

Published by the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities
"Helping people to live, learn and work in our community"

Sean Patterson becomes first DEI coordinator at FCBDD



DEI Coordinator Sean Patterson says he's always open to new ideas.

After years as an advocate, case manager and volunteer on behalf of many different communities, Sean Patterson is ready to help the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities embrace and improve diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Patterson, a service coordinator at FCBDD for the past 14 years, got started as the new DEI coordinator in January. "It's a step toward trying to make our agency better, and that's exciting," he said. "The beginning is really about having conversations."

Building on the work of the FCBDD equity committee with new trainings, meetings and recruiting initiatives will be a significant part of Patterson's job. "This is a real priority for our agency, and I'm pleased that Sean will be able to continue this important work," said FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison.

Patterson will engage with employees, families and the broader community on matters of race, disability, gender and sexual orientation, as well as religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and age.

"His door is open to hear concerns, answer questions and to listen," said FCBDD legal counsel Gwynn Kinsel, Patterson's supervisor. "I think he'll do great. One of the things that stood out so much about Sean is his experiences with so many different groups."

Patterson previously worked at other social services agencies, including the Buckeye Ranch and Franklin County Children Services. He also coaches his son's soccer team at Liberty Christian Academy and heads a nonprofit called the 411 Foundation in honor of his late father. His dad stood just 4-foot-11, Patterson says, but had a huge impact giving back to his community.

A native of Steubenville in eastern Ohio, Patterson saw "the ugly side of racism" at a young age. "Our house was spray-painted with KKK symbols and a cross was lit and leaned against our house," he said. "It was a great time to be living in a brick home."

His family stayed put and stayed firm. "From that experience, my parents had the opportunity to teach my sister and me that this was ignorance. And that we couldn't blame all white people."

Although he has had tough times, especially after losing his father at age 12, Patterson is an optimist. He enjoys telling a story about being stuck in a long line during a Disney vacation several years ago, when young boy with Down syndrome grew antsy and seemed to want Patterson to pick him up.

"I asked Dad -- a white guy from the South -- if it's okay. It was. I must have held him the last 20 minutes," Patterson said, smiling. "It was so organic how it happened; I still think about that a lot. We were all comfortable with each other."



Patterson made fast friends with a child while waiting in a long line at Disney World.

FCBDD provider fair returns in April

For the first time since 2019, the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is hosting an in-person provider fair to help connect people with disabilities and local disability-services providers.

The annual event, which draws hundreds of families and providers, did not take place for the past three years due to the COVID pandemic. This year's fair returns to the Lausche building at the Ohio Expo Center (state fairgrounds) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 27.

Organizers expect at least 120 providers to attend. Color-coded balloons help individuals and families know what

types of Medicaid-waiver services are offered by each provider. Larry Macintosh, FCBDD director of administrative services and support, said the event will spotlight remote supports and shared living services.



Families and individuals who need more information should contact their service coordinator or Anne Watson at 614-342-5574 or anne.watson@fcbdd.org; or Anne Russell at 614-342-5550 or anne.russell@fcbdd.org

Best Buddies in Ohio offers new ‘Citizens’ program for adults

Best Buddies is partnering with the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities on a new program to foster one-to-one friendships among adults with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Best Buddies Citizens aims to build on the success of original *Best Buddies* initiatives, which link hundreds of school- and college-age students throughout Ohio each year. Because many people with developmental disabilities have limited opportunities for social interactions after leaving the educational environment, *Best Buddies Citizens* focuses on helping adults of all ages engage in public life.

“We really feel that there’s a need for more adult programming, and we’re excited to work with Franklin County to provide this fun and unique opportunity for volunteers to get involved,” said Catlin Skufca, best Buddies in Ohio State Director. “Our goal is to end the isolation of people with IDD and create a more diverse and inclusive community for all.”

Best Buddies Citizens first launched in Ohio in the Cleveland area with hopes of making at least five friendship matches at the start. “It was so successful, we made 18,” Skufca said. “Our goal in Franklin County is to make 20, and we think we will.”

Alex Rogers, Best Buddies participant and ambassador for the organization, has been a part of Best Buddies at the Ohio State University for eight years. “I graduated from the OSU TOPS program last year, and now I’m living on my own and working,” he said. “I want to meet more people in the community, so I’m excited to be a part of Best Buddies Citizens.”

FCBDD is happy to support the local expansion, Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. “Best Buddies has helped to provide social opportunities for many young people in Franklin County over the years, and we think this next step is a great idea,” he said. “Friendships are important for adults, too.”

