



Champaign County Board of Developmental Disabilities

WINTER QUARTER 2021 - NEWSLETTER

Hello Readers!



I hope that as you are reading this, you are able to reflect upon the past year and be proud of making it through. It has certainly been a roller coaster experience over the past two years. I take pride in the fact that our team at the Champaign County Board of Developmental Disabilities faced the many challenges over the past year and still ensured that every person we serve received what they needed.

I am not only proud of the employees at the Champaign County Board of DD, but I am proud of the many provider agencies and Direct Support Professionals that make up the backbone of our field. I am proud of the people we serve and their families and the way they displayed resilience in a pandemic with ever-changing guidelines in place to keep us healthy.

As always, I am thankful for the support of the Champaign County community. I am also grateful every day that I have the privilege of being a part of such an amazing team and am looking forward to 2022.

Leigh Anne Wenning | Superintendent
Champaign County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Winter is a Great Time to PLAY!



In the winter there is snow. And when there is snow, we play! Who doesn't love building a snowman, having a snowball fight, or making snow angels? If you ask Jess Baird, playing in the snow is a "great multisensory experience" and a recommended activity for child development. And as a certified consultant for The PLAY Project, she knows what she is talking about.

The PLAY Project may sound like a guide for having fun, but it is so much more. It is a unique program designed for families who have children, ages 0-6 yrs, on the autism spectrum. A consultant works one-on-one with parents and empowers them with knowledge on using engaging activities in their everyday routines with their child(ren), who might have various sensory and developmental challenges. The Champaign County Board of DD (CCBDD) is very lucky to have Jess Baird as our in-house certified PLAY Project consultant.

To participate in The PLAY Project, a child must first be evaluated by CCBDD to determine eligibility for early intervention services. Anyone can make a referral for the initial evaluation. After evaluation, the CCBDD staff decides if the family is a good candidate for PLAY Project.



Jess Baird | CCBDD Certified
PLAY Project Consultant

To start, simply contact the CCBDD Early Intervention Director, Jennifer Bradford at j.bradford@champaigncbdd.org to ask about referrals. Or you can start the referral process yourself by going to www.ohioearlyintervention.org.

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Winter is a Great Time to PLAY! (cont.)

In the meantime, Jess offers ideas to support families with a child on the autism spectrum and to help all families start the holidays and new year with engaging activities.

1. Connect with local Champaign County mom, Rhiannon, through her blog www.autismandgo.com. This blog is an

honest depiction of life with a child on the autism spectrum. Not only does Rhiannon share her experiences, but she also shares tips



Photo Credit: www.autismandgo.com

and tricks she has learned through the years. Finding support in your community and others who can relate to your situation can help alleviate stress.

2. Visit some of Jess Baird's favorite websites like www.asensorylife.com and www.inspiredtreehouse.com.

These sites offer a wealth of resources for helping children with high sensory needs. There are checklists, tips and tricks, research information, and fun therapeutic activities.

3. Enjoy the winter! Participate in all the new senses and activities that can only happen in winter weather. Jess says, "My favorite winter activity (and every other season too) is getting outside to play." Bundle up in all the winter gear. Build with the snow. Make wet or snowy footprints. Breathe in the cold air. Jess also suggests, "If getting outside isn't possible, making indoor obstacle courses, forts, or crashing into pillow piles are all fun ways to get some energy out too."



Photo Credit: Rhiannon Rose (www.autismandgo.com)

Self-Advocacy in the New Year

Self-advocacy is defined as the action of representing oneself or one's views or interests. This year, CCBDD was full of people, both those we serve and those we employ, advocating for themselves and what they want for our community.

Just scroll through the newsfeed on the CCBDD Facebook page, and you will see many images and stories of self-advocacy. Aktion Club members taking officer positions and creating projects for children, Special Olympics participants meeting weight lifting and running goals, Regional Advocacy conference and meetings, people fundraising for a new inclusive playground, and individuals with disabilities finding their ideal job are just a few examples.

This winter, let's start thinking about more ways to be better advocates and how we can continue to promote self-advocacy in the new year.

- Think about what makes you happy and healthy, and find out how to start doing it.
- Set new goals for yourself.
- Share your story with others and listen to their stories.
- Ask for help when you need it. Knowing that you sometimes can't do it on your own is also a part of advocating for yourself and your wellbeing. (If you are served by CCBDD, speak with your SSA about your goals.)
- If you have an infant or toddler and feel your child needs help with developmental growth, make a referral to our Early Intervention program. (see PLAY Project article)
- Be inspired by other self-advocates!



2021 Self Advocacy Conference at Riverside (Miami Co Board of DD)

Photo Credit: John Silfies

Provider Spotlight: Person Centered Services (PCS)

Keeping the Focus on People

The pandemic changed a lot of routines and habits for everyone. Some of these changes were incredibly difficult for individuals with disabilities. Due to caring for people with high needs and some individuals having increased risk of illness, Person Centered Services (PCS) in Urbana needed to make some tough decisions.

How can they make the health and wellness of their day service participants a priority while still maintaining a connection to the community and providing quality activities?



Many precautions are in place. There are less group outings. Visitors should call ahead, will be screened for illnesses and asked to wear a mask before entering. Staff amped up the cleaning, wear masks and try to keep day service participants in smaller groups. They also eat lunch and snacks in shifts. All of these changes were important to ensure the health of all their people.



What hasn't changed is the genuine care that the PCS staff has for people with disabilities. They still keep everyone mentally active with puzzles, crafts, games, books, music, and regional self-advocacy meetings.

They still engage everyone in physical active by having exercise time in the large dining area. They also walk the circular driveway outside their building when the weather is nice and up and down the long hallway when it is not nice.

The PCS staff encourages nutritional health by organizing a cooking club. They help the group pick out a nutritional recipe, take them to the grocery store to get the ingredients, and help them put the recipe together to share with everyone else at lunch time.

Then there is emotional health. This is encouraged through holiday celebrations and making friendships with each other. Staff members put a lot of love and time into creating the Thanksgiving feast pictured here, and they ensured that day service participants were invested in the process as well.

As an added bonus, some of the PCS staff members can be found volunteering time with community organizations which their day service members likely participate in. In fact, Director Darlene Caudill current helps as an adviser for the Champaign County Kiwanis Aktion Club.

So, in the coming year, when you make your new year resolutions, think about PCS. Be inspired to set goals of caring and kindness.





**Champaign County Board
of Developmental Disabilities**
224 Patrick Ave
Urbana, OH 43078

CONTACT US

224 Patrick Ave
Urbana, OH 43078
(937) 653-5217

contactus@champaigncbdd.org
<https://champaigncbdd.org>

 @champaigncbdd.org

 @champaigncbdd

 @ChampaignCBDD

YEAR IN REVIEW




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