

The New!

Reach Out e-Diversity News



An Electronic Publication of the
Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

February 2022 Edition | Volume 1, Issue 1

Read, Pass on to Friends,
Family Members, Colleagues &
Constituents



Don't
Miss an
Issue!

Reach Out e-Diversity News is designed to EMPOWER you to...

- ✓ Recognize the needs of un/underserved Ohioans with developmental disabilities.
- ✓ Collaborate and coordinate to make sure culturally competent services are provided.
- ✓ Measure and monitor to get results that support un/underserved Ohioans living more productive and independent lives.



This month's focus: Board Diversity

Why?

Having diverse Boards is essential to guaranteeing that diverse experiences, expertise, and perspectives are included when organizations are planning, making decisions, and taking advantage of opportunities. **Diverse Boards** are more responsive to cultural differences, in touch with community needs, and able to access community resources.



Resources

Each newsletter includes a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Tool Kit** that is a "must have" set of resources to help you expand your thoughts about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and equip you to act.

This month's **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Tool Kit** offers you relevant and current examples of best practices, discussions, resources, and training focused on **Board Diversity**.

[Check out the ODDC Board DEI Tool Kit](#)

First, Prepared, and Ready for Board Service

Marci Slaughter is the first person with developmental disabilities to become a member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Learn why she is prepared and ready to serve.

[Check it!](#)



Marci Slaughter

Increasing Board Diversity Requires Intentionality

Meet **TyKiah Wright**, Nominations Committee Chair, Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) and find out how she is leading Board change.

[Check it!](#)



TyKiah Wright

What Can You Do? Make Sure New Board Members Are Valued, Included & Engaged!

Dr. Patricia Hicks identifies 5 areas that your Board needs to focus to make sure all Board members feel valued, included and engaged.

[Check it!](#)



Dr. Patricia Hicks



It's a Challenge!

Within 60 minutes... you will **virtually** have an unforgettable, enlightening experience that helps you move forward in creating a diverse Board equipped to advance the organization's mission.

[Learn More!](#)



DIFFERENCE MAKER

#BEACATALYST4CHANGE



Events

February is Black History Month. It is a time to celebrate the accomplishments African Americans have made as well as a time to reflect on their roles throughout history and the present.

[Click here](#) to find activities that you can do safely at home or around Ohio.

Advocacy Awareness Day Be the Change

Ohio Developmental Disabilities Awareness & Advocacy Day
March 02, 2022 at the Ohio Statehouse

Attendance can be in person or virtually. All participants must register to attend. This is a free event.

[Register Here](#)



Key Findings about Non-Profit Boards

1. They are slightly more diverse, but far from representing the communities they serve.
2. Board recruitment practices are not aligned with diversity goals.
3. Boards that include people of color are more likely to have adopted diversity, equity, inclusions practices than Boards that do not include people of color.
4. While most demographic differences highlight racial and ethnic differences, there is need to examine differences about disability status and intersectionality (multiple demographic factors).
5. *Boards are willing to change but don't know how.*



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First, Prepared, and Ready for Board Service

Marci Slaughter

Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Member

FIRST

Marci Straughter is the first person with developmental disabilities to serve on the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, but her diversity extends beyond abilities. Marci is African American, female, and a member of the millennial generation. While she lives in Ohio, Marci was born in California. While in California, Marci had an acting agent and was able to participate in acting workshops and got a chance to act in some videos, commercials, plays. Even though her videos didn't make YouTube, nor her commercials landed on television, Marci enjoyed the experience and was grateful for it.



Marci Straughter's employment experience has been diverse and impactful, to include Statewide Trainer (Project STIR, Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility), having trained over 150 people in the state of Ohio to speak up for themselves and helped them become Ohio Leaders; Self-Advocacy Consultant, Ohio at Home, her Provider Agency; Certified Human Services Assistant, ARC Industries, her first job after graduating from Columbus State College in May, 2015 which she worked up until the start of the pandemic.

