouraging and meaningful growth from fall to spring. Many made strong gains in academic readiness and developmental skills, showing clear progress across multiple early learning areas. For students with more individualized needs, growth occurred at a pace that honored their unique journeys—yet every child showed forward movement, engagement, and a commitment to learning. This continued progress highlights the strength of a nurturing, responsive environment where each child is supported and celebrated for who they are and how they learn best.

A major success of the year was the launch of an exciting partnership with the local public library, which brought new energy and enrichment to the program's early literacy efforts. Through this collaboration, children enjoyed memorable field trips, hands-on activities, and book-centered experiences designed to spark curiosity and a lifelong love of reading. Activities aligned with the State of Ohio's Day by Day early literacy calendar helped extend learning beyond the classroom, offering families additional ways to support literacy at home. This partnership has strengthened community connections and added joyful, high-impact experiences to the children's school year.

Throughout 2025, the program remained strongly aligned with its mission—providing exceptional support to students with higher-level IEP needs, nurturing family partnerships, and ensuring every child has an opportunity to thrive. Staff worked together to deliver high-quality instruction and promote meaningful growth. To enhance the program's ability to meet the needs of students requiring specialized support, we reduced our capacity by one classroom, allowing resources to be more strategically focused. This proactive decision strengthened the program's capacity to deliver individualized instruction and maintain the high standards families have come to expect.

Looking ahead, the program is excited to continue deepening its partnerships with local districts. These collaborations play an essential role in supporting strong outcomes for students, families, and the community. With a continued focus on excellence, collaboration, and student-centered practices, the program is well-positioned to build on the successes of 2025 and create even more positive impact in the years to come.



Help Me Grow (HMG)

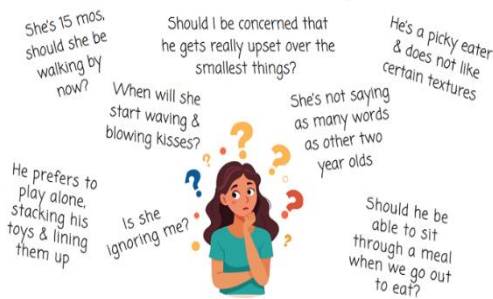
Our Help Me Grow (HMG) Home Visiting team had a wonderful time serving 136 families who were enrolled during 2025. Our staff consists of five home visitors, a supervisor, and a program manager. We currently serve three counties. These counties are Highland, Adams, and Brown County. Our program serves prenatal moms and children up to age five. We offer home visits, play groups, support, and connect families to resources within the county they reside in. We are funded through the Department of Children and Youth and hold the Maternal, Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant (MIECHV) in Adams and Highland County.

HMG is funded through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth and does not rely upon local tax dollars from HCBDD.



Early Intervention

Have you ever thought...



Early Intervention (EI) is a statewide system that provides coordinated early intervention services to parents of eligible children birth to age three with developmental delays or disabilities. EI is grounded in the philosophy that young children learn best from familiar people in familiar settings. Every family served in EI will have a team that consists of a service coordinator, service providers, and the family. The team works with the family and child in their natural learning environment. In most cases, that would be the family's home, but we can also meet for visits at daycares, the local park, or the grocery store. The best environment to provide services is determined by your child's plan called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). You and your team will work through your IFSP plan to use your existing supports and resources, family routines, everyday learning opportunities, and build upon them to enhance your child's learning and development.

EI is celebrating having a full multi-disciplinary team that consists of Service Coordinators, Autism Program Manager, Nursing, Developmental Specialists, Occupational, Speech and Physical Therapist. We also have access to Hearing and Vision services, as well as an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant. Highland County Early Intervention continues to offer Autism diagnostics through our ADEP program (Autism Diagnosis Education Project), to the families participating in EI. In 2025, our core team participated in book study, using *Uniquely Human* by Barry M. Prizant, PHD with Tom Fields-Meyer. Working through this book as a team encouraged meaningful discussions, providing the opportunity to hear various perspectives, learn from one another, and served as a great reminder of the importance of our work and the connections we make with the families we serve.

Highland County Early Intervention provided services to 164 families in 2025. This is over 1100 visits with children and their families. Your EI team will also work with your family to ensure there is a plan in place when your child turns 3 and graduates from our program. This can include working closely with the local school districts, Early Head Start/ Head Start, and local daycares. Early Intervention graduated 38 kids from the EI program as they turned three. In 2025, The ADEP program had 12 kids complete the full diagnostic process, with 9 more currently in the process.



Creating Opportunities Through Technology



Innovation Room, housed at the Fayette County Board of DD Administrative Office (Caryl Center), is designed to expand opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities by combining accessible design with modern technology. The space promotes independence, learning, and meaningful engagement through a variety of adaptive tools and supportive features. The room's mission is to empower individuals by providing access to technology that enhances daily life and helps bridge the gap between potential and opportunity.

Key Features

- **Assistive Technology:** Tools such as speech-to-text software, screen readers, and adaptive keyboards support communication and mobility challenges.
- **Sensory-Friendly Environment:** Adaptive lighting, sound-reducing features, and tactile materials create a calming space for those with sensory sensitivities.
- **Accessible Furniture:** Ergonomic and wheelchair-accessible furniture, including a power sofa and lift recliner, ensures comfort and usability.
- **Interactive Learning Tools:** Devices like an iPad, smartwatch, and Alexa enhance hands-on learning and engagement.