Franklin County residents with and without developmental disabilities can apply to the Citizens program online. Best Buddies staff conduct interviews and work to match participants with similar interests. Both people must commit to meeting at least once a month and to have two calls monthly for a year.



Maggie and Jenna cherish the friendship they developed through Best Buddies.



“Best Buddies also hosts social events, like bowling or going to a game,” Skufca said. “Sometimes people who are waiting on a match will come to get a feel for it. We’re open to anyone who wants a social opportunity; you can be a part of a chapter without being matched.”

To apply, go to www.bestbuddies.org/join. To learn more, contact program manager Sarah Blakely at sarahblakely@bestbuddies.org or call 614-928-3383.

Act removes harmful language from state law

More than a decade after banning the R-word from county boards of developmental disabilities, the state is now set to rid the Ohio Revised Code of harmful and derogatory language about people with disabilities.

Gov. Mike DeWine signed the Mental Health and Disability Terminology Act (House Bill 281) to ban words such as “idiot,” “lunatic,” “mentally retarded” and “deaf and dumb” from state statutes.

“People don’t understand how mean and painful these words are for individuals with disabilities,” said Marci Straughter, a self-advocate and member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Adult Advocacy Centers (AACs) helped to lead a coalition of organizations that began calling for action on the issue two years ago, and Ohioans with disabilities wrote letters and emails, made calls and testified. State Rep. Dontavius Jarrells of Columbus and Rep. Tom Young of Dayton introduced the legislation, which drew several co-sponsors.

Katherine Yoder, executive director of the AACs, said advocates are grateful to supporters and “thrilled that respect for individuals with disabilities is now reflected in the language of the laws that govern us in Ohio.”

In 2009, after a legislative victory by advocates, former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland signed a law removing the term “mental retardation” from public entities.



State Rep. Dontavius Jarrells, left, said the law signed by Gov. Mike DeWine will help reduce stigmas.

Silver Alert system expanded to cover adults with autism

Advocates are cheering what they say is a life-saving change to criteria for Ohio's Silver Alert public notification system, which now includes people with autism and other developmental disabilities.

The Silver Alert system allows public safety and law enforcement agencies, along with public and commercial broadcasters, to immediately coordinate to release information about a missing person.

Kathi Machle, managing director of the Autism Society of Central Ohio (ASCO), said state Sen. Tim Schaffer worked quickly to make sure an amendment updating the criteria was passed before the end of 2022. ASCO worked with the Autism Society of America and affiliates throughout Ohio to lobby for the change.

The goal is for people with autism and other developmental disabilities to be added to the alert-system criteria in all states, Machle said. Notification systems for missing-adult alerts vary nationwide, and many focus on seniors and people with dementia or Alzheimer's.

"I know that this change will help our state devote the resources needed to locate individuals quickly and prevent injuries or even deaths," said Mark Butler, an ASCO board member. "As a parent of two adults with autism, I will sleep easier at night knowing that this change is in place."

Machle once was told she couldn't file a missing-person report for at least 48 hours after her adult son, who has autism, became upset and stormed out. "He slept outside. It was April, and not warm," she said. "If it's a child, all the red flags go out. But once they hit 18, it's, well, they're an adult. There wasn't really anything we could do."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 44 children has autism spectrum disorder and more than half – about 60 percent – were reported to wander or elope from safe environments. Many adults with autism are known for becoming lost when separated from caregivers or when leaving safe locations.

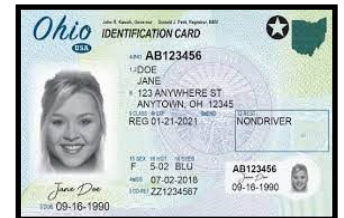
Disability advocates urge voters to obtain photo ID cards

A major overhaul of Ohio election laws means all voters will be required to show photo identification to cast a ballot in person.

Under the new statute, voters need an Ohio driver's license, state ID, U.S. passport, passport card, military ID or interim identification from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Kevin Truitt, legal advocacy director at Disability Rights Ohio, said studies have shown that people with disabilities are among the groups less likely to have those forms of identification. "This unfortunately impacts them, but we don't know the full extent," he said. "My concern is that a lot of people who aren't following the news might go to vote next time and not be aware of these requirements."

Though lawsuits could affect the new laws, the best advice for now is for people to make sure they have an acceptable photo ID, Truitt and others say. Utility bills and other documents won't be accepted. State-issued ID cards are free and available to Ohioans 17 and younger.