Marci Straughter is a blogger. "Marci's Keepin it Cookin Cookbook" blog is on Facebook and has over 380 followers. While Marci does love cooking, her primary focus is to share her secret recipes on how to find a good provider and be a self-advocate.

Marci Straughter loves public speaking and advocating. In 2020, Marci spoke at the State House on Advocacy Awareness Day. She has also shared her experience in Washington, DC meeting with Ohio senators and advocating the need for more providers and staff.

Marci Straughter's diversity will bring added value to the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

PREPARED

Marci Straughter lends her voice to diverse organizations, to include having served on the *Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council* and was *Chair of the Technology Committee*; representing Central Ohio in the *Tech Ambassador Network*, a program that promotes how adaptive technology use enhances lives and independence for people with developmental disabilities. Marci is one of *five tech ambassadors selected statewide* to discuss how they use supportive technology at home, school, work, and in the community. She has shared her personal experiences through *peer-to-peer mentoring* sessions; the *Council of Ohio Leaders* (better known as the COOL group), *Ohio Self Determination Association*. The COOL group oversees and advises *Project STIR training materials*; other board and work group service includes *Advocacy and Protective Services, Inc. Board, We Thrive Together Advisory Board, Ohio One Plan, Individual Service Plan work group*.



In 2012, Marci Straughter joined a group of her friends and leaders in the disability community in advocating for a person with developmental disabilities to serve on the Franklin County DD Board. Even though there were no seats available, she continued to join others in advocating for representation. Marci was surprised when Jed Morison, Superintendent/CEO, called and apprised her that a seat on the Board was now available. “Yes,” she was interested in the Board considering her for the vacant position. Ultimately, the decision about filling the vacant seat would be decided by the Board of Commissioners. When Marci heard from Jed Morison again it was to confirm the Commissioners had decided and voted to seat her on the Board. Marci was elated and honored to be the first person with a disability to now serve on the Franklin County Board. *Marci believes her parents are watching over her from heaven and saying, “she’s doing good.”*



Marci Straughter is equipped to be a contributing member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, committed to making a difference in the lives of people with developmental disabilities. She brings personal experience, past experience serving in a variety of capacities to many diverse organizations.

READY

Marci Straughter has been assigned to the Human Resources Committee, and the Advocacy/Equity Liaison. She is ready to serve.

Marci Straughter is ready to demonstrate the real meaning of self-advocacy. She is ready to lead and demonstrate that people with disabilities are capable and if given the opportunity, they can make a difference at companies like her Provider Agency. She has lots of ideas about staff training, increasing training videos, providing remote support.

In this new role, Marci plans to encourage other people from different cultures to get on committees and Boards. She hopes that her presence will make others feel more comfortable in pursuing Board opportunities.

There is no question, Marci Straughter will confidently take her seat, bringing energy and creativity to the table, an unparalleled understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives, a heart to serve, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to increase others understanding of the issues, barriers, and solutions.



Marci Straughter is the first person with developmental disabilities to be seated on The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. She is prepared and ready to make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families.

NOTE:

Marci Straughter was interviewed by Dr. Patricia Hicks, Reach Out e-Diversity News Editor



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How Do We Make Boards Diverse? TyKiah Wright's Story

About TyKiah Wright



It has been 18 plus years engaging in nonprofit leadership with a foundation of diversity, equity, inclusion that forms the backdrop to TyKiah Wright's Board Diversity story. She started her career as a budding entrepreneur and launched a nonprofit organization called **WrightChoice Intern Program**.

She has always had a passion for ensuring that students with disabilities were connected to meaningful internship and mentoring opportunities prior to graduation. Elevating people with disabilities so that their voice can be heard is an important component to her diversity and inclusion business strategy.

After 15 years, she decided to transition from nonprofit leadership to the corporate space and joined Nationwide Insurance. For three years, she was instrumental in developing and managing business relationships and partnerships with nonprofit organizations for Nationwide. Currently, TyKiah serves as a Director for the National Diversity Council, providing oversight to the Ohio Diversity Council (OHDC). Under her leadership, the Council focuses on fostering a learning environment for organizations to grow and leverage their knowledge of diversity. OHDC serves as the premier resource for diversity best practices and leadership development in the state.

