



# Pursuing Quality Lives

Supporting Ohioans with Autism Across Agencies,  
Across the State, Across the Lifespan

May 2018

**Ohio**

Interagency Work  
Group on Autism



Ohio has a rich and long-standing history of addressing autism spectrum disorders (ASD), driven by a strong network of individuals, families and advocates. Today, the state's response to autism is coordinated in a concentrated effort to move policy to action. This is possible through Ohio's Interagency Work Group on Autism (IWGA), a multi-agency collaborative effort, with leadership from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and OCALI. Informed by individuals, families and stakeholders, IWGA meets monthly to review state policies, learn from current research and data, share learning and identify opportunities to better communicate and coordinate autism policy. A hallmark of the IWGA's efforts is the creation of an innovative, free, online video training series, ASD Strategies in Action, now being used by more than 20,000 people across Ohio, giving them practical ways to care for and support loved ones with ASD, from early childhood through young adulthood.

In 2012 the IWGA released the Quality Lives report of recommendations, setting forth a timeless blueprint for system-wide improvement of Ohio's response to autism. Recognizing the past accomplishments that grew from Quality Lives, today the IWGA continues to build from that foundation, with renewed momentum to set forth updated priorities that address the challenges and opportunities for future planning. Today the IWGA remains vigilant to raise the bar to coordinate its work with quality and integrity - to support the best trajectory of life outcomes for Ohioans with ASD and their families, infancy through adulthood.

**"For the past 10 years, Ohio's Interagency Work Group on Autism, has worked to coordinate Ohio's efforts to ensure Ohioans with autism spectrum disorder have the necessary system of supports across their lifespan."**

**– John Martin, Director  
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities**

# Ohio's Autism Infrastructure

Working together across agencies, across the state, across the lifespan

Ohio enters this revisioning process with a well-built foundation and a renewed commitment to empower and support Ohioans with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. Supported through statute, Ohio's Interagency Work Group on Autism (IWGA), along with the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), its Advisory Board, and a powerful force of autism advocacy networks form a strong infrastructure to support innovative change. Ohio's infrastructure is built on multi-agency collaboration, partnerships that unite the private and public sector, and a centrally shared resource through OCALI to move policy to action.

## OCALI: Ohio's Shared Resource for Autism

(ORC 3323.31)

Informing public policy

Providing consultation and promoting collaboration

Researching, developing, and deploying evidence-based practices

**Accomplishes:** The central source for high-quality autism information, professional development, and technical assistance for Ohio

## OCALI Advisory Board

(ORC 3323.33)

Persons with autism and low incidence disabilities

Parents and family members

Educators and other professionals

Medical professionals

Service providers

Higher education instructors

Representatives of state agencies

**Accomplishes:** A formal process for parents, individuals, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to contribute to the state's policy development and implementation

## Interagency Work Group on Autism

Governor's Office

Office of Budget Management

Ohio Department of Education

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)

Ohio Department of Medicaid

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities

Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

**Accomplishes:** A formal process for various state systems to work together to inform policy development and implementation



# GET A GOOD START

Identification and diagnosis can happen at any age and should occur at the first-suspected signs.



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Promote information sharing and resources across state systems and stakeholder organizations to enhance public awareness and understanding of autism,** developmental milestones, the importance of early screening, and identification by leveraging leadership within IWGA and the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

**Provide an array of professional development opportunities and resources for local early care and education providers,** center and home-based, to improve the quality and inclusivity of programs serving children from birth to age 5 and increase understanding of: developmental milestones and red flags; basics of ASD; effective communication strategies with families; and available multi-system resources.

**Enhance the Autism Diagnosis Education Project** to broaden the availability and composition of local teams across the state with expertise to screen, identify ASD, and refer children and families to services.

**Maintain OCALI's Educational Identification Training Series** to build capacity of school district teams to evaluate and identify students with ASD, ages 3-21.

**Leverage the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT) to increase screening for ASD** – inform public and private partners about screening opportunities.

**Identify gaps** between early identification and entry into services in collaboration with public and private partners to facilitate a more seamless process for families.

# OBTAIN NEEDED SERVICES

Individuals with ASD should have access to high-quality services



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Define a common understanding of the term “underserved”** to more effectively identify populations with ASD, including but not limited to, those involved with multiple-service systems, who reside in service-shortage areas, or are not being identified because of culture, socio-economics status, linguistics, or ethnicity.

**Utilize the common understanding of the term ‘underserved’** to identify target areas of high needs related to ASD.

**Continue the collective impact work of the IWGA, making *ASD Strategies in Action*, an online video-based training program accessible to underserved areas and populations.**

This program was designed to increase community-wide understanding of ASD and build the capacity of local multi-system administrators and front-line workers to provide high-quality information, resources, and strategies known to result in successful engagement, participation and inclusion in home, school, employment, and community.