The law also mandates that mail-in ballots arrive within four days of Election Day, instead of 10. Each Ohio County now can have only one drop box for ballots.

State launches county-board funded DSP retention payments

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has kicked off a new retention-payment initiative aimed at keeping more direct-support professionals on the job.

Quarterly payments representing about 6.5 percent of claims paid during the applicable time period are to be distributed to participating home- and community-based waiver providers – and then passed along to DSPs – starting in mid-March, according to the state. Independent providers were to have received their first payments in mid-January.

With a federal match, county boards will generate about \$143 million annually for the payments. "These payments are designed to help providers retain high-quality staff, so that they can deliver high-quality services," said Dot Yeager, chief business officer for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

The direct-support system in Ohio and throughout the nation has long struggled with low wages and high levels of responsibility, leading to high turnover and a shortage of workers. According to the state's 2021 DSP compensation survey, the annual turnover rate for DSPs in Ohio hit 56 percent, and the average hourly wage was \$13.72.

Agency providers participating in the retention-payment initiative must report certain data and attest that the money was used according to requirements. For more information, go to <https://dodd.ohio.gov/providers/RetentionPayment>

Ohio State medical students focus on disability advocacy

A new student organization at the Ohio State University is working to increase inclusion and awareness of disability advocacy in the College of Medicine.

"We want to make sure that in health education, everyone is included," said Chelsea Bray, an OSU medical student and member of the Disability Advocacy Coalition.

The aim is to broaden expertise among new health-care professionals so that they can be aware of and responsive to the needs, challenges and abilities of children and adults with disabilities. The group also is a hub for advocacy and support for students and providers who identify as having a disability.

The coalition recently held a toy drive and stopped by the Early Childhood Education and Family Center at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Bray met with FCBDD Early Childhood Education Director Becky Love and Early Childhood social worker Susan Gibson as she dropped off a load of toys – including several Barbie dolls in wheelchairs.

"It was so wonderful to see the very thoughtful gifts this group purchased for our students," Gibson said. "I am even more excited for ECE to be able to support this student organization's larger purpose."



OSU medical student Chelsea Bray dropped off a load of donated toys for FCBDD's Early Childhood Education program. ECE Director Becky Love was thrilled with the Barbies in wheelchairs.

West Central 'virtual grads' invited to 2023 commencement

West Central School and Transition Services is inviting graduates from the past three years (2020, 2021 and 2022) to join this year's graduating class for an in-person ceremony and celebration.



Isaac donned his cap and gown for a photo and video of West Central's virtual graduation ceremony last year.

Commencement took place virtually for those three classes due to the pandemic. "We recognize what an important milestone graduation is and know that a formal ceremony can be meaningful for our students and families," Principal Rebecca Holthaus wrote in a letter sent to families of previous graduates.

The ceremony is scheduled for 6 p.m. May 17 at the school. For planning purposes, Holthaus asks families to RSVP by Feb. 17 to rebecca.holthaus@fcbdd.org or by calling 614-342-5284.

Mary Anne Ledinsky, former director of schools at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, is set to be the featured commencement speaker. The school's library is named in honor and memory of Ledinsky's sister Susie, who had Down syndrome.

"When she was born in 1949, we had never even heard of Down syndrome," Ledinsky said. Her parents rejected a doctor's suggestion – common at the time – that Susie be placed in an institution.

"Susie really affected our family in a terrifically positive way," Ledinsky said. "When it came time to choose a career, I chose special education."

A poster for a Black History Month event. The top features a colorful geometric pattern of overlapping squares in red, yellow, green, and black. Below the pattern, the text reads: "BLACK HISTORY MONTH: FILM SCREENING AND CONVERSATION ON HEALTH IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY". Underneath that is the slogan "ENGAGE. EDUCATE. ENTERTAIN". The event details are listed: "DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2023", "TIME: 11:00 AM - 3:30 PM", and "LOCATION: THE KING ARTS COMPLEX 835 MT VERNON AVE, COLUMBUS, OH 43203". A "PROGRAM" section lists: "11 AM – OPENING REMARKS, GROUNDING LIBATION AND MEDITATION", "11:45 AM - FOOD (CATERED)", "12 PM – DISCUSSION AND Q&A ON HEALTH EQUITY AND RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS", "1-3 PM – VIEWING OF THE FILM 'SOMETHING THE LORD MADE'", and "3:15 PM – CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY CARE".

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

We're grateful to talented and knowledgeable staff members like West Central School instructor assistant Alan Rafiyq, who created a wonderful display for our students to learn about Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Jan. 16) and President's Day (Feb. 20). Alan, a former ARC North employee, studied art in college and loves helping with visual projects.