It is comprised of 5 advisory boards: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo.

While just finishing up a year in this new position, TyKiah enjoys engaging with people, understanding their needs, and then connecting the dots, and providing the appropriate resources. "That is my sweet spot," says TyKiah Wright.

Leading Change on the Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) Board

TyKiah Wright was asked to apply for membership to the DRO Board by its former Executive Director, Michael Kirkman and was also encouraged by another Board member to apply as well. TyKiah completed her application, participated in a Board interview, and then was invited to join the Board. Shortly,



and then was invited to join the Board. Shortly,

after joining the Board, she was asked to Chair the Nominating Committee. That was the start of TyKiah's path to creating a more diverse Board. The DRO Board had done a fairly good job of engaging people with disabilities but appeared to be missing other demographic factors.

The following is a description of **TyKiah Wright's 6-Step process** to creating a more diverse Board.

Step 1: Board Assessment



This step was essential to understanding the current Board composition so that they could be intentional about their outreach to potential Board members. The current Board completed a self-assessment that focused on identifying various demographic factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race/ethnicity, disability, geography, etc. The committee reviewed the data, identified gaps, and established priorities.

Step 2: Develop Outreach and Recruitment Strategy

This step was critical because past practices had relied upon individual Board members identifying potential candidates. Most often “who” you know in your circle does not necessarily result in increased diversity. Our committee decided to focus on connecting with community organizations for our candidates. Each committee member was challenged to bring at least five organizations that they had direct connection and could make contact with for the purpose of identifying the Executive Director or individual who would be the best contact for the purpose of helping to identify potential Board members. Organizations were identified that represented, the refugee community, Latino community, African-American community, disability community, etc.

Step 3: Build Relationships

The key component of the recruitment strategy was relationship building. The committee felt it was important to have established relationships with the key contact at each organization so that when recruitment time came around, they would have an understanding of the organization, its focus and priorities and then be better able to identify candidates that would align with the DRO mission. It took about three months for all committee members to identify the best contact for the organization, have conversations with them about the organization before soliciting their support in recruiting potential Board members. About eight people were identified and the Board selected six.

Step 4: Make the Application Plain

The Committee then reviewed the application to make sure that plain language was used so that no one would be excluded. They wanted everyone irrespective of disability to be included. Consequently, all questions were reviewed resulting in some questions being eliminated, revised and, others added.

Step 5: Ensure an Inclusive Interview Process

The Committee then reviewed the interview protocol with a goal of ensuring that everyone could have access to the information needed in order to be prepared for their interview. Needless to say, the Committee found opportunities to make modifications in the interview process.

Step 6: Create an Engaging Onboarding Process

The Committee recognized that getting off to a good start as a new Board member starts with the Onboarding Process. A decision was made to include other Committee Chairs so that new Board members could get familiar with other Board members early on. Additionally, the process included several meetings so that individuals would not be overwhelmed with too much information at one time.

Key Takeaways

✓ **You can create your best Board outreach plan when you begin with conducting a Board assessment.** Knowing who currently sits on your Board prevents you from blindly establishing priorities on assumptions that may not be reflective of reality.



✓ **Connecting to community organizations is important.** They represent the diverse populations your organization serves and know the community best.

✓ **Building relationships is essential.** It's not about sending an email or dropping off flyers. It is about connecting to diverse communities, getting to know the people so that you can know who best fits with your organization.

intentional
in · ten · tion · al

✓ **Don't forget generational diversity.** There is opportunity to engage college students by connecting with Disability Services on college campuses. Younger people bring more robust ideas and new ways of thinking and doing things.

Creating a diverse board can be captured in one word. It requires being **INTENTIONAL**.

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What Can You Do to Make Sure New Board Members Are Valued, Included, and Engaged?