**Promote use of technology for providing early intervention and behavioral health services virtually across the state for individuals with ASD** in order to increase access to qualified providers and services in areas of the state where they are limited.

**Raise awareness of autism disparities in order to improve planning and outcomes,** employment, graduation rates, physical and mental health, well-being, and reduction of seclusion and restraint.

**Build an understanding of the unique healthcare needs of individuals with ASD with Ohio’s medical community** in order to meet the needs and improve lifelong health outcomes.

# DEVELOP SKILLS TO SUCCEED

Life skills develop and change as an individual grows. Skill development is a continuous need throughout an individual's life.



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Promote the importance of social literacy and self-regulation** in cross-system professional training efforts to build awareness and recognition of how social emotional development and acceptance impacts the lifelong health, mental health, and success of individuals with ASD and their families.

**Develop training opportunities for providers of employment services** specific to soft skills with an emphasis on social literacy for individuals with ASD.

**Promote the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills** beginning in early childhood and continuing through adulthood through innovative tools specific to individuals with ASD.

**Leverage technology** in promoting communication, skill development, and individualized supports for children, youth, and adults with ASD across the lifespan.



# STRENGTHEN SUPPORT ALONG THE WAY

Family is the most important, consistent and instrumental influence in a child's life. A strong base of support is important.



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Facilitate access to and an understanding of accurate and reliable information and training for families** to build their skills, advocate for their children and family, and develop a vision for a good life, as early as possible.

**Define a common understanding of family navigation** as it relates to ASD to better assist families in locating services and supports across systems.

**Continue collective impact work leveraging *ASD Strategies in Action*** to build the capacity of local cross-system, front-line workers to better serve individuals with complex behavior early on and to provide families with supports and resources to decrease the likelihood of crisis.

**Elevate ASD in policy discussions** related to crisis and stabilization, and trauma-informed care, to increase the awareness of the unique characteristics of ASD, including interfering behaviors, and the impact on families.

# HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND

It is imperative that professionals and community members recognize and understand the characteristics of ASD in order to serve, support, and empower individuals and their families.

## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Include *ASD Strategies in Action* in the approved coursework** for the Direct Service Professionals (DSP) Longevity: 60-Hour Training Add-On to increase understanding of practical strategies to care for and support individuals with ASD.

**Develop and promote a toolkit for use by public and private community partners** (i.e., recreational centers, libraries, faith-based organizations, service industry, public transportation, movie theaters, etc.) to build their comfort and confidence in welcoming and including individuals with ASD and their families.

**Ensure first responders and public safety officers have accurate and updated training** regarding the characteristics of autism and how to interact and support an individual with ASD.





# LIVE WELL

Knowing how to network and navigate available community resources is fundamental to developing and sustaining effective supports for a successful future.



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Provide opportunities for the IWGA and Employment First Task Force to meet collaboratively** to discuss common goals and build an understanding of the unique needs of individuals with ASD to help inform educational outcomes, transition services and coordination, and professional development.

**Focus professional development at the state and local levels to allow various agency professionals to use assessment data** across agencies to better understand the interests and needs of individuals with ASD.

**Promote opportunities that strengthen transition planning** for individuals with ASD that lead to an adult life of community membership and meaningful employment.

**Develop and disseminate a survey for individuals with ASD that have graduated or exited secondary school** (high school) in order to identify services that were effective in the process of transition from secondary school.

# SUSTAIN THE FUTURE

Thoughtful planning and coordination is necessary to uphold broad, but connected, service systems that are responsive to individuals with ASD and their families.



## TARGETED PRIORITIES

**Identify and compile meaningful data** that show efficacy of the collective impact work around joint promotion of *ASD Strategies in Action* within IWGA member agencies.

**Build opportunities for data sharing and collaboration with key providers** who diagnose or find eligible ASD across Ohio to gain insight about prevalence numbers and individual and family experiences.

**Identify the various state initiatives across agencies (proactive and reactive)** related to social literacy and self-regulation to ensure they address the unique needs of individuals with ASD.

**Bring the unique needs of individuals with ASD into consideration in state-level, cross-system work related to transition** across the lifespan (i.e., from Early Intervention Part C of IDEA to Early Childhood Special Education Part B, school-age to Adulthood and into older Adulthood).

**Enhance opportunities to leverage *ASD Strategies in Action* as a shared service model** that reflects the value of public/private partnership while transforming professional development at the state, local, and community levels.





**Pursuing Quality Lives**  
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[www.iwg-autism.org](http://www.iwg-autism.org)