



## Callaway County Special Services Community Needs Assessment 2024 Overall Executive Summary



### Process

Callaway County Special Services (CCSS) staff and board of directors identified a goal to engage the larger community and stakeholders into conversations about the future growth and development of CCSS services, programs, education, and resources for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD). In July 2024, CCSS executive team began the design of the Community Needs Assessment data inputs for information gathering facilitated by Terry Trafton of TT2 Consulting.

Qualitative research was conducted to gather stakeholder perspectives for the Community Needs Assessment through three main forms of input including a community survey, focus groups and individual interviews. A seventeen-question survey was designed, finalized and launched via survey monkey online tool as well as paper copies being distributed and collected via community partners. The survey was conducted and collected between August 5<sup>th</sup> through November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The survey was promoted via social media channels, flyers, and emails to community stakeholders. The result was a total of 59 responses received.

Six focus groups were held between July 16<sup>th</sup> through October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, with a total of 48 participants representing a diverse range of stakeholder groups identified by the CCSS leadership

team. Participants in the focus groups included individuals served, board members, case managers, school providers, IDD providers, and community resource network members. The focus groups were conducted as group interview discussions to gain a deeper understanding of several topics, opinions, or experiences.

Individual Interviews were conducted between August 12<sup>th</sup> through September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, with a total of 34 participants representing a diverse range of stakeholders identified by the CCSS leadership team. Participants included family members, board members, funded and partner organizations, school providers, and government officials. The interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of several topics, opinions, or experiences.

The findings from all these inquiries will be used to inform the CCSS staff and board of directors in the development of a comprehensive strategy that will meet the needs people with IDD and stakeholders. This will allow for innovation in moving initiatives, goals, and actions forward over the next one, three and five years. The following is a high-level executive summary followed by identified themes from all three data input sources and 141 individuals.

## **Executive Summary**

Callaway County Special Services (CCSS) is a distinct organization characterized by its people-centered approach, strategic partnerships, and commitment to serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). CCSS's services, programs, education and resources are influenced by the contributions of staff, board of directors, families, individuals served, partners, and community members. Leveraging the SB40 legislation and tax levy in Callaway County, CCSS has been able to build strategic collaborations with municipalities and partner organizations ensuring that decisions directly benefit the individual residents of the Callaway County. By serving as a major funder and provider of IDD services, CCSS plays a crucial role in supporting individuals with IDD and strengthening the overall community network. CCSS demonstrates its dedication to providing access to resources that are fostering community inclusion through a variety of services and funded organizations, programs and initiatives including the highly valued Individual and Family Support (IFS) program. The IFS program is vital for addressing funding gaps for critical needs, such as medical equipment and home modifications, etc.

CCSS' purpose as described by stakeholders in conversations is summarized as dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) by offering personalized support, services, and opportunities for growth. They foster community inclusion, provide meaningful services, and act as a liaison to connect families with essential education and resources. CCSS advocates for inclusive policies and practices to ensure equal opportunities for individuals with IDD. They strive to help individuals live independently by providing tailored support and resources.

CCSS offers day program services to support individuals with IDD in reaching their independent living goals. By participating in community activities and building strong communication skills, individuals can foster a sense of belonging, independence, and financial security. CCSS's commitment to funding services and educational initiatives for individuals with IDD in Callaway County demonstrates its dedication to improving lives and promoting inclusion. CCSS's community engagement and collaboration with other organizations is essential for providing comprehensive education and developing additional services. These community engagement efforts led by Mr. Mike Lederle and his team were mentioned on multiple occasions in interviews and discussions with stakeholders as a strength. Additionally, mentioned were the Board of Directors' decision to move CCSS in a positive new era for the future.

In the survey conducted it was found that 78% of respondents agree or somewhat agree that the **mission** of CCSS is in alignment with supporting people with IDD. When considering CCSS' **impact on lives of people with IDD**, the survey identified strengths in the areas of Adult Day Services, Community Integration, and Funded Supports and Services for Individuals. Over the past five years survey respondents found CCSS has had significant strides in **improving the lives** of individuals with IDD, particularly in the areas of transportation services, community inclusion and accessibility, employment services and job training, housing accessibility and affordability, and case management and educational services.

Survey respondents rated CCSS' **reputation in the community** at 61% or an average score of 3.1 out of 5.0. Comments centered around community awareness and communication around services and partnerships. In focus group discussions, **stakeholder satisfaction** in the current relationship with CCSS was found to be good at 78% with an average score of 3.9 out of 5.0. The key strengths of relationships include good communication, engagement, and support for individuals with IDD in special situations.

For the next five years, **priority areas** identified for CCSS' focus of services and programs for individuals with IDD identified in the survey and other inputs include expanding **employment** services and job training opportunities, improving **housing** accessibility and affordability, enhancing **transportation** services, promoting **community inclusion** and accessibility, and providing quality **after-school and summer programs**.

A comprehensive analysis of all three data sources with 141 individuals, aided by Gemini AI, revealed key themes that are organized into organizational strengths and opportunities, current services expansion and new service and programs and presented for your consideration.

## Summary Themes

### Organizational Strengths

- **Community Inclusion:** CCSS promotes and supports individuals with IDD in developing independent living skills and participating in community activities significantly improving quality of life, community inclusion and accessibility.