The space supports individualized learning, improves communication for nonverbal individuals, and increases independence through adaptive technologies. Training will be provided for individuals and caregivers, and the room will continue evolving with new technologies, including remote monitoring capabilities. Collaboration with therapists and technology experts ensures the space meets diverse needs. More than just a collection of devices, the Innovation Room is a pathway to growth—empowering individuals with developmental disabilities to thrive, learn, and reach their full potential.

The Highland and Fayette County Boards of DD, in partnership with the Southern Ohio Council of Governments, operate the Remote Supports Mobile Smart Home. This mobile unit highlights available assistive technology through hands-on demonstrations.

It is available for community events and can be scheduled by contacting the Highland or Fayette County Boards of DD.



IT Department Tackles Technology Integration

Fayette County Board of DD & Highland County Board of DD Technology Integration

Between **January and October 2025**, the IT Department led a major initiative to unify and modernize the technology infrastructure for the **Fayette** and **Highland County Boards of Developmental Disabilities**. The goal was to consolidate systems, standardize platforms, and ensure consistent, secure access to technology across both counties.

Key Accomplishments

1. Infrastructure Consolidation & New Server Deployment

- Designed and implemented a combined server environment to replace aging or incompatible infrastructure across both counties.
- Deployed new physical and/or virtual servers to support shared services, security tools, and communication systems.
- Migrated critical data and applications from legacy systems into the new unified environment.

2. Network Modernization (Wi-Fi, Routing, and Connectivity)

- Installed new **Wi-Fi access points** across multiple buildings to provide consistent wireless coverage and improve device onboarding.
- Deployed a new **router and supporting network equipment** to ensure secure, reliable connectivity between counties and cloud services.
- Standardized network configurations, security policies, and monitoring tools.
- Networks are scalable to increase future growth.

3. Email Account Provisioning and Identity Integration

- Created new standardized email accounts for all Highland and Fayette County staff under a centralized Microsoft 365 tenant.
- Established unified identity, security, and permission policies to support collaboration between counties.

4. Large-Scale Email & Data Migration

- Planned and executed the transfer of **over 5 million email objects** and related mailbox data from legacy systems to the combined environment.
- Ensured data integrity, minimal downtime, and successful user transition.
- Updated workstation profiles and mobile devices to work with the new mail configuration.

Overall Impact

By October 2025, both Boards of DD moved to a shared, modernized technical foundation that significantly improved:

- Reliability and uptime
- Security posture
- Collaboration between counties
- Long-term maintainability and support efficiency
- Scalability for future growth or additional service integrations

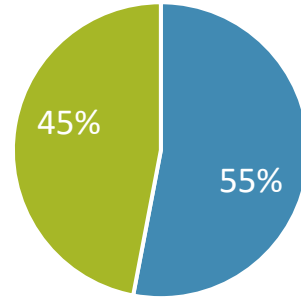
Financial Statement

Revenues

\$6,240,406.68

Local and Federal/State

- *3.35 mill Tax Levy
- *1.0 mill Tax Levy
- *Waiver Reconciliation
- *Grants
- *Help Me Grow Part C
- *OOD
- *Medicaid Administrative Claiming
- *Title XX
- *ODE Funding
- *Targeted Case Management
- *Help Me Grow Home Visiting
- *Other

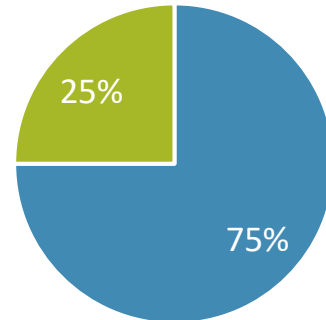


■ Levies ■ Federal/State

Expenditures

Supports and Services

- *Residential
- *Employment
- *Early Intervention
- *Preschool
- *Service and Support Administration
- *Medicaid Coordination
- *Employment Coordination
- *Home Purchases
- *Help Me Grow Home Visiting
- *Community Outreach
- *Vocational Habilitation
- *Preschool Transportation
- *Family Support
- *Community First
- *Home Repairs
- *Quality Assurance
- *Community Outreach



■ Supports and Services

■ Administrative Supports

Administrative Support

- *Facility Maintenance
- *Supplies
- *Overhead
- *General Expenses
- *Utilities
- *Equipment
- *Personnel

2025 Board Members

Elizabeth Fryman, President
Michael Richards, Vice President
Kim Adams, Secretary
Paul Pence
Patty Day
Jenny Penn
Autumn Eads

2025 Administrative Staff

Larry Gray Superintendent
Sherry Burns, Executive Administrative Assistant
Erin Walters, Education Director
Lori Moore, Business Director
Phil Loudin, Operations Director
Elizabeth Brennfleck, Human Resource Director
Molly Warnock, Community First Director
Kelli Williamson, Service and Support Director
Suzie Janasov, Early Childhood Director
Brady Scott, IT Director
Jennifer Goodwin, Investigative Agent



Highland County
Board of DD