

Fulton County Board of DD
Annual update on the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan
February 16, 2021

We would like to take this opportunity to provide a summary of the first year of our current three-year strategic plan. With 2020 being such an unanticipated year, as we set out to review our plan and accomplishments of the past year, we did so with the anticipation that we likely did not meet the goals we intended to meet.

However, what we found was that while we did not accomplish all that we planned to, we did see growth and some ironic positives. As we reviewed early intervention (EI) services in 2020, we quickly focused in on the goal to “maximize availability of EI team members to families through the increase use of technology in EI service delivery”. If there is a silver lining to the pandemic it is the increased use of technology in our EI daily service provision. We were literally not using it one day and totally providing services virtually the next. Staff and parents learned how to use Zoom, FaceTime, Skype and Duo on their phones and computers quickly and pretty much without issue. Staff also became familiar with a scanning app that allows them to get papers to families quickly when not in the office. Incorporating the use of electronic signatures was probably one of the single most positive technology additions during the pandemic for the service coordinators. Fulton County Family and Children First Council secured grant money that was used to purchase three iPads and a Hotspot that can have data loaded on it by purchasing minutes on a card. This ensures that services are not limited to only families that have technology.

We increased technology use with adults as well including adding iPads for communication and socialization as well as for use with school activities. A laptop was purchased to increase virtual socialization and an increase in the use of remote supports for individuals living in the community.

We increased the use of technology internally, creating additional an additional space to host meetings with remote participants. SSAs increased their use of texting with individuals and families as well as making connections through Zoom and FaceTime. Staff also collaborated with many different agencies via Teams for technical assistance from DODD and through the State Multi-System Youth collaboration.

The use of technology also allowed us to continue meet with our self-advocates. The group, Come Together, was able to “travel” to see animals in Texas, Elvis in Las Vegas, decorate cookies together at Christmas and have a “swim party” in the summer. All from the comforts of their own homes!

During 2020, we provided specialized autism services (PLAY Project) to five children and their families. This service includes the use of videotaping for teaching. Technology use increased here as well with the use of Dropbox to securely share videos with families.

Another goal for 2020 was to “ensure that parents are aware of resources, tools and supports available to meet their children’s and family’s needs while assisting them to gain confidence to take initiative/find solutions/problem solve”. The EI staff have used a coaching model to provide services and supports to EI families for several years. Moving to a virtual service delivery vs services in family homes, forced this staff to “only” coach. This has led the staff to feel more confident in their coaching skills and so better supporting families as they increase their knowledge and problem solving skills.

Many families in 2020 found themselves in unique situations. SSA’s worked with families to assist them in connecting with new or existing resources to help them in getting through the challenges of the pandemic. This included challenges with schooling, loss of income or employment, as well needs unique to the lockdown that was faced early in the pandemic as well as ongoing challenges that continue today.

We had many plans to build our community relationships in 2020. While we did build on our relationships, it was not in ways that we intended. Through our participation in our regional EI partnership, choke tubes were provided to local physicians to share with pediatric families to remind them our services. The Help Me Grow Home Visiting program that serves Fulton County, started a Facebook Playgroup and included EI families. Throughout the pandemic, we have maintained our positive working relationship with the Fulton County Health Department.

We continued to share funding and services with our partnerships with NOWAC, Family and Children First, and NW Ohio Early Intervention. We also continue to share early intervention supervision with Henry County Board of DD. We have come together with self-advocacy groups in other counties; sharing opportunities for virtual socialization.

We worked in 2020 to ensure that we were available to our residential and day providers. This included meetings (both in county as well as regionally), assisting with obtaining needed PPE, and trying hard to recognize the work that was being done each day by direct support professionals working with individuals living in the community.

Another goal was to continue to develop high performing staff. The pandemic, with its necessary restrictions, actually opened doors in this area. We have been fortunate to have many training opportunities become available to staff to attend virtually. This opened up opportunities for staff to attend conferences that were never available in the past due to location and/or cost when figuring in travel, meals and lodging.

In 2020, we planned to continue our focus on community jobs and building employment skills. We currently have 39 individuals who are community employed. During 2020, 26 people retained their community jobs while an additional four were off for some months but have returned to their positions. While five people lost their employment in 2020, nine individuals began employment in new positions. We were happy to see these statistics with the high unemployment rate of last year.

Early last year, we completed the process of providing assessment to all who were on the transitional waiting list. We also allocated four new IO waivers, three Level 1 waivers, and one SELF waiver.