Patricia Larkins Hicks, Ph.D.
Outcomes Management Group, LTD

It is important that Board members examine their board culture, policies, and procedures to ensure that new Board members will be valued, included, and engaged in meaningful ways that help advance the mission of the organization and achievement of its goals. Directing intentionality to the following five areas will help your Board retain satisfied Board members who feel valued, included, and engaged. For each area, specific actions are identified that the Board can consider. The suggested actions are not intended to be inclusive.

Incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into the organization's core values, and strategic plan; Board's culture, policies and procedures

Non-profit Boards can have the best intentions in creating a diverse Board but do not realize that the organization (Board members and staff) does not have a shared understanding of what diversity, equity, inclusion means; consequently, there is also lack of clarity about what actions are necessary to achieve the goal. Creating a change in Board composition starts with Board agreement that diversity, equity, and inclusion is not the flavor of the month. The Board needs to take time to think about how diversity, equity, inclusion relates to the organization's mission, values, strategies and board's culture, policies, and procedures.



Actions to Consider

- ✓ Board members reach agreement about what diversity, equity, and inclusion means to the organization
- ✓ Board members examine the organization's mission statement and identify "why" diversity, equity, and inclusion is necessary for the mission to be achieved, and "what" barriers exist
- ✓ Board members decide "how" diversity, equity, and inclusion should be embraced as values (basic beliefs) of the organization

- ✓ Board members include consideration of diversity, equity, inclusion in the organization's strategic planning process
- ✓ Board Chair and CEO/Executive Director propose to the Board "how to audit" the Board's policies and procedures to ensure alignment with the agreed upon DEI definitions, values, and strategies.
- ✓ Board members determine the audit process and decide how to use audit results to make modifications in its culture, policies, and procedures.

Develop a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Statement

After the Board has reached agreement about what DEI means and how it fits into the organization's values, development of a manifesto (creed to live by) is important. This statement should reflect to internal stakeholders (Board and staff), external stakeholders (clients, family members, service providers, partners, funders, etc.), and the communities served the organization's long-term commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion.



Actions to Consider

- ✓ Board Chair identifies an existing committee or appoints an ad hoc committee charged to examine existing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion statements and recommend to the Board the key elements that should be included as part of their organization's statement.
- ✓ Based upon Board feedback, the committee members develop a draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion statement and solicit feedback from staff. After integrating staff feedback, the ad hoc committee members make revisions and then obtain feedback from external stakeholders about their understanding of the statement to ensure the intended message is being received by diverse stakeholders. External stakeholder feedback is considered in preparing a final draft statement for Board approval. Recommendations are developed regarding how the Board should communicate the statement to both internal and external stakeholders
- ✓ Board votes to approve final Diversity, Equity, Inclusion statement and communication next steps

Ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion is integrated into the existing committee structure. This requires all board members to take ownership of alignment of Board practices with its diversity, equity, inclusion manifesto.

Ownership of this area needs to be integrated into the Board Structure to ensure long-term focus and demonstrates that



diversity, equity, inclusion is not the flavor of the month, or a flavor fueled by external incidents and circumstances. For example, existing Governance or Nominating committees can be responsible for ensuring that recruitment practices consider diverse groups, Board expectations do not exclude diverse groups from membership, etc. Marketing and communication committees can be responsible for ensuring both internal and external communications give consideration to diverse constituent groups.



Actions to Consider

- ✓ Board Chair and CEO/Executive Director review committee assignments to ensure committee assignments leverage the expertise, experience, and gifts of all board members and make necessary changes with members' input
- ✓ Committee Chairs facilitate committee meetings that focus on examining the committee's goals, priorities, and practices to determine areas that are not in alignment with the agreed upon diversity, equity, inclusion definitions, values, and strategies. Based upon the findings, each committee develops an alignment plan
- ✓ Executive Committee reviews all Committee DEI alignment plans, examines opportunities for collaboration across committees, and provides feedback
- ✓ Committee Chairs share their DEI Alignment plans with the full Board for feedback

Conduct Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Training As Part of Board Development

Diversity, equity, inclusion training is necessary to ensure that new members are equipped during their onboarding process to align with the organization's DEI definitions, and focus. Additionally, as part of the Board's on-going Board development, DEI trainings should be made available. These will ensure the organization maintains alignment with current best practices.