Early Childhood Education teaching assistant Amy Frick helped the community to honor her daughter – and to save lives – with a blood drive last month in honor of Alexandra. Alex, who passed away last summer, attended the ECE program as a young child and was a student at Gahanna Lincoln High School. “She always wanted to help people,” Amy said. “So we tried to do something that allows her to keep doing that.”

Career Milestones

35 Years
Carl Curtis

20 Years
Jeff Baird
Julie Maynard
Valerie Pitts

15 Years
Lisa Anderson
Kimberly Goleb
Julia Stevens

5 Years
Safiatou Balde
Jennifer Rainey

We Thrive Together programs open to Franklin County residents all year

The Franklin County board of Developmental Disabilities is again working with We Thrive Together to support a variety of online programs and in-person events throughout 2023.

FCBDD is providing a countywide We Thrive Together subscription so that programs are free and available to all Franklin County residents. As last year, online activities can be accessed using a computer, tablet, Chrome-book smartphone or land-line telephone.

We Thrive Together hosted more than 1,800 programs in 2022, offering online exercise classes, cooking demonstrations, games, virtual trips and more.



Mandy is a big fan of the online programs and activities offered by We Thrive Together.

The organization also has included skill-building programming such as advocacy training, financial literacy, health and wellness, technology training, workforce readiness and others.

Additional in-person events are planned throughout the state.

For monthly event calendars or to learn more, go to WeThriveTogether.org, email Alyssa@WeThriveTogether.org or call 866-584-5640.

2023 Franklin County Provider Fair

Come for a Balloon Leave With a Provider




SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, April 27, 2023

11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The Lausche Building
17th Avenue at I-71
Ohio State Fairgrounds

FREE PARKING!

HELPFUL TIPS

- Plan on dedicating at least 1 hour to have the chance to get the most information.
- Service Coordinators are available for any assistance you may need.
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Food and drinks available for purchase.

DD Waiver Providers and Community Resources!

Calendar

Editor's Note: The following calendar is tentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 614-342-5950 before attending any meeting to see if it is still scheduled.

February, 2023

- 2 Groundhog Day
- 11 Franklin County Special Olympics - Polar Plunge – Franklin County Special Olympics. Please contact Ryan Phillips for details at Ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or 614-342-5984.
- 14 Happy Valentine's Day!
- 16 FCBDD Early Childhood Education and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective Produce Drive Through from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the ECEFC Bus Lane (accessed via Marilyn Lane). For more details, contact Sarah Gillilan at 614-342-5803.
- 20 Presidents' Day - all county facilities closed.
- 23 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board Committee Meeting, 4:00 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus.
- 23 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio, via Zoom for the public. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Click on the following link to connect:

[FCBDD Board Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)

DD Awareness and Advocacy Day coming March 1

The 2023 Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day event at the Ohio Statehouse is set for Wednesday, March 1. Watch for registration details on social media or check the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council website at <https://ddc.ohio.gov/>

Awareness and Advocacy Day is held annually in March during National DD Awareness Month, which began in 1987. The Statehouse event typically features various speakers, displays and demonstrations, and opportunities for people with meet with Ohio legislators.



FREE DRIVE THROUGH PRODUCE MARKETS at our school

Please join the FCBDD Early Childhood Education Partnership and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to STOP HUNGER with more FREE produce giveaways!

DATES TO SAVE:

- OCTOBER 20
- NOVEMBER 17
- DECEMBER 15
- JANUARY 19
- FEBRUARY 16
- MARCH 16
- APRIL 20
- MAY 18

When: 5:30 - 7:30pm
Where: ECEFC Bus Lane
(off of Marilyn Lane-just east of building)
2879 Johnstown Road
Columbus, Ohio 43219

NOTICE
PHOTO ID REQUIRED

Any questions? Please call Sarah Gillilan at 614-342-5803

We are an equal opportunity provider. Please visit us at: www.fcbdd.org/na



Dateline

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The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities does not discriminate in employment or services on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, or disability.

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Information about the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is always available on the internet at:

www.fcbdd.org

Special Olympics Polar Plunge is Feb. 11



There's still time to donate or register to take a cold dip for a good cause during this year's Polar Plunge.

To support the Franklin County Special Olympics team (aka the Freezin' Flyers), go to <https://give.soo.org/team/461412>

The Polar Plunge takes place at the Columbus Crew's Lower.com field on Feb. 11. Registration opens at 9:30 a.m., and plunging starts around 11 a.m.