- **Family Support and Engagement:** CCSS provides support and resources to families of individuals with IDD. They foster a sense of community among families and create opportunities for peer support.
- **Community Engagement:** CCSS provides opportunities for people with IDD to engage the community through day program services and a variety of social and recreational activities that promote well-being, community integration and collaboration with local businesses.
- **Adaptability and Innovation:** CCSS has a strong ability to adapt to changing needs and innovate their delivery of services. This flexibility allows them to expand their services and reach a wider population, further solidifying their role as a leader in Callaway County.
- **Collaboration & Relationships:** Effective communication, trust, and collaboration have built strong relationships that allow for working together on joint projects and partnership initiatives.
- **Reputation and Partnerships:** CCSS has earned a positive reputation in the community through their high-quality care and commitment to excellence. Their partnerships with various organizations have allowed them to leverage resources and enhance their impact.

## Organizational Opportunities

- **Communication:** Develop a comprehensive communication plan to reach target audiences effectively. Utilize a variety of channels (e.g., social media, email, newsletters, comprehensive resource guide) to share information and engage families and the community.
- **Community Awareness & Outreach:** Utilize outreach strategies such as community events, and event sponsorships to increase visibility, share stories, breakdown barriers around stigma and discrimination and communicate with clarity the organization's mission, vision, values, and services to inspire and motivate the community.
- **Engagement & Partnerships:** Enhance collaboration with schools, community organizations, businesses and other stakeholders. Strengthen partnerships with organizations to increase direct support, capacity and service delivery. Increase school collaboration in meetings for challenging cases needing more coordinated services.
- **Staff Capacity:** Address staffing needs through proactive recruitment and retention strategies include additional funding for staffing to address the shortage in special needs areas and services. Invest in training and development for staff to enhance their skills.
- **Education & Training:** Strengthen family support by offering a parent support group, and educational resources to families of individuals with IDD. Education focus groups for community and service providers. Educational offerings to teachers and aids from experts in the field that address the complex needs of students with disabilities.
- **Facilities:** Consider the need for additional facilities throughout Callaway County to better meet the service needs of individuals with IDD. Continue to create inclusive spaces and opportunities within the community.

- **Advocacy:** Advocate for increased healthcare funding and legislation at the state and federal levels to address funding challenges and support for individuals with IDD.
- **Funding Strategy:** Develop a plan for resources from the SB40 collections to fund services for individuals with IDD across Callaway County. Additionally, consider potential financial challenges and limitations at the state and/or federal levels.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Develop a robust system to track and measure key performance indicators (KPIs). Collect and analyze data to identify trends, assess impact, and inform decision-making to improve program effectiveness, allocate resources efficiently, and share data with stakeholders.

## Current Services Expansion

- **Transportation Services:** Enhance variety of transportation and/or bus options on weekends, nights, evenings, and holidays including outside the county to ensure individuals with IDD can access work, medical appointments, essential services, and social outings.
- **Day Programs:** Continue and enhance day program services and consider additional services to allow individuals with medical fragility to attend.
  - **Skill Development:** Offer more life skills opportunities to promote personal growth and enjoyment including cooking training with chef assistant, dance instruction classes, and socialization with therapeutic animal services.
  - **Family Focus:** Provide more opportunities to offer family nights or grandparents' day to spend quality time together and create lasting memories.
  - **Social Activities:** Increased opportunities for outings and out-of-town trips for individuals with IDD and Autism to enhance social engagement and interact in the community through safe spaces that include sensory sensitivity experiences.
- **Assistive Technology, Adaptive, or Medical Equipment:** Access to treatment equipment to aid in the success of outcomes and independence including technology hardware or software.
- **In-home Assistance:** Support services for daily living needs that promote independence and to remain living at home.
- **Individual & Family Support Program:** Explore the process for funding, amount of funding, and add an emergency action clause to expedite access to funding for high needs items.
- **Home Modification:** Need for home modification service providers, explore becoming a provider in this area or subcontracting with other professionals to address this gap for wheelchair ramps and bathroom modifications.
- **Community-Focused Initiatives:** Expand Inclusive Parks concept to smaller communities like Auxvasse and Millersburg.

## New Services and Programs

- **Employment Supports:** Grow opportunities for employment training and life skills development and job placement assistance to promote independence. Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to create job opportunities that can support economic development.
- **Independent Living Services:** Provide a range of accessible and affordable housing options such as group homes, independent and supported living arrangements, including support for rent and expenses to maintain independent living and staffing for housing to promote community integration.
- **Expanded Day Programs:** Offer structured day programs for various age groups, including youth (after school/summer options) and young adults with IDD and consider availability of services in underserved areas of Callaway County.
- **Respite Services:** Collaborate with organizations to expand respite care options, including both in-home and out-of-home respite.
- **Youth Transition:** Offer early intervention services and support for youth transitioning into adult services.
- **Autism Services:** Provide specialized services for individuals (children and adults) with specific needs, such as autism spectrum disorders. This could involve increased collaboration with outside organizations and school systems.
- **Children's Services:** Enhance therapy services, evaluations, and ongoing care within Callaway County through partnerships to better serve children and families locally.
- **Early Child Education:** Consider partnering with early education centers including educational resources to support families with special needs children.
- **Representative Payee Services:** Explore providing or partnership for services to assist individuals with IDD in managing their finances.
- **Eligibility Criteria Navigation:** Consider a Specialist to communicate the eligibility requirements for services and support access to families and individuals with IDD.
- **Non-Waivered Services:** Explore ways to provide additional support to people on the waitlist for waived services that ability to access state resources.
- **Equipment Library/Store:** Consider establishing or funding the development of a durable medical or equipment library or store where individuals can borrow the resources needed for temporary use.
- **Therapy Services:** Access and availability of specialized services to support treatment such as OT, PT, ST, ABA, etc. Partnering with community agencies who provide specialized support such as behavioral analysis for non-verbal individuals and in-home or in-school services.