Actions to Consider

- ✓ Board Chair, CEO/Executive Director, and Committee Chair responsible for onboarding new Board members develop a plan for expanding the onboarding process to include understanding the organization's DEI definitions, manifesto, goals, and strategies. Make sure onboarding plan includes timelines, costs, and metrics
- ✓ Board Chair & CEO/Executive Director determine how best to move forward in developing an ongoing board development plan that includes diversity, equity, inclusion training and proposes plan to the Board for its consideration. Plan should include costs, timelines, and metrics

- ✓ Board approves onboarding plan
- ✓ Board members responsible for onboarding new Board members make necessary modifications of the process to include DEI training. They document the processes and include in appropriate Board Handbooks
- ✓ Board members responsible for ongoing Board development document expectations, processes and include in appropriate Board Handbooks

Assign a Mentor

Mentors of new board members play an integral role in helping them to navigate the organization, feel valued, engage in board activities, functions, and events, and meet Board requirements.



Actions to Consider

- ✓ Board Chair & CEO/Executive Director determine how best to develop a New Member Mentoring Plan that focuses on ensuring new members understand expectations, connect with other Board members, and get fully engaged in Board and organization activities/events. They identify appropriate committee or form an ad hoc committee to develop and document the mentoring program
- ✓ Assigned Board members develop mentoring program to include implementation plan, cost, metrics
- ✓ Board members approve mentoring program
- ✓ New Member Mentoring process is documented, and materials are developed

Making sure the Board’s culture values diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the Board aligns its structure, processes, actions with this goal are essential to guaranteeing that new Board members are valued, included, and engaged.



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ODDC BOARD DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION TOOL KIT



This month's **ODDC Board DEI Tool Kit** contains a "must have" set of resources that helps you increase the diversity of your Boards and Councils and make sure all members feel valued, engaged, and contributing to advancing the organization's mission.

Click on each discription and check out the examples pertaining to best practices, discussions, resources, and training.

BEST PRACTICES

3-part Article Series, including recruiting best practices



Study Findings on culture, staff training and communication



DISCUSSIONS

Research Report by People with Disabilities, Western Australia



Overview of Board Diversity Project



RESOURCES

Board Diversity Includes Disabilities



Accessible Boards



Sample Board Diversity Policy



TRAINING

Nonprofit Board Inclusion Training Series
Culture of inclusivity, Downloadable roadmap



Strategy, Governance, Questions to ask board members



Board gaps, Equitable recruitment



SHARE this toolkit with:

- Executive Directors
- Board Chairs
- Nominating and Governance Committee Chairs
- Board Members
- Prospective Board Members
- Council Officers
- Council Members

Also share with persons interested in serving on a Board, and Organizations developing individuals interested in board service



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Difference Maker Board Diversity Challenge

This Difference Maker Challenge is virtual!

It's Happening - February 22, 2022 – 6:00-7:00 pm

60 minutes....

Your Challenge Hosts will facilitate interactive and engaging large and breakout group activities that will be fun and informative.



Dr. Patricia Hicks,
Reach Out e-Diversity
News Editor; Outcomes
Management Group, CEO



Shari Cooper, Public
Relations Assistant,
Goodwill Easter
Seals, Miami Valley;
former member, Ohio
Developmental Disability
Council and Outreach
Committee

CONNECT... with Board Diversity experts

MEET... individuals from across the state and country

LEARN... to use the information in the Reach Out
e-Diversity newsletter

Leave prepared to...

“Make a Difference” within your organization,
community, state

On a Board or Interested in joining a Board?

Sign up Now

Don't come alone!

SHARE & INVITE others to join you